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Teachers Walking The Talk: Four Teachers' Perceptions And Instruction Of Reading Minilessons

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TEACHERS WALKING THE TALK: FOUR TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS
AND INSTRUCTION OF READING MINILESSONS

by

Cindy M. Gregg
Associate of Applied Science in Business, University of Minnesota – Crookston, 1988
Bachelor of Science, University of Minnesota – Crookston, 2004
Master of Education, University of North Dakota, 2010

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirement

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota
August
2016

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This dissertation, submitted by Cindy M. Gregg in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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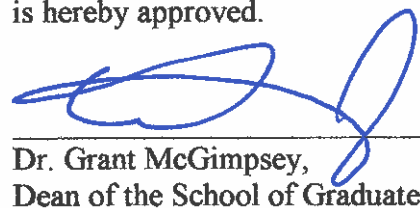Dr. Shelby Barrentine, Chairperson

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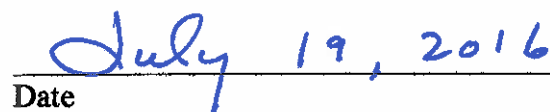Dr. Aimee Rogers

_____
Dr. Cheryl Hunter

This dissertation is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.

_____
Dr. Grant McGimpsey,
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

_____
July 19, 2016
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Degree   Doctor of Philosophy

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Paul, Matt, and Andy

ABSTRACT

This study is about teachers' reading minilesson instruction. Research questions sought information about teachers' perceptions of their minilessons, what content was taught, and what instruction was like. Describing teachers' minilesson instruction is of interest because this type of lesson is well-described in the reading education literature but relatively little is known about what occurs in classroom settings.

In this study teachers' explicit instruction of reading content is viewed through the lens of the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) model of instruction. In particular, the "Teacher Does" Phase of GRR model was of interest because it aligns with the explicit instructional aspects of reading minilessons. Four white, female elementary teachers from a single school in a small Midwestern town served as participants. All participants were experienced with teaching reading minilessons. Data collected for this study came from three principal sources: transcriptions of 36 video recordings of participants as they taught reading minilessons, interviews with participants and curriculum documents.

Two themes emerged from the data analysis. Derived from interview data, Theme 1 indicated teachers' perceptions of their instruction were closely aligned with literature about minilessons: teacher as competent other, explicit instruction through demonstration and explanation, and brief guided practice. Theme 2, derived from observation data, showed that participants' explicit instruction during minilessons was limited. Additionally, minilesson content was focused on thinking within the text.

Findings lead to asserting that in order to teach readers to learn to "have a conversation with text," the minilesson content must challenge students to think in a variety of ways, not only within text. It was also asserted that some teaching moves result in teachers taking more responsibility for performing the reading task than others. Modeling, explaining, thinking aloud for example, result in teachers taking responsibility for making invisible reading processes visible. By contrast, when question and answer methods dominate the minilesson, teachers tend not to engage in explicit instruction of reading content, and Phase 2 of GRR model, "We do it together," dominates the lesson. In this case study, teachers may have sacrificed what they knew about modeling and explaining due to the way the commercial program structured the minilesson.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When providing instruction on reading comprehension, teachers are trying to teach children to use thinking behaviors that lead to an ability to comprehend text independently. These thinking behaviors are invisible strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006) readers use to process text to construct meaning. Reading strategies such as predicting, making connections, visualization, self-questioning, inferring, summarizing, synthesizing, and others have been named, described, and studied by many (Calkins, 2010; Dole, Duffy, Roehler & Pearson, 1991; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2006; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Keene & Zimmerman, 2007; Miller, 2002; Pardo, 2004).

How to teach reading strategies has been the subject of much discussion in the reading education literature (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Miller, 2002; Routman, 2003). Currently, and for about the past 20 years or more (e.g., Atwell, 1987 or Calkins, 1994), minilessons have been a type of lesson promoted in the literacy education literature for teaching literacy content. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2001) a minilessons is "explicit teaching, designed to help students work more productively during independent reading, [providing] very specific instruction regarding effective reading strategies and skills or focuses students' attention on elements of literature" (p. 122).

This explicit, short, whole group lesson is a main component of an approach to teaching reading called reading workshop. In reading workshop students spend significant amounts of

time reading and talking, and each day they experience the minilesson during which readers learn something specific about reading (Calkins, 2010; Hagerty, 1992; Hindley, 1996). During the minilesson, according to Clark and Graves (2005), the teacher explains the lesson content, models how to use it, and then may have students engage in a short practice session.

The point of the explicit instruction is to make visible the invisible reading behaviors required for processing text. Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008) indicated that reading comprehension instruction requires that teachers ". . . model, describe, explain, and scaffold appropriate reading strategies for children" (p. 370). Kelcey and Carlisle (2013) state that when teachers "talk, show, enact, or otherwise represent information or ideas" (p. 304) about reading strategies, students learn how to use the invisible thinking behaviors required for successful text processing. Other researchers such as Almasi and Fullerton (2012) agree. They argue that children begin to learn how to think like readers when teachers use brief but explicit explanations and think-alouds.

Thinking aloud and other explicit teaching moves such as modeling are viewed as effective teaching practices for instruction of reading strategies and other content (Clark, 2014), but are teachers using these practices? Vanairsdale and Canedo (2011) indicated, "as teachers we all want to be effective in helping our students construct new knowledge and skills; however, the problem is many of us have been unaware that what we're doing either isn't working or could be even more effective" (p. 41-42). Furthermore, a key reason why teachers are practicing ineffective instruction is because most teachers draw on the teacher's manuals as a guide; unfortunately, instruction from the manual does not impact all students (Vanairsdale & Canedo, 2011).

Need for the Study

It is noted by Douglas (2009) that there is an urgent need for evidence on how to enhance classroom instruction. In the case of minilessons, what they are and how they work is well described in the literature, but what is occurring in practice is not well-known. This research will help to fill in knowledge about what many view as an essential practice for delivering information to learners about how to read (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Calkins, 2010; Taberski, 2011).

Filling in knowledge about what occurs during practical use of minilessons during reading instruction will benefit several stakeholders in education. Classroom teachers may use the findings like a mirror for self-reflection which may lead to affirmations and changes. Literacy coaches may gain understandings about explicit teaching behaviors that lead to modification of observation protocols for minilessons. Teacher educators' knowledge about what to teach in literacy methods courses may be altered and enhanced. The relationship between the professional literature and actual practice will be more informed.

Research Questions

My research questions aim to enhance the literature on explicit instruction of reading strategies and other content conducted by classroom teachers in elementary schools. In schools, explicit instruction during reading takes the form of minilessons. My questions are:

- How do teachers perceive their minilesson instruction?
- What is the content being taught?
- How do teachers teach the minilesson content?

Theoretical Framework

This study views teachers' explicit instruction of reading content through the lens of the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) model of instruction. Originally described by P. D.

Pearson and M. C. Gallagher in 1983, the GRR model of instruction was represented in a figure showing how teachers transfer responsibility for learning to students while offering support as the learning occurs (Fisher, 2008). Many figures and images of this model have been developed over time by many educators. Figure 1 depicts a recent model showing the GRR (Fisher, 2008). In a monograph by Fisher in which this image appears, Fisher, like many others, identifies four phases or levels within the process of handing over learning to the point of independence: I do it (meaning, the teacher), We do it (meaning teachers and students perform the task together), You do it together (meaning the teacher has more or less withdrawn involvement and students support each other) and You do it alone (students perform the task alone). As Fisher (2008) pointed out, the phases of the GRR model are interrelated meaning, the phases support each other, can overlap and can be used in a different sequence at times. However, each phase has distinct elements which contribute to students' learning. For example, the focus lesson, comparable to the minilesson, "allows the teacher to model his or her thinking and understanding of the content for students . . . focus lessons establish the purpose or intended learning outcome" (Fisher, 2008, unpaged). Again, this states the lesson purpose and modeling are teaching behaviors associated with Phase 1 of the GRR model. Fisher (2008) goes on to say, "In addition to the purpose and the teacher model, the focus lesson provided teachers opportunity to activate background knowledge" (unpaged). Activating background knowledge can occur during any phase of the GRR model but is intentionally used during the "I do" Phase, or Phase 1 of the GRR model.

According to Clark, not only does the GRR model furnish teachers with a format that can be applied to structure classroom lessons to support the learning process, but also this model intentionally plans for scaffolded instruction that incorporates demonstration and practice. The GRR model reflects the Vygotskian view that meaningful learning takes place over time and

with abundant guidance and practice (Clark, 2014). During the beginning stages in the Zone of

Proximal Development, the student may have very little knowledge or understanding of the topic

presented and at this stage the teacher provides explanations or modeling (Tharp & Gallimore,

1988) so following teacher modeling with guided practice is important. In both phases, however,

it is important to note that "the teacher relies heavily on the use of instructional scaffolding, one

of the most recommended, versatile, and powerful instruction techniques of constructivist

teaching" (Clark & Graves, 2005, p. 570).

Teacher Responsibility

Focus Lesson	"I do it"
Guided Instruction	"We do it"
Collaborative	"You do it together"
Independent	"You do it alone"
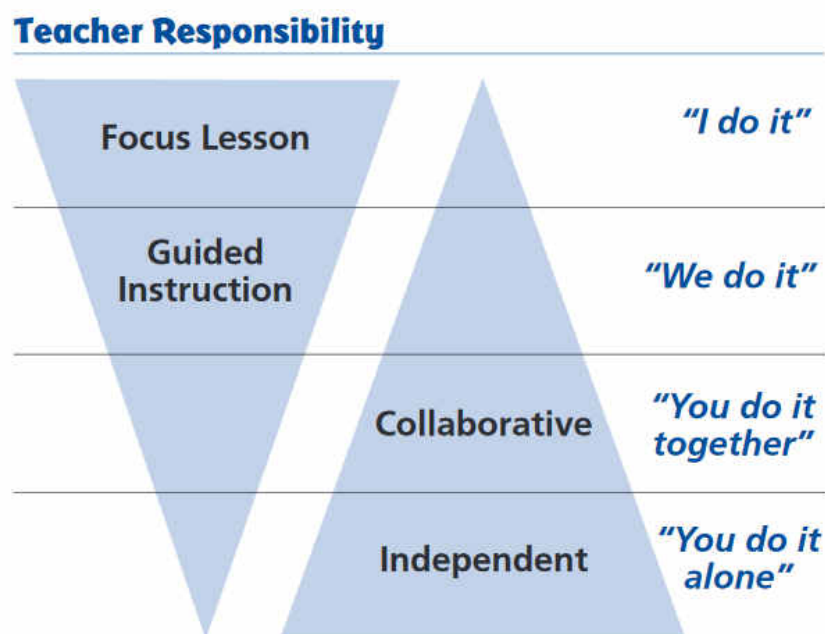
Figure 1. Gradual Release of Responsibility model. Source: https://www.mheonline.com/_ treasures/pdf/douglas_fisher.pdf (retrieved June 3, 2016)

In this study, I am focusing on the first component or phase of the Gradual Release of

Responsibility model. During this phase, according to Fisher and Frey (2008a), teachers

explicitly engage in modeling the desired outcome. For example, teachers often model

comprehension strategies, how to decode words, how to use text structure, or how to gain

information from text features. In another article by Fisher and Frey (2008b), they describe what modeling within the focus lesson is and what it is not.

> Through modeling . . . teachers reveal what goes on in their minds as they solve problems, read, write, or generate ideas. Modeling does not mean providing explanation or questioning students; it means demonstrating the way experts think as they approach problems. (p. 34)

The GRR model of instruction is grounded in Vygotsky's constructivist view of social learning. In Vygotsky's view of learning, "cognitive development was due to the individual's social interactions within the environment" (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). According to Dixon-Krauss (1996), ". . . Vygotsky (1962) argued that the developmental process moves from the social to the internal," (p. 11) and that "learning leads development with the gradual internalization of intellectual processes that are activated through social interaction" (p. 11). In Vygotsky's theory of learning, assistance provided by more capable others is central to the process of becoming independent (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). For example, when the teacher models a reading behavior, she is performing as the competent other. As they interact, the teacher's role changes to assisting the learner to engage with the task with guidance.

Koch (2014) found that many social cognitivists emphasize the significance of modeling and according to social cognitivists, people learn partly by watching. Dialectical constructivists believe that learning also occurs by listening and that language is central to learning (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). Strategy instruction in reading is based on dialectical constructivist principles, in which the teacher takes on the role of providing explanations for the strategic processing as it occurs. When students are handed more responsibility for task performance, the teacher takes on the active role by using language to provide hints and prompts to scaffold student learning. According to Almasi and Fullerton (2012), teachers might initiate discussion about strategic

processing by prompting students with open-ended probes such as, "How did you figure that out?" or "Why do you think that?" (p. 144).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to know more about teachers' explicit instruction of reading content, ideally as it relates to comprehension. The practical literature designed for teachers' consumption has created a perspective on best practices for comprehension instruction. Little is known, however, about how this perspective has translated into actual classroom practice. In particular, minilessons, adhering to various principles, have been promoted for use. Thus, describing what happens during reading minilessons will shed light on the relationship between the professional literature and actual practice.

Another purpose of this study is to learn more about how teachers perceive their instruction in reading. According to Reutzel and Cooter (1991), planning for effective reading instruction is an essential concern for teachers; however, when entering numerous classrooms, the informal observer comes into contact with the ordinary environment of traditional structural lessons. Teachers feel they are bound to follow the basal reading curriculum to support that their students have knowledge of the skills and strategies (Reutzel & Cooter, 1991).

This research will also fulfill a personal goal. As an experienced first grade teacher, I implement minilessons during reading instruction. While I have a professional sense of how I conduct my lessons, I have a curiosity about how minilessons are conducted in other classrooms. I have an interest in the times when the teacher is front and center in conducting a lesson. In addition, I want to know how the GRR model fares in actual practice during teachers' minilessons and how that relates to my research. I agree with Atwell (1998) that supportive

teaching models and delivers reading instruction as a knowledge-seeking development, and teachers involve students in what they need to become real readers.

Delimitations of the Study

There are delimitations that need to be considered as the study unfolds. First, this qualitative case study is delimited to four of over 20 teachers at the research site. Also, the participants represented only 3 of the 4 relevant grade levels. Only teachers from grades 2, 3 and 4 were represented from relevant grade levels 2-5. These factors are delimiting because the four teachers' experiences are unlikely to represent precisely the same experiences, views and teaching behaviors of all teachers at the research site.

Another delimitation of the study is data were collected over a period of three months. Data from some teachers were obtained within a few weeks, narrowing the range of curricular content covered by them. Data from others were collected over a longer time frame and a wider range of curricular content was represented by them. Related to this, teaching behaviors may have been somewhat constrained due to the situation that the curriculum was in its first year of implementation.

Because I was unable to be present during the video recording of teachers' minilesson instruction, there are delimitations to what I know about what may have occurred out of range of the camera lens. Additionally, teachers were free to choose which lessons they recorded.

Definition of Terms

Anchor Chart: "Recording children's talk by creating a large chart. Anchor charts make thinking permanent and visible, and so allow us to make connections from one strategy to another, clarify a point, build on earlier learning, and simply remember a specific lesson" (Miller, 2002, p. 56-57).

Explicit Instruction: "Teacher modeling, explanation, and think alouds of what, how, when and why a strategy is used (i.e., declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge), guided practice, in which teachers gradually release responsibility for task completion to students, and independent practice and feedback" (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012, p. 31).

Gradual Release of Responsibility Model: "Pearson and Gallagher use a model of explicit reading instruction using these four stages that guide children toward independence: Teacher modeling and explanation of a strategy; guided practice, where teachers gradually give students more responsibility for task completion; independent practice accompanied by feedback; application of the strategy in real reading situations" (Miller, 2002, p. 10).

I.R.E.: Pattern of interaction in classrooms between teachers and students. "The three-part sequence of teacher Initiation, student Response, and teacher Evaluation (IRE)" (Cazden, 2001, p. 30).

Metacognitive: "Metacognitive is the knowledge that people have about their own thinking processes, and their ability to monitor their cognition" (Feldman, 1998, p. 448).

Minilesson: "A teacher-directed instructional activity used to provide increased assistance for students by modeling or providing more explicit directives on how to perform a particular skill or use a particular strategy" (Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p. 194).

Reading Skills: "Reading skills are automatic actions that result in decoding and comprehension with speed, efficiency, and fluency and usually occur without awareness of the components or control involved" (Afflerbach & Pearson, 2008, p. 368).

Reading Strategies: "Reading strategies are deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meaning of text" (Afflerbach & Pearson, 2008, p. 368).

Scaffolding: "The support for learning and problem solving that encourages independence and growth" (Feldman, 1998, p. 516).

Think Aloud: "Teacher modeling, or showing kids how, includes explaining the strategy, thinking aloud about the mental processes used to construct meaning and demonstrating when and why it is most effective" (Miller, 2002, p. 10).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of my study is explicit instruction of reading content taught in the context of minilessons. In this chapter, I present the literature review for researching the following questions:

- How do teachers perceive their minilesson instruction?
- What is the content being taught?
- How do teachers teach the minilesson content?

In this chapter, first I present information about what is taught in reading programs. Then, I provide information about how reading content is taught with a focus on minilessons. I explain the larger context of these lessons (reading workshop), how they work and how they are aligned with explicit instruction. I provide examples of two minilessons, one as written text and one as a link to a YouTube video. How explicitly taught minilessons are aligned with the GRR model and Vygotsky is presented. The literature review concludes with information about teachers and some of the challenges of learning to teach explicitly.

The Content of a Reading Program

What readers need to be able to do to become proficient readers is ideally what is taught in a reading program. Of course, what to teach in a reading program is a much debated topic (e.g., see Eppley, 2011 arguing against skill-based, scripted reading programs) but the current trend is towards prioritizing comprehension instruction through strategic thinking. Fountas and

Pinnell (2006), giants in the field of reading comprehension instruction, describe three ways of thinking strategically that is the basis for the content of a reading program:

- Thinking Within the Text: The reader processes the information in the text in order to gain the basic or literal meaning. Thinking within the text enables the reader to gather essential information from the text.

- Thinking Beyond the Text: The reader brings information to the text that is not explicitly there. Thinking beyond the text enables the reader to understand the text more fully, because the real meaning may be different qualitatively from the literal meaning. Almost all texts require thinking beyond the text for true understanding.

- Thinking About the Text: Thinking about the text is analytical. The reader considers the text as an object. Thinking about the text enables the reader to learn more about how texts work and, as a result, apply that information to achieve a high level of understanding and enjoyment. (p. 33)

Thinking Within the Text, Thinking Beyond the Text, and Thinking About the Text, are all taking place at the same time before, during, and after reading in their way of teaching strategic thinking to comprehend, readers use "systems of strategic actions for processing written texts" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 33). They organize and associate each of the three types of strategic thinking with specific reading actions that support comprehension. Table 1 is a summary of the types of thinking and reading behaviors they view as program content. Further, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) argue that proficient readers "build complex reading processes from the beginning" which means "they use a wide range of information in a smoothly integrated way, without conscious awareness" (p. 26).

Fountas and Pinnell (2006) argue that teaching each strategic action in isolation is artificial since they continually interact with each other and can occur almost simultaneously. Nevertheless, for communication purposes, the strategic actions within the ways of thinking

Table 1. Fountas and Pinnell's Content of a Reading Program.

Ways of Thinking	Systems of Strategic Actions for Processing Written Texts
Thinking Within the Text	Solving words Monitoring and correcting Searching for and using information Summarizing Maintaining fluency Adjusting
Thinking Beyond the Text	Predicting Making connections Inferring Synthesizing
Thinking About the Text	Analyzing Critiquing

about text are often described separately. Thus, an orientation to each strategic action is supplied

here (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

Thinking Within the Text

- Solving words: taking words apart to decode them

- Monitoring and correcting text: checking words, sentences and text meaning continually while reading; problem solving words, sentences and meanings when something breaks down

- Searching for and using information: using information in the text to form meaning and solve comprehension problems, including word meaning

- Summarizing: organizing the most relevant information from the text; creating a schema for the information during reading

- Maintaining fluency: orchestrating the flow of the text for smooth reading

- Adjusting: changing to the different demands of the text

Thinking Beyond the Text

- Predicting: considering what is known to make informed projections about what will happen next

- Making connections: using personal, world and textual information to add to one's schema during reading

- Inferring: using what is implied but not stated in the text to make meaning

- Synthesizing: constructing new understandings by linking information in the text and background knowledge

Thinking About the Text

- Analyzing: scrutinizing the text for meanings, craft, and structure

- Critiquing: examining text ideas critically in the context of culture, time, space

All of these reading strategies support readers as they gather basic information to construct a literal understanding of a text (thinking within), gather evidence to move beyond a literal understanding (thinking beyond), and as they stand back to reflect on understanding or constructed meanings (thinking about).

Fountas and Pinnell (2006) have constructed a very complete system for thinking about the reading process and comprehension, and other reading educators think in similar ways to Fountas and Pinnell. Miller (2002) for example, conducted her own personal research about comprehension. As indicated below, she identifies the influences on her thinking as she synthesizes her own research about comprehension. Note the names of the researchers she identifies in the quote from her book. She determined that to be active, thoughtful, proficient readers who construct meaning, students must learn to use the following strategies:

- Activating relevant, prior knowledge (schema) before, during, and after reading text (Anderson and Pearson 1984).

- Creating visual and other sensory images from text during and after reading (Pressley 1976).

- Drawing inferences from text to form conclusions, make critical judgments, and create unique interpretations (Hansen 1981).

- Asking questions of themselves, the authors, and the texts they read (Raphael 1984).

- Determining the most important ideas and themes in a text (Palinscar and Brown 1984).

- Synthesize what they read (Brown, Day, and Jones 1983). (Miller, 2002, p. 8)

In their book, *Mosaic of Thought*, Keene and Zimmerman (2007), explain that reading comprehension is comprised of a mosaic of metacognitive strategies readers use to construct meaning from text. The strategies they name as reading program content are: monitoring for meaning, using and creating schema, asking questions (or self-questioning), determining importance, inferring, using sensory and emotional images, and synthesizing. When readers are effectively using these thinking strategies while reading, they enhance "listening to the voice in your mind that speaks while you read" (Keene & Zimmerman, 2007, p. 14).

Like Keene and Zimmerman (2007), reading educators Harvey and Goudvis view reading as a conversation between the reader and the text, and using thinking strategies enhances that conversation. In their book, *Strategies that Work* (2007), Harvey and Goudvis name and promote teaching six strategies: monitoring comprehension, activating and connecting background knowledge, self-questioning, visualizing and inferring, determining importance, summarizing and synthesizing information. Each of these strategies is comprised of a suite of behaviors that can be broken down into many lessons for each strategy. For example, in their book they provide lessons on various dimensions of questioning: questions about your own reading, gaining information through questioning, thick and thin questions, reading to answer a question, reading with a question in mind, and using webs of questions to expand thinking.

The point of teaching reading strategies is to equip readers to construct meaning, and to consciously or intentionally apply strategies when needed. Although, as pointed out by Almasi and Fullerton (2012), for the most part, once learned, applying reading strategies is so rapid, proficient readers "hardly notice they are taking place" (p. 4).

Teaching Reading Content Through Minilessons

Reading Workshop as Context for the Minilesson

Minilessons originated in the context of the workshop approach to teaching reading and writing (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 2010; Hagerty, 1992). In particular, reading workshop is an approach to teaching reading that aims to have students become readers for a lifetime (Atwell, 1998). Hagerty (1992) asserts that reading workshop is a reader-centered approach to teaching reading and that it resembles how reading takes place in the "real world." The principles upon which a reading workshop operate are those that affect reading in school and non-school settings: time, choice, response, and community. Structure is another principle that supports the workshop.

Principles of reading workshop. Hagerty (1992) sheds light on these principles of time, choice, response, and community. How time is used in a workshop is different than in traditional reading approaches in which readers spend time filling out worksheets or responding to comprehension questions. In reading workshop, the largest amount of time is devoted to independent reading. Related to this, students have choice about what they read and most typically, they are reading literature as opposed to being assigned stories to read from a commercial reading program. Teachers model, assist and guide students to make choices about what to read. The principles of response and community are interrelated as readers interact socially about what they are learning as readers and about their books. Finally, structure is

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critical. Readers learn to rely on the structure of the workshop so they have the time needed to read as well as learn about reading from the daily reading minilessons.

      Components of reading workshop. The minilesson is embedded in the structure of reading workshop. The structure of the workshop approach to literacy instruction is shown in Figure 2. The reading workshop and writing workshops are twin approaches. Typically, both reading and writing workshops are about 60 minutes in length, depending on grade level and school district. The minilesson is about 10-15 minutes long; practice, or the activity time is the longest time block and is 30-45 minutes long; sharing is a central part of the workshop structure and lasts 10-15 minutes. They both have three critical components: the minilesson, practice time, and share time. The major means for giving instruction in writing workshop is the minilesson (Richgels, 2003). The routine of starting each writing workshop with whole group creates structure and unity to the workshop (Calkins, 1994). Reading workshop also begins with a minilesson when the children, gathered on the floor, get together in whole group and the teacher models to the students something about reading (Hagerty, 1992).
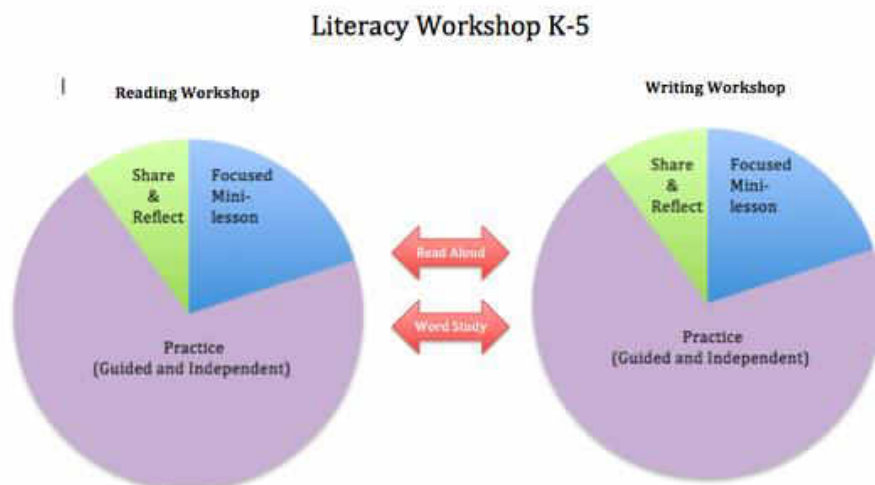
Figure 2. Literacy workshop K-5. Source: https://www.google.com/search?q=literacy+workshop+model&biw=1920&bih= 963&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved= 0CDgQ7AlqFQoTCKXt3MuzwsgCFYqXgAodYGQCpw#tbm=isch&q=Literacy+Workshop+K-5

The Minilesson

Instruction occurs throughout the workshop (Calkins, 2010), but the minilesson is used to introduce program content to the whole group. In her book *A Guide to Reading Content, Grades 3-5* (2010), Calkins mentions that she is often credited with "inventing the idea of minilessons, some twenty-five years ago—coining the phrase and developing the method" (p. 58). In this book, as in many of her publications, she describes the features and the "architecture" (2010, p. 48) or design of a minilesson. The four parts of a minilesson are connection, teaching, active involvement, and link (Calkins, 2010).

To clarify what a minilesson is like, the "teaching" part of a lesson taught by a teacher who works closely with Calkins is shared below (Calkins, 2010). The lesson is a fluency lesson—Thinking Within the Text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). It is a lesson for grades 3-5. Notice the teacher uses a segment of familiar literature to model choppy reading and then reading with meaning. She is not particularly emphasizing expression but rather models that "meaning is in word groups" (Calkins, 2010, p. 50). Note too, the teaching moves reflect explicit teaching moves. See Appendix A to read the entire lesson including the connection, which comes before the teaching part. An entire writing minilesson is also supplied in Appendix A.

"Readers, when we're really into a story, we don't read a word at a time. We don't pause after each word. If we pause at all, we do so after reading a whole group of words that makes sense. I'm going to show you how."

"Here are two sentences from page 50 of *Fantastic Mr. Fox.*"
Mr. Fox grinned slyly, showing sharp white teeth. 'If I am not mistaken, my dear Badger,' he said, 'we are now underneath the farm which belongs to that nasty little potbellied dwarf, Bunce.'

"Let me tell you, first, how not to read these sentences."

Mr. Fox. . . grinned. . . slyly,. . . showing. . . sharp. . .white. . . teeth. 'If I am. . .
not. . . mistaken, my. . . dear. . . Badger,' he said, 'we. . . are now. . . underneath. .
. the farm. . .'

"Readers, could you see how the way I just read that made it feel like I was eating
one or two Cheerios at a time? Wasn't it frustrating? Didn't you feel like saying, 'I need
to hear not just *one* word, *one* word, *one* word but one *mouthful* of words, another
mouthful of words if I'm going to understand!' This is because reading is like talking. We
don't pause after every word we utter. We only pause after we've said a *group* of words
that makes sense."

"Let me read the two sentences again, and this time watch out for the pauses.
Note that I don't pause after every word, I only pause after a group of words that makes
sense."

Mr. Fox grinned slyly. . . showing sharp white teeth. . . If I am not mistaken. . .
my dear Badger. . . he said,. . . we are now underneath the farm. . . which belongs
to that nasty little potbellied dwarf,. . . Bunce.

"Did you see how I waited for a complete thought before I paused? I still paused
often because it was a pretty long sentence. In some shorter sentences, I wouldn't pause
at all. But in any case, I wait for a group of words to make sense before pausing so that I
can reach across the group of words to grab meaning. It's almost like each word group is
a complete thought. You see how meaning is in word groups, not in individual words?"
(Calkins, 2010, p. 49-50)

To show what a reading minilesson looks and sounds like in action, provided here is an

Internet link for another reading workshop minilesson by Rick Kleine. Rick Kleine is a fifth

grade teacher. In the video he is seen reading *The Wednesday Surprise* by Eve Bunting (1989).

"By reading a short story aloud, Rick Kleine models for his intermediate grade level students

how their initial theories of character traits can change over time"

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJjGKJawG8U, retrieved June 7, 2016). In this video

(about 7 minutes long), Rick Kleine uses a think aloud to model how he as a reader develops

"theories" about characters during reading. He makes connections to his own life, thinks aloud,

and then turns over the responsibility to the students. Using the teaching move turn and talk,

Rick Kleine provides time for guided practice. During the guided practice, Rick Kleine goes to the students and listens to their own theories and briefly reports back to the group what he heard.

Minilesson features. It is essential to understand that the term "minilesson" cannot be applied to just any short lesson. Rather, the minilesson is a particular kind of lesson with specific features and a design. The features of a minilesson are numerous, even though the lessons are only about 10 minutes in length. As Calkins (2010) pointed out, minilessons are brief because when they become long, they cut into students' time to read. Provided is an Internet link to a short video (under 2 minutes) in which Calkins "explains why the writing workshop puts an emphasis on minilessons and how to mine minilessons for the instructional value" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOeJIxGwpY8, retrieved June 7, 2016). While the video is about writing, the information parallels how to mine reading minilessons for their instructional value.

A minilesson covers one thing, one topic. One reason why a minilesson can end up as just another reading lesson is because teachers might try to cover multiple topics during one lesson rather than teaching about one topic. Another important feature is usefulness (Hagerty, 1992). Minilessons need to have an authentic reason to be taught and the topic must help students to become skilled readers (Hagerty, 1992). A common feature of minilessons is that the teacher draws on her own experiences as a reader to bridge the authenticity of the topic from her to the students. A distinct feature of minilessons is they are not a time to engage in a cumbersome exchange of questions and answers between teacher and students (Barrentine, Quistgard, Ullyott, & Wierson, 1995). Rather, minilessons frequently look like little speeches, similar to short lectures. But, they are completely unlike the lectures that were once a part of education (Calkins, 1994) because they are short, focused, and explicit in content. Some minilessons, after teaching

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occurs, will include brief guided practice. They often incorporate segments of familiar literature and anchor charts which act as reference information for students when they apply the lesson content independently. Ideally, the topics for the lessons come from the needs of the learners (Hindley, 1996). Though the reality is, the teacher will need to take into account the required curriculum from the state or district and the types of questions and language children will be required to know and apply to demonstrate their expertise on tests (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

Out of the three workshop components: the minilesson, practice time, and share time, the minilesson appears the closest to what correlates with traditional teaching (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Although this may be true, Calkins (1994) noted, the minilesson is the teacher's opportunity to form a suggestion to the whole class, bring up a concern, investigate a concern, show a technique, or strengthen a strategy. It is agreed by Dixon-Krauss (1996), a class minilesson is a structural design developed to enhance teacher support for the whole class.

Parts of a minilesson. Calkins (2010) provides in depth descriptions of the parts of a minilesson and information about what occurs within each part. The four parts are: the connection, teaching, active involvement, and link.

According to Calkins (2003b), minilessons start with a connection. A connection is the "listen up" part of a minilesson, and it usually is completed in about one minute (Calkins, 2003b, p. 46). In the connection phase, the teacher places "today's minilesson into the context of the class's ongoing work" (Calkins, 2003b, p. 46). Calkins (2003b) explains:

> Often the connection begins with a sentence or two in which we recapitulate yesterday's work, followed by a precise example that illustrates the generality. "Yesterday we worked on . . . You remember how Mario. . ." We end the connection by telling children what we will teach them today that we hope they will carry with them not just today but into the future. (p. 46)

A subpart of the connection part is called the teaching point. According to Calkins (2010), in this subpart of the minilesson a teacher "crystalizes what it is we hope to teach in that day's minilesson" (p. 51). A successful teaching point communicates "what readers often try to do— the goal and ways we often go about doing it—the procedure" (Calkins, 2010, p. 52). Calkins (2010) models the teaching point.

> Today I want to teach you that every nonfiction reader reads with energy, with power. One way that nonfiction readers do that is we rev our minds up for reading. Even before we shift into 'go' and read a sentence or a paragraph, we read the title, subtitles, we look over chunks of the text, and we think, 'I think this book is mostly about. . .' or 'And then it will also tell. . .' (p. 51)

In this example on the topic of using text features in nonfiction to prepare to read and preview text, we hear the teacher helping the students know what they need to get ready to learn.

Next is the "teaching" part of the minilesson. According to Calkins (2010), the teaching part is when the teacher verifies the subject matter and the text being used. After a teacher has determined the subject matter, the text or other things she will use, then she chooses her method: "demonstration, guided practice, explicitly telling and showing an example, or inquiry" (Calkins, 2010, p. 53). Any one of these methods can be used in a minilesson to teach students, but Calkins (2010) points out what to consider.

> Kids will learn more if I don't try to demonstrate the entire process of reading the book or of thinking about a character, but instead home in on the specific kind of thinking I'm trying to teach today. Kids will learn more if they see themselves doing what I'm trying to do. Kids will learn more if we are explicit with them about what we hope they notice and what they'll be asked to do with what they notice. (p. 54-55)

The next part of the minilesson is active involvement. In this part students become actively engaged in the lesson and practice what was taught (Calkins, 2003b). The students usually turn and talk and the teacher scaffolds their learning (Calkins, 2003b). According to Miller (2002), when students are engaged in guided practice they are "invited to practice a

strategy during whole-class discussions, asked to apply it in collaboration with their peers in pairs and in small groups, and supported by honest feedback that honors both the child and the task" (p. 11). According to Calkins (2010), "this is the time when you say to your kids 'Now you try it,' and you provide them with just a little bit of guided practice" (p. 55). There are several things to know when implementing the active involvement component of a minilesson (Calkins, 2010).

> Set children up for a quick success, find ways to scaffold the work, tuck in more teaching points to differentiate your teaching, give every child a chance to be actively involved, not just listening, and extrapolate for children what you hope they can learn that will be applicable to their reading from now on. (p. 56-57)

The final part of the minilesson is called the link. According to Calkins (2003b), "We link the minilesson to the ongoing work of today's workshop, for example, 'How many of you will do this today?' we might ask" (p. 46). The minilesson finishes with the teacher repeating what she "hopes children have learned, doing so in a way that is transferable to another day and another text" (Calkins, 2010, p. 57).

Minilesson types and content. Those who write about minilessons and workshops (e.g., Atwell, 1998; Anderson, 2005; Barrentine, et al., 1995; Calkins, 2010; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Hagerty, 1992; Hindley, 2006; Miller, 2002; Serafini, 2001) organize minilessons into types and associate topics with the types of minilessons. Types of minilessons vary somewhat from author to author and teacher to teacher, though there are many similarities. Atwell (1998), one of the early users of the workshop format in her middle school classrooms, says the following about types of minilessons.

> Some are procedural: the rules and routines of the workshop. Some relate to issues of literary craft: what authors consider when they create literature. Some address conventions of written language: the compacts or agreements between writers and readers that students need to know, the rules literate people follow so our writing will be taken

seriously by others and understood as we intend it to be. Some minilessons focus on the strategies of good readers, of people who know how to choose, engage with, understand, and appreciate literature. (p. 153-154)

For types of minilessons, others also name procedural, literary, language conventions, and reading strategies. Classroom teacher Joanne Hindley (1996) for example, names the following types of minilessons taught in her elementary classroom: management, literary elements, and skills and strategies. Akin to the procedural minilessons noted by Atwell (1998), Hindley (1996) lists management lesson topics to include how to choose books, sign out a book, organize a reading log, find a place to read during the workshop, use peers as a resource when the teacher is engaged, and keep noise in-check.

Hindley (1996), Hagerty (1992) and Barrentine et al. (1995) list several topics in common for literary minilessons: setting, character, conflict, resolution, themes, endings, language, flashbacks, and characteristics of various genres. The list of topics for literary minilessons is long but generally focused on enhancing meaning development by focusing on literary content (Barrentine et al., 1995). This list includes characteristics of formula fiction (such as romance or horror), characteristics of biography, evaluating characters' behaviors, types of conflict in stories (e.g., person against person or person against nature), patterns of action (conflict and resolution), recognizing implicit themes (what is the story *really* about), how setting is integral with conflict and resolution in survival novels, identifying point of view (i.e., who is telling the story), recognizing figurative language, how humor is woven into the story, titles and what they mean, how illustrations add meaning to the story, and how an author "grabs" our attention" (Barrentine et al., 1995, p. 4-5).

Skill and strategy minilessons can be distinguished from each other by considering the difference between tasks. According to Almasi and Fullerton (2012) skills are "automated

processes that are enacted without the reader's conscious awareness" (p. 1). Fluid, automatic decoding is a skill—though there are times when all proficient readers need to apply decoding strategies. Also, when learning to decode, initially students must be strategic. Learning to decode and comprehend are simultaneously and interrelated processes (Cazden, 1982). Thus, from the beginning, readers must learn to be strategic (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008; Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). Being strategic means to deliberately control a process (See Afflerbach et al., 2008, p. 371).

Strategy minilesson content has been identified by numerous literacy researchers and educators, as noted in the first section of this literature review. Recall, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) name 12 processing behaviors and organize them under the umbrellas of Thinking Within the Text, Thinking Beyond the Text, and Thinking About the Text. Keene and Zimmerman (2007) named metacognitive strategies such as monitoring for meaning, using and creating schema, asking questions (or self-questioning), determining importance, inferring, using sensory and emotional images, and synthesizing. Harvey and Goudvis (2007) named monitoring comprehension, activating and connecting background knowledge, self-questioning, visualizing and inferring, determining importance, summarizing and synthesizing information.

To explore reading skills as a type of minilesson content, Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burkey, Lenhart, and McKeon (2003) say a skill is "cognitive and language abilities, which are necessary for reading comprehension" (p. 614). A skill is an automatic process (Afflerbach et al., 2008). Furthermore, "reading skills are motivated by goals of fluency, effortlessness, and accuracy; they give rise to pride in ability; not effort" (Afflerbach et al., 2008, p. 370). Hagerty (1992) explained that "a skill is more focused—for example, how to use blends to figure out unknown words" (p. 13). Fountas and Pinnell (2001) provided several skill-based minilessons:

"recognizing and using base words, recognizing and using prefixes, recognizing contractions, recognizing compound words, recognizing plurals…" (p. 132).

Of course, there are other minilesson types and topics that make their way into reading workshop. For example, Barrentine et al. (1995) single out "attitudes" as a type of minilesson (p. 7). They note topics such as persistence in comprehending text, practicing reading, choosing to read, and valuing reading as attitude lessons that can highlight the intrinsic rewards of reading. Also, at their best, minilesson topics are personalized by teachers. For example, Rick Kleine's minilesson (above) was a literary minilesson about following characters' actions, but the topic was personalized as "having personal theories about stories." Similarly, Hindley (2006) presents a "literary gossip" minilesson on authors doing research to present factual information in fictional text (Hindley, 2006).

Instructional Moves Within Minilessons

This study pertains to how teachers present information so their readers have the knowledge, skills and strategies they need to become capable readers. In particular, this study questions how teachers use the minilesson to teach comprehension. Reading strategy instruction is the current approach to teaching readers how to comprehend. Reading strategies are defined as metacognitive processes (Afflerbach et al., 2008; Almasi & Fullerton, 2012) which means teachers are charged with delivering instruction that teaches readers to use thinking behaviors to help them problem solve while reading and processing written text (Afflerbach et al., 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Moreover, the goal is for readers to use strategies independently. Afflerbach et al. (2008) state, "A crucial part of reading development is the shifting control for using strategies—first in response to others and later as self-initiated strategies" (p. 369).

What educators have come to understand about instruction is when a metacognitive task needs to be learned, e.g., a reading strategy, a particular type of instruction is needed—explicit teaching: explaining, modeling and practicing reading strategies (Afflerbach et al., 2008). In their work to define strategic thinking in reading, Afflerbach et al. (2008) concluded the following about strategy instruction:

> Teachers need to explain how to think to their students; that is, we need to model, describe, explain and scaffold, appropriate reading strategies for children. For example, teachers can search for a main idea in a text and use thinking aloud to demonstrate their reasoning for each sentence and idea. They can describe the differences between a topic sentence and a main idea, differences between an explicit and implicit main idea, and differences between a main idea and supporting details in their discussion. (p. 370)

Minilessons, which are designed as a type of lesson that shows and tells, seem particularly well suited to delivering explicit metacognitive literacy content. This is supported by the work of Kelcey and Carlisle (2013) who set out to improve what we can learn from observing teachers' literacy instruction. Part of their research process involved selecting and naming what to observe. As a result, they identified three theoretical dimensions that are "thought to contribute to effective instruction" (Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013, p. 304) in literacy learning. They are organization, delivering content, and supporting student learning (Figure 3).

Organization of the lesson pertains to structuring a lesson so students understand what they are being asked to learn and why. The teaching moves they associate with lesson organization are explaining the lesson's purpose and relevance, giving directions, and summarizing or wrapping up. These are associated with the beginning component of a minilesson in which the expectation is for the teacher to state the topic of the lesson, define terminology, and explain why the lesson will be useful to the reader. Vanairsdale and Canedo (2011), echo this idea stating that instruction should look and sound like teachers are providing

Instructional Actions in the Three Dimensions in the Automated Classroom Observation System for Reading

Theoretical dimension	Instructional action
Organizing (i.e., providing pedagogical structure)	• Explaining the purpose of the lesson • Explaining the value/relevance of the lesson • Giving directions for an activity • Providing a wrap-up or summary of what has been accomplished
Delivering literacy content (i.e., directing knowledge and skill acquisition)	• Telling • Modeling • Asking questions to check or mediate student learning • Providing practice or review activities
Supporting student learning (i.e., fostering their engagement and self-understanding)	• Fostering discussion • Assessing students' work; providing feedback • Giving students an opportunity to ask questions

Figure 3. Dimensions of classroom instruction. Instructional actions showing teaching moves that can be used to describe minilessons. (Extracted from Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013, p. 304)

readers with purposes for using the strategies, being clear about why readers should apply the strategies, and explaining why students must understand and recognize them as second nature.

The delivering literacy content dimension pertains to the teaching moves selected to ensure learning. Kelcey and Carlisle (2013) associate several metacognitive, explicit types of teaching moves with lesson delivery: telling, modeling, asking questions to check learning, and providing practice. Again, matching the design of the minilesson, the teaching moves used after establishing the lesson purpose are teacher modeling, explaining, thinking aloud, showing and describing how readers use a reading strategy (or other content). The metacognitive strategy, through these teaching moves and use of props such as books, make visible to the students what it is good readers know and are able to do. According to Miller (2002), "Teacher modeling includes explaining the strategy, demonstrating when and why [the strategy] is most effective, and thinking aloud about what's going on inside our heads as we read allows us to make the invisible visible and the implicit explicit" (p. 10). Fountas and Pinnell (2006) say that teachers who communicate their own concepts and thoughts about what readers do show and explain the types of thinking that readers execute.

The third dimension, supporting student learning, pertains to interacting with the students: holding discussion, providing feedback on student performance, and allowing students to ask questions (Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013). Minilessons are designed to engage students in guided practice of the lesson content. Within the parameters of Phase 2 (We do) of the GRR model (Fisher & Frey, 2008a), during the lesson, teachers handover some of the responsibility for completing the task to learners. Thus, when modeling the "underground" behaviors of effective readers, teachers use many teaching moves. They "model or demonstrate each strategy, provide ample guided practice and teacher feedback, and gradually diminish teacher-directed activities to foster independent student work" (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012, p. 27-28).

Explicit Language in Minilessons

Language that clearly supports teaching and learning the minilesson content is elaborated on and modeled in Fountas and Pinnell's (2006) writing about minilessons. They say, "*Precise and explicit language will help students understand minilesson principles*" (italics in original), (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 354). They encourage teachers to use consistent language when referring to a strategy or other literacy content so that readers will remember and internalize the language of the lessons. To model this for the users of their books, they provide sample explicit language that clearly states the teaching point of the minilesson. Some examples from their modeling of explicit content about literary elements are excerpted here (Figure 4).

Almasi and Fullerton (2012) who view themselves as dialectical constructivists, also consider the importance that teachers' language be clear in stating lesson content. Almasi and Fullerton (2012) say the following:

> Such explanations must go beyond "mentioning" and focus on which strategy is being used, what specific knowledge is associated with the strategy, why it is being used in a given situation, why it is helpful in that situation, and how to perform the strategy. (p. 45)

Literary Element	Explicit language to convey the teaching point
Characters	Readers notice who are the most important characters (main characters) in the story. Readers think about what characters say and what their words tell you about them. Readers think about what characters do and what their actions tell you about them. Readers notice that some characters change in a story and some do not.
Plot	Readers think about the problem in the story. Readers think about the important events in a story. Readers think about the order of events in a story. Readers predict how a story will end.
Language	Readers notice how writers use words carefully to communicate meaning. Readers notice memorable phrases and sentences writers use to communicate meaning. Readers think about the language writers use to make comparisons that help them understands the meaning and enjoy reading.

Figure 4. Explicit language for minilesson instruction. Excerpt of a figure about explicit language for minilesson instruction. (Extracted from Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 357-58)

Their goal with such thought out language is that when clear explanation accompanies

demonstration, readers will be able to visualize the cognitive processing called for during

reading.

Gradual Release of Responsibility and Explicit Minilesson Instruction

The four phases of the GRR model (Figure 5) present an instructional model that begins

with placing the responsibility on the teacher to perform the reading task. This is the "I do it"

Phase and is the key focus of this study. According to Clark (2014), during the minilesson "I do

it" Phase the teacher "provides direct instruction, models, demonstrates, and provides rationale

for lesson whereas the learner is an active listener" (p. 29). The "I do it" Phase within a

minilesson carries and introduces the reading program content and as established earlier, for

metacognitive content such as comprehension strategies, the teacher ideally uses explicit

instruction moves. But, basically, the entire cognitive load for task performance rests with the

teacher. In the case of a reading comprehension strategy, a covert reading behavior used by an expert reader is made overt (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012).

In essence, Phase 1 of the GRR model is the first rung of the scaffolded instruction. Though the students do not perform the task, the explanatory modeling performed by the teacher is the foundation on which students climb towards independent ability to perform the task. Thus, the student role in Phase 1 is not to be overlooked. The student is engaged by listening, following along if the teacher is reading, observing the teacher, and being attentive. Neo-Vygotskians, Tharp and Gallimore (1988) point out that as learners, students are not sponges, blank slates or "passive recipients" (p. 36). Rather, they engage metacognitively with
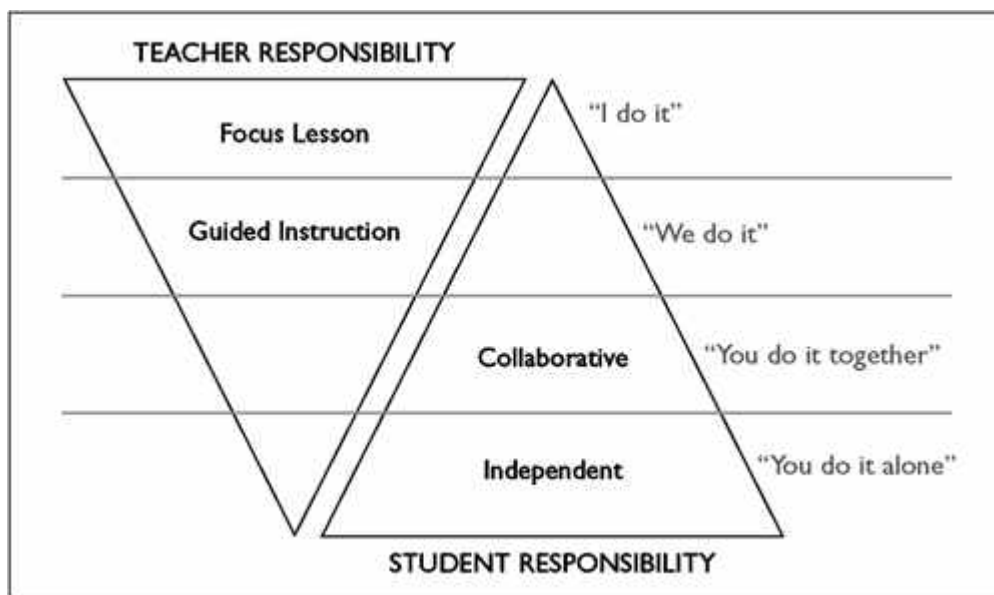
Figure 5. Fisher and Frey's (2008) Gradual Release of Responsibility model. Source:
https://www.google.com/search?q=Fisher+and+Frey's+Gradual+Release+of+Responsibility+Mo
del&biw=1821&bih

the task being observed in the social learning setting, and they begin to transform the information to their own backgrounds and experiences. Because of this, it is especially critical that the teacher's performance of the task be understandable and meaningful to the learners.

Essentially, in Phase 1, the teacher is not only interacting within the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD) but it seems that the teacher is awakening developmental potential (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 35). As Tharp and Gallimore (1988) say, ". . . a ZPD can be created" (p. 31). This suggests that laying out a clear introduction to the lesson topic and purpose must be very thoughtfully done because it may be creating the learner's ZPD for that particular reading content.

Also of interest in this study is Phase 2 of the GRR model since minilessons often include a limited amount of guided practice or instruction, the "We do it" Phase (Figure 5). Guided instruction can and should occur at other times during the learning process and not only during the minilesson (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). But to the extent that it occurs in minilessons, it is of interest since part of the reading program content is delivered during the guided practice component of the minilesson. The construct of scaffolding plays a large role here. According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), scaffolding equates with the amount, type and duration of assistance provided to learn a task. Guidance (or assistance) offered by the teacher so students can perform the task, e.g., using a reading strategy, can vary. As they state, "The various means of assisting performance are indeed qualitatively different" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988. p. 34). Keene and Zimmerman (2007) note that early guided practice calls for students "to experiment with the strategy in their own work, in groups of four or two, and/or individually" (p. 77). Similarly, Miller (2002) says, "Here, children are invited to practice a strategy during whole-class discussions, asked to apply it in collaboration with their peers in pairs and small groups, and supported by honest feedback that honors both the child and the task" (p. 10-11). Tharp and Gallimore (1988) point out that since the learners do not yet know how to organize the task for use, the expert collaborates with the learner to arrive at a satisfactory end. Interestingly, they

state, "Scaffolding, however, does not involve simplifying the task; it holds the task difficulty constant, while simplifying the child's role by means of graduated assistance from the adult/expert" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 33). Almasi and Fullerton (2012) remind us that without the assistance, the learners could not perform the task and that the assistance provided reduces the cognitive load (text processing demands) on the learner (p. 48-49).

In summary, helping students move through their ZPD towards internalization of a task such as a covert reading strategy, may require creating a ZPD for the task through defining the task and establishing the purpose, effective initial scaffolding through explicit performance of the task by the teacher, and providing guided practice that reduces the cognitive load for the learners but retains the work and expectations of the actual task.

The collaborative and independent phases of the GRR model occur during other segments of the reading workshop, though all phases could be observed and are at work during all parts of the workshop. Further, it is important to consider the GRR model can be used on a meta-level, that is, as a planning tool not only for lessons, but for units of study. Keene and Zimmerman (2007) state, "This model can be applied to studies lasting from three to nine weeks and is most efficiently used when teachers are focused on one strategy at a time, cumulatively adding strategies that have been taught before" (p. 75).

Teachers and Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction is not without its challenges, even when the lessons are only 10 minutes in length. As Afflerbach et al. (2008) points out, teachers may not feel comfortable or be good at making their "thinking public" (p. 370). Almasi and Fullerton (2012) found that when teaching teachers how to teach explicitly, there were obvious amounts of resistance as well as confusion about reading content and how to teach explicitly.

One teacher they worked with viewed himself as an implicit learner and explicit instruction felt controlling. Almasi and Fullerton (2012) noted, "Explicit teaching bothered this teacher. He thought of it as stifling and narrow" (p. 279). Similar to what Afflerbach et al. (2008) observed, Almasi and Fullerton (2012) said, ". . . teachers . . . initially had difficulty modeling their own cognitive processes for students via think-alouds and demonstrations, and they had difficulty understanding how to provide appropriate guided practice (p. 279). Moreover, Almasi and Fullerton (2012) found, "Often teachers did not include modeling or thinking aloud in their lessons at all. Sometimes they merely engaged the student in an activity and did not provide any strategic instruction" (p. 279). When instructing teachers how to teach strategic content explicitly, Almasi and Fullerton (2012) found, "Although they tried to incorporate the basic elements of strategy instruction into their lessons, some still designed instruction that focused on narrow skills" such as "presenting the student with index cards that had the prefixes *un-*, *re-*, *in-*, and *dis-* printed on them, along with their meanings" (p. 287). Reflecting on learning to teach strategies explicitly, one teacher said this:

> At first I was very confused about what strategies were. How was this different from what I was already doing in the classroom? I honestly thought at first that strategy instruction was just a different way of doing the same activities." (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012, p. 287)

By contrast, other teachers saw the benefits of explicit instruction. One teacher reflected, "I have become increasingly aware of the importance to start off [my lessons] using concrete examples so that the student is able to link to the more abstract ideas or concepts I am trying to teach" (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012, p. 283). Another teacher came to view strategy instruction as tools readers use to solve reading problems. She wrote, "I need to make sure I help equip my

students with the 'know-how' of what to do when reading breaks down" (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012, p. 288).

According to Calkins (2010), teaching the minilessons is the "most intense instructional time of our day" (p. 47). Calkins (2010) pointed out the main problem is not learning the "content of the minilessons but rather the methods and while the content of minilessons change from day to day, the architecture, or design of a minilesson, remains largely the same" (p. 48). Furthermore, students need explicit instruction in the "skills, strategies, and habits of proficient readers" and this explicit instruction begins with a minilesson (Calkins, 2010, p. 47).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study is designed to reveal more about teachers' explicit instruction of reading content, ideally as it relates to comprehension and when they use minilessons as a tool for teaching. The intent is for the research to lead to a deeper understanding of how teachers see their own instruction. Another purpose is to understand more about what content is being taught when using minilessons and to reveal what those lessons look and sound like.

In this chapter, I restate the research questions and then discuss the background of my case study. I describe the overall design of the study and then discuss each aspect of the design to include site selection, participants, data collection, and data analysis. Additionally, I address considerations of validity of the data, data analysis, and findings. I conclude this chapter with background information about the four participants and background information on the curriculum used at the research site. The background information given will provide knowledge on the curricula that informed participant instruction.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions:

- How do teachers perceive their minilesson instruction?
- What is the content being taught?
- How do teachers teach the minilesson content?

Case Study Approach

A qualitative case study approach is compatible with the philosophical underpinnings of this study. The study leans on constructivism because at its heart, learning occurs when persons are interacting with things and individuals in the environment and constructing meaning from them (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Constructivism is the learning theory and theoretical framework that most directly connects to what we presently know about how individuals learn and how people interact with other people, objects, and concepts to build their understanding of what is taking place around them (Koch, 2014). From the constructivist viewpoint, the teacher's role during reading instruction is to develop students' background knowledge and teach strategies for using "text cues and drawing inferences" (Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p. 18). According to Vacca et al. (2003), when constructivism is applied to understand teaching reading, "it holds that teachers engage [students] in a process of seeking and making meaning from personal, practical, and professional experiences" (p. 10).

Qualitative research "recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning but doesn't reject outright some notion of the objective" (Miller & Crabtree, 1999, p. 10, as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). With the qualitative approach, I was able to hear and observe participants' stories about teaching and reveal their realities through viewing video recorded observations of their teaching.

My research questions lend themselves to a qualitative, instrumental case study approach. In qualitative inquiry, case study research refers to "an intense study of an individual, institution, organization, or some bounded group, place or process over time" (Glesne, 2011, p. 279). A case study is an effective approach for this study because it allows me to describe "what is" and employs methods compatible with probing teachers' perceptions of their own instruction.

The primary consideration in establishing boundaries for this qualitative case was to assure the ability to answer my research questions. This involved considering what the study would and would not address. Since I could not realistically answer questions about broad aspects of reading instruction, I used the advice of Baxter and Jack (2008) to contain the study by considering the following: defining the phenomenon or activity to be studied, determining a location and context where the activity could be observed, and narrowing the time frame to a reasonable scope. Thus, the topic of the study was narrowed to understanding more about explicit reading instruction by elementary teachers in one school in the region and who were experienced in teaching with reading minilessons. Reputational information would be used to support the location of a site and teachers for the case study. The amount of time devoted to the study, three months, was fixed due to various circumstances. Regarding establishing the boundary of time, on one hand, I wanted to have data that showed a range of minilessons by each teacher so that teachers' realities were captured. On the other hand, special circumstances of the participants (e.g., maternity leave and student teacher obligations) helped determine the case study would take place over a period of three months. Context was also a factor in binding the case. By choosing experienced teachers who had been at the same school for a period of time, they all had similar background experiences teaching reading.

As the case boundaries came into focus, the type of case study emerged. Because I wanted to know more about a specific issue or phenomenon, explicit whole group minilesson instruction on the topic of reading comprehension, the case aligned with an instrumental case study. An instrumental case study serves the goal of clarifying an individual issue (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 2005). Regarding the instrumental approach to case study research, Baxter and Jack

(2008) draw from the work of Stake. Stake, as cited in Baxter and Jack (2008) says the instrumental case study approach does the following:

> It provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The case is often looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, and because it helps the researcher pursue the external interest. The case may or may not be seen as typical of other cases (Stake, 1995). (as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 549)

The topic is the central factor in this study. The goal is to provide a look at what comprehension minilessons look and sound like in the classroom setting. This will help educators understand more about how teachers deliver reading content to students during reading instruction.

Another aspect of this study is that it is a single case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Four participants contributed data to the case, but the goal was to understand what explicit minilesson instruction looked like as a whole, not by individual teachers. The point of having multiple participants was to look for patterns within explicit instruction (the global issue) and not to compare or contrast how individuals taught reading minilessons.

The theoretical framework is also a factor in the background of this study. As Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest, the theoretical framework can serve "as an anchor for the study and is referred to at the stage of data interpretation" (p. 553). In this study, the Gradual Release of Responsibility model of instruction (Fisher, 2008) frames teachers' instruction and drives much of the data analysis and interpretation of findings.

Design of the Study

As a tool for communicating about the methods and procedures of this study, I provide Figure 6 which draws on the work of Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (2014) who recommend that qualitative researchers develop a flexible but overall plan for their research projects. Figure 6 is a design of this case study, and it is used to structure the rest of the methods chapter.

Site Selection
1 elementary school, 4 teachers who use reading minilessons as part of their instruction

Participant Selection
4 elementary teachers who use explicit instruction to provide instruction of reading content and process, ideally, minilessons

Data Collection
- 2 interviews with each teacher
- 9 video recorded observations of each teacher
- Observational notes of video recordings
- Documents on reading programs in use

Data Analysis
- Interview transcription
- Coding
- Data categorization
- Theme development

Attention to Validity
- Reputational participant selection
- Member checking
- Triangulation
- Audit trail

Figure 6. Design of this study.

Permission to Conduct the Research

This study was conducted in compliance with the Human Subjects approval process at

the University of North Dakota. Here I highlight some of the most critical aspects of compliance:

- I proceeded with the study only after teachers signed informed consent letters (See Appendix B for Consent Form);
- I protected anonymity by giving pseudonyms to the site and all participants, both teachers and students;
- I am the only one with access to the data. Printed materials, except for participant consent forms, are stored in a secured box.
- All digital audio files will be destroyed three years after the completion date; written documents will be shredded after five years, however, transcripts will be kept indefinitely in a secure location.

Site Selection and Access

Access was gained to one site for this study. The research was conducted in a regional elementary school and met the following two selection criteria:

1. Explicit instruction is a routine part of reading instruction and is used to deliver reading content; and
2. Access to teachers who routinely implement explicit instruction of reading content.

To locate a site, I talked to several professors about schools and teachers who might fulfill these criteria. After obtaining several suggestions, I reviewed the websites for several regional school districts and the teachers. At one site, the description of the school's reading program appeared well suited to my study. This was confirmed when I made general inquiries about the school. For example, my advisor knew of the school, the principal and many teachers and confirmed it would be a good potential site for my research.

Access to the site was a multi-step process. I reviewed the webpages for Pioneer Elementary School (pseudonym) and read about the school's demographics. I noticed there were usually six classrooms for each grade level. I read about their curriculum and names of familiar researchers were mentioned as literacy resources used for teaching reading and writing: Fountas and Pinnell, Calkins, Collins, and Miller. My advisor knew several of the teachers at this school and suggested they had educational backgrounds for engaging in the type of teaching needed for my study. The principal was contacted to ascertain his willingness to consider the idea of me conducting my research at this school site. He agreed to allow me to contact him again which I did by email (See Appendix C for Principal Contact Letter). He supplied a letter of agreement.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

Reputational identification was used to develop a possible pool of participants for the study. According to Roulston (2012), "Reputational case sampling is where teachers are selected

on the basis of recommendations from experts in a field" (p. 82). My advisor knew several of the teachers at Pioneer and recommended several for possible participation. She considered them to be known for using the type of teaching methods I planned to study. Also, the principal was asked about various teachers, what was known about their use of reading minilesson instruction, and likelihood of willingness to participate.

Another factor in participant selection and identification was grade level. Initially, my preference was for second and third grade teachers to participant in the study. This rationale was because I am licensed for birth through third grade and felt I was best equipped to study teachers at the primary level. But, I was open to fourth grade teachers as participants in this research study as well. A key part of this study was addressing reading comprehension instruction. First grade literacy curriculum is less focused on explicit reading comprehension than other grades and thus, first grade teachers were not viewed as ideal for this study.

To select participants for the study from Pioneer, I emailed four teachers to ascertain willingness to participate. Those I contacted were recommended by my advisor and the school principal. Each teacher was contacted with a separate email. In the email I introduced myself, shared that I had obtained support from their principal to contact them, stated information about the study, and said I would follow up with a phone call at their school with a goal to make an appointment to share more about my study (See Appendix D for the Teacher Contact Letter).

The following day, two teachers agreed to meet with me and learn more about the research. After several delays, another one of the teachers contacted me and agreed to meet. Upon not hearing from the other teacher, I emailed her to bring closure to the contact. I contacted a fifth teacher. I sent her the initial email letter introducing myself and the study. The following day I called her, and we set up a time to meet. From December 16, 2015 to January 5, 2016, a

total of four participants volunteered to meet, learn more about my study, and if consent was given, I would conduct the first interview.

To summarize, five teachers were contacted about participating in the study, and four volunteered to participate: Ms. Smith (second grade), Ms. Thompson (third grade), Ms. Taylor (third grade), and Ms. Fisher (fourth grade). The rationale for four participants was these numbers of participants were expected to yield enough data to answer my research questions for this case study.

In this study, all participants were white and female. Participating teachers varied, however, in educational history, length of teaching experience, years taught at Pioneer, grade levels, and post-secondary background (Table 2). Ms. Taylor had the most teaching experience with 25 years and Ms. Smith had six years of teaching experience which is the lowest number. As noted in Table 2, overall teaching experience ranged from 6-25 years. All participants either have or are working on their master's degree in reading education. Participation is confidential and pseudonyms were used to strengthen confidentiality. In order to protect the identity of the participants, the title Ms. was used in all pseudonyms. The link between participants' names and pseudonyms was not disclosed to the committee members. More information about the participants is presented at the end of this chapter, Background of the Participants.

Table 2. Information About Participants.

Participant	Overall Teaching Experience (years)	Grade Level Teaching	Years at Site	Level of Postsecondary Education
Ms. Smith	6	2	6	Masters in Process
Ms. Thompson	8	3	8	Masters
Ms. Taylor	25	3	16	Masters
Ms. Fisher	19	4	17	Masters

Students

The demographics of the K-5 students reflect that of their teachers. The students are appropriately described as white and working class, born in the region, with families rooted in the community. The racial makeup in the year 2014 at Pioneer Elementary School was "White 85.1%, Hispanic 6.8%, American Indian, 2.8% and the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch is 41.3%" (School Diggers, 2015, p. 1).

Although this study is about teachers and their instruction, students have a limited role as participants. They were present in the classroom while data were collected, though I did not interact with them or collect their work. Of note, parent permission letters about the study were sent home with teachers' assistance (See Appendix E for Parent Letter).

<div align="center">

Data Collection

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Data collected for this study came from three principal sources:

- Video recordings of participants' reading minilessons
- Interviews with teacher participants including the construction of a pie chart using a drawing tool
- Documents such as materials from the curriculum.

The duration of the data collection for this study was from December 2015 to March 2016 but participants were asked to be available for follow up questions until August 2016. There was a

concentrated time for teachers' participation which lasted for about 4-7 weeks. In this section, I describe the procedures for collecting this data.

Interviews

For this case study, one-on-one interviews using open-ended questioning were conducted with the four participating teachers. The interview protocols that I used with each participant appear in Appendix F. I met with each participant individually in her classroom and when it was most convenient for her. During each 45-60 minute interview, I wrote notes directly on the interview protocol but the primary data collection process was digitally recording the interviews. I administered two rounds of semi-structured interviews with all four of the participating elementary teachers: Interview 1 and Interview 2.

I set apart the two interviews from each other in time so that I would have a chance to evaluate the transcripts. In this case, using open ended questions, participants could express their experiences unimpeded by any viewpoints of the researcher or previous research results (Creswell, 2012). According to Roulston (2012), "Although the interview guide provides the same starting point for each semi-structured interview given. . . each interview will vary according to what was said by individual interviewees, and how each interviewer used follow up questions to elicit further description" (p. 18). I observed that new questions evolved throughout the interviews as I probed a participant's answers to my research questions, after I started to examine the interviews, and after I examined new documents (Locke et al., 2014). As a researcher, I asked my interview questions with the "words 'how' or 'what' rather than 'why' so that I did not suggest probable cause and effect relationships as in quantitative research" (Creswell, 2012, p. 132).

Interview 1. Interview 1 was 45-60 minutes and took place before the video recorded observations began. Essentially, there were two parts to this interview: conveying logistics of the study and interviewing the participant about her professional background.

The first part of Interview 1 served several purposes. I used the time to get acquainted with my participants and obtain informed consent. Integral with this was explaining the study and the process of self-recording whole group reading lessons, collecting the recordings, and establishing a recording schedule. Information about how the study would proceed was explained. For example, they were told they would video record nine observations of themselves conducting reading instruction. The teachers decided what they wanted to record. The lesson segment they recorded was when they were conducting whole class lessons. They had the option to record these lessons within a 2-6 week time period. I explained I would not be present for the lessons or video recordings and why: I am a full-time classroom teacher and unable to be away from my work to record their teaching.

I explained that the camera needed to be focused on the teacher so that in the recording I would be able to see and hear the teacher teach and view teaching materials such as charts and books used. It was not necessary to capture the children in the recording, it is not important for me to see their faces or know their names. I mentioned, though, it would be of value to hear any interactions between the teacher and students during the lessons. I told the teachers that because children are in the research setting, parents need to be informed. We discussed options for how to inform parents. Ms. Thompson, Ms. Taylor, and Ms. Fisher all sent their Parent Letter home as a hardcopy. Ms. Smith sent her Parent Letter home through email.

After explaining this, I showed the participant the recording equipment and demonstrated how to use it. I explained I would collect the recordings of her lessons on Friday afternoons, in

person (this is explained in more detail below). Finally, we drafted a plan for a recording schedule.

The latter part of the allotted time was devoted to the interview. I used audio-recording for this part of the interview. I used my questions to clarify demographics: age, experience, background experience, and professional experience with reading. I asked questions pertaining to the reading workshop minilessons, the purpose of the minilessons, and their roles in implementing these minilessons. The challenge of this interview was to talk about content reading instruction without specifically telling the teachers my object of interest was the minilesson, as I did not want the teachers to change their teaching because they knew the precise focus of my study.

Interview 2. The second interview took place after all video recordings had been completed. The second interview called for participants to share their perceptions of their reading instruction, specifically, their minilessons. During this interview, each participant was asked to fill out a pie chart of the reading program and I also used this interview to clarify information from the first interview. It was 45-60 minutes in length and was audio-recorded. I referred to my interview protocol when needed (See Appendix F for Interview Protocol).

Observations: Equipment and Logistical Considerations

Video recording equipment. I was not physically present when the observational data were collected, that is, when the reading minilessons were video recorded. In large part, this is due to the fact that I am a fulltime classroom teacher. While initially this may appear to be a disadvantage to my study, there are advantages. First, teachers were not encumbered by the stress of having a researcher in their classrooms. Second, if for whatever reason the video recording could not happen on that day, teachers did not have the burden to contact me in time

not to come. Even though I would respect and enter the research site with the least amount of disruptions as possible (Creswell, 2012), not physically being in the classroom could benefit student performance during instruction because having an unfamiliar figure present would most definitely distract certain students. An advantage of having the observations recorded is this allowed me to watch the observations more than once.

Digital technology was used to capture the observations. I borrowed camera equipment from the technology support unit at the University of North Dakota. For the visual recording of lessons, I checked out camcorders with Blue Tooth microphones, tripods, battery packs, and chargers. Teachers did not have to share any equipment. Rather, for the duration of recording their lessons, the camera and tripod remained with each teacher. Three of the four participants used UND equipment. One participant preferred to use her IPad.

Video recording procedures. There were instrumentation and data tracking considerations related to recording the observations.

- Participants and I set a loose plan for when to record their lessons – for example, the teacher indicated what days or weeks would work for her to record her observations.

- I supplied each of the three participants with a tripod, camera, batteries, charger, and video recording memory chips for storing the recordings. One participant used her IPad.

- I showed them how to use the camera and record their lessons.

- Participants were given a direction sheet on how to use the camcorder.

- Throughout the study, I organized the memory chips for each participant.

  - I gave them pre-labeled envelopes for storing the memory chips used for their observations.
  - I coded each chip by participant and observation number, e.g., 1#3 stood for participant 1, recording number 3.
  - Altogether there were 9 chips per participant, one recording per chip.

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o Participants were instructed to use the corresponding chip for each video recording. This instruction was important because I did not want the memory chip to fill and stop recording during a lesson.

o One participant did not need envelopes or memory chips. Again, she used her IPad to record her lessons. She sent her recorded lessons to me by email.

- I picked up the storage chips in person at the end of each week.

Data pick up procedures. Every Friday, I went to the research site and dropped off envelopes containing memory chips to the participants for the following week and picked up the recordings they had just completed for the week. I chose to pick-up materials so I was physically present on the site at least once a week. I also contacted the participants during the week to see if they had questions and to remind them I would be at their school if they needed to see me in person. This consistency showed the participants that I was dependable, and they also had several ways to contact me weekly.

Finally, after the video recordings were completed, participants were instructed that I would pick up the equipment and remaining data storage chips from them.

It is important to mention that I routinely checked all data as soon as I collected it from the participants. For one thing, I wanted to make sure the data were being recorded. I wanted to confirm the camera equipment was recording visual and audio effectively and that the camera lens and microphone were facing the teachers so I could see and hear the teachers' lessons. I also wanted to make sure the lessons were of the type that was suited to my study.

Video Observations

According to Creswell (2012), the advantages of observation in general are comprised of "the opportunity to record the information as it occurs in a setting, to study actual behavior, and to study individuals who narrow your observations to specific aspects" (p. 215-216). Thus, observation is a data collection tool well suited to this study wherein the goal is to document, in

detail, what occurs during the teacher's instruction of reading content. In particular, I used video recorded observations to capture the teachers' minilessons because this is the type of lesson designated for teaching reading content and processes. This allowed me to focus in on teacher language, use of teaching materials (e.g., charts and books), and student interactions.

As the researcher, my role was a nonparticipant observer. I watched digital recordings of elementary teachers teaching reading workshop minilessons in a whole group setting to students. The nonparticipant observer role is appropriate for this case study because interacting with the participants in the field was not needed to answer the research questions. The research questions required accurate transcription, but not interaction. Because the teachers' lessons were video recorded, I was able to take field notes on the lesson setting without becoming engaged in the events of the members (Creswell, 2012). My role required less access than a participant's role, and gatekeepers and individuals at the research site were comfortable with it (Creswell, 2012).

I collected the observational data during the winter when the participant's classroom routines were established. I scheduled a total of 36 video recorded observations of the four participants to obtain enough data to see patterns in this type of reading instruction. Each of the four participants' video recorded themselves teaching minilessons on 9 separate days. It was set-up for each participant to self-record reading workshop on three consecutive days, preferably Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, with Thursday being a flex day in case an extra day was needed to get three recordings in for that week. This would occur for three consecutive weeks because nine recordings were needed. This schedule worked for two participants, whereas the other two participants recorded their lessons in a longer yet timely manner. One participant recorded her lessons in four weeks whereas the other participant recorded her lessons in a little over six weeks. Both participants had the intention to do three recordings in a week but as the

end of the weeks drew near, they sometimes only gave one recorded lesson, or there was a week when no recordings were turned in. All four participants had different start dates for when they began recording. From the first recording to the last recording, the time frame was a little over six weeks. One participant completed recordings of her lessons in a two week time frame and another completed her recordings in a little over six weeks. One benefit of letting the teachers have more time in between recordings is I could see more of a variety in the topics that were taught.

Observational notes. Written observational notes were developed and based on the observation recordings. The observational notes, comparable to field notes, provided additional information about the study. Though I had the audio on all 36 videos transcribed by a transcriptionist, I watched the videos and wrote descriptive and reflective observational notes. I used these in conjunction with the transcripts during data analysis. While descriptive observational notes were used to document and record an explanation of the activities, happenings, and individuals, I wrote reflective observational notes to record "personal thoughts that the researcher has that relates to insights, hunches, or broad ideas or themes that emerge during the observation (what sense you made of the site, people, and situation)" (Creswell, 2012, p. 216-217). An example of a significant descriptive field note is one I wrote after watching several video recorded lessons. I noticed a pattern of teachers asking a question and a student would respond. This conversation would go back and forth. I made a note to ask about this in Interview 2 because the literature conveyed that during minilessons the emphasis was on teacher modeling and explanation.

Thus, watching the recorded lessons and writing observational notes helped to inform my protocol for interview two and follow-up questions. Consequently, I asked more in-depth

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questions about strategies that I observed the participants working on and therefore, learned more about lesson content, participants' explicit instruction as well as more about their perceptions of their teaching. Viewing the video recordings presented me with the chance to formulate ideas about the reading instruction and to develop questions I could then ask in interviews with the participants (Locke et al., 2014).

Documents

In my initial contact with the school principal, I explained my need to obtain or make copies, with teacher permission, of anchor charts, teaching materials, and props only if they were not viewable in the observation videos. If anchor charts, props, or other materials used in teachers' lessons were not clear on the videos, I asked the teacher participant if I could obtain a copy.

As it turned out, I ended up looking over some relevant school documents available on the Internet to develop knowledge about the research site. Pioneer's well developed webpages were an asset to learning more about their reading curriculum. From the website I learned the school's curriculum is Benchmark Literacy. Through the participants, I learned they had changed reading programs from Literacy Collaborative to Benchmark Literacy. This became significant information and became the topic of discussion in the interviews. Documents written about Pioneer's reading workshop minilesson topics assisted in triangulating the interview and observation data and helped in my creation of full-bodied protocol questions (Locke et al., 2014).

Researcher Reflexivity

According to Creswell, (2012), reflexivity "refers to the researcher being aware of and openly discussing his or her role in the study in a way that honors and respects the site and participants" (p. 474). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) indicate "qualitative researchers guard against

their own biases by recording detailed field notes that include reflection on their own subjectivity" (p. 33).

In my circumstances, it was very important that I understand how my background could create bias. As an elementary teacher, I have implemented minilessons in my classroom. I have used minilessons to provide explicit instruction to my students. I use teaching moves such as modeling, demonstration, and thinking aloud. I have implemented procedural minilessons, especially during the beginning of the school year, to educate students on the routines and expected behaviors in our classroom. Comprehension strategies, skills, and literacy minilessons have all been conducted by me during whole group instruction also known as the minilesson. The school where I teach also uses the same curriculum as the research site, Benchmark Literacy. I am familiar with the curriculum the participants used but I am familiar with it at a first grade level. I have a master's degree in reading education, as do three of the four participants in this study. The fourth participant is in the process of earning her reading education master's degree. I am familiar with and have also used the work of researchers, Fountas and Pinnell, Miller, and Calkins. In short, I have a deep passion for reading instruction.

Because my own ways of teaching are similar to what I am studying, I had to keep in check my own views of teaching reading. Thus, to consider potential biases, throughout the course of this study, I used reflective observational notes to capture my own thoughts. This helped me be alert to my views and opinions. It is noted (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003), "The goal is to become more reflective and conscious of how who you are may shape and enrich what you do, not to eliminate it" (p. 34).

Other ways I maintained reflexivity was by being open with my participants. The participants knew I was a doctoral student and a first grade teacher. They knew I was a doctoral

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student because it was disclosed in my Teacher Contact Letter. The participants knew I was a first grade teacher because I told them this when I explained why I would not be present during the observational recordings. However, I did not dwell on this during interviews or other contact with my participants. Rather, I stressed to them they were selected for the study because of their perspectives and experiences on using whole group instruction where they were front and center in their classrooms. Participants drove the context of our conversations. I did not supply guidance or information during interviews or conversations with participants.

Still, I kept in mind that the nature of qualitative research is subjective and I needed to be aware when my expectations for how to teach reading surfaced. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003) qualitative researchers need to "Acknowledge that no matter how much you try you cannot divorce your research and writing from your past experiences, who you are, what you believe and what you value" (p. 34). Furthermore, researchers "need to be open to being shaped by the research experience and to having your thinking be informed by the data" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 34). As a researcher, it was essential for me to constantly know that the purpose of this study was to capture participants' perspectives rather than to evaluate them.

Data Analysis

A case study is an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 1989, p. 23).

Transcription

All of the data collected for the study, audio and video recordings, allowed me to obtain highly accurate data for analysis. I was able to have all of the data transcribed, verbatim. In this way, the video recorded observations and the recorded interviews were utilized not only to help

in remembering certain activities but also as an instrument for careful study of teacher and

student behaviors and actions (Mohan, Lundeberg, & Reffitt, 2008). As I collected data, I had the

observations and interviews transcribed by a transcriptionist. This assistance sped up the analytic

process. I listened to and read the written transcripts and observational data and compared them

to the digital recordings (Locke et al., 2014). The review of notes on the interviews and

observations that participants gave to me occurred before becoming involved with the

transcription (Locke et al., 2014). When interview tapes are listened to prior to transcription,

Maxwell (2013), "you should write notes and memos on what you see or hear in your data, and

develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships" (p. 105).

Coding

In the beginning phases of data analysis, I was engaged with organizing what I had "seen,

heard, and read" (Glesne, 2011, p. 184). There were multiple sets of data to decipher that were to

be coded: the observation transcriptions, the observation notes, interview transcripts, and

documents. After each interview, I wrote field notes to remember what actions or emotions the

teacher did or showed. After the transcriptionist transcribed the interviews, I listened and read

each interview more than once, I watched and took notes while viewing the observations, and I

read over and reviewed materials given to me. Looking for and classifying codes was a continual

process during the data collection (Locke et al., 2014).

During the first stage, I took the interview data sentence by sentence and created

significant statements. See Appendix G for significant statements created from data from

Interview 1 for Ms. Thompson. I labeled data with codes to make initial sense of participants'

behaviors and responses (Turner, 2010). I used both emic and etic codes. According to Creswell,

(2012), "Emic data is information supplied by participants in a study and etic data is information

representing the [researcher's] interpretation of the participants' perspectives" (p. 471). Emic codes were derived from the participants' language and behaviors as found in video recordings of lessons and interviews (Creswell, 2012).

Etic codes on reading strategies were derived from my literature review resources such as Atwell (1998), Calkins (1994, 2010), and Fountas and Pinnell (2006), Harvey and Goudvis (2007) Keene and Zimmerman (2007), and Miller (2002). These researchers also supplied potential etic codes on teaching moves associated with explicit instruction. Kelcey and Carlisle (2013) and other resources also provided potential codes for analyzing the data. Further, resources, Fisher and Frey (2008a) and Keene and Zimmerman (2007), on the Gradual Release of Responsibility model, also supplied etic codes. Some of the etic codes that I derived from these resources are stated here.

Comprehension strategies: self-questioning, making predictions, making inferences, drawing conclusions, summarizing, visualizing, making connections, etc.

Literary minilessons: plot, theme, mood, authors, genres, voice, character, problem, point of view, dialogue, illustrations, pace, setting, distinguishing fact from fiction

Skills: figuring out unknown words (using context, substituting, using picture clues), mapping a story, finding the main idea and details

Procedural behaviors: where to sit during reading time, how to give a book talk, how to participate in reading workshop, how to have a peer conference, how to use a table of contents, how to choose a book

Teaching moves: explain, model, think aloud, tell, providing a wrap-up, asking questions to mediate learning

A coding technique I used was color coding. The codes created were color coordinated by teacher. Each teacher had her own color. This technique provided a visual to identify what each participant said and to trace codes back to original data.

Data Categorizing

My analysis of the information was a continuing practice of studying, understanding and rereading the transcribed data I obtained from the interviews, observation recordings, documents, and literature. I used memos to write down my own reflections and thoughts (Creswell, 2012). One of my layers of analysis was to put codes in place to see what would go in Phase 1 of the participant's perceptions of her teaching. To see a clearer picture of the codes from Interview 1, I created a representation of the Gradual Release of Responsibility model by Fisher and Frey (2008). This representation shows examples of codes from early analysis of Interview 1 showing participant's perceptions of their teaching moves during minilesson instruction. These codes were placed within Phase 1 of the GRR model I created (See Figure 7 for a model of this). Creating this figure was a first step in sorting my interview data. It was an early and initial analysis tool and because of the codes, I could trace data back to the significant statements. From the significant statements, I could trace data back to the original information from the interviews. In this phase of analysis, I'm showing how I began to sort interview data and started to develop codes.

Codes from Early Analysis of Interview 1 Showing Participants' Perceptions of their Teaching Moves during Minilesson Instruction and Placed within Phase 1 of the GRR

Codes
Focused topic
Short (10-20 minutes)
Leading Instruction
Purpose & Why
Show
Demonstrate
Facilitate   Student Independence
Provide Application
Interaction
Guided Practice
Turn and Talk
Ask Questions

Phase 1 GRR Teacher Competent Other
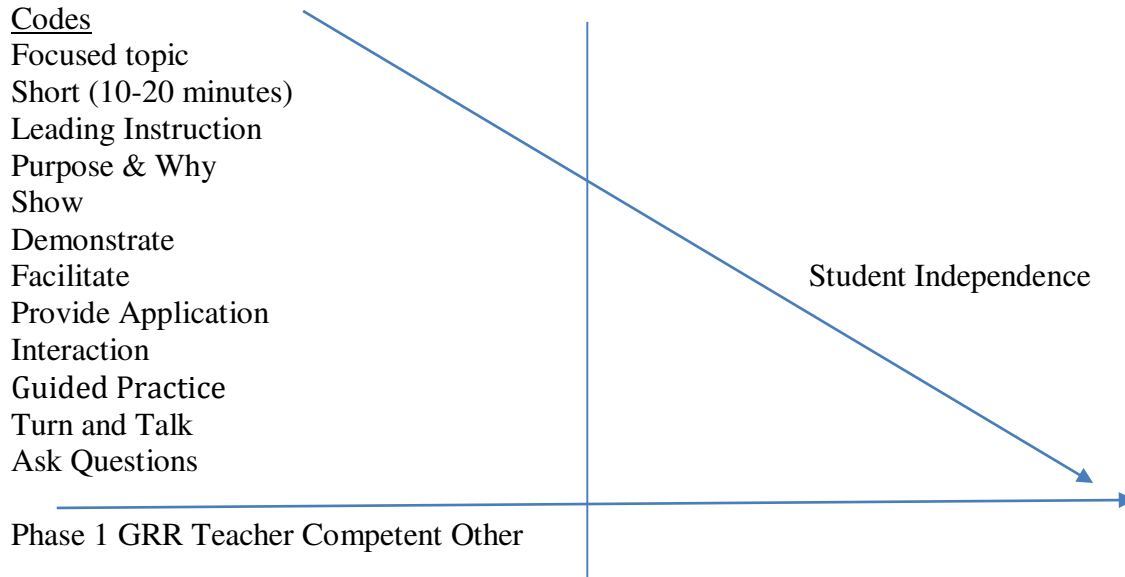
Figure 7. Participants' perceptions of what happens in a minilesson.

In the early stage of the analysis, there were many codes which were kept track of in a list and on the coded data. The list of codes revealed some overlap. Different terms were used to code similar behaviors. For example, in Figure 7 the codes "provide application," "guided practice," and "interaction" were collapsed into one code called "interaction." Thus, I went from having three separate codes to one code. Another example was the code "purpose and why" became two new separate codes called "telling" and "purpose." Once the codes were reduced or renamed there was more clarity and instances of types of behaviors in the data.

In the next step of data analysis, I categorized the data coded interview and observational data. Developing categories comes from grouping codes that were related in content to show patterns of information (Orcher, 2005). "We categorize to make sense of things, to help us see patterns in social interaction and we need categories to develop hunches, hypotheses, and

theories" (Glesne, 2011, p. 215). During the analytic procedure of categorization, I put coded data together that formed a pattern and had meaning related to my research questions. In addition to looking for patterns in my recorded observation data and interviews, the patterns were also looked for in my observational notes. To identify categorical codes, I used the literature review of this study. I used words pertaining to understanding my research questions from Calkins (2010), Fountas and Pinnell (2006), Fisher and Frey (2008a) Gradual Release of Responsibility model because they used key language in understanding what a minilesson should look and sound like.

Like all of the phases and processes of the analysis, the process of arriving at a theme was iterative and had many layers of decision making. For example, Figure 8 shows an early attempt of an audit trail moving from codes to categories to a theme using interview data. In this second attempt to understand Phase 1 of the GRR model, I began by drawing a figure in which I took the codes and began categorizing them. This early attempt at analyzing interview data had three categories: Teaching Moves, Anatomy of Reading Program, and Props. With this early attempt at analyzing the data, I still knew I had not arrived at the patterns that described their minilessons. In Figure 8, I'm showing the process of how I arrived at Theme 1 by chunking codes into categories.

In the final analysis, none of these categories remained and were collapsed, renamed, or dropped. Codes were realigned or renamed. Figure 9 shows an audit trail of the three categories that organized the codes for Theme 1: Goals and Program Organization, Minilessons Described, and Content. Theme 1: Opportunity to Talk the Talk about Reading and Minilessons was developed from Interviews 1 and 2.

Codes	Categories	Theme One
Objectives Explicit Instruction Sharing I.R.E. Modeling Purpose Show Telling Turn and Talk Demonstrate	Teaching Moves	
Whole Group Closure Guided Reading Independent Reading Interactive Read Aloud Minilesson Components Stations Reading Workshop Word Study Wrap Up Scheduling	Anatomy of Reading Program	Opportunity to Talk the Talk about Reading and Minilessons
Anchor Charts Books Charts Closed Reading Books Graphic Organizer Smartboard Posters Reader's Journal Reader's Notebook	Props	

Figure 8. Audit trail showing early analysis for theme 1.

Codes	Categories	Theme 1
To love to read Reading is fun Feel confident Love reading We are different	Goals and Program Organization	
Time/length Teacher's role Student's role Lesson components Props	Minilessons Described	Opportunity to Talk the Talk About Reading and Minilessons
Strategy Skill Attitude Literary	Content	
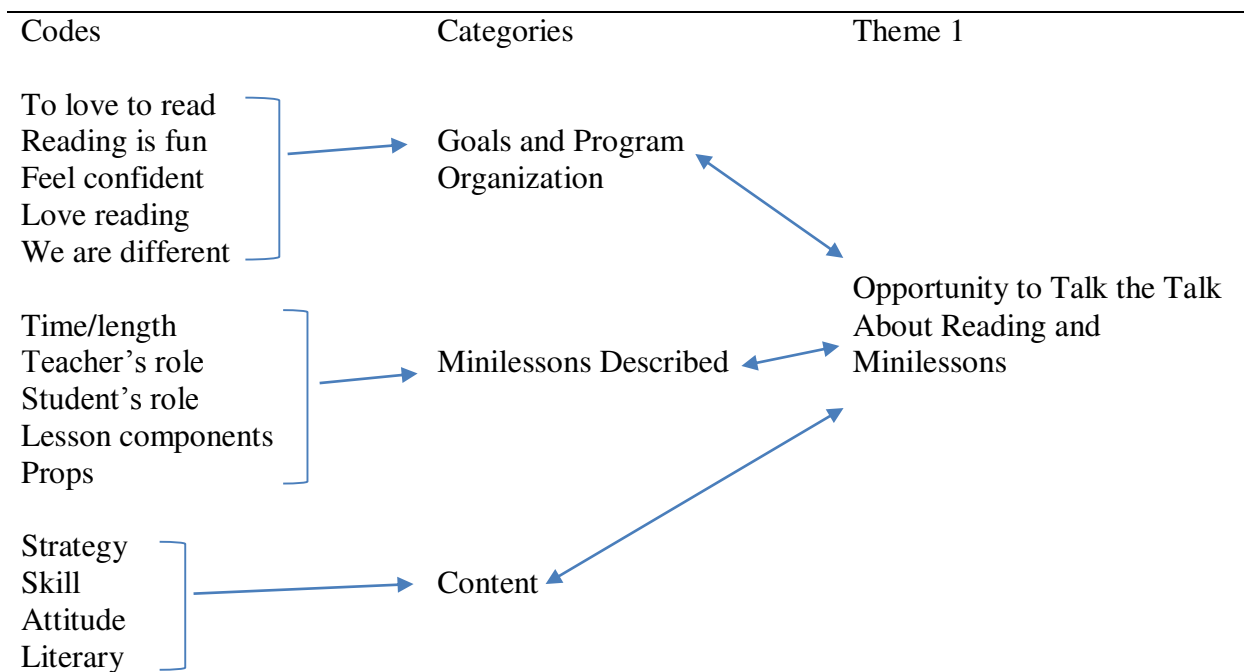
Figure 9. Audit trail showing final analysis of flow from codes to categories to theme 1.

The process of developing codes from the 36 video observations was not coded in the same manner as the interview data. Again many layers of decision making took place. The first layer of analysis was to code data that named aspects of participants' actual teaching. To see a clearer picture of the codes from video observations, I used etic codes and created a table using key words from the Kelcey and Carlisle (2013) Figure 3 presented in the literature review. Units of data were assigned multiple codes for various dimensions of the study. For example, Table 3 shows a unit of data coded for teaching content, which part of the minilesson is being analyzed, and the teaching behavior that is evident. Categorizing and coding participants' minilessons was the initial step in analyzing the transcriptions of the video recorded observational data. Table 3 shows a section of Ms. Fisher's second video observation on teaching pausing (an aspect of fluency). Ms. Fisher was using an idioms poster and she was about 10 minutes into her lesson.

Table 3. Theme 2 Observation 2 Data of Ms. Fisher.
(Note: Initiate (I), Response (R), Evaluate (E), or IRE)

Data Unit	Content of Minilesson	Lesson Part	Teaching Move
Ms. Fisher: So it says, *Of course, Mitch and Dave won't be actually hanging from anything.* The phrase hanging out is an idiom that means spending time with someone. So do you see, like in the box there? [point to the box on the poster] There is a picture of like an alien and a space craft and it says down to earth. And then the next one says feeling blue. What is down to earth mean? If you are down to earth? Lacy. Lacy: Like you're falling. Ms. Fisher: Does it really mean that you're falling from earth? Ryan: No. Ms. Fisher: What does it mean if you are down to earth? Eric, what do you think? Eric: I have heard the phrase before. Ms. Fisher: Adam, what do you think? Adam: Paying attention? Ms. Fisher: Could be you're paying attention, Kim? Kim: You are kind of like fine with everything. Ms. Fisher: Yeah, it just means that you are realistic. You are not. . .you are just realistic in what is going on around you.	Pausing/ Phrasing	Teaching	Questioning IRE

This early analysis of the observation data is how I coded and categorized the data. The data were coded where breaks appeared in the video observation data. For example, the opening, behavior management, transitioning to a book, poster, and writing are all examples where the video observation data were divided into data units, and then the data unit was coded and categorized. This early attempt to code and categorize data from Ms. Fisher's Video Observation 2 on pausing and phrasing revealed important information. In her original Video Observation 2,

her minilesson lasted 18 minutes. Within that 18 minute time frame I identified 23 data units

which I then coded and categorized for Content of Minilesson, Lesson Part, and Teaching Move.

In this example, Content of the Minilesson was coded "pausing and phrasing," Lesson Part was

coded "teaching," and Teaching Move was coded "questioning and IRE." (Initiate, Response,

Evaluate). The next phase of the analysis involved naming a theme to describe the findings.

Figure 10 shows the audit trail of the observational data and how I organized codes into

categories and then categories to a theme. The three categories developed from video observation

data were Minilesson Content, Teaching, and Questioning. The codes that developed the

Minilesson Content category were developed from etic codes from the literature and the emic

codes used by the participants. The codes developed from the Teaching category were formed

from what teachers said and did during their minilesson. For example, teachers modeled, thought

aloud, demonstrated, used charts and props, explained, and questioned. The third category

developed was Questioning. Questioning was also a code used for the category Teaching.

Questioning became its own category because of how the teachers used it. The teachers'

questions were described as IRE, a pattern described by Cazden (2001) where the teacher

initiates a question, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates or follows up on the student

response. Questioning in this sense is more of Phase 2 of the GRR model.

Theme Development

To summarize, the purpose of the coding method is to understand the data, separate it

into word sections, mark the sections with codes, inspect the codes for words unnecessary to the

Codes	Categories	Theme 2

Strategy Topics
  Sequencing
  Summarizing
  Inferring
Skill Topics
  Adjectives
  Fluency
Literary Topics
  Genre
  Story elements
  Poems
  Author's message
  Author's purpose
Attitude Topics
  Stamina
  Listening

Minilesson Content

Environment
Props/charts
Interaction
Reading Aloud
Explain
Demonstrate
Think Aloud
Turn and Talk
Question/Answer

Teaching

IRE
Questions to Model

Questioning

What Walking the Talk Looks and Sounds Like

Figure 10. Audit trail final flow of codes to theme 2 derived from observational data.

meaning, and minimize (also known as data reduction) these codes into wide themes (Creswell, 2012). Themes result in the coherent answers to my research questions and the connections to my conceptual framework. This is where I thought and anticipated what I would find out with a picture, envisioning everything coming together as a whole.

     Again, Figure 8 shows how I arrived at the first theme that brings coherence to the data: Opportunity to Talk the Talk about Reading and Minilessons. To arrive at this theme I began by

writing significant statements for all my interview and observation data. Then codes were developed from the significant statements from the data from Interviews 1 and 2. The codes were color coordinated by participant. Each teacher had her own color. The codes were then sorted and put into one document to look for patterns among the codes, producing a single-spaced twenty-four page code list. Through the use of this code list, categories, patterns, and themes were developed. With everything color coded, I could glance at the data and know who said what and it was easy to trace back to the original interview. Theme 1 was derived from the interview data.

The observation data were not coded in the same manner as the interview data. The video recorded observational data were broken down into data units and coded using content from Figure 3, Kelcey and Carlisle, 2013. The transcripts of the video recorded minilessons were coded according to the three categories: Content of the Minilesson, Lesson Part, and Teaching Moves. The theme that emerged was named "What Walking the Talk Looks and Sounds Like" (Figure 10). The familiar adage, "walking the walk" was changed to "walking the talk" because using the word "talk" harkens back to Theme 1 in which teachers talk about how their teaching was analyzed.

Developing the Assertions

When I identified the main themes and no new information improved the themes, then I had reached the point of saturation (Creswell, 2012). At this point when findings were complete, I looked at my categories and themes to determine if there were overall arguments or assertions I could make (See Figures 9 and 10). Two assertions were formed to formalize meanings of the findings. Assertion 1, Minilesson Content Must Challenge Readers to Think Strategically Within, Beyond and About Text, responds to the research question about the content of

minilessons. Assertion 2, Teaching Moves Influence Teacher's Responsibility for Task

Performance, responds to the research question about how reading content is taught during a

minilesson. Both assertions were formulated by reflection on what the data conveyed about how

participants' instruction intersected with the GRR model of teaching and what the education

literature describes as what and how to teach reading content.

Reliability and Validity

For the case study to be effective, I used specific methods of analysis and triangulation to

guard against experiential knowledge, such as opinion (Stake, 2005).

Reputational Participant Selection

For this study, my participants were chosen by reputation. The school principal and my

advisor, who also knows many teachers at this school, recommended the participants for this

study. The participants were selected because they were known for using minilessons during

reading instruction and would be likely to supply data pertaining to my research questions.

Member Checking

According to Creswell (2012), "member checking is a process in which the researcher

asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account" (p. 259). In this

study, each participant was given Interview 1 transcript and invited to review it for accuracy. Ms.

Fisher was the only participant to return hers to me with minor revisions. In the Interview 2

transcript, again Ms. Fisher was the only participant to return hers to me with a few minor

revisions. In order to confirm my analysis of the elementary teachers, when I had an unclear

observation to interpret, I contacted the teacher for clarification. This was important since I was

not in the classroom when the video recorded observations took place.

Triangulation

Triangulation in this case study was achieved using information from all the participants, from the kinds of information utilized, and from the methods of data collection in codes, categories, and themes in this qualitative research study (Creswell, 2012). To launch credibility, I analyzed each transcript and observation recording and watched for connections contained in the data between participants (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). A type of triangulation was developed through gathering participants' standpoints by collecting multiple forms of data using the same process for all participants. According to Maxwell (2013), collecting information from a variety of sources and methods is an aspect of triangulation.

Audit Trails

Audit trails were developed for this qualitative case study. I kept a complete record of the events while implementing the study (Robson, 2002). These audit trails are manifested in Figures 7, 8 and 10. These were valuable because they let me follow the progression of the research, piece by piece, through the findings made and procedures (Shenton, 2004). The beginning of the audit trail was created by giving each sentence in each participant's interview a significant statement. These statements were developed into codes. Each teacher was assigned a specific color and each code was color coordinated. The color coding helped to get all of the data organized; in particular, it gave a clear picture of who said what. All codes were then combined and sorted into categories and those categories were developed into themes. This process was a continuous process of looking at the data, thinking deeply about the content provided, and always analyzing to see patterns and relationships. The themes developed into assertions. I digitally recorded interviews and they were transcribed in a timely manner. Field notes were

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written down promptly after interviews and viewing observations. Also writing reflective observational notes took place throughout the study for my own reflection of thoughts and ideas.

Context of the Study

Essential background information on participants' experience with two reading programs is necessary to contextualize the findings of the study. To offer this, I provide background information about the two reading programs that inform the participants' instructional background at Pioneer Elementary School, Literacy Collaborative and Benchmark Literacy. Also provided is helpful contextual information about each participant which includes some detail about her teaching background and her perspective on the current reading program.

Overview of the Two Reading Programs Informing Participants' Instruction

Two reading programs figure largely into the teaching lives of the participants in this study: Literacy Collaborative (the old program) and Benchmark Literacy (the new and currently used program). Similarly, the two programs share the same framework of balanced literacy. According to Vacca, et al. (2003), balanced literacy in definition is "a philosophical stance that recognizes the contributions of many different approaches and perspectives to teaching reading and writing" (p. 607). The role of these programs at Pioneer Elementary School is explained, followed by a brief overview of each program.

Literacy Collaborative. Literacy Collaborative was used for teaching literacy at Pioneer Elementary School (pseudonym) for 10 years. All four participants in this study used Literacy Collaborative until June 2015. Literacy Collaborative is described by its creators as a "Comprehensive school literacy model based on the award-winning work by reading experts Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell in collaboration with teachers and university teams at The Ohio State University and Lesley University" (Literacy Collaborative, 2016, p. 1). The Literacy

Collaborative three-block framework is comprised of "language and word study, reading workshop, and writing workshop [and] is a conceptual tool for organizing instruction" (Literacy Collaborative, 2016, p. 3). Minilessons are taught during both reading and writing workshops. In the Literacy Collaborative framework, minilessons, a key area of focus in this study, are described by Fountas and Pinnell (2001) as, "explicit teaching, designed to help students work more productively during independent reading, provides very specific instruction regarding effective reading strategies and skills or focuses students' attention on elements of literature" (p. 122). Literacy Collaborative instructional framework is based on the Gradual Release of Responsibility model. A framework for early literacy learning showing how instruction moves from highest teacher supported program elements (reading aloud) to lowest teacher supported program elements (independent reading) is provided by Literacy Collaborative and shown in Figure 11.

There is not a lot of information openly available pertaining to Literacy Collaborative to provide a variety of resources to build background knowledge. Presumably, one must join the Collaborative and attend trainings to have access to program materials. Here is how Ms. Fisher, a participant who attended numerous trainings, explained a Literacy Collaborative minilesson.

> Literacy Collaborative is a framework using reading workshop, word study, and writer's workshop. A typical reading minilesson is very brief and lasts 5-10 minutes. An example of a minilesson could be readers analyzing the author's use of language to give readers images. I would write that up for the kids on a chart. Then I would model it by sharing quotes from a book that we have read in class and read the various pieces to demonstrate to the kids. I would share the image that I created from those words. I would have them record the sentences and phrases from their book and the image they created from their words in their response journal. Sometimes we just write it on sticky notes. After independent reading or guided reading we would meet in a circle and this is where we share.

Letters, Words, & How They Work

Extensions & Themes

High Teacher Support

Reading Aloud

Community Writing (Shared & Interactive)

Shared Reading

WRITING

READING

Guided Writing & Writing Workshop

Guided Reading

Independent Writing

Independent Reading

Low Teacher Support

Documentation of Progress

Home & Community
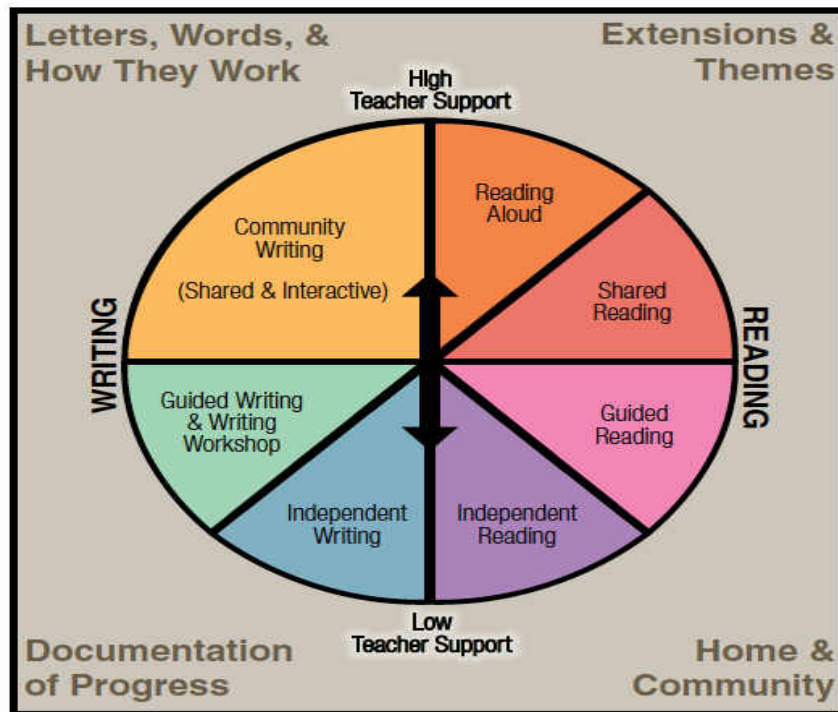
© 1997 The Ohio State University (revised 2011)

Figure 11. A framework for early literacy learning. Source: https://000f5d96-a-62cb3a1a-s-sites.googlegroups.com/site/districtlc/literacy-collaborative-f

As described by Ms. Fisher, the purpose of a minilesson is to provide students with a target that they will implement during independent reading. After the minilesson, teachers met with guided reading groups, as needed. The other students were engaged with independent reading with "just right" books and writing in their reading journals. At the end of the reading workshop, teachers gathered students for a whole class sharing session. Sharing focused on revisiting the content of the minilesson and other topics. Sharing could consist of partner sharing first then everyone sharing in whole group, or everyone sharing around the circle, or picking volunteers to share while in whole group.

Benchmark Literacy. The four participants in this study, Ms. Smith (second grade), Ms. Thompson (third grade), Ms. Taylor (third grade), and Ms. Fisher (fourth grade) are all in their

first year of implementing a new curriculum, Benchmark Literacy. All four participating teachers are coming with two sets of backgrounds. A couple of the participants said the school district switched from Literacy Collaborative to Benchmark Literacy for a couple of reasons: one reason was due to budget cuts and the second reason was teachers at Pioneer lacked confidence in implementing units of study; they wanted a manual to have a precise scope and sequence to warrant that they all were teaching what they were expected to be teaching. Thus, Benchmark Literacy was adopted by Pioneer Elementary School and it was in its first year of implementation during this study. The participating teachers began implementing the new program in the fall of 2015. The program was new to all four participants in the study. In the summer of 2015 the teachers experienced training that took place over four half days.

Benchmark Literacy is a K-6 reading basal program and is described as a "comprehensive, research-proven [program] aligned to new State Standards and empowers both experienced and beginning teachers with 30 weeks of explicit comprehension-focused lessons for the whole class, small groups, and intervention" (Benchmark Literacy, 2016a, p. 1). Benchmark Literacy's framework is balanced literacy. Balanced literacy is a "model for teaching children in a student-centered classroom, based on the research of Marie Clay, Irene Fountas, and Gay Su Pinnell," and is designed to help all students learn to read and write effectively (Dykes, 2016, p. 1). Like the Literacy Collaborative, they share three program components: Word Study, Reading Workshop, and Writing Workshop. See Figure 12 for an outline of what a sample schedule for a 120 minute ELA block would look like (Dykes, 2016, p. 1).

Sample Schedule for 120 minute ELA block	
*Please note: Reading Workshop, Phonics/Word Study, and Writing Workshop components can be scheduled in any order. For example, teachers may choose to start the ELA block with Writing Workshop first instead of Reading Workshop.	
Reading Workshop	
• Read aloud	10 min
• Whole group minilesson	20 min
• Small group reading (2 groups per day) independent reading/literacy workstations	40 min
Phonics/Word Study	20 min
Writing Workshop	
• Whole Group minilesson	10 min
• Independent writing/conferring	20 min
	120 minutes Total

Figure 12. Sample schedule for 120 minute ELA block. [Extracted from Dykes, 2016, p. 1]

With importance placed on comprehension, Benchmark Literacy claims the program offers every component of reading instruction (Benchmark Literacy, 2016b). According to Benchmark Literacy, the curriculum offers all the day-to-day components of reading instruction which includes "assessment, interactive read aloud, whole group minilessons, differentiated small group/guided reading, independent reading, phonics and word study, writing, professional development, and interactive technologies" (Benchmark Literacy, 2016b, p. 1-2).

Benchmark Literacy claims that the minilesson in each unit "focuses on a specific text-dependent comprehension strategy and a metacognitive strategy" (Benchmark Literacy, 2012, p. 11). The program for each grade level is described by the company in the following way.

> Ten comprehension-focused units of instruction for each grade, 3 weeks of explicit instruction and extension activities for each unit, gradual-release model incorporates spiral review of previously taught strategies, each unit supports students from modeling to guided practice, application, and strategy transfer. (Benchmark Literacy, 2016b, p. 2)

The focus of the minilesson for Benchmark Literacy is broken down into three week units. Here is what those three weeks look like (Benchmark Literacy, 2012):

A unique feature of Benchmark Literacy is the tight correlation between whole group and small group instruction. Each unit of whole-group instruction focuses on a specific text comprehension strategy and a metacognitive strategy. Week 1 focuses on explicit modeling and guided practice using short mentor passages on posters and interactive whiteboards. Week 2 provides an opportunity for students to practice strategies in the context of additional text models and in Week 3, students revisit previously taught skills and strategies and integrate new strategies through reader's theater rehearsal and performance. (p. 11)

Provided in Figure 13 is a Benchmark Literacy (2016b) diagram to explain how the components change over the 3-Week Unit.
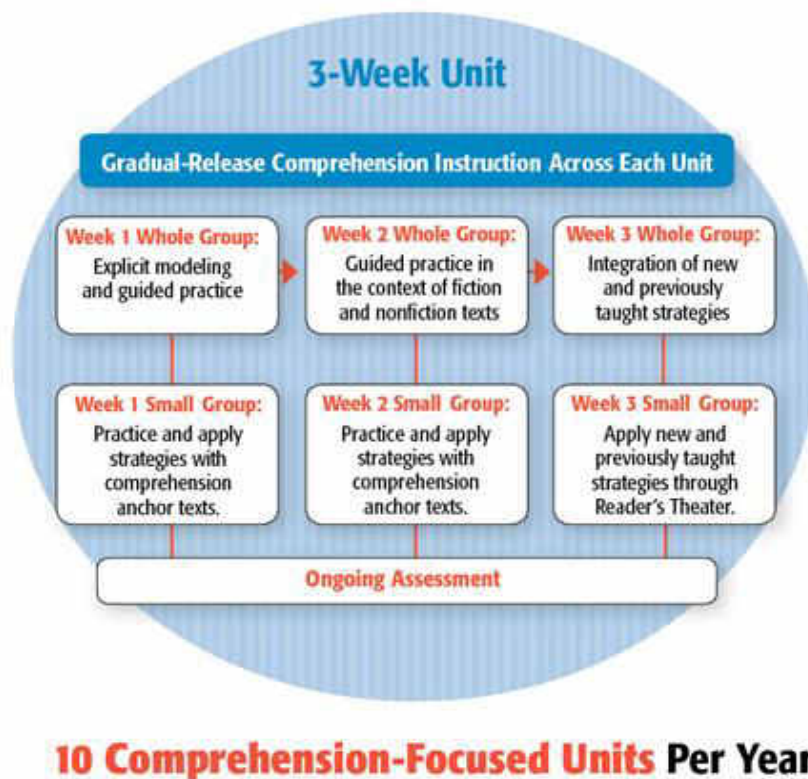
Figure 13. Benchmark Literacy comprehension instruction. [Extracted from Benchmark Literacy, 2016b, p. 2]

Again, unless you purchase the program, information pertaining to Benchmark Literacy is limited. Here is how participant Ms. Thompson explained Benchmark Literacy.

The reading, writing, and word study curriculum are all [combined] into one. It provides the scope and sequence of skills that needs to be taught throughout the year. It is standards based so it covers what each grade level needs to know for the [state] standards.

The four participating teachers have similar perspectives on the two programs. The transition to using the new curriculum Benchmark Literacy appears to be more positive with the teachers who have taught fewer years at Pioneer Elementary School, compared to the teachers who have worked at Pioneer Elementary School for a longer period of time. In the following section, Background of the Participants, the participating teachers' views are shared.

Background of the Participants

In this section, the participants' educational history, the duration of teachers' teaching experience at Pioneer Elementary School and the teachers' views on the current and former literacy curriculum are explained. Information about the teachers was obtained from Interview 1 and Interview 2 and to a lesser extent, individual emails. This information is contextual and helps to understand the findings.

Ms. Smith. Ms. Smith graduated from a four-year education program with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. The summer after earning her bachelor's degree, she interviewed and was hired to teach kindergarten at Pioneer Elementary School. She taught kindergarten for two years but for the past four years she has been teaching second grade, marking six years teaching at Pioneer. She is one of six second grade teachers at Pioneer. Typically, there are about 25 students in each second grade classroom. Ms. Smith stated twenty-five students is a large class size for this grade level. Of note, recently, she has begun taking coursework towards earning her master's degree in reading education.

Ms. Smith has taught reading for five years using Literacy Collaborative. What she liked about the Literacy Collaborative is it taught her how to be self-sufficient and to meet the needs of

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her students. According to Ms. Smith, the challenges she faced using Literacy Collaborative was not having a teacher's manual, developing the curriculum based on doing a lot of research, and teaching Literacy Collaborative "right."

Ms. Smith states budget cuts was a reason Pioneer went to the new Benchmark Literacy curriculum. She indicates she likes how the Benchmark Literacy curriculum is open ended. She said she likes the flexibility she has using Benchmark Literacy. It allows her to base instruction on the teacher's manual and "go with" what her students need to be learning. She feels it hits all the core components of the standards, and it provides her with the resources she needs while at the same time, permits her to add or take out things. Ms. Smith says she already knows the framework well because it is the same framework as Literacy Collaborative. She says having the set program helps her communicate with different grade level teachers and know what the expectations are. Ms. Smith feels Benchmark Literacy does a "good job" establishing what is supposed to be mastered in first grade, second grade, and third grade and what she is supposed to be covering in a provided time frame.

A challenge Ms. Smith faces using Benchmark Literacy is it sometimes takes away her ability to slow down. She says she feels like she has to get through the lesson and she feels a little pressure to make sure she is teaching the lesson in the exact way the basal tells her to teach. Also Benchmark Literacy is new to her, and she is sometimes unsure of what she is doing because she has not been through the material yet.

Ms. Thompson. Ms. Thompson earned her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a math minor. The math minor allows Ms. Thompson to teach math in grades 5-8, if she were to choose to do so. She completed a master's degree in reading education. Before obtaining a fulltime teaching position, Ms. Thompson substituted for two years in the area surrounding

Pioneer Elementary. After two years of substitute teaching, Ms. Thompson secured a position teaching at Pioneer. She chose Pioneer because she liked the area, and she liked the reading program (which was Literacy Collaborative) and instructional approach. She also liked the reading resource room that was brimming with guided reading books. She liked what the school had to offer to a new teacher.

Ms. Thompson was hired to teach third grade and has continued to teach at this level for the totality of her eight years at Pioneer. She is one of six third grade teachers and typically has about 25 students in her class. Ms. Thompson has seven years of experience using the Literacy Collaborative Framework for teaching reading. Ms. Thompson saw positive results using Literacy Collaborative. According to her, the Literacy Collaborative has the same components as Benchmark Literacy: reading workshop, writing workshop, and word study. She says Literacy Collaborative follows the same plan for how to set up the reading or the literacy block as Benchmark Literacy.

Some challenges Ms. Thompson said that she faced using Literacy Collaborative was Pioneer teams were working together but not as consistently as with the new program. Curriculum across the classrooms was not the same and students were not getting the exact same curriculum. The main complaint that Ms. Thompson had with Literacy Collaborative is she did not know where to go next. She had teacher resource books on teaching literacy but Ms. Thompson said she should not have to pull out of books and read chapters to figure out what to teach.

Ms. Thompson has positive feelings towards the new program, Benchmark Literacy. According to her, the program meets students where they are, provides student choice, and is a balanced literacy program. In her view, the structure is the same as Literacy Collaborative since

it uses the workshop model, something with which she is familiar. She likes that the skills she is to focus on are presented unit by unit. Ms. Thompson feels it is good to have the new program because it provides a curricular sequence for previous grade levels so she knows what curriculum content her students will have experienced.

Some challenges Ms. Thompson says she faces using Benchmark Literacy are time, implementing the curriculum for the first year, and being able to conference with her students.

Ms. Taylor. Ms. Taylor graduated with a bachelor's degree in elementary education. She is trained as a Reading Recovery teacher, a Literacy Collaborative literacy coach, and she has her master's degree in reading. Ms. Taylor has been teaching at Pioneer for 16 years but has been teaching for a total of 25 years. She applied to teach at Pioneer because of proximity to her home and because she views it as a beautiful facility.

Ms. Taylor has a variety of teaching positions in various schools, including Pioneer. In the past, she taught a kindergarten/early childhood split, first grade, Title I, and third grade for seven years. She also looped with her second grade students to third grade. For 10 years she served as a literacy coach at Pioneer. When the literacy coaching position was eliminated in 2015 due to changing reading curricula, she returned to her current position, teaching third grade. Similar to Ms. Smith and Ms. Thompson, she has 26 students in her classroom and considers this a large class size.

Ms. Taylor is an advocate for the former reading curriculum. Ms. Taylor's view of Literacy Collaborative is highly favorable. She views it positively because Literacy Collaborative is balanced literacy and it hangs on the framework of writing workshop, reading workshop, word study, and interactive read aloud and it does not have a specific curriculum to

follow. She values the idea that teachers build the curriculum based on knowing students' needs and using their professional knowledge about literacy.

Ms. Taylor's views of Benchmark Literacy are less favorable. According to Ms. Taylor, Benchmark Literacy, and the entire concept of a predesigned program, is confining and negative. For Ms. Taylor, a lot of the lessons in the curriculum are not authentic. She explained that her frustration with the curriculum is by the end of the unit her students might be able to do the strategy but they have not learned any content. Another challenge, she said, is the strategy does not need to be taught over and over with lesson after lesson within a unit. Additionally, there are mini lessons she cannot complete in 20 minutes and she has to remove some of it. Furthermore, she said there is too much packed into each lesson. Also, she dislikes that the units are set up by reading strategies rather than a content discipline or genre. The guided reading books for each unit fit with the strategy as opposed to a genre or a content area. In her view this is an inauthentic way to organize curriculum for reading instruction.

Ms. Fisher. Ms. Fisher's bachelor's degree is in Elementary Education and Math Education. The same year she earned her bachelor's degree she was accepted into a teacher induction program at her alma mater. This graduate degree program allowed her to earn her masters' degree, complete her first year of teaching and have access to a fulltime onsite mentor who was an experienced teacher. When she completed the program, Ms. Fisher earned her M.Ed. in Elementary Education with advanced credits in reading education, qualifying her to be a reading specialist. While in the program, Ms. Fisher taught second grade at a public school.

After the induction year, Ms. Fisher was hired to teach first grade in a different but nearby school district. In that district, she acquired two more years of teaching experience in first and second grades. Then she was hired at Pioneer Elementary School where she has taught first,

second, and fourth grades. For three years, she also served as the literacy coach. This is her seventeenth year at Pioneer Elementary.

Ms. Fisher currently has 23 students in her class this year, which is within the typical range for class size. She indicated there are six sections of fourth grade with 22-25 students in each section.

Ms. Fisher's view of the former program, Literacy Collaborative, is highly favorable. According to her, Literacy Collaborative really focused on students. Ms. Fisher enjoyed it because it took the focus from the teacher spending 45 minutes of instruction and narrowed it down to 10 to 15 minutes of well-organized instruction, thus allowing students to spend most of their time reading. She said, however, a lot of teachers did not feel confident in the freedom permitted with the Literacy Collaborative. They wanted a teacher's manual with a designated scope and sequence to ensure that everybody was teaching what they were supposed to be teaching. According to her, this is a reason why the school went to Benchmark Literacy instead of staying with Literacy Collaborative.

With Benchmark Literacy, Ms. Fisher stated more people feel like they can implement it compared to Literacy Collaborative. According to her, Benchmark Literacy focuses on a strategy to be taught. She explained the first day of the unit is always about modeling and getting some interaction between teacher and students. The second day calls for more interaction. Then, as the unit moves on the plan is to have students use the strategy with a partner and then use it independently. She states, "It's a gradual release."

Ms. Fisher says the main challenge with Benchmark Literacy is figuring out how to teach reading with the new series. According to her, it is a challenge to get everything done in the manual into the time allotted for the lesson. Also Ms. Fisher indicated the Benchmark Literacy

manual is driving her instruction more than is necessary for her students to learn the material. The Benchmark Literacy minilesson is a focused lesson but what is challenging is it takes more like 20-30 minutes, sometimes longer. Ms. Fisher said learning the new curriculum is difficult but it is also difficult to have the manual tell her what she should be teaching her learners.

Students. The students in the teachers' classrooms were not the focus of this case study. The study is about the teachers and their explicit instruction during reading. Thus, the teacher is the most prominent source of information. As teachers video-recorded their teaching, students appeared in the recordings, or their voices were captured. Though it was of value to hear interactions with the teacher during the lesson, it was not important for me to see the students' faces or know their names. But, teacher/student interactions were transcribed and reported as data to shed light on teachers' instruction.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to report key findings from the study. The aim is to express the themes as they emerged from the data analysis. To introduce findings, I provide an overview of the research questions. The main part of the chapter presents the thematic findings of the data analysis.

Research Questions

My research questions attempt to enrich the literature on explicit instruction of reading content taught by classroom teachers in an elementary school. The questions guiding this case study are:

- How do teachers perceive their minilesson instruction?
- What is the content being taught?
- How do teachers teach the minilesson content?

Teachers' awareness and understanding of their classroom practice is viewed in the reading education literature as enhancing instructional practice and perhaps, student learning (Miller, 2008). Their intentionality and ability to name their instructional moves is viewed as critical to professional expertise (Miller, 2008).

Theme 1, Opportunity to Talk the Talk about Reading and Minilessons, describes my participants' foundational views about why and how they teach. Theme 2, What Walking the Talk Looks and Sounds Like, offers a detailed view of what actually occurred during teaching. In Chapter V, the findings in these themes will be combined to develop assertions "couched in

terms of personal views or in terms of theories or constructs in the literature" (Creswell, 2007, p. 244).

Theme 1: Opportunity to Talk the Talk About Reading and Minilessons

Theme 1, Opportunity to Talk the Talk about Reading and Minilessons, addresses the research question, "How do teachers perceive their minilesson instruction?" This question leads to exploration of teachers' intentionality in teaching reading content (Miller, 2008) and of how they situate themselves in Phase I of the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (see Figure 5). Do they take on the role of "competent other" (Clark, 2014; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) as is called for in the literature about using minilessons? What do they say is the content of their lessons? What do they perceive about what their instruction looks and sounds like?

Recall that the literature describes minilessons as a very specific type of lesson that is used to teach literacy content such as comprehension strategies (e.g., visualization, inferring, summarizing), skills (decoding, fluency, workshop procedures), literary content (e.g., literary elements, writer's craft) and even attitudes (e.g., becoming a lifelong reader) (Calkins, 1994).

Additionally, the literature states that in the lesson, the teacher uses props such as charts, familiar literature, the teacher's own behavior and student work to model and what it is students need to learn and be able to do (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). The minilessons last 10-15 minutes and student interaction is kept to a minimum, though limited guided practice is recommended. In relation to the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Figure 5 in the literature review) the minilesson is generally aligned with the "I do it" or Focus Lesson. It often also involves "We do it" or "Guided Instruction" where the teacher provides moderate support to students she involves in the minilesson.

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In the case of the participants in this study their Benchmark Literacy basal program, the daily reading lesson begins with what is called "the minilesson," though all of the teachers implemented minilessons previously when using the Literacy Collaborative framework.

Before addressing teachers' explanations of their minilessons, what I present in this theme is teachers' statements about their instructional goals and descriptions of their reading blocks. During Interview 1 teachers were asked to explain their teaching goals and their approach to teaching reading. Later, during Interview 2, I asked each teacher to use a pie chart to describe her reading program. Then, I used the pie chart to focus in on the minilesson segment of the reading program. Consequently, teachers described their roles, the students' roles, and other aspects of their programs and specifically, the minilesson.

The results of these research procedures are reported here, teacher by teacher. This provides opportunities to describe teachers' perceptions of their explicit instruction and show a "detailed view" (Creswell, 2007, p. 163) of the case without comparing the teachers. Rather, the data for each teacher are kept separate, allowing for direct interpretation, i.e., putting the data together "in more meaningful ways," (Creswell, 2007, p. 245) at a later point.

Ms. Smith

Goals and how her program works. When Ms. Smith was asked in her first interview what she believed about how her reading instruction impacted her students' learning, she said her hope is that she makes "reading fun for kids." When she was asked what was most important for her readers to know and be able to do, she said that it is important for her students to understand that "everybody can read and that it is fun." She also expressed the following:

> I hope that if [students] come into second grade not reading that they learn they are a
> good reader by the time they leave my room. I have kids who come in and sit with me at

guided reading. They just cry for those first couple of weeks. Even though it is hard, it is okay because we are all at different levels.

To address students' anxieties about not reading, at the beginning of the school year, Ms. Smith does a lesson focusing on how "we are all different." She explains that the lesson is from Daily 5, a program developed by Boushey and Moser (2006). Two students from the classroom are selected to be part of the lesson.

> You put [the two students'] shoes in the middle. One [shoe] is a big and one [shoe] is tiny. You have [the two kids] try on each other's shoes. You are like, Oh, they don't fit! Well, why? We are all different.

By the end of the school year, Ms. Smith wants her students to have confidence and be comfortable reading even though they may not be at the "right" reading level. She says:

> It is not realistic that every kid is going to leave my room at the right reading level. They are just going to be at their reading level. I think it is important for kids to know that. Even though it might be a struggle, everybody is going to get there someday. It might take you a little bit longer.

These data show Ms. Smith tries to send the message that in her class, it is okay to be at different levels of achievement and development. Ms. Smith reassures her students in more ways than one that they should not feel bad if they have a harder time reading. She believes it is important to build her students' confidence. To build their confidence, she noted, "not every book is going to fit every kid" and helps her students to understand "you shouldn't feel ashamed if you have a hard time reading." Everybody is going to get there but we may take different paths. Her statements suggest she views some students who struggle with reading from a developmental perspective—not every reader meets developmental benchmarks at the same age (Hill, Ruptic & Norwick, 1998).

What Reading Program looks like: Interview Two
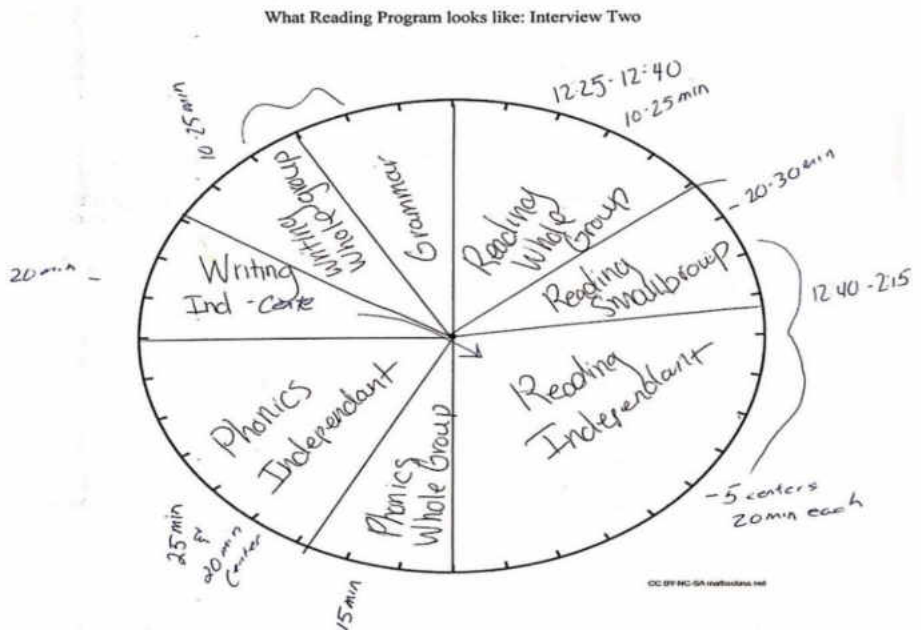
Figure 14. Ms. Smith's visual depiction of her reading program.

When Ms. Smith was presented with the pie chart in her second interview and asked to draw and label each part of her reading program, she divided the chart into eight sections, showing her entire literacy block which included writing workshop (Figure 14). Three of the eight sections on the figure make-up her reading block: reading whole group, reading small group, and reading independent. Ms. Smith starts her reading block at 12:30 p.m., and it lasts until the end of the school day. She explained that this is the only part of the day when she has a large uninterrupted block of time. Her whole group time is comprised of two segments: read aloud and the minilesson. She explained.

> I begin usually with a read aloud no matter if it connects with what we are doing that day or not. Just because I think kids need to be read to. It is their favorite time of the day. We come in from lunch and they lay on the ground and I read to them.

This information helps contextualize Ms. Smith's minilesson instruction because the minilesson immediately follows the read aloud. As she says, after the read aloud, she continues with "whole group." When asked, she states she does not call this time "minilesson." For clarification

purposes, I insert the term "minilessons" after the phrase "whole group" when she is referring to the minilesson segment of her reading program.

> I try not to make [the whole group minilesson] more than 10-20 minutes. Sometimes it can get to 25 minutes but it just depends on the lesson that day and how much is needed. Sometimes it is not so bad if it gets longer because sometimes they are sent off to do something with a partner and then come back and share. That takes a little bit more time because it is more management.

In contrast with recommendations in the literature about the length of minilessons (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Calkins, 2010), here we learn that Ms. Smith allows her Benchmark Literacy minilessons to stretch out to 25 minutes, particularly if guided practice (Phase 2 of the GRR model) is a dominant part of the minilesson. Because the minilesson follows the read aloud, the second graders may spend up to 30 minutes or more together in whole group.

Ms. Smith's chart (Figure 14) indicates she combines small group and independent reading, though they may appear as separate segments as drawn on the chart. She explained these two segments are "center-based learning." During this time, some students work independently at centers while she pulls others for guided reading. Her guided reading is centered on the needs of her students.

> I would say the whole group [mini]lesson is centered on the average peer need, and then the small group reading is centered on individual student need. I target what they really individually are struggling with or need help with in the small group. You can tell that in my whole group a few kids are just like, I do not get this.

Of interest here is that Ms. Smith distinguishes between the roles of the minilesson and small group instruction. Used for different purposes, the whole group minilesson is where reading content is introduced and at other points in the reading block, individual needs are addressed.

The minilesson. When asked during Interview 1 to describe what her whole group minilessons looked and sounded like, Ms. Smith stated she is in front, and her students are sitting together on the carpet for whole group.

> It is a very short period of time, which I like because I don't think they need me sitting there lecturing to them for a long period of time. I basically just model and give them examples of different things that we're working on. I might have a student help me with something or come up to the board and do something.

Ms. Smith's statements are compatible with what the literature describes as features of a minilesson: brevity, focus, use of explicit teaching methods, and involvement of the students when appropriate. Ms. Smith identifies a topic to teach to her students, and she has the students all come to a certain area in the room to teach this topic (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Ms. Smith says she shortens up the whole group lesson as much as she can because she tries to teach only what students need to know. Rather than teach more than one thing or allow the lesson to be long, she says she takes a whole group minilesson from Benchmark Literacy and divides it into two to three days because a typical reading lesson is "way too long for a second grader to listen to." Calkins (2010), encourages teachers that minilessons are ten minutes and to "trim, delete, or bypass anything to keep your minilesson just that—minilessons" (p. 58). Ms. Smith has emphasized what Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) have pointed out, "teachers use the minilesson to introduce one idea/skill/strategy that seems relevant and timely" for students (p. 12).

Data collected during the second interview indicated that Ms. Smith's role during the whole group minilesson was being a leader. As she continues her explanation, her role also appears to facilitate interaction.

> I would say that I am the leader at whole group. I keep it manageable. I definitely like kids to be involved. I like them answering questions. I like them listening. Every once in a while I will cold call on kids. Like if I feel like they need to be more interactive with me. I like partnering. I like turn and talking. But most of all, I am leading the lesson, and

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I am teaching the skill and modeling it. Then, I expect them to use that as they go off into independent work.

Later in Interview 2 she states:

> [They are] like an audience but a participating audience who are actively listening and engaged. They need to be part of the conversation. If they have to go and do something with a partner they are definitely participating in the activity and coming back with something to share.

In the first data segment, Ms. Smith's explanation parallels the role of the competent other in Phase 1 of the GRR model. The students are listening and she is providing explicit instruction by modeling. When her students become involved in answering questions, partnering, and talking, her teaching information reflects Phase 2 of the GRR model, where she is starting to release responsibility for task performance to her students. Turn and talk, a teaching move associated with the "We do it" Phase of the GRR model, is described by Serafini (2001) as "turn and share" and this is a time when students "turn to their partners and share their ideas" (p. 70).

Ms. Smith states that during a minilesson, she will normally use a visual to go with her lesson.

> This curriculum [Benchmark Literacy] comes with a lot of visuals. I will show them the poster that goes with the lesson or something that we are working on. It might even be another book or another read aloud that goes with what we are talking about. We will read a section of it.

Another name that teachers use for visuals is props. Teachers use props during their lessons to enhance student understanding of the concept being taught. According to Calkins (2001), "In modeled reading, you read a text to students, engaging them by showing your thinking along the way" (p. 16). Given Ms. Smith's statements, there is some ambiguity about how she uses the text or prop. She says she "shows" the poster, suggests there is "talking" and that "we" read a section.

Ms. Smith's approach to using curriculum posters may vary from what Calkins (2001) explains as using text as tools for teachers showing their own thinking.

When asked what happens in the middle of her lesson, Ms. Smith explains she may use "question and answer" that might lead to students' peer discussion about the lesson concept. She said:

> I do not like to get in the way of two kids who are talking about something in front of all of us when it has to do with what we are actually talking about. I try to let that happen as much as possible.

Different from "turn and talk" behavior which reflects Phase 2 of the GRR model, if students engage in peer discussion, the minilesson is reflecting Phase 3 of the GRR model, "You do it together" (Figure 5). Students would actually be assisting each other while the teacher holds back on assisting student performance.

At the end of the whole group lesson, Ms. Smith wraps up the minilesson. She said, "I do a quick overview of what we just talked about, and then I will introduce centers." At this point, Smith emphasized that what is accomplished by her students at the end of her whole group instruction using the Benchmark Literacy curriculum is "independence."

> Maybe not mastery because [the students] might hit it again in third or fourth grade. I think the key is forming some type of independence with it. Forming a basis of understanding or knowledge around what the concept means.

During the middle of Ms. Smith's minilesson, according to Calkins (2010), this is where Ms. Smith would apply one of the four methods: "demonstration, explicitly tell and show an example, inquiry and guided practice" (p. 53). Students engaging in a question and answer response would move the minilesson to the GRR model Phase 2 or possibly Phase 3 if the teacher withholds involvement. If Phase 1 of the minilesson was either skipped or stopped,

independence would be hard for her students to attain since explicit modeling would be replaced by student interaction.

Content of the minilesson. In the data gathered in the first interview, Ms. Smith addressed that Benchmark Literacy heavily focuses on common core and state standards. Because of this, she follows the lessons. The lessons are structured to cover the strategies and skills students need to know to pass the standardized tests.

> I mean, you do not like to teach to the test but we would also look at what is on the NWEA's. What is on the MCA's? What do they need to know for third grade to move them forward? Then we would really look at where they are as far as their level of reading and what pieces they may be missing to get them to that next level.

When Ms. Smith talks about the NWEA and MCA tests, she is referring to state tests given. NWEA stands for Northwest Evaluation Association and MCA stands for Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments. According to Taberski (2011), "We must remember that while the Common Core State Standards set the goals, they are not a prescription for how to achieve them. That's up to us" (p. 20).

During Interview 1 Ms. Smith was asked what might be a topic she would teach in a minilesson. She named several topics she covered so far using Benchmark Literacy curriculum.

> So far this year we have talked about main idea, inferencing, and sequencing. We will talk about character analysis. We will talk about fluency. There is really not a lot that goes with this curriculum. There is less but it is more in-depth, which I really like. Before I was trying to hit so much throughout the year because I did not know if it would cycle again so it is really nice to know that there is going to be a cycle.

As noted earlier, Benchmark Literacy has units and each unit lasts for three weeks, covering a comprehension and metacognition strategy (Benchmark Literacy, 2012). Two reading strategies Ms. Smith taught in previous units were summarizing and synthesizing. She claimed she noticed a big change in how students were "thinking about what they were reading." Also,

she taught a unit on story elements in her whole group lesson, and said the students were able to retell the story without restating every word back to her. Fluency is another big topic of study covered in Benchmark Literacy and becomes the topic of many whole group minilessons.

Ms. Thompson

Goals and how her program works. Ms. Thompson, a teacher with 8 years of experience teaching third grade and two years as a substitute teacher, in her first interview stated that the most important thing that she wants is for her third graders "to love to read." One way she does this is by creating a community of readers and having books available that the students like.

> I really think that interest is the number one thing to get them motivated to read. I let them read what they want to read, except at group. If they are reading something that I do not think they should be reading, we will talk about if that is the right book or I will say maybe that is something you want to read with your parents at home. I never say, "You cannot read," because I do not want to shut them down. I think that is probably the most important thing.

In Ms. Thompson's classroom, she makes available to her students a variety of books. Ms. Thompson is building her students "love to read" by allowing her students to pick out books of their interest. It is noted by Serafini (2001) that in order for students to take ownership of their reading, students have to take part in deciding what books they want to read. When this happens, "students begin to assume responsibility for their growth as readers and as members of our reading community" (p. 12).

As a third grade teacher, Ms. Thompson's reading block is about 75 minutes long each afternoon. Similar to Ms. Smith, Ms. Thompson was presented in her second interview with a pie chart and asked to draw and label each part of her reading program. She was asked to "show what each part of her reading program would look like and what it would consist of." As shown

in Figure 15, she divided the circle into three unequal sections and labeled each one. Her reading

block begins with a whole group minilesson, moves to independent reading/guided

reading/conferring, and finally ends with "Circle up & Share."
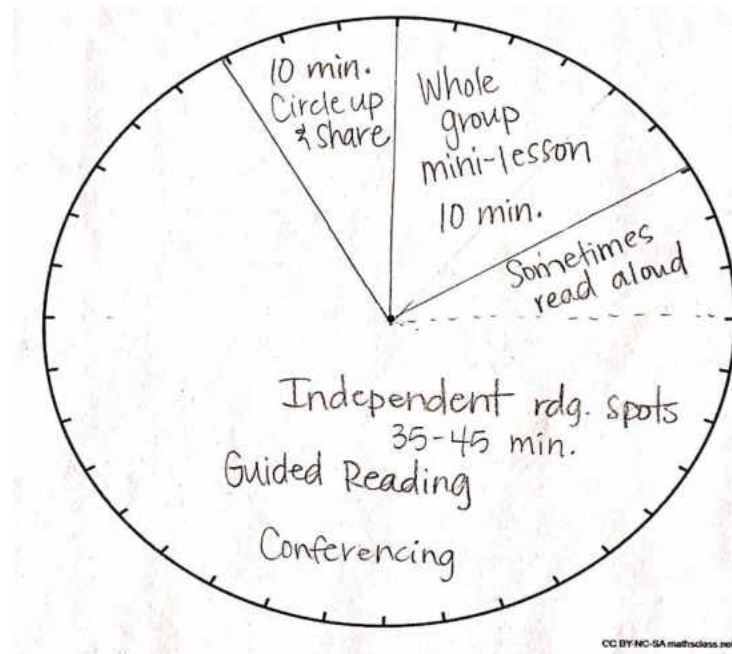
Figure 15. Ms. Thompson's visual depiction of her reading program.

According to her chart, Ms. Thompson's whole group minilesson is about 10 minutes

long. When asked if whole group and minilesson is the same thing, she said, "Yeah, whole group

and minilesson are the same thing." She has students sit in a circle during this time. About two-

thirds of Ms. Thompson's reading block, about 35-45 minutes, is comprised of simultaneously

occurring elements: students' independent reading, guided reading and conferencing. Referring

to an organizational program developed by Boushey and Moser (2006) she stated, "Because I

don't do Daily 5, it's not like stations." Rather, Ms. Thompson explained, "They all have

independent reading spots in the classroom that they go to. They read their own just right book

independently, and we work a lot on making sure they're choosing books that are appropriate for

them."

Once the students are seated in their own spots and reading independently, Ms. Thompson said she will call her "guided reading groups back and work with them at their level in their guided reading group, and we work on different skills here." Ms. Thompson explained the dotted line on her pie chart that separates her read aloud block from her independent reading indicates there are times when she includes reading aloud within her reading block. "It's not the same every day," explaining that a read aloud can take place during whole group, later in the morning, before or during writing, or later in the day. Reading aloud takes about 10 minutes. The final segment of Ms. Thompson's reading block is what she called "circle up & share." This is a short segment, lasting about 10 minutes. Ms. Thompson said that "Circle Up" is a time, "To get students to foster the reading community, to get them to share with each other, and build that excitement for our reading."

There are important things to note about how Ms. Thompson organizes and explains her reading program. She includes a minilesson which allows for conveying reading content information to the whole group. In this way, all students, regardless of reading level, have access to important information about reading. She seats them in a circle which according to Serafini (2001) establishes a setting where everyone can talk to each other during the lesson. Guided reading, by contrast, Ms. Thompson explains, allows her to focus in on the needs of her students and work with them more intensely on content such as strategic actions (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006). Also, she incorporates reading aloud as part of her reading program. A read aloud, according to Fountas and Pinnell (2006), "is a way of nourishing the intellect of your students, expanding background, vocabulary, and language, developing an appreciation for inquiry, and creating a literary community in your classroom" (p. 215). Finally, bringing closure to her lesson as a community allows Ms. Thompson to work towards her goal of bringing excitement and the

love of reading into the social setting (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Students can hear each other talk about how books work and what excited them that day about their reading.

The minilesson. As previously noted, Ms. Thompson explains that for the minilesson she has students gather around a circle. In doing so, wittingly or unwittingly she challenges traditional teaching arrangements. According to Serafini (2001) during reading workshop, when students are sitting facing the teacher in a "traditional arrangement, most of the comments are directed toward the teacher, rather than toward each other" (p. 71). She may be inviting more student to student interaction and setting up the physical arrangement of the lesson for Phase 2, "We do it," of the GRR model. Turn and talk, for example, may be more readily enacted.

She noted that minilessons are supposed to be short but pointed out she does go longer than "what she should" on some days. She explained:

> A general minilesson time is about 10 minutes so you can be quick and to the point and then get them to their reading spots and then [onto] guided reading where you can do more intense one on one specific instruction.

In parsing these comments, it sounds as though Ms. Thompson tries to adhere to the brevity described in literature about the features of a minilesson, e.g., brevity and focus, but there may be challenges retaining brevity.

During the second interview I prompted Ms. Thompson to use her pie chart to describe both teacher and student roles in a minilesson. She described her role as an explainer.

> In the whole group, my job is to deliver the minilesson for the day and explain the strategy or the genre text that we're working on. To explain the strategy and teach it to them, explain what I want them to learn from it and how I want them to apply it to their reading. Also [I teach] how the lessons that we're learning help them become better readers because that's the goal.

She described her students' roles as listeners.

> Their job during the whole group is to sit on the floor and listen and write down what I want them to write down from the chart. Be thinking about the lesson and what it is that I

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want them to do. To follow the directions and think about how they can apply the lesson to them as readers. I expect them to participate and do their job and be positive.

Embedded in these comments we hear Ms. Thompson embracing facets of Phase 1 of the GRR model by perceiving her role in the minilesson as an explainer. She does not mention her role is to model the strategy but she does say her role is to "teach it to them." Aligned with Phase 1 of the GRR model, students' role during the minilesson is to listen. They do not perform the task but rather she wants them to be "thinking" so they can "apply the lesson to them as readers." Fountas and Pinnell (2006) discuss the listening role and urge teachers to inform students "you'll do a lot of listening during that first part of the minilesson, and not a lot of talking" (p. 48). Not to be overlooked is Ms. Thompson's point that her goal is to help her students become better readers. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006), "Our ultimate goal as teachers is to help each student in our schools become a reader who loves books and all they have to offer" (p. 3).

Content of the minilesson. During Interview 1 Ms. Thompson stated she opens her reading block with the minilesson. The lesson itself, she stated, is provided in the basal reading program, Benchmark Literacy. The lesson is scripted, indicating what she should say for each minilesson for each day of the week. Ms. Thompson provided an example of what that would sound like.

> Today we're going to be working on sequence of events in this story. When we read the story I want you to notice those words that you find in the text that we've been talking about that help you know that something is going to be happening next, or in a certain order.

Ms. Thompson stated the minilessons pertain to a skill, strategy, or genre in the basal unit. Ms. Thompson explained more about the content of her minilessons.

> Whole group is often just a general lesson for everyone. Although sometimes I'll do a lesson the next day based on something I saw the kids doing. [Especially] if I see a lot of the kids doing it. But usually it is just right out of the book.

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Teaching minilessons determined by the basal curriculum is new to Ms. Thompson. Before this year the content of the minilesson was selected and planned by her. When she implemented the Literacy Collaborative, she used ideas from various books and gathered resources to develop a unit. For instance, she used Fountas and Pinnell's (2001) *Guiding Readers and Writers* as a basis for lessons. Ms. Thompson is striving to learn the new curriculum, how it works, and the content of the lessons prescribed in the teacher's manual.

Given that Ms. Thompson's current lessons are new to her, it is important to bear in mind that her perceptions of her minilessons could mismatch her actual instruction. Much of what she expresses about the roles and content of these lessons may be in conflict with the program she is currently using. As noted previously by Vanairsdale and Canedo (2011), drawing content and instruction from commercial programs affects instruction.

Ms. Taylor

Goals and how her program works. When Ms. Taylor, a former literacy coach, was asked in Interview 1 what was the most important thing for her readers to know and be able to do, she said "love reading." She stated her goal is "teaching kids the passion and joy that comes with loving books."

> If my kids don't leave this room loving reading, then I have done something wrong. I hope that they leave this room with a passion and a love for reading. That they have favorite authors. That they have favorite series. That they know how to think about books and have conversation about books. To ask questions and talk to the author in books. Basically just living like a real reader.

Also Ms. Taylor says it is important for her students to "do well on the MCAs." Her goal is to have her students reading at grade level. To achieve this goal, she incorporates a large amount of

reading time, especially independent reading, into her daily schedule. Her view is "the more reading that my students do the better readers they become."

According to Serafini (2001), "Adults in children's lives, teachers, parents, authors, all play a role in the success of a child and it is the skill of the classroom teacher, based on their knowledge of the reading process and the children in their classroom that makes the reading workshop successful" (p. 11). Ms. Taylor has made doing well on the MCA's (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments) which is a state test, a goal. Her goal is to meet the needs of her students in her classroom so they are able to meet grade level expectations. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006), "Through independent reading, students develop the habit of spending a significant amount of time reading" (p. 329).

When Ms. Taylor was presented with the pie chart and was asked to draw and label each part of her reading program, she divided the pie chart into four unequal sections and labeled each one (Figure 16).
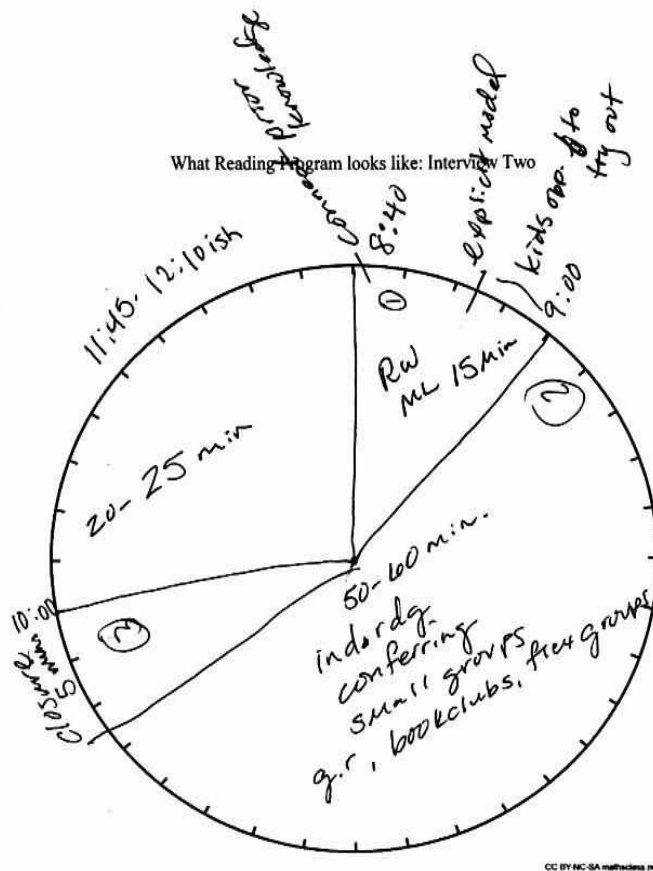
Figure 16. Ms. Taylor's visual depiction of her reading program.

Her literacy block lasts about an hour and forty-five minutes and is implemented five days a week. She starts her reading block with a minilesson, but most of Ms. Taylor's reading block is used for the segment she calls independent reading. It is about 50-60 minutes long. Ms. Taylor explains the multiple activities that occur simultaneously during Independent Reading.

> I release them to their independent reading [spots] so that they can get started independently reading. We do have logs that we record the times we start and finish, our page numbers, our books, and things like that to keep track of our reading. I conference with kids or I meet with groups. Sometimes it is a guided reading group. Sometimes it is a literature circle or a book club. Sometimes it is just calling five kids up to do a strategy lesson with that group, or it might be to write about a reading lesson. It is not always guided reading. I mean, it is a lot of different kinds of things that go on at that table.

After independent reading, Ms. Taylor initiates closure to the reading block by having students gather as a whole group. She wraps up by discussing things she noticed.

We circle back at the end and we close up. Some kids might do some sharing but typically I call out certain kids that I noticed who showed evidence of the specific lesson that I did teach.

The fourth segment on Ms. Taylor's graphic (Figure 16), is read aloud. She explains read aloud is central to her program because students must think as readers and build a positive relationship with books. Further, she selects books she will later use as the basis for minilesson instruction. She states:

I will just do the read aloud for mostly enjoyment because I really want them to authentically love the book. Then for a minilesson I will pull one of those books. It does not necessarily have to be the book that I read the day before. It might be a familiar book that we have already read or a copy of a page from a read aloud that we have read to be able to model this text or model this lesson.

By placing the minilesson in the opening segment of her reading block she is putting the main reading content for the day at the beginning of the lesson. This concurs with what Calkins (2010) recommends for placement of the minilesson in a reading workshop. By having the lesson first, there is continuity and a focus to the daily workshop. The second component in Ms. Taylor's minilessons is independent reading where her students are released to their independent reading spots and Ms. Taylor can pull students to work with them in guided reading groups, strategy groups, or conferencing. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2001), this is a time during reading workshop, where the teacher can "provide small group instruction while the other students engage in silent, independent reading or writing in a reader's notebook" (p. 373). During independent reading, students can also be engaged in a discussion or conversation about a book, also known as book clubs. "Preparing for a partner conversation during independent reading causes children to anticipate the content of the upcoming conversation and to consider not only their ideas, but how to support their thinking, and possible alternate points of view" (Nichols, 2006, p. 94). The read aloud is a component in Ms. Taylor's reading workshop where

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she is engaged in reading text aloud to her students. Having a separate read aloud time allows Ms. Taylor to engage in text where she can model, provide explicit instruction, and get involved in her book without taking time from her minilesson. Relative to reading aloud, Fountas and Pinnell (2001) state, "You can demonstrate a wide range of thinking—personal connections, connections to other texts, using background information, and adjusting your views" (p. 217). Thus, by reading aloud to her students, Ms. Taylor is creating an environment where students are using strategic thinking but in the context of listening to text. This provides students with covert practice using reading strategies.

The minilesson. According to her pie chart, Ms. Taylor has a 10-12 minute minilesson every day.

> Our reader's workshop starts with a minilesson. I always model [the task] for them. Then they give it a try. Maybe it is partner talk. They might have their reader's notebook with them as I give them the minilesson. They might do some writing in their reader's notebook. Then we move onto independent reading.

According to Ms. Taylor, her time frame for minilessons differs from what the basal curriculum mandates.

> If you did the entire [minilesson] lesson that the curriculum [Benchmark Literacy] manual expects you to do, it would take 30 to 40 minutes. In Reader's Workshop a minilesson is 10 minutes or 12 minutes so that you can get your kids independently reading. I really am a stickler about trying to stay between 10 and 12 minutes with that minilesson because it has to be quick.

When asked to describe what her minilessons look and sound like, Ms. Taylor stated her students come "to circle." Circle is a big area in the classroom where her minilessons take place. Ms. Taylor will have her students bring their reader's notebook to the circle with them. She indicated, "The easel is kind of my main showcase. This is where she does the "modeling and any writing that I need to do." Ms. Taylor described what her reading instruction would look like in a

minilesson using *Charlotte's Web*, (White, 1980) when her topic was "thinking about a line in

text."

> I pulled out the *Charlotte's Web* book that we were reading and I modeled for them how I
> think about a line in *Charlotte's Web*. Then I made a T-chart on the easel, and I showed
> them how I would write that line in there from *Charlotte's Web*. Then I wrote on the
> other side of the T-chart what my thinking was.

Also during the minilesson, Ms. Taylor stated her students do "a little bit of trying" out what was

taught.

> I will hopefully try to do an explicit model. I will have some kids get an opportunity to
> try it out. Sometimes this gets muddy and it gets kind of combined. Sometimes this is
> very quick, [or some days] I spend more time on this. Sometimes they just try and go
> right in with me if I know that it is something that they can do and they don't need much
> modeling.

Ms. Taylor said she always has a closing to the minilesson which, after guided practice such as

turn and talk, involves having students refocus as a whole group. She tells about a time when

she observed during the closing, the minilesson did not seem to be successful.

> At the end [of the minilesson] we always have a closing. [Only] three people could
> remember what it was that my minilesson was! So a huge focus for me is to figure out
> what can I do to keep these kids engaged, so they understand this is where they are
> getting what it is that they need to learn, right here [in the minilesson].

In listening to Ms. Taylor's explanation of her minilesson, her lessons are compatible

with the parts of the minilessons described in the literature. While she doesn't mention

beginning her lesson with the connection part of the minilesson (Calkins, 2010), she does explain

she uses explicit modeling which often involves using charts. Thus, it appears Ms. Taylor allows

herself to be the "sage on the stage" to make covert reading behaviors overt for her students

(Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Active involvement (Calkins, 2010) is also a part of her minilesson

and is described by her as "kids get an opportunity to try it out" (p. 55). This guided practice, a

step that involves her supporting students as they try out the strategy or skill modeled in the

minilesson, is the part of the lesson that reflects Phase 2 of the GRR where task performance is partially released to the students as the teacher performs the task with her students. According to Nichols (2006), when students talk with a partner, they are engaged in text that allows them to "consider not only their ideas, but how to support their thinking, and possible alternate points of view" (p. 94). The discussions or a conversation that take place around text delivers the support readers need to "stretch their thinking" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 218). In addition Nichols (2006) states, "As we orchestrate talk around rich text, children begin to engage in the negotiation of meaning that is the hallmark of purposeful talk and constructivist learning" (p. 53).

Regarding length, Ms. Taylor is in tune with the feature of brevity when it comes to minilessons. If the lessons are longer, they become maxilessons (Hagerty, 1992) and that cuts into a student's independent reading time (Calkins, 2003). For some of her students, Ms. Taylor confesses the minilesson is not always valuable or useful because it is not easy for some students to "stay focused to take in the specific lesson." She observes, for this particular group of students, it is difficult for them to sit on the floor past 10 minutes.

When asked about her role during the minilesson, Ms. Taylor described her role as "heavy handed teaching." She also sees herself as "specifically instructing and teaching and modeling." Explicit modeling is a behavior Ms. Taylor states she uses when implementing reading topics during minilessons in her reading program. She uses herself as a model in teaching reading and sees that as a strength in her reading instruction.

> Explicitly model. Explicit. So explicit. I try my hardest to use my own reading first. This is what I do as a reader. It might be something that is going to help you as a reader. I use my own books. I bring my own books to show the kids because I think they have to see that I am a reader as well. They have to know what I am doing. I have my own reader's notebooks. I show them my own writing about reading in my notebooks.

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When Ms. Taylor describes her role during the minilesson as teaching strategies

explicitly, she reflects what Almasi and Fullerton (2012) described in the literature as teaching

readers "*how* to perform a given strategy" (p. 276, italics in original). Kelcey and Carlisle

(2013) also view explicit instruction as showing how and central to students' learning. Fisher

and Frey (2008b) express explicit teaching in the form of demonstration or modeling and

explanation as Phase 1 of the GRR model. The teacher, Ms. Taylor, is fully performing the task

and her students are listening. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006) this is an important part

of the minilesson. They tell teachers, "You will want to provide explicit demonstrations to help

your students learn how to respond to a text through talking, writing, and sometimes drawing"

(Fountas and Pinnell, 2006, p. 367).

When Ms. Taylor was prompted to use her pie chart to explain her students' role during

the minilesson, Ms. Taylor saw her students' role to be engaged.

> It is to hopefully be engaged so that they can listen and learn and be ready to take in some
> new instruction. I am doing the work, most of the work here in my minilesson and in
> independent reading the [students] are doing the work. That is *their* heavy work time.

Ms. Taylor's juxtaposition of teacher and student roles during minilessons classically aligns with

how the literature on minilessons views how minilessons work: the teacher models and students

actively listen and watch as the teacher performs what students need to know and do as readers

(Calkins, 2010; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Hagerty, 1992). During Ms. Taylor's minilesson

instruction, she is performing the task as associated with Phase 1 of the GRR model (Fisher,

2008). According to Calkins (2010), the next part of the minilesson is active involvement.

During this part, Phase 2 of the GRR model (We do it) the teacher provides guided practice and

scaffolds as the students engage in trying out what they are being taught (Fisher & Frey, 2008a).

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Content of the minilesson. Ms. Taylor states her ideas for her whole group minilessons come from combining what she knows from her old curriculum, Literacy Collaborative, with what is expected instructional content in the new curriculum, Benchmark Literacy. She notes, however, that the new curriculum devotes more time than needed on only a few strategies and objectives. She asserts, she does not need three weeks to teach two objectives.

> I look at the objectives in the unit and I know that I have to weave those in but I really do not need to teach those. It is usually two big objectives over the span of three weeks.

She said her minilesson topics pertain to strategy instruction, literary elements, and skills and are all minilesson topics she teaches to help students become better readers. She provided an example of what that would sound like.

> I guess one of the lessons that we did was how readers set new goals for their reading. We looked at our logs and what books we had been reading to see if we needed to kind of branch out of the genre that we typically navigated to try and challenge ourselves a little bit. We set some new goals and I [modeled] that as a reader. I try to get outside of my box and read fantasy or something that I really do not want to read. It helps me become stronger as a reader.

Ms. Taylor appears to view the designated curriculum as a guide for her teaching. She seems to align with the ideas expressed by Serafini (2001) about teaching from the commercial program with too much fidelity. Serafini (2001) states, "Blindly following a teacher's manual or the scope and sequence of a commercial reading program will not help our children become competent readers" (p. 11). Further, Ms. Taylor appears to be knowledgeable about all the types of minilessons (strategies, skills, literary elements and attitude lessons). Given her rich professional knowledge, if used for instruction, her students will experience learning "Thinking Within the Text, Thinking Beyond the Text, and Thinking About the Text" (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006, p. 32).

Ms. Fisher

    Goals and how her program works. When Ms. Fisher, a fourth grade teacher and former literacy coach, was asked during Interview 1 what her goal was for her readers, she said to have "confidence." Ms. Fisher stated, "I think it is important that my readers feel confident that they can read. Without that confidence, it does not matter what I teach them. They have to feel confident that they can do it." Also a goal that Ms. Fisher has is she wants her students to know "we are not all the same."

> I think that there has to be a certain atmosphere in your classroom to provide that support [to accept] that we are all different. But, truly a kid has to know that they can do it and they can be successful.

Ms. Fisher's goals for her students to be confident and to feel accepted are both goals that reflect the type of classroom environment she chooses to provide for her students. In her view, students need an understanding and encouraging environment to support their growth as readers. In this regard Serafini (2001) states, "Whether this means creating a safe place to make mistakes or allowing children the extra time they need to develop, they need space" (p. 12).

    During the second interview, when Ms. Fisher was given the pie chart and asked to draw and label each part of her reading program, she divided the chart into three sections: minilesson (ML), interactive read aloud (IRA), and guided reading (GR) (Figure 17). The figure shows Ms. Fisher's minilesson is about 20-30 minutes long; guided reading about 60 minutes, and the interactive read aloud is about 15-20 minutes long. During guided reading she meets with two groups for about 30 minutes each.
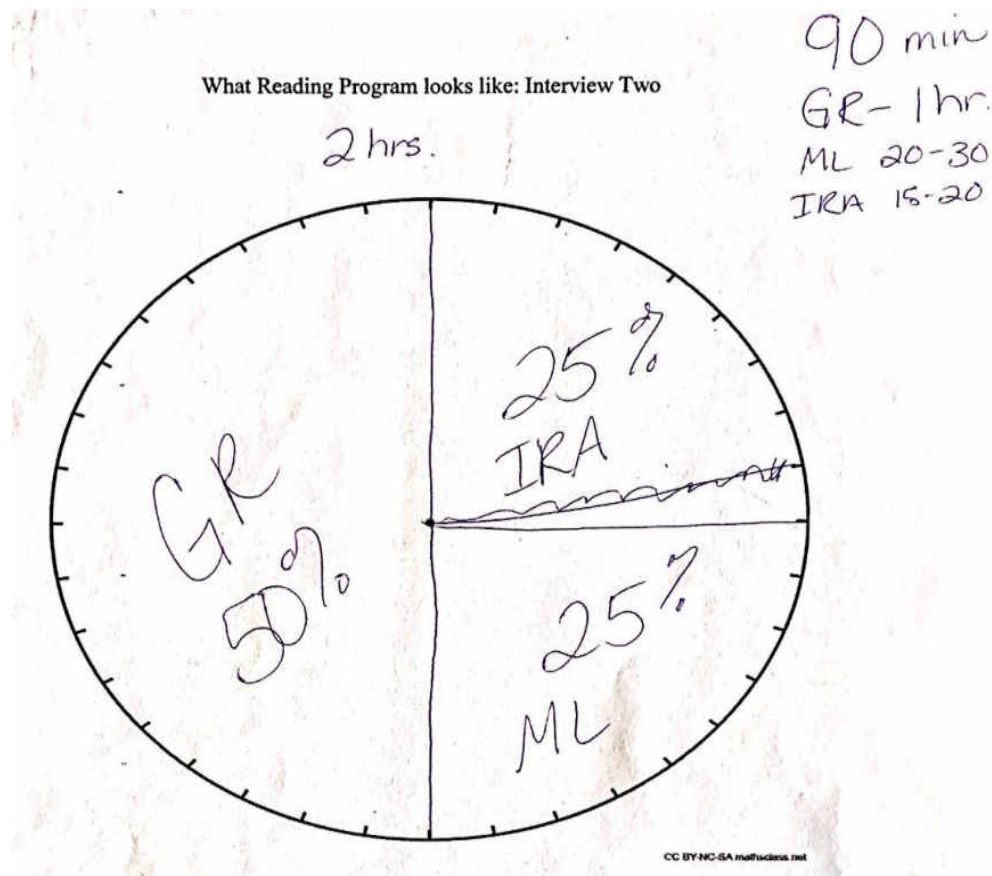
Figure 17. Ms. Fisher's visual depiction of her reading program.

Ms. Fisher's reading block begins with guided reading then she teaches a whole group minilesson. Her students go to Title I reading right away in the morning. She said she would prefer beginning the reading block with the minilesson and then move into reading groups. But because of her Title I schedule, the groups she wants to meet with the most are gone for Title I, and she can't begin her minilesson until after guided reading.

> Half my class is out for the first chunk, which is the first time this has ever happened.
> Usually it is your lower groups that you see all the time, and I would restructure this. I
> have said this 100 times but I have 10 students that leave the classroom for either Special
> Education or Title I reading. It is my high groups left. I have spent a lot of time with my
> high groups this year because they are the only ones left in the room.

Ms. Fisher states the interactive read aloud is a very important component in her reading block.

Ms. Fisher makes reference to Benchmark Literacy's recommendation of an interactive read

aloud being done every day. The interactive read aloud book "serves a purpose for the following

day." Ms. Fisher reads the book to her class one day and the next day, uses segments of it for the

minilesson.

> The interactive read aloud I believe is super important because that allows you to apply
> all these strategies and skills that you are working with in an actual text and it becomes
> your mentor text because you can always refer back to that with the kids.

Daily, Ms. Fisher ends her reading block by having the students gather up again, and she

conducts what she calls a "share out."

> Sometimes it is a whole share, sometimes it is a turn and talk, partner up. It just kind of
> depends on the time. If [the students] partner up, usually I ask for one or two to share. It
> is also my gut feeling about how many people are going to want to share because you can
> only sit for so long on the carpet before somebody's not quite on task.

According to Fountas and Pinnell, (2006), "The reading workshop begins with a brief minilesson

on any aspect of reading. After that, students independently (and silently) read books they have

selected themselves. The workshop ends with a brief sharing period" (p. 269-270). But due to

"pull out" schedules for readers with high needs, Ms. Fisher's reading program is out of sync

with recommendations for how to organize reading workshop. She has had to modify the way

she prefers to organize her reading program and teaches the minilesson after small group

sessions. A complication of this is that during guided reading and conferring, students cannot

apply the content of the minilesson (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006, p. 354).

Like Fountas and Pinnell, Ms. Fisher views interactive read aloud as instructional.

Regarding interactive read aloud, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) say, "Rather than picking up a

book…you'll want to decide what you want to teach and then look at any good text through that

lens—that's basic to teaching readers rather than teaching to the texts" (p. 367). Ms. Fisher refers to the books she reads during interactive read aloud as "mentor" texts, and she uses these texts she reads during her interactive aloud to reinforce the strategy or skill she is teaching in her minilesson. Further, when Ms. Fisher reads the text aloud, she frees students' "attention from processing the print to think about what is happening in the text and what it means as well as how the writer communicates the information (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 216). In this way, Ms. Fisher allows students to have an internal conversation with the text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

The minilesson. Ms. Fisher appears to have a sense of the "big picture" of how the Benchmark Literacy curriculum is designed. She explains the daily minilessons build each day over the three-week-long unit. Benchmark Literacy names a strategy or skill and teachers carry out instruction over the three week unit. She views this as favorable, stating that her fourth grade readers need scaffolding, and that the Benchmark Literacy curriculum is designed to gradually release responsibility for task performance to the students a little bit each day.

> I truly like that about the program because I think a lot of times the reason kids do not do what you have asked them to do is they do not know what you wanted them to do. I try to always go back to that thinking if I was a kid, would I have known. So providing them with examples and stuff. The third week in the unit it builds up their fluency [the third week of every unit devoted to fluency objectives].

The minilesson in Ms. Fisher's classroom takes place when the students gather together at a certain area on the carpet. For this whole group lesson, Ms. Fisher states she is in front and her students sit in a group on the floor. She states that her minilesson is focused on one topic and to engage her students and keep their attention, she emphasizes the lessons need to be kept short.

> The big thing is kids need to know what you want them to learn. They have to know and understand the purpose for being there. If it is a fluency lesson about pausing at the end of periods, they have to understand that the reason you have to do that is nobody will understand you if you are reading out loud.

When Ms. Fisher is implementing the whole group minilesson, her purpose is to provide them with a "skill set or strategy" that they will apply independently.

> You can tell [students] as many times as you want this is what a summary is or this is how you solve words but if they do not actually get to apply it, they will not develop that as a skill or strategy that they independently can do without you.

The teaching move Ms. Fisher talks about using during teaching is modeling. She also states she uses interaction to reduce her role as "leader."

> I really try to provide kids with a lot of examples. I think that that is huge for them. Whether it be in reading or writing. I think that modeling your thinking aloud for them is really big. Student participation is very big. I like it to be more student-oriented than teacher-led.

She builds on her point that she wants her minilessons to be interactive and to involve practice.

> If I just demonstrated up there for them, they [would] not get it. A lot of kids need you to keep drawing them back. "Well, what did you think were the most important points?" Then, show them how to do it, and then actually let them do it too.

> I usually will tell them to find a spot in their book where the author didn't clearly state something but they knew this was happening, and we give a lot of examples. Sometimes we might play a game to get them to understand that that is what an author does. An author crafts clues and you just have to be a detective to solve it.

Aspects of Ms. Fisher's minilessons align with what is expressed in the literature about minilessons. For example, Ms. Fisher models and shows her students how to do something and provides examples during her minilesson Though her pie chart (Figure 17) shows her minilessons are 20-30 minutes long, she speaks about brevity and also focus (Calkins, 2003b; Fountas and Pinnell, 2006). The focus of the lesson is supposed to be evident to the students. Ms. Fisher also considers that for students to learn the reading content from the lesson, her minilessons need to be short and the students need to understand the purpose. From Ms. Fisher's statements, it is not clear how the curriculum scaffolds and releases responsibility for task independence to readers, but Ms. Fisher values gradual release towards independence. She states

that without scaffolding, students may not understand what you want them to do. She seems to equate gradually releasing responsibility with scaffolding, though in actuality, the responsibility for task performance can be released to learners without scaffolding (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988) this can be problematic and result in learners struggling with the task.

Two teaching-related ideas come through as Ms. Fisher talks about her minilesson instruction: modeling and interaction, though there are some mixed messages about modeling. Ms. Fisher says "modeling your thinking aloud" has a big place in her lessons but follows up by saying she wants her minilessons to be "more student-oriented than teacher-led. According to Miller, (2008), "thinking aloud about our thinking is the best way to make thinking visible" (p. 60). Thinking aloud is a way to show students how to do something during a minilesson. Thinking aloud what you want students to learn takes place during the teaching component of the minilesson and takes place during the "I do it" Phase of the GRR model (Miller, 2008).

Ms. Fisher indicates she uses interaction to reduce her role as leader and indicated student participant is big. A tension seems to arise here within Ms. Fisher's ideas as she states she values modeling but wants the students to share in the modeling. Calkins (2003b) raises cautions about having students take too much control of the minilesson. Calkins (2003b) says, "One predictable problem we encounter during this phase is that some teachers have been taught that it is better to elicit information from children rather than to say anything to them in a straightforward way. The result is that some teachers begin the minilesson with a barrage of questions" (p. 49). It may be surprising but according to Calkins (2003b), teachers should avoid asking questions during minilessons. Calkins (2003b) says, "above all, avoid asking known-answer questions in which you're looking for a particular answer because children can't read

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your mind, so their answers will take you off in different directions, turning a minilesson into a conversational swamp" (p. 49).

During Interview 2, when Ms. Fisher was prompted to use her pie chart to explain her role during the minilesson, she described it as being a "leader." But, she also indicates she guides students to be independent as the lessons progress throughout the week and unit.

> I am leading the instruction most of the time. I try to have the kids turn and talk as much as we can or break off with the task we have done. Usually the first few days we are doing it together where it is shared. You know, come on up tell me from there what do you see? By the middle of the week it is, let's get with a partner and you try this and by the end of the week it is, you are solo.

When Ms. Fisher was prompted to use her chart to explain the student's role during the minilesson, she states they are to be "attentive, listen and focus." As the lessons progress through the week, students are to become interactive.

> During the whole group lesson, their first role is to be attentive and listen and focus but then that application piece is always there and depending on which day, if it is the beginning of the week, usually Monday and Tuesday, it is the interaction, to be interactive, active listeners. I don't want them sitting there not saying anything because then I know it is either over their head or they don't care but ultimately during our reading block they need to be reading.

A tension between teachers as competent other and handing over responsibility to students resurfaces as Ms. Fisher speaks of teacher and student roles during minilessons. Ms. Fisher explains that at the beginning of her unit she is the lesson leader but that role diminishes over the course of the unit. The commercial curriculum still labels the whole group lesson as a minilesson, but the ideal, from the commercial curriculum, is that over the course of the unit the teacher and students reverse roles. Though Ms. Fisher begins the minilesson, the students, during the minilesson, take over the task and the teacher is the monitor. Thus, at the beginning of the unit, the teacher is "sage on the stage" but by the end of the unit, the teacher is more like

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"guide on the side." Relative to the GRR model of teaching, throughout the unit, during the minilesson, Phase 1 (I do it) fades away or "flat lines" a bit more each day because the lesson begins with less and less of a modeling role for the teacher. Perhaps, by the end of the unit, the lessons are no longer minilessons since a key feature of a minilesson is that the teacher uses explicit instruction to teach students content. Nevertheless, because teacher and student roles change during the unit, how to function during these whole group lessons change throughout the unit. According to Calkins (2003b), on many occasions, students should be taught what their job is during a minilesson. Calkins' ideal is that students should also be taught that during a minilesson the teacher will be modeling and showing them strategies they will use during reading (Calkins, 2003b). Calkins (2003b) says students should be told, "You'll do a lot of listening during that first part of the minilesson, and not a lot of talking because this introduces children to the connection and the teaching part of a minilesson" (p. 48).

Content of the minilesson. Before Benchmark Literacy, Ms. Fisher organized her minilessons according to demands of the genre they were using for instruction. Now, her topic ideas for minilessons come mainly from the reading series Benchmark Literacy.

> We start the year with routines [e.g., how reading workshop works and how to behave]. We talk predicting, word solving strategies…main idea, inferencing, sequencing, author's craft, author's purpose, literary elements, plot, setting, timelines, character development, and character traits.

Ms. Fisher states that her topics and resources used in her minilessons also come from the Literacy Collaborative and professional resources.

> A lot of [minilesson topics] come from Fountas and Pinnell. When we built the fourth grade unit, we used Lucy Calkins reading units of study, we would find charts that we really liked and we used [them] as anchor charts [in our lessons].

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With the changeover to new commercial curriculum, Benchmark Literacy dominates decisions about what gets taught in Ms. Fisher's classroom. By adhering to the units in the textbook, the scope and sequence for teaching and learning is determined by what is pre-established there day by day, week by week, year by year. In the case of Benchmark Literacy, one week of each unit is devoted to aspects of fluency. Other weeks are preset topics that according to Ms. Fisher, address literary elements, comprehension strategies, and skills.

Summary of Talking About Minilessons in the Reading Program

Theme 1, Opportunity to Talk the Talk about Reading and Minilessons, describes my participants' foundational views about why and how they teach and addresses the research question, "How do teachers perceive their minilesson instruction?" According to the reading education literature, minilessons are a form of explicit instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2006; Calkins, 1994). To develop a more focused image of the participants' minilessons, I present a summary of teachers' descriptions of what their minilessons look and sound like. I also summarize what they say is the content of their lessons.

Interview data from all four teachers indicated they provide explicit instruction in the form of a minilesson. Ms. Smith, however, when asked, did not use the term minilesson but called the lesson "whole group," although the commercial program calls the lessons to which she refers, the "minilesson." All four teachers expressed the whole group minilesson should be short, though some stated their lessons varied in length from 10-30 minutes. The participants all indicated that their minilessons take place where the students gather together at a certain area at the carpet and the teacher is front and center.

Ms. Taylor and Ms. Fisher both described a minilesson format aligned with the educational literature. Ms. Taylor suggests her lessons have a clear opening and she begins her

lessons by connecting students' prior knowledge to the new minilesson topic. Ms. Fisher emphasized students must know the purpose of the lesson (e.g., "kids need to know what you want them to learn"). All four teachers indicated the whole group minilesson called for the teacher to be a leader who modeled the expected behavior, or provided explicit instruction.

> Ms. Smith: I am leading the lesson, and I am teaching the skill and modeling it.

> Ms. Thompson:. . . my job is to deliver the minilesson for the day and explain the strategy or the genre text that we're working on.

> Ms. Taylor: Explicitly model. Explicit. So explicit.

> Ms. Fisher: I am leading instruction most of the time. And I think that modeling your thinking aloud for them is really big.

These teaching behaviors and roles are aligned with the "I do it" Phase of the instructional model, Gradual Release of Responsibility (Figure 5). The teacher provides high support and uses pedagogical practices such as thinking aloud, modeling and giving examples. The students are listening and focused. The four participants' statements are compatible with what the literature says a minilesson is, "explicit teaching…provides very specific instruction regarding effective reading strategies and skills or focuses students' attention on elements of literature" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 122) but, recall the tensions in Ms. Fisher's statements.

All four teachers expressed they incorporated large amounts of guided practice into their minilessons. Large amounts of interaction within the minilesson contrasts with recommendations in the literature since interaction can unravel the focus of the lesson, reduce the amount of teacher expertise that is shared, and cause the lesson to be too long (Calkins, 2010; Hagerty, 1992). Participants' comments suggest they use interaction for engagement, management, and due to concern about being "sage on the stage."

Ms. Smith: It is a way of both engaging them and giving me a little bit of informal feedback just to kind of know where they are at.

Ms. Thompson: I guess [asking questions is] to just build participation and monitor who is listening and who is not. Who is participating and to get [the students] involved.

Ms. Taylor: Informal assessing what your students are able to do and to know. I am fishing to see if there is understanding. If there is not then I know I have to go back to do more modeling and more teaching and if there is then I know I can speed through quicker.

Ms. Fisher: Student participation is very big. I like [the minilesson] to be more student-oriented than teacher-led. And if I just demonstrated up there for them, they [would] not get it. A lot of kids need you to keep drawing them back.

The purpose of interaction during the Guided Practice Phase of the Gradual Release of Responsibility model is for the teacher to provide moderate and even low support after he or she provides rich demonstration and clear, complete explanation of the behaviors to be learned. A problem occurs when questions are used during the minilesson when explicit instruction is supposed to be implemented. Teachers should avoid asking too many questions during minilessons, and "above all, avoid asking known-answer questions in which you're looking for a particular answer" (Calkins, 2003b, p. 49).

Both Ms. Taylor and Ms. Fisher explain their minilesson instruction in language aligned with the Gradual Release of Responsibility model. They indicate the minilesson is where the teacher provides high support and that support diminishes as the teacher hands over responsibility for the task to the learner.

Ms. Taylor: I am doing the work, the most of the work here in my minilesson, and independent reading the [students] are doing the work. That is their heavy work time.

Ms. Fisher: By the middle of the week it is, let us get with a partner and you try this. And, by the end of the week it is, you are solo.

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Ms. Taylor and Ms. Fisher begin their minilesson in the "I do it" Phase of the GRR model, the phase in which teachers are doing all the work. Gradually the students are released responsibility and are engaged in the Guided Instruction, "We do it" Phase of the GRR model. Here the teachers are providing scaffolding when the students are working in partners. Eventually, as Ms. Taylor indicated, the students work independently in the "You do it alone" Phase of the GRR model. When teachers use detailed and explicit language during Phase 1 of the GRR model, this helps students comprehend minilessons instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

Theme 2: What Walking the Talk Looks and Sounds Like

Findings for Theme 2 address the following research questions:

- What is the content being taught [in the minilessons]?
- How do teachers teach the minilesson content?

The findings in Theme 2 draw almost exclusively from observational data, that is, the 36 transcribed video recordings of the four participants' reading minilesson instruction. By contrast, Theme 1, Opportunity to Talk the Talk about Reading and Minilessons, drew from both Interview 1 and Interview 2. In that theme, participants were able to state their ideals about how their minilessons worked. Observational data, however, sheds light on what actually happens in the classroom, when teachers, curriculum and students intersect. Theme 2 offers a detailed view of what actually occurred during teaching, bearing in mind that in this instrumental case study, the phenomenon, minilessons, is the primary interest and not the actual teacher. The main point of this case is to know more about what is taught in the lessons and what minilesson instruction looks and sounds like in the classroom setting. Thus, in this analysis, detailed information on content and instruction are presented, and the main focus is not on the teacher but on the content and the instruction.

Theme 2 is divided into three main sections. The first section, Minilesson Content, answers the research question, What is the content being taught [in the minilessons]? In the format of a table (see Table 4), participants' minilesson topics are presented. To contextualize the content, data segments for four types of minilessons are presented: strategy, skill, literary, and attitude. Rather than simply state what the content is, the data segments help to characterize the minilesson content.

Following the section on the Minilesson Content, findings address the research question, How do teachers teach the minilesson content? There are two sections addressing this question: Teaching the Minilesson, and Teachers' Use of Questioning During the Minilesson. The section, Teaching the Minilesson, showcases teaching behaviors and materials used during the lessons. The "I do it" Phase of the Gradual Release of Responsibility model is used as a lens for focusing on how teachers deliver the lesson content. Rather than providing short data segments to show facets of many minilessons, I present a minilesson in its entirety. In doing so, what one minilesson looks and sounds like is available for observation of teaching behaviors, teacher-student interactions, and use of materials. It shows the range of what occurred during one lesson, which is derived from the assigned curriculum. A second lesson taught by another teacher is made available for additional perspective in Appendix H. A summative statement about this lesson is included in the summary for Theme 2.

The third section, Teachers' Use of Questioning During the Minilesson, also addresses the research question, How do teachers teach the minilesson content? All of the participants in this study used extensive questioning during their minilesson instruction. Thus, a closer look at this was warranted.

Minilesson Content

Describing the Minilesson Content is significant to this study because part of the purpose of this study was to know more about comprehension strategy instruction. Strategies are covert processes and literature indicates (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006) explicit instruction, as designed to be used in minilessons, supports learning these covert processes. Of the 36 minilessons video recorded, the breakdown of the minilesson topics follows in Table 4. Many of the lessons were continuations of the same lesson from the previous day, but each observation was counted as a separate lesson. Teachers often stayed with the content of a minilesson for up to 5 days, as that was the directive in the Benchmark Literacy Program.

Table 4. Types and Topics of Minilessons Observed in This Study.

Minilesson Type	Topics
Strategy Content (deliberate cognitive behaviors that lead to meaning construction)	5 lessons on sequencing 5 lessons on summarizing 4 lessons on inferring
Skills (automatic actions that lead to reading efficiently)	1 lesson on adjectives 5 lessons on fluency
Literary (information about how books work)	3 lessons on genre (trickster tales, realistic fiction) 7 lessons on story elements 1 lesson on poetry 2 lessons on author's message/purpose
Attitude (personal habits and behaviors that support personal habits of mind)	1 lesson on stamina 2 lessons on listening

According to the participants, nearly all of the lesson topics were derived directly from Benchmark Literacy, though some were derived from teachers' previous experiences with the Literacy Collaborative or other professional knowledge. For example, Ms. Thompson taught a

lesson on poetry that was not part of the assigned curriculum. While all reading minilessons have potential to impact reading comprehension, the strategy and literary lessons noted in Table 4 appear to have the most direct influence on reading comprehension. These lessons accounted for 72% of the lessons recorded during the data collection period. This information, however, does little to characterize or provide a picture of what was covered during the lesson. Thus, in the segments that follow, I provide an indication of what the literacy content looked and sounded like for each type of minilesson. At a later point in the Theme 2 findings, I point out various teaching behaviors but the data in this section are presented as evidence of minilesson content.

Strategy topics. According to the reading education literature, teaching students to be strategic readers is essential to comprehension (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Fourteen of the 36 minilessons video recorded were categorized as strategy lessons. Ms. Smith, for example, taught 5 lessons on sequencing. While this could be viewed as a skill, generally the point of sequencing is to organize information to construct meaning which is more strategy related. A segment from one of her lessons is presented here to show that sequencing information can be an oblique endeavor when a host of information surrounds what happens first, next and last. The story was about the lifecycle of an oak tree but information about what a seeds needs to germinate is embedded in the attempt to teach the sequence of the life cycle. Ms. Smith uses a big book and reads it aloud to the class as they looked on. Note, for clarity, the text is italicized when she reads aloud.

> Ms. Smith: This is our Chapter 2, *A New Oak Tree Grows. A few months after the acorn falls, roots begin to grow. The roots grow into the ground.*
> Ms. Smith: Right here they have actually given us a picture. The actual photograph of a seed and a root, and you can tell it is pointing to all these different things that are coming off, and those are all the roots.
> It says, *Roots grow if the acorn stays moist and cool.* What do you think helps keep the acorn moist and cool? Lisa?

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> Lisa: The soil and dirt.
> Ms. Smith: The soil and dirt. What else would you need to make it moist? Bill?
> Bill: Um.
> Ms. Smith: Really quickly, let us answer that question. What would we use to keep the soil moist? Paul?
> Paul: Water.
> Ms. Smith: You would definitely need water.

It may be challenging for readers to ascertain the purpose of the lesson when the content of the text, the life cycle of an oak tree, overshadows the reading strategy, which in this case was sequencing. According to Fountas and Pinnell, (2006), "Readers of factual text are required to process a great deal of topic-specific information, identifying new information and adding to what they already know" (p. 183). Given this, when using informational text such as the one Ms. Smith is using, teachers may need to consider using text to highlight the strategy and avoid confusing the focus of the lesson.

Summarizing was the topic of four of nine minilessons for fourth grade teacher, Ms. Fisher. Summarizing is a strategy that causes readers to use "within text information" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 43) to construct an organized comprehension of the main parts of the story. To show what a summarizing lesson covers, a lesson segment from Ms. Fisher is highlighted. In the lesson she used a chart consisting of the words, "Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then." This chart, from Literacy Collaborative, is a scaffold for summarizing text, and each word, e.g., Somebody or Wanted, serves as a prompt to string together text content. Ms. Fisher read the story, *Wilma Unlimited* (Krull, 1996), and her students summarized the story using the "Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then" scaffold. During the minilesson, the students wrote their summaries in their reading journals.

> Ms. Fisher: So "Somebody," who is the main character in the story?
> Carl: Wilma.
> Ms. Fisher: Wilma Rudolf, right? What did she "Want?"

Jen: She wanted to overcome her fear.
Ms. Fisher: I cannot hear everyone at once. Who would like to tell us? What did she "Want?" Kim?
Kim: She wanted to overcome her problem.
Ms. Fisher: What is the problem in the story? Mark?
Mark: She got paralyzed in one of her legs and then she took off the brace.
Ms. Fisher: "So then" what happened next? John?
John? She tried to overcome her fear on taking off the brace and walking.
Ms. Fisher: She went to therapy and she went walking and then the resolution is how did the story end up? Andy?
Andy: She became a racing champion.

The chart, "Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then" was also used by Ms. Thompson in her minilesson on summarizing a chapter from the story *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1980). Ms. Thompson filled out the chart as the students were answering her summary questions.

Ms. Thompson: What did Wilbur "Want" in Chapter 9? What was it that he "Wanted?" Tom what did he "Want?"
Tom: To spin a web.
Ms. Thompson: He "Wanted" to spin a web, remember? He said, "I can spin a web. Just tell me how to do it, no big deal. I can do it." So he "Wanted" to spin a web. "But" we have a "But." "But" what happened?
Julie: He fell.
Mrs. Thompson: He fell. He could not do it. Emma?
Emma: He is not a spider.
Ms. Thompson: Because what?
Emma: Because he is not a spider.
Ms. Thompson: He is not a spider, is he? "So" Wilbur "Wanted" to spin a web "But" he could not do it because he is not a spider.

Summarizing is a strategy readers use to "put together important information" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 43). According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006), this strategy is used when readers are "Thinking Within the Text" meaning readers "process print to gather basic information" (p. 32). According to Table 4, five of the 14 strategy lessons were on summarizing. In both lessons, the curriculum chart served as a formula for thinking in a summative way about text. The words on the chart are the formula for "extracting information from a text," in this case, a text written for use with the chart and devices like this can scaffold the "task of summarizing text" (Fountas

& Pinnell, 2006, p. 48). It is reasonable, however, to wonder how effective the "Somebody, Wanted, But, So Then" scaffold holds up when applied to any developmentally appropriate text at large. Or, how well does this tool work for text not designed for the scaffold?

Because strategic comprehension is a focus of this study, it is of value to examine another strategy minilesson topic: inferring. Inferring is a difficult strategy to understand (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007) in part, because it is easily confused with predicting. Both strategies call for readers to Think Beyond the Text and use their background knowledge about the world and text. Predicting is when readers make an informed guess about what will happen next. Inferring, however, springs from author's implied, unstated information and leads to theorizing or imagining in relation to the story (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

Three out of nine recorded observations of Ms. Taylor were of her teaching strategy based lessons on the topic of inferring. In the lesson segment presented here (selected because it was the third in her series of 3 lessons) she used the curriculum poster "Mystery of the Disappearing Matter" from Benchmark Literacy. The poster and text were created for teaching inferring and like the summarizing chart, has a scaffold: Clues + Connections = Inferring. In this lesson segment, Ms. Taylor refers to clues and her personal connections—what she knows from her personal background knowledge—to infer that the dog in the story, Sneakers, is too warm.

> Ms. Taylor: I am going to use my connections or what I know to help try and make inferences in this story, "The Mystery of the Disappearing Matter." *The thermometer read 102°F (39°C).*
> Jim: Ohhh.
> Ms. Taylor: *Tom and his dog, Sneakers, sat on the porch. Sneakers was panting*. Now here is what I know. Here is a connection. I know that when it is hot like this that dog's pant. Do you know why they do that?
> Derek: Because they are hot?
> Ms. Taylor: Who knows why they do that? Jill?
> Jill: Because when they pant it is kind of like sweating for them so they get more cool.

Ms. Taylor: Yeah. You know that about dogs. That is a connection that probably most of us have and we know that about dogs.

Sometimes called "reading between the lines" inferring is a strategy all readers use. In Ms. Taylor's lesson, the task of making inferences is shaped by the text written specifically to teach inferring. The task, now perhaps somewhat artificial due to the engineered text, feels difficult and right answer-oriented. Inferring the dog is panting due to the *102°F* is the "right" line of thinking in this lesson but it seems like Ms. Taylor's modeling is maneuvered and requires a leap in her thinking using limited information: there is such a limited amount of text to work with. The teaching feels heavy-handed. Fountas & Pinnell (2006) raise awareness about teaching thinking in heavy-handed ways and state "heavy-handed teaching can actually interfere with text processing" (p. 45). Likely, however, the heavy-handed teaching emerges from the engineered text assigned to teaching inferring. The content of the lesson, inferring, seems artificial rather than a type of thinking all readers use.

Skill topics. Skills content in reading is wide ranging but they are automatic actions readers learn and eventually grow unaware of their use (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). Decoding, largely, becomes automatic. Processing meaning at basic, literal levels becomes automatic. Skill lessons are on topics that address how readers can be more automatic, efficient readers. In this study, skill lessons were mainly fluency lessons: using punctuation, reading with expression, avoiding word-by-word oral reading. Out of the 36 observations, 3 teachers taught skill lessons on the topic of fluency.

What was taught about fluency is representative in a minilesson taught in Ms. Fisher's classroom. Ms. Fisher completed her video observations in a two week time frame which is of interest here because three of her nine video observations collected pertained to one topic:

fluency, and in particular, pausing. The minilesson topic for her first two observations and

observation five was "pausing." In this lesson, her first minilesson recorded on this topic, Ms.

Fisher talks about how punctuation marks tell the reader to pause. The text she uses is a poster

assigned to this lesson by the Benchmark Literacy reading program. The poster is a chart with a

list of sentences embedded with idioms that require appropriate pausing for meaningful

expression. The underlining appears on the curriculum poster and marks the idiomatic phrase.

> Ms. Fisher: *You can <u>bet your life</u> that I'll remember his birthday*.
> What do you think, Kim?
> Kim: That he knows.
> Ms. Fisher: He is going to be certain, right? He is not going to have to wonder about it.
> He is going to know for certain when his birthday is. [Reads] *I decided to <u>take a chance</u>*.
> Mike: A risk.
> Ms. Fisher: A risk. Yeah.
> Ms. Fisher: *The sound of Mom's voice was <u>music to my ears</u>*.
> Ryan: It sounds good.
> Ms. Fisher: It sounds good. Now I am going to read them without paying attention to my
> punctuation. See if you notice a difference.
> Ms. Fisher: *My dad always says, "<u>hold your horses</u>."* [Ms. Fisher reads very fast and
> without pauses.]
> Ms. Fisher: What do you notice?
> Sara: You did not stop at the period.
> Ms. Fisher: I did not really stop and what else?
> Stacy: Reading way too fast.

During Interview 2, Ms. Fisher said she did not think the selection of text required by the

basal program for teaching fluency was quality material.

> I do not feel the demonstration poster [on idioms] I used really changed the meaning of
> the sentence. It made it sound better when you paused but it didn't change the meaning.
> And we do know there are phrases, when they are read differently, do change the
> meaning of the text. I think that next time I do it, I would do it different. I would make
> sure that whatever I found had it two different ways so that they could understand how it
> changed it by pausing or not pausing.

Pausing is a part of fluency and refers to the way the "reader's voice is guided by punctuation"

(Fountas and Pinnell, 2006, p. 69) but, Ms. Fisher didn't feel the content in the poster was quality

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material for teaching pausing. Indeed, the information on the poster seemed to bring more about the meaning of the idiom to the forefront of the lesson than the skill of pausing. Ultimately, instruction on fluency should help readers "focus on meaning" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 63). Maintaining fluency requires the reader to Think Within the Text so that smooth processing of language can take place (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). The content of this lesson on pausing for idioms may not be helping readers focus on smoothly processing language, in large part because the idiomatic language overshadowed the fluency aspect.

Literary topics. Minilessons on literary topics teach students how stories work, how elements such as character and setting and plot interrelate, and identifying the theme (Atwell, 1998; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). According to Barrentine et al., (1995) lesson topics in this category range from learning about the types of genre in children's literature to recognizing when an author uses foreshadowing" (p. 4). In this study, 13 literary minilessons were taught during data collection, comprising 36% of the types of lessons taught.

To paint a picture of what was covered in a literary minilesson, a lesson segment from Ms. Smith's second grade classroom is helpful. Four of her recorded lessons were literary and on the topics of character, setting and plot. The lesson segment shared here took place during the first week of a unit in the Benchmark Literacy program. In this segment, Ms. Smith mentions the story elements of character, setting, and problem/solution. Her students have been given a clipboard with a copy of the story. As Ms. Smith reads through the story she has instructed her students to underline any story elements.

> Ms. Smith: Who can raise their hand and remind me what is one type of story element, Lisa?
> Lisa: *The Lost Crayon.*
> Ms. Smith: Oh, that was one story that we read. What was one thing that we were looking for in that passage, that is a story element, Lenny?

Lenny: Solution.
Ms. Smith: There is usually a solution to a _____?
Connie: Problem.
Ms. Smith: To a problem. So there is a problem and a solution. What else, Luke?
Luke: Character.
Ms. Smith: A character and the last one is what, Jackie?
Jackie: Problem.
Ms. Smith: Oh, we said that one.
Eric: Setting.
Ms. Smith: Setting. . . [Ms. Smith looks at the poster.] This is called *The Lost Dog.*
Follow along on your sheet with me.

> *One day, Erica came home from school to find that her dog, Zak, was not at home. Zak had made a hole under the fence and had run away.*
>
> *Erica and her dad looked everywhere for Zak. They walked all around the neighborhood. They looked high and low. "We are lost, too!" said Erica's dad.*
>
> *Then Erica saw Zak! "It's okay, Dad," said Erica. "Zak will show us the way home. Look, he's sniffing his way back home right now!"*

Ms. Smith: I want you to take just a few minutes. I am going to give you two minutes and I want you on your board to reread this one time. So look at your board. Look at your paper, Bill, and reread it one more time. If there are any extra things you notice that are story elements, you are going to want to underline them. Go ahead right now you have about one minute and thirty seconds. Sometimes there is more than one character. Sometimes there is more than one setting.

In this lesson, Ms. Smith addresses what she calls story elements and they are character, setting, problem/solution. Of interest here is that these elements are not defined or explained but are simply identified for presence in the story. The nature of the role of rising action or character actions or the interrelationship of setting and plot are not addressed. Considering this is the first lesson in a series on story elements, it is reasonable to wonder what readers can learn about story elements from text designed and limited to use for identification of story elements.

The third grade teacher, Ms. Thompson, taught two literary minilessons, both on the topic of genre. She taught about Trickster Tales.

Ms. Thompson: This week we are going to talk about Trickster Tales. Have you read a Trickster Tale?
Don: Nope.
Ms. Thompson: Nope. Never heard of it? Have you heard of a fairytale?
Kathy: Yes.
Ms. Thompson: Have you heard of a tall tale?
Tim: No.
Ms. Thompson: Those are all forms of traditional literature, which means that they are stories that have been passed on from generation to generation for many, many years. Sometimes they originate in different countries and most of the time nobody even knows who wrote the story in the first place. They just get passed down and people tell their stories to their kids and they grow up and they tell it to their kids or grandparents tell it. It keeps getting passed down from generation to generation so they are really old stories. Trickster Tales are a version of those stories. What do you think these stories might have in them if it is called a Trickster Tale?
Scott: Tricks.
Ms. Thompson: Mindy? [managing behavior]. Some kind of trick so there is tricks in the story. Before we talk about the features of a Trickster Tale, I am going to read you one and then we are going to see what you notice about the features and characteristics that other Trickster Tales might have. This one is called *The Raven* [begins reading the story].

In this lesson, Ms. Thompson begins by clearly explaining to students the origins of traditional stories: they are passed down the generations and generally not ascribed to a single author. From there, however, she cuts short a fuller and more specific explanation of what is a Trickster Tale. Perhaps if she had taken the content of the lesson a bit further, explaining the nature of trickster tales, students would have heard the story with that information in mind.

Attitude topics. Attitude minilesson topics are those that address personal behaviors that help readers develop awareness and build habits that support reading growth (Atwell, 1998). Some behavior management topics such as "staying on task" fall into this topic. Three of the 36 video observations pertained to Attitude topics. Ms. Thompson taught an attitude minilesson due to students being off task during independent reading. She worried that students lacked stamina to read for a sufficient length of time. Ms. Thompson's minilesson on reading stamina was a brainstorming lesson on what readers with good stamina do.

Ms. Thompson: What are some things that good readers do or do not do if they are working on [reading stamina]?

Bob: Use sticky notes to write things down.

Ms. Thompson: Okay. Where would I put that? Is that what a reader does with stamina or without?

Denise: With stamina.

Ms. Thompson: With stamina. So they use sticky notes. What did you say, Bob?

Bob: To help them remember.

Ms. Thompson: Okay and to show what they are _____?

Kyle: Thinking.

Ms. Thompson: Thinking. Yeah, so readers with stamina use sticky notes to show what they are thinking. Anything else? Matt?

Matt: Do not go to the bathroom a lot.

Ms. Thompson: So if you do not have very much reading stamina that means you are getting up and finding reasons to get up and out of your spot, like go to the bathroom.

According to Barrentine et al. (1995), "In attitude minilessons, teachers teach about the outlook students need to develop and demonstrate at various times as readers" (p. 7). In this particular lesson, the content reminds students how to use their time well during reading workshop. Designed to revisit habits of mind, Ms. Thompson helps students re-envision what it looks like to stay on task.

Summary of minilesson content. The teachers' minilesson content observed on the video recordings was derived from the Benchmark Literacy curriculum. They taught four types of minilessons: strategy, skill, literary, and attitude minilessons on a variety of topics. The content of some of the lessons appears to have greater power to impact meaningful literacy learning than others. Data provided here also suggest teaching behaviors resembled and also strayed from the classic minilesson teaching behaviors recommended in the educational literature (e.g., strong explicit instruction and limited questioning). Thus, it is important to conduct a deeper analysis of the minilesson instruction. This analysis occurs in the sections that follow.

Teaching the Minilesson

The lesson segments above were shared to characterize the content of the minilessons taught by the teachers in the study. Now, to show what minilesson instruction was like, one complete lesson is presented here. This lesson was selected because it is a comprehension strategy lesson, which is the central topic of this study: what does minilesson reading comprehension instruction look and sound like in the classroom? The lesson presented here is about inferring and is taught by third grade teacher Ms. Taylor. A segment of this lesson was presented above in the section about strategy minilessons. The complete lesson shows her continuous teaching behaviors, use of curriculum materials and teacher-student interactions. The lesson is divided into meaningful lesson segments and observational analysis of the instruction is integrated throughout. A second lesson on the topic of story elements and sequencing is available in Appendix H. It is taught by second grade teacher, Ms. Smith. Rather than presenting a full narrative of her lesson, observational notes provide an on-going analysis of the lesson, emphasizing instruction.

In a pre-analysis of Ms. Taylor's sample minilesson on inferring, this minilesson was going to be labeled and broken down into the four parts of a minilesson: connection, teaching, active involvement, and link (Calkins, 2010). The parts of Ms. Taylor's minilesson were not labeled with the four parts because the beginning of Ms. Taylor's minilesson started with her students turning and talking. This is the "You do it together" Phase of the GRR model. According to Calkins (2003b), a minilesson begins with the connection part and during the first couple of minutes of the minilesson, "we put today's work into the context of children's ongoing work and explicitly name what we will teach today" (p. 49). The connection part, along with teaching, is situated within the "I do it" Phase of the GRR model. In Ms. Taylor's lesson,

following the turn and talk, she calls on students and engages them in a question and answer conversation on what they know about inferring. This question and answer conversation takes place between Ms. Taylor and her students which, according to Calkins (2010), is not part of the connection or the teaching parts of a minilesson.

Sample minilesson. In her third of three lessons on inferring, the transcript of Ms. Taylor's video recorded lesson shows how she taught this strategy lesson. I present most of that 10 minute lesson here, dividing it into segments with observational comments to look at the lesson mainly through the lens of the Gradual Release of Responsibility model. In the lesson, Ms. Taylor uses a text from a curriculum poster to model inferring and then uses it to guide the students to name the cues within the story and their lives to practice inferring.

Ms. Taylor's students are seated on the carpet with Ms. Taylor seated in a chair beside an easel which holds a poster. This environment reflects how she described her minilessons during Interview 2 (see Theme 1, Ms. Taylor). The poster placed on the easel has sticky notes on it, covering areas that reveal information she does not want students to read until later. A short "story" printed on the poster is fully accessible to all. She opens her lesson by having the students try to use the knowledge they have about inferring to share with their neighbor. Relative to the Gradual Release of Responsibility model of instruction, sharing information would be more aligned with Phase 3, the "You do it together" Phase, than with what might be expected for a lesson beginning. However, this is not the first lesson the students have experienced on inferring so perhaps it is not unexpected to "stray" from the expected minilesson format.

> Ms. Taylor: Raise your hand if you can remember last week when we talked about the reading strategy of inferring. Turn and talk to your neighbor about what you remember about what inferring is.
> S: Students talking to each other.

Immediately following "turn and talk," Ms. Taylor calls on students, then listens and comments

to assess what they already know about inferring from her previous lessons. Of interest, one

student who shares confuses inferring with summarizing, two strategies with little relationship to

each other. Following up on this and a comment from a student, Ms. Taylor plants some

language that she wants students to attend to about the process of inferring: using clues and

connections.

> Ms. Taylor: Okay. I would like to hear some ideas. What do you remember about what
> you think making an inference is or inferring is? Let us listen to the speaker so you can
> agree or disagree if you need to. Julie?
> Julie: It is like when an author gives you clues about what is going to happen. Then you
> have to infer it to say I think this is going to happen.
> Ms. Taylor: Justin, you want to add to that?
> Justin: I thought inferring is basically making a summary by yourself.
> Ms. Taylor: A summary is different than inferring. Because a summary is taking the
> whole story and kind of telling the plot of what happens. So it is not the same as
> inferring. Linda?
> Linda: [reading the wall chart]: It's Clues + Connections = Inferring.
> Ms. Taylor: Well, you are just reading the chart. Is that what you remember? Inferring is
> using clues from the story plus connections. The connections, Linda, are things that we
> know. Things that have happened to us and things that we have learned.

> Ms. Taylor moves the lesson towards the new material for the day but ends up getting

involved in an aside when a word in the title of the story of the chart needs to be defined.

> Ms. Taylor: So I have this story today. We are going to practice some inferring. So you
> are going to have to really pay close attention to inferring in this story. If you do not infer
> in this story, you are going to totally not understand the story. The story is called *The
> Mystery of the Disappearing Matter*. Do you know what matter is?
> Joe: No clue?
> Ms. Taylor: Anything is matter. The floor is matter. The table is matter. Ice is matter.
> Anything is matter.
> Jim: The dog? Food?
> Ms. Taylor: This is made of matter. Everything is matter.

Recall this curriculum is new to Ms. Taylor so likely she did not anticipate the need to

define the word "matter." This situation may have prevented her from setting a purpose for

reading the story or wondering about the word: "Could there be a reason that "matter" is in the title?" Or, "Why might matter disappear? What could the mystery be, and how might that relate to matter? Will we need to infer something about this mystery or matter?"

You will note that in the following segment, management interactions occurred in Ms. Taylor's lessons, but they were minimal. As she transitioned to reading the poster, some off-task behaviors were refocused. She proceeds to model by thinking aloud, showing her personal connection or knowledge (why dogs pant) and suggesting this connection will help lead up to making an inference to understand the story.

> Ms. Taylor: Let us do a little bit of reading. What I am going to show you is how I use my connections.
> Ms. Taylor: I will wait for listeners.
> Ms. Taylor: I am going to use my connections or what I know to help try and make inferences in this story.
> Ms. Taylor [reads] *The Mystery of the Disappearing Matter*.
> *The thermometer read 102°F (39°C).*
> Jim: Ohhh.
> Ms. Taylor [reads] *Tom and his dog, Sneakers, sat on the porch. Sneakers was panting*.
> Ms. Taylor: Now here is what I know. Here is a connection. I know that when it is hot like this that dogs pant.
> Ms. Taylor: Do you know why they do that?
> Derek: Because they are hot.
> Ms. Taylor: Who knows why they do that? Jill?
> Jill: Because when they pant it is kind of like sweating for them so they get more cool.
> Ms. Taylor: Yeah. You know that about dogs. That is a connection that probably most of us have and we know that about dogs.

A common method among all of the teachers in the study was to integrate their own thinking aloud and modeling with asking the students questions. The questions Ms. Taylor used here seemed to model that her students most likely have the same information about dogs in their heads as she does—dogs pant to cool themselves. Interestingly, the inference that "it is hot" was not capitalized upon using the "clues," the temperature (102°F) and Sneaker's panting.

To arrive at the inference "Sneakers ate the cool treat," Ms. Taylor breaks down the inferring process into a series of nine (9) statements and interactions. The process generally seems to involve using information within the text and being alert to personal background knowledge to understand the story.

> Ms. Taylor: "*Yum . . . lemon ices," said Tom, eating his first spoonful.*
> Ms. Taylor [interjects] See his lemon ice over there?
> > *Across the street, Tom saw his friend Jade holding an egg.*
> > > *"The weatherman on TV said it's hot enough to fry an egg on the sidewalk," Jade called out.*
> > > *Tom ran over to watch. Jade cracked the egg. The egg dribbled down the hot sidewalk, but it didn't cook.*
> > > *Tom and Jade went back to Tom's porch.*
> > > *"My lemon ices are gone!" cried Tom.*
> > > *"The sun must have melted them," said Jade. "The solid turned into liquid. Then the liquid turned into gas and disappeared into the air."*
> > > *Tom looked at Sneakers, who was sleeping happily.*
> > > *"Well, I believe the part about the melting . . ." Tom said.*

1. Ms. Taylor: Now, I do know that when a solid turns into a liquid it is because usually it has melted. You have seen ice do that? Have you seen ice do that?
Steve: Um, hum.
2. Ms. Taylor: So I am guessing that that part might be true. That the ice could have turned into a liquid because the sun was so hot and it melted.
3. Ms. Taylor: But what do you think about this part. *Then the liquid turned into gas and disappeared into the air.*
Julie: No. Not long enough.
4. Ms. Taylor: What do you mean, Julie?
Julie: That is not long enough to disappear.
5. Ms. Taylor: Because he was not gone that long was he?
Tina: No.
6. Ms. Taylor: Yeah. He was just gone for a little bit. Do you think that if he was gone for like a week, it could evaporate into the air?
Emily: Yeah.
7. Ms. Taylor: Probably it could, if he was gone for quite a while. But it was gone.
8. Ms. Taylor: Now I am using my connections about the dog and how he probably was really thirsty because it is really, really hot. How many of you are making an inference that the dog probably drank it?
Carter: Yeah.
9. Ms. Taylor: I am also seeing that, *when Tom looked at Sneakers, he was sleeping happily.* So, that is also letting me know about my own dog, who after he has had his

food. He usually acts like he is kind of sleepy and he wants to take a nap. So that is kind of giving me a clue that maybe it is because he had something to drink and he is sleeping.

The nine statements and interactions are guiding exchanges to scaffold the third graders to see in the picture that the solid or icy lemon drink changed to a liquid, and to consider the possibility of the drink turning to a gas (evaporation) within the time the boys were trying to fry the egg on the sidewalk. Further, Ms. Taylor wanted the students to consider the clues and connections they could make to the dog. Within the Gradual Release of Responsibility model of teaching, the instruction resembles "We Do" more than Phase 1 "Teacher Does." The teacher is co-constructing the inference with the students and this therefore cannot be labeled "explicit" instruction on the process of inferring.

Again, breaking with the classic minilesson approach of "teacher as sage on the stage," in the segment below, Ms. Taylor incorporates more guided practice into her lesson. She helps the students synthesize the information they have into an inference about what happened to the icy drink, though the term "infer" is not applied.

> Ms. Taylor: So what do you think? Does your inference [tell you] that Sneakers drank the icy?
> Karly: Yeah.
> Ms. Taylor: Do you think that there are enough clues that lead us to believe that Sneakers drank the icy?
> Shelly: Yeah.
> Ms. Taylor: Nick and Ben, it is not nap time. Are there enough clues?
> Connie: Yeah. No.
> Ms. Taylor: Let us review. What are the clues? Joe?
> Joe: That it was all gone and he was [sleeping].
> Ms. Taylor: Okay. What else? Justin?
> Justin: He was sleeping happily.
> Ms. Taylor: He was sleeping happily which makes you believe that he is probably got a full stomach. Tom?
> Tom: His tummy's sticking out.
> Ms. Taylor: Yeah. Why do you think his tummy's sticking out though? Do you think it is sticking out because he drank it or because it is hot?

Steve: From panting. Has ice in it.

Ms. Taylor: Yeah. That one's still got the ice in it. Yeah. He is probably panting.

Ms. Taylor's teaching is tied to using the Benchmark Literacy curriculum and thus in the next lesson segment, she returns to the curriculum poster, which up until now, has hidden "answers" under sticky notes. She peels away sticky notes and confirms they identified two clues to make the inference, but one was forgotten. Eventually, she peels away the sticky note covering the exact inference statement.

> Ms. Taylor: Alright, let us see if our clues were right. *Sneakers was panting*. We said that. *After Tom got back from across the street, Sneakers was sleeping happily.*
> Connie: Yes.
> Ms. Taylor: We said that. I forgot about another thing. Did Sneakers go with them to look at the egg?
> Emily: No.
> Ms. Taylor: No, he stayed back, didn't he? And I do not know about your dog, but if I leave food unattended. If I leave food unattended, with me not guarding it, and my dog can get it. He gets it. How many of you have a dog like that?
> Ben: Me.
> Ms. Taylor: Um, hum. So that connection helps me to know that this dog is probably going to do it.
> Ms. Taylor: Okay. So let us see if the author's inference is the same as ours.
> [Looks at and reads from the poster]. *Sneakers drank the melted lemon ices.*
> Ms. Taylor: I am guessing Sneakers was pretty hot. He was looking for something to cool him off, wasn't he?
> Nick: Well, he is sitting right in the middle of the sun.
> Ms. Taylor: Yeah. He was looking for something.

The process of how to infer is complex and varied (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006) but Ms. Taylor wraps up information on inferring by pointing out to students that this strategy calls for them to "think in between" by using their background and what happens in the story. Thus, in the following segment, we see her use novel language, "thinking in between" to reference back to the definition on the curriculum poster: Clues + Connections = Inferring.

> Ms. Taylor: So that is what an inference is. It is using your connections and what you know to help you figure out what happened. Now if I would have just read this without

inferring, I really would not know what happened. Because I have to do that thinking in between. Does that help you a little bit more?
Sue: Yeah.

Before dismissing students to move to their workshop locations and tasks, Ms. Taylor uses classic minilesson closure language to end the lesson. She recommends to them that if the lesson content is needed during their reading tasks, they should apply the strategy, mark it to share later.

> Ms. Taylor: Okay. I am going to have you be aware of your thinking when you are reading today. Use the strategy of inferring, if you need to. Not all of you are in places where you need to infer. But be using that strategy of inferring if you need to. And if you do notice that you infer something, because you thought of a connection and noticed a clue, put a sticky on it so that you can share it.

The students will move to their independent reading spots. Ms. Taylor will be engaged in guided reading, conferencing, or one-on-one instruction. Independent reading is the longest block of time during Ms. Taylor's reading workshop. When students gather back together in their whole group spot, Ms. Taylor will have some, all, or a few of the students, who understood the concept of inferring, share their sticky from independent reading.

Teachers' Use of Questioning During the Minilesson

There was a strong pattern of participants using questions during minilessons. Asking questions was the primary pattern of instructional delivery for teachers in this study. Telling and explaining were used but typically only after or integrated with posing questions. When students responded to the questions, teachers followed up student response with explanation, clarification, elaboration, correction and other types of comments. Table 5 shows that from the very beginning of each of these lessons, participants relied on questioning, rather than, for example, summarizing where the lesson left off and stating where it would resume for the day. The lessons

presented in Table 5 were selected because for comparative purposes, they all had beginnings that were about three minutes long.

Table 5. Numbers of Questions Posed by Teachers at the Beginning of Four Minilessons.

Teacher and Grade Level	Length of Lesson Beginning in Minutes and Seconds	Questions Posed by Teacher	Lesson Topic
Ms. Smith 2nd grade	2.17	17	Story Elements
Ms. Thompson 3rd grade	2.57	8	Story Elements
Ms. Taylor 3rd grade	2.56	12	Story Elements
Ms. Fisher 4th grade	2.29	9	Summarizing

Considering that modeling and telling/explaining are recommended in the literature as the predominant delivery mode for minilessons (Calkins, 1994; Hagerty, 1992), it is of interest to look at how questions were used in these classrooms.

How questions were used in the minilessons. In lesson after lesson recorded for this study, teachers asked students questions, sought student response, and followed up on the responses. Cazden (2001) describes this pattern of interaction in classrooms between teachers and students as Initiate (I), Response (R) and Evaluation (E) or, IRE.

I: Teacher poses a comment, often a question
R: Student or students respond
E: Teacher follows up with a comment
- Evaluative: "Good!" or, "Right!"
- Elaborative: Adds more information
- Elicitive: Requests more information from students
- Other: Teacher commentary of various types

In the case of the participants in this study, teachers kept up a steady cycle of initiating lesson interactions with questions. One example of the IRE pattern of interaction is in Ms. Smith's lesson on sequencing. Recall she was using a story with her second graders about the lifecycle of an oak tree. The pattern of IRE is indicated, showing 3 cycles of the IRE pattern.

I 1:   Ms. Smith: When a tree begins, what are some things we think about or think of or see in our visualization when a tree begins, Liz?
R1:   Liz: It starts out as a seed and then it keeps growing into a small tree, then a large tree, then it starts to get to a bigger tree.
E1:   Ms. Smith: Okay. We are kind of moving into this side. [pointing to the graphic organizer she is filling out]

I 2:   Ms. Smith: But, I like how you said that the tree begins as a ____?
R2:   Brian: Seed.
E2:   Ms. Smith: Seed [wrote seed on graphic organizer]. That is a key word. We will write that down in the beginning. In the beginning, that is the first word my mind went to, Liz, so we were on the same page which is really awesome.

I 3:   Ms. Smith: What else does a tree need to begin, Lisa?
R3:   Lisa: Water, food, sun, soil, nutrition.
E3:   Ms. Smith. Okay, so I can tell Lisa has a little bit of experience with growing plants.

Another example of the IRE pattern of lesson delivery is from Ms. Thompson's lesson with her third graders on a Trickster Tale. Again, of note here, the minilesson is devoid of explaining and modeling but relies on the question/answer/comment delivery mode of instruction.

I 1:   Ms. Thompson: Do you think Iktomi learned a lesson?
R1:   Scott: Yep.

I 2:   Ms. Thompson: What?
R2:   Bob: To be fair.
E2:   Ms. Thompson: To be fair.

I 3:   Ms. Thompson: Why was he not fair?
R3:   Allysen: Because he, um a muskrat.
E3:   Ms. Thompson: Iktomi?

I 4:   Ms. Thompson: Why was he not fair in this story?
R4:   Emma: I do not know.

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E4:   Ms. Thompson: The muskrat cheated. He swam through the lake and it was supposed to be a race around the lake but Iktomi was not really fair either. What did he do that was not fair? He started off the race.

Fourth grade teacher, Ms. Fisher, is teaching a lesson on understanding the author's purpose but sidetracks the lesson to define the word "excerpt" since she is going to use an excerpt from a text for the lesson.

I 1:   Ms. Fisher: Today we are going to be reading a passage, or an excerpt, out of the Benchmark Literacy curriculum's reader's theater book which we read yesterday. Does anybody know why it is called an excerpt? Why is it called that? Lacy?
R1:   Lacy: Because it is like the very beginning.
E1:   Ms. Fisher: It could be the very beginning. It could be, but it is not. That is not the reason why it is called an excerpt.

I 2:   Ms. Fisher: Do you know, Mike?
R2:   Mike: Because it is before the journey began.
E2:   Ms. Fisher: Okay, which is kind of what Lacy said at the very beginning, and it could be. But, that still does not quite define what an excerpt is.

I 3:   Ms. Fisher: Alex?
R3:   Alex: I think it is not the whole story but it is like part of it.
E3:   Ms. Fisher: Exactly, and that is why I wanted to give you that vocabulary. It is a section, a small section of the story so that we can work with it.

In these examples, the teachers use questions to have students recall and report information. The interactions have an assessment or even a testing orientation. The questions are used to test what students know (e.g., meaning of the word "excerpt") or recall (low level comprehension) about a character (Iktomi) or recall the lifecycle of a tree. Explicit instruction on what or how to do something as a reader is not at the foundation of these interactions.

By contrast, in one lesson, Ms. Taylor does use questions to model how to do something. Recall the attitude minilesson Ms. Taylor taught on being a listener. Note how she uses questions to model how to engage someone to talk and then follows up with questions that show she listened to the speaker. She asked the student, Julie, to be the speaker while she, the teacher,

would be the listener. The exchange is conversational and not an IRE interaction. The intention is different. In the IRE pattern, the teacher has the "agenda" to get to the right information. Ms. Taylor is modeling how to pick up on things the speaker brings up or says. For example, when Julie says it is boring when books lack funny pictures, Ms. Taylor shows interest and probes her about this.

> Ms. Taylor: Julie, I would like you to tell me about your favorite book. What are your favorite books?
> Julie: I like books that are funny and have pictures in them. Some [books] really do not have pictures in them. It is kind of boring because you do not get to look because there is not a picture to know what the character looks like.
> Ms. Taylor: So do you have a hard time visualizing?
> Julie: Yeah.
> Ms. Taylor: You do? Interesting, tell me more about that.
> Julie It is hard to visualize because it does not have the characters.
> Ms. Taylor: Oh, why do you think that?
> Julie: Because it is hard to visualize something when there is not any words to describe it.

In this lesson, Ms. Taylor incorporated student help with the minilesson because for authentic modeling, a student was needed to help convey the lesson content. But, as a rule, Routman states students may be asked to help in a small way during the lesson, but the "teacher or expert shows—precisely—'how to do it' by initiating, modeling, explaining, thinking aloud" (Routman, 2003, p. 45).

Summary of Theme 2

Table 4 shows the breakdown of the minilesson topics: strategy, skill, literary, and attitude. The table was created because the minilesson topics are significant to this study because part of the purpose of this study was to know more about comprehension strategy instruction. This table also helps answer the research question, "What is the content being taught? Table 4 shows 14 out of 36 minilessons observed were strategy lessons. Thirteen of the lessons were classified as "literary," with seven of those lessons focusing on story elements. The story

elements topic was the only one that all four participating teachers shared. Attitude topics were addressed by two of the four teachers. Ms. Thompson conducted a minilesson on reading stamina and Ms. Taylor conducted two attitude lessons on listening. Ms. Thompson said her minilesson topic on reading stamina was chosen because it was a management lesson. It wasn't from Benchmark Literacy but came from Lucy Calkins. Ms. Thompson said, "I had noticed that we needed to talk again about how [the students] needed to be attentive to their books and work at it to be better readers or be able to last longer as a reader." The topics for the participants' minilessons came from the new Benchmark Literacy curriculum, the time of year, and from the participant's old curriculum, Literacy Collaborative. According to Miller (2008), teachers' awareness and understanding of their classroom practice is viewed in the reading education literature as enhancing instructional practice and perhaps, student learning.

According to the literature on minilesson instruction, the teacher who uses explicit instruction acknowledges the purpose of the minilesson and models and gives an explanation to assist students in their understanding (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). In the minilesson presented as an example of teaching comprehension through strategy instruction, explicit instruction was laced in between posing questions to students. Ms. Taylor opened her lesson on inferring using the teaching move, turn and talk. Rather that opening the minilesson as "sage on the stage," the students stepped into the "You do it" Phase of the Gradual Release of Responsibility model which resembles the role of "guide on the side." To arrive at an inference about what happened to the icy lemon drinks, she used a series of nine interactions, six of which were question-based. Explicit instruction was limited.

A similar pattern of questioning to deliver lesson content was evident in the lesson by Ms. Smith on story elements and summarizing, as made available in Appendix H. Ms. Smith

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sought student input by playing a guessing game or fill in the blank questioning format. She used questioning to have students help name the story elements about the Crayon Man (character, problem, solution). To some extent, she uses thinking aloud when the lesson transitions to using story elements to summarize but returns to using questioning, largely in the format of IRE. There is evidence that she purposefully applies the Gradual Release of Responsibility model Phase 2— "You do it together," when she has the students turn and talk to summarize the Crayon Man story using the story elements as cues for what to include in the summary.

The pattern of asking questions was the main mode for teaching minilessons by all the participants. One teacher asked as many as 17 questions only 2 minutes into her minilesson. The IRE pattern of interaction (Cazden, 2001) dominated the instructional language of the classrooms. This had the effect of making the lessons sound like quizzes in which the teacher would pose questions and students would take turns answering correctly. According to Calkins (2010) a minilesson is the time "for the teacher to teach as efficiently and explicitly as possible" (p. 48). Recall, too, that Calkins, who is ascribed with developing and naming the minilesson, states that teachers should avoid "turning a minilesson into a conversational swamp" (p. 49) by asking a "barrage" (p. 49) of questions because the lesson can be derailed from its purpose when children have to guess at the answers the teacher is looking for.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to know more about teachers' explicit instruction of reading content, ideally as it relates to comprehension. The reading education literature has described reading comprehension strategies (e.g., Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Miller, 2002) and other content. I wanted to know what reading content was being taught and what those lessons were like. I also wanted to learn more about how teachers perceive their instruction in reading and to fulfill a personal goal. As an experienced first grade teacher, I implement minilessons during reading instruction. While I have a professional sense of how I conduct my lessons, I have a curiosity about how minilessons are conducted in other classrooms. I have an interest in the times when the teacher is front and center in conducting a lesson. In addition, I want to analyze how the instructional model, the Gradual Release of Responsibility model can help describe teachers' minilessons. The research questions guiding this study were:

- How do teachers perceive their minilesson instruction?
- What is the content being taught?
- How do teachers teach the minilesson content?

The theoretical framework underpinning this study views teachers' explicit instruction of reading content through the lens of the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) model of instruction. Originally described by P. D. Pearson and M. C. Gallagher in 1983 (Fisher, 2008), the GRR model of instruction was represented in a figure showing how teachers transfer responsibility for learning to students while offering support as the learning occurs (see Figures 1 and 5 for related

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depictions). The GRR model of instruction is grounded in Vygotsky's constructivist view of social learning. In Vygotsky's view of learning, "cognitive development was due to the individual's social interactions within the environment" (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). In Vygotsky's theory of learning, assistance provided by more capable others is central to the process of becoming independent (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). The "I do it" Phase of the Gradual Release of Responsibility model is used as a lens for focusing on how teachers deliver the lesson content. Koch (2014) found that many social cognitivists emphasize the significance of modeling and according to social cognitivists, people learn partly by watching. Dialectical constructivists believe that learning also occurs by listening and that language is central to learning (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012).

The type of case study that emerged for this study was an instrumental case study. This case emerged when the case boundaries came into focus and because I wanted to know more about a specific issue or phenomenon: explicit whole group minilesson instruction on the topic of reading comprehension. The instrumental case study serves the goal for clarifying an individual issue (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 2005). The phenomenon was the minilesson itself and the means for understanding this phenomenon were the participants. Studying their teaching was the way to get at the information about reading minilessons. The instrumental case study approach allowed me to probe this phenomenon of what the minilesson looks like in action compared to what a minilesson looks like in the literature. What the minilesson looks like in practice is of interest because it is written about so much in the literature.

Because my emphasis is on minilesson instruction and not on the teachers, at this point in the study, participants' names are not important as I synthesize information about minilesson instruction. Earlier in the study, names (pseudonyms) were helpful for communication purposes.

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In this chapter, however, teachers' names are removed so that I can speak more generally about minilesson instruction. Focusing on the phenomenon and not the teachers frees me to describe the phenomenon in action and what the minilesson looks like in the classroom.

By using an instrumental case study I was able to obtain an in depth understanding of minilesson instruction. I was able to reveal the instructional content and teaching methods for the duration of the study and analyze how these differed from what is communicated in the reading education literature. The teachers were heavily influenced by the commercial curriculum they were implementing, which affected the nature of the minilesson content and how the minilesson was taught. The commercial curriculum ends up changing the archetypal minilesson. In particular, a participant indicated the teacher and the students reversed roles by the end of the week. This was a surprise.

Two assertions were derived from these findings. The first assertion which is about the content of the minilesson is closely associated with the minilesson content aspects of both Themes 1 and 2. In these themes, findings were about teachers' perceptions and implementation of minilesson content. I contextualize this first assertion in a discussion supported by the literature on reading comprehension. The second assertion which is about teaching the minilesson, I contextualize in a discussion on the GRR model of instruction. This assertion draws from the second theme which was about what minilesson instruction was like in classrooms. Findings for Theme 2 were derived from the 36 video recordings of minilesson instruction in my participants' classrooms. In addition to presenting and discussing the assertions, this chapter also includes limitations, recommendations, recommendations for future research, and a set of final thoughts about the study.

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**Assertion 1: Minilesson Content Must Challenge Readers
to Think Strategically Within, Beyond and About Text**

There were some similarities between the content of the minilessons in the professional literature and participants' minilessons. Participants taught literary element lessons, strategy lessons, and attitude lessons. They taught skill lessons, as well. However, perhaps due to the content of their basal reading program, the content of the lessons often seemed to lack challenge and of the 36 lessons observed, nearly all of them were at the level of what Fountas and Pinnell (2006) call, Thinking Within the Text. Thinking Within the Text is when readers learn to obtain the literal meaning of the text. For example, readers learn to read fluently so that the author's meaning is conveyed, or the story is summarized for effective recall.

Many lessons observed through the duration of the study were on the topic of summarizing and fluency. Even the lessons that were taught on the topic of sequencing seemed to relate to summarizing—putting story events in order to retell in a summarized fashion. Likewise, some of the lessons on story elements had an undercurrent of using the framework of naming the character, problem and solution to summarize the story. Recall from Table 4 there were 5 lessons taught on summarizing, 5 on sequencing, and 4 on fluency. Thus, at minimum, 42% of lessons observed were lessons on Thinking Within the Text.

Recall a lesson in the fourth grade classroom on fluency. The lesson used a chart with embedded idioms and emphasized pausing at punctuation and reading at an appropriate pace.

> Teacher: Now I am going to read them without paying attention to my punctuation. See if you notice a difference.
> Teacher: *My dad always says, "hold your horses."* [Teacher reads very fast and without pauses.]
> Teacher: What do you notice?

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Sara: You did not stop at the period.
Teacher: I did not really stop and what else?
Stacy: Reading way too fast.

One may wonder how many students really needed this lesson, or ask how this content fits with silent reading, since fourth graders spend most of their time reading silently. Imagine lifting the sophistication of a lesson on the topic of fluency by drawing upon segments from familiar literature and the teacher modeling how to read meaning into the words when reading aloud. Related to this, the idioms seem to confuse the purpose of the lesson. Interpreting the meaning of them diverted attention from smooth processing. While fluency should help readers "focus on meaning" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 63), it should also help them "process information rapidly and efficiently" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 63). In this case, combining idioms with fluency slowed down the smooth processing. Familiar text, perhaps would have allowed the lesson to stay focused on fluency. However, the snippets of text provided on the curriculum chart were also an issue. Developing fluency requires that readers read in sustained ways so they can incorporate many fluent reading behaviors simultaneously: group words into phrases in a meaningful way, use tone to communicate meaning, and adjust speed to reflect the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

Likewise, in the second grade classroom, the lesson on sequencing (considered a comprehension strategy topic) seemed as though it called for greater challenge. The second graders were sequencing the life cycle of an oak tree.

Teacher: This is our Chapter 2, *A New Oak Tree Grows* . . . It says, *Roots grow if the acorn stays moist and cool.*
What do you think helps keep the acorn moist and cool? Lisa?
Lisa: The soil and dirt.
Teacher: The soil and dirt. What else would you need to make it moist? Bill?
Bill: Um.

Teacher: Really quickly, let us answer that question. What would we use to keep the soil moist? Paul?

Paul: Water.

Teacher: You would definitely need water.

Sequencing information from a text supports the ability to summarize text. Fountas and Pinnell categorize this as "Thinking Within the Text" (2006, p. 33), thinking at the literal level. A couple of things are occurring about thinking, related to this particular lesson. First, consider that the conversation about the text is focused on the familiar fact that plants need water. Indeed, it is likely this is information these second graders experienced in preschool and certainly in kindergarten. Perhaps the curriculum materials being used limit the level of learning potential, but what if the teacher had tried to lift the quality of the thinking and asked, "Moist? Isn't that an interesting word to remind us that the roots need water? The word moist helps us know the conditions in which the plant grows successfully." Just by modeling the use of the word moist, rather than asking about water, the students would infer water makes the soil moist, and would be called on to Think Beyond the Text. Or, what if she had emphasized the word "cool," thinking aloud about why the acorn needed to stay cool in order to grow successfully. But, also consider that the focus of this reading lesson is supposed to be on the topic of sequencing. Peering in, however, we see a science lesson. Even the suggestions made here about refocusing the conversation on less familiar content to Think Beyond the Text only enhances the science aspects of the lesson. The goal, however, of a reading minilesson is to teach reading content. A more archetypal reading minilesson would sideline the science content and sound more like this:

Teacher: Students, reading information in science calls for hanging onto lots of information. One way to hang onto lots of information is to be alert to the most important information and keep that information in an order, or sequence. Sequencing will help you recall the information in a way that fits what you are learning about. For example, the text on our poster is about the life cycle of an oak tree. To recall that information, you will want to think about the first phase of the life cycle, the next, the

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next and the next. Listen as I read the poster. I am going to tell you what I see as the first, next and final phases of the life cycle so you can hear how I hang onto and organize science information so I can use it when I need it.

At least a couple of things are different between the content in the lesson segment and the more archetypal lesson. One thing is that in the segment from the classroom minilesson, more attention is given to the science content than the reading content. In the archetypal lesson, how to read science text is the focus. It explicitly sets up the lesson for thinking sequentially within the text so students know they are to learn about one way to read for information. Also, in the archetypal lesson, the reading content is embedded in a larger purpose. The larger goal is to learn to read for information whereas in the classroom segment, there is a sense of "what is the right sequence for the information about the life cycle of an oak tree?" If engaged with numerous minilessons grounded in larger purposes, learning to Think Within the Text can build readers' foundation for thinking beyond and about text.

In a strategy minilesson on story elements but also focused on summarizing, student thinking could have been lifted, as well. Wilbur, the pig, from the story *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1980), wanted to spin a web like his friend, Charlotte, the spider. Recall the teacher was using the summarizing scaffold of Someone, Wanted, But, So, Then.

> Teacher: What did Wilbur "Want" in Chapter 9? What was it that he "Wanted?" Tom what did he "Want?"
> Tom: To spin a web.
> Teacher: He "Wanted" to spin a web, remember? He said, "I can spin a web. Just tell me how to do it, no big deal. I can do it." So he "Wanted" to spin a web. "But" we have a "But." "But" what happened?
> Julie: He fell.
> Teacher: He fell. He could not do it. Emma?
> Emma: He is not a spider.
> Teacher: Because what?
> Emma: Because he is not a spider.
> Teacher: He is not a spider, is he? "So" Wilbur "Wanted" to spin a web "But" he could not do it because he is not a spider.

As an outsider to the instructional moment, it is perhaps easy to wonder what students might gain from discussing this scene or the character. Recall that Fountas and Pinnell (2006) suggest explicit language ideas for teachers to use when talking about characters, e.g., "Readers think about what characters do and what their actions tell you about them" (p. 354) The idea that Wilbur could not spin a web is not really the point of the scene. Rather, Wilbur's actions show he is still a baby pig and unaware of his limitations. Just by raising the question, "What do Wilbur's actions tell us about him?" the students would have much more to think about in the lesson. Or better, since it is a minilesson, perhaps the teacher might have seized the moment to model what goes on in the mind of an expert reader about the character's actions and what those actions tell us about the character. Undiscussed, Wilbur simply appears to be a bit ridiculous. Also, undiscussed is what this scene foreshadows, since later in the book, Charlotte the spider, tricks people into thinking Wilbur can spin a web. Touching on or intentionally building on these topics (character actions and foreshadowing) would call for the teacher to model predicting and inferring, both ways of Thinking Beyond the Text. Modeling could have reached to Thinking About the Text, as well, perhaps by analyzing how Wilbur might change as he matures.

Harvey and Goudvis (2007) and Keene and Zimmerman (2007) write about reading being a conversation with the text. The conversation that teachers put out in the social setting models for readers the conversation potential. It also models the thinking potential. According to Nichols (2006), "By teaching our children to read, think, and talk about their thinking, we enable them not only to have raging conversations that construct meaning with others, but also to have raging conversations in their own heads, even when thinking alone" (p. 103). But, the issue is, to have "raging conversations in their own heads" readers must know how to think during reading. If the

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content of minilessons on teaching thinking, day after day, lesson after lesson, is confusing, unclear, lacking in focus, sidelined and only at the literal level, those conversations would occur accidentally rather than purposefully, if at all.

Assertion 2: Teaching Moves Influence Teacher's Responsibility for Task Performance

The second assertion derived from the thematic data analysis was, "Teaching Moves Influence Teacher's Responsibility for Task Performance." In essence, this means that some teaching moves result in teachers taking more responsibility for performing the reading task than others. Modeling, explaining, and thinking aloud, for example, result in teachers taking responsibility for making invisible reading processes, such as comprehension strategies, visible. Other teaching moves such as implementing the IRE script result in mutual task performance, which is more like Phase 2 of the GRR model, "We do it." In the following section, I revisit what teachers believed how minilessons are to be taught. Examples of participants' minilessons are revisited for explicit and nonexplicit teaching moves and then theorized about how this might affect student learning. Throughout, I consider the tensions between "talking the talk" and "walking the walk." As previously noted, Theme 2 that emerged was named What Walking the Talk Looks and Sounds Like. The saying, "walking the walk" was changed to "walking the talk" because using the word "talk" references language in Theme 1 in which teachers talk about their teaching was analyzed.

Talking vs. Walking

When studying the data, a discrepancy between the teaching moves recommended for explicit instruction in Phase 1 of the GRR model and those used by teachers was apparent. According to Fisher and Frey (2008b), in the first component of the Gradual Release of

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Responsibility model, teachers explicitly engage in modeling the desired outcome. Fisher and

Frey (2008) describe what modeling is and what it is not.

> Through modeling . . . teachers reveal what goes on in their minds as they solve
> problems, read, write, or generate ideas. Modeling does not mean providing explanation
> or questioning students; it means demonstrating the way experts think as they approach
> problems. (p. 34)

What educators have come to understand about instruction is when a metacognitive task needs to

be learned, e.g., a reading strategy, a particular type of instruction is needed—explicit teaching:

explaining, modeling and practicing reading strategies (Afflerbach et al., 2008).

In their interviews, teachers described a minilesson format aligned with the educational

literature. All four teachers indicated the whole group minilesson calls for the teacher to be a

leader who models the expected behavior and provides explicit instruction. Quotes from each

teacher on this topic were shared in Chapter IV.

1. I am leading the lesson, and I am teaching the skill and modeling it.

2. . . . my job is to deliver the minilesson for the day and explain the
strategy or the genre text that we're working on.

3. Explicitly model. Explicit. So explicit.

4. I am leading instruction most of the time. And I think that modeling your
thinking aloud for them is really big.

The participants' "talk" matches with what the literature describes as explicit instruction within a

minilesson and within Phase I of the GRR model. In other words, their professional knowledge

about minilessons aligns with the literature, for the most part. At times, there was some sense

some of the teachers struggled with "being sage on the stage" but, as they described their views

in the interviews, their professional knowledge about minilesson format and instructional moves

was impressive. However, their teaching, their "walk," shows something different occurred

because within the 36 lessons, it was very hard to find instructional segments where complete

modeling of a reading strategy or behavior occurred.

Some modeling and explaining, however, did occur. In one lesson, the third grade teacher

models how to do something. In an attitude minilesson (shared previously in Theme 2 in the

section, How questions were used in the minilessons), she uses questioning with the goal to

model how to be a listener. She involves a student in the lesson to model how to be a listener.

The exchange is conversational and not an IRE interaction. The intention is different. In the IRE

pattern, the teacher has the "agenda" to get to the right information. In this minilesson, the

teacher is modeling how to pick up on things the reader brings up or says. For example, when

Julie says it is boring when books lack funny pictures, the teacher shows interest and probes her.

> Teacher: Julie, I would like you to tell me about your favorite book. What are your favorite books?
> Julie: I like books that are funny and have pictures in them. Some [books] really do not have pictures in them. It is kind of boring because you do not get to look because there is not a picture to know what the character looks like.
> Teacher: So do you have a hard time visualizing?
> Julie: Yeah.
> Teacher: You do? Interesting, tell me more about that.
> Julie It is hard to visualize because it does not have the characters.
> Teacher: Oh, why do you think that?
> Julie: Because it is hard to visualize something when there is not any words to describe it.

In this lesson segment we see Phase 1 of the GRR model at work. The teacher models, for the

whole group, how to interact with a peer on a topic about reading. Though a student is involved

in the demonstration, the teacher has full responsibility for showing the class how to converse

with a peer and be the listener—ask questions that build off of what the speaker is saying. In this

case the teacher has not handed over any responsibility for performing the task. Neither has she

used IRE to teach how to listen.

In another lesson, a third grade teacher defines and explains the features of a genre of stories, Trickster Tales. She takes full responsibility for explaining aspects of this type of story, operating within the "Teacher does" Phase of the GRR model.

> Teacher: Those are all forms of traditional literature, which means that they are stories that have been passed on from generation to generation for many, many years. Sometimes they originate in different countries and most of the time nobody even knows who wrote the story in the first place. They just get passed down and people tell their stories to their kids and they grow up and they tell it to their kids or grandparents tell it. It keeps getting passed down from generation to generation so they are really old stories. Trickster Tales are a version of those stories.

Up to this point, this lesson on Trickster Tales and the lesson on how to be a listener, both show the teacher operating within the recommendations for explicit modeling in Phase 1 of the GRR model. In Figure 18, their teaching can be theorized as aligned with Phase 1 of the GRR model.

Gradual Hand Over of Responsibility

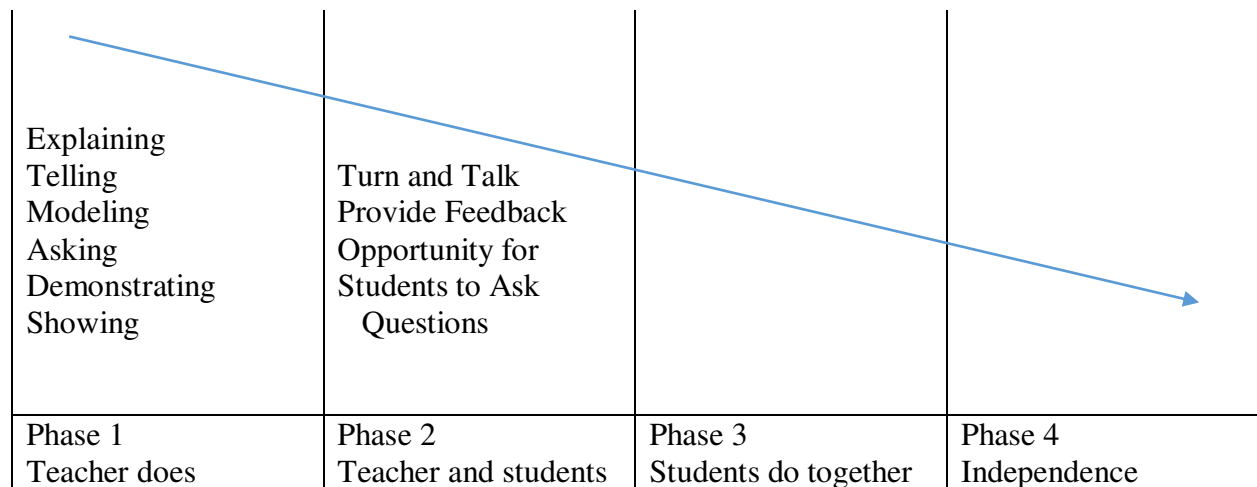| Explaining Telling Modeling Asking Demonstrating Showing	Turn and Talk Provide Feedback Opportunity for Students to Ask Questions		
Phase 1 Teacher does	Phase 2 Teacher and students	Phase 3 Students do together	Phase 4 Independence

Figure 18. Gradual hand over of responsibility.

But, something happens in the next moment within the lesson on genre. The teacher ends her explanation with a question and hands over some of the responsibility to the students. Somewhat similar to ideas expressed in Assertion 1, her question, however, seems to call for

limited thinking by the learners by asking students to supply an obvious answer, what Calkins

calls a "known-answer question" (Calkins, 2003b, p. 49).

> Teacher: What do you think these stories might have in them if it is called a Trickster
> Tale?
> Student: Tricks.
> Teacher: Some kind of trick so there are tricks in the story.

Also, of interest is the organization of this lesson which occurred within this same moment of her

lesson.

> Teacher: Before we talk about the features of a Trickster Tale, I am going to read you
> one, and then we are going to see what you notice about the features and characteristics
> that other Trickster Tales might have. This one is called *The Raven* [begins reading the
> story].

An observer is provoked to wonder, what if she had operated within Phase 1 of the GRR model

and continued explaining the features of this type of story. Would students have more to think

about as they heard her read? Would their listening have been more purposeful? What "silent" or

personal conversations might students have been able to have with the text? Without having

some background information on the "features and characteristics" how will the children know

what to listen for? Since students have to guess at these, it seems as though this minilesson has

taken on features of a discovery lesson, rather than a minilesson.

In the interviews, teachers did talk about using and valuing interactions between teachers

and students within the minilesson. Guided practice interactions are compatible with the

architecture of a minilesson described by Calkins (2010). The second component of her

minilesson organization is "teaching" which includes modeling and guiding practice.

Additionally, we saw Rick Kleine, in his YouTube video transitioning his lesson from modeling

and explaining to guiding practice (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJjGKJawG8U,

retrieved June 7, 2016).

During the interviews, when asked about how their minilessons "worked" or were organized, participants offered these remarks about interaction—which may or may not be the same as guided practice.

> It is a way of both engaging them and giving me a little bit of informal feedback just to kind of know where they are at.

> I guess [asking questions is] to just build participation and monitor who is listening and who is not. Who is participating and to get [the students] involved.

> Informal assessing what your students are able to do and to know. I am fishing to see if there is understanding. If there is not then I know I have to go back to do more modeling and more teaching and if there is then I know I can speed through quicker.

> Student participation is very big. I like [the minilesson] to be more student-oriented than teacher-led. And if I just demonstrated up there for them, they [would] not get it. A lot of kids need you to keep drawing them back.

Upon reflection, some of these comments have minimal relationship to guided practice, Phase 2 of the GRR model. Rather, they indicate and suggest interaction is a management and assessment tool. For example, "drawing them back" and "monitor who is listening and who is not" is using interaction (questioning) to manage behavior. "Fishing to see if there is understanding" is about assessing. The comment, "I like [the minilesson] to be more student-oriented than teacher-led" suggests the teacher is distancing herself from Phase 1, explicit instruction, and views demonstrating as instruction that is not "student-oriented." Further, IRE as a teaching move, results in shared or mutual performance of the task which is akin to guided practice. Revisiting some of the lesson segments raises the question, when there is no explicit instruction in the minilesson, is Phase 1 eliminated from the GRR model? What is the slope of the line for gradual release of responsibility? It appears the slope of the line is flat (Figure 19). There is no "release" of responsibility because the teacher has not held responsibility for

performing the task (Figure 19). Rather the entire lesson tends to have teachers and students

perform the task together.

By way of example, it helps to return to the lesson on sequencing the lifecycle of an oak

tree, we see this teacher and group of second graders engaged in the IRE teaching move. This

pattern continued for at least three cycles.

> I 1: Teacher: When a tree begins, what are some things we think about or think of or see in our visualization when a tree begins, Liz?
> R1: Student: It starts out as a seed and then it keeps growing into a small tree, then a large tree, then it starts to get to a bigger tree.
> E1: Teacher: Okay. We are kind of moving into this side. [pointing to the graphic organizer she is filling out]

Returning to the lesson on Trickster Tales, after reading the story aloud to the students, the third

graders engaged with the IRE pattern of lesson delivery. The IRE occurred for at least four

cycles but only cycles three and four are revisited here.

> I 3: Teacher: Why was he not fair?
> R3: Student: Because he, um a muskrat.
> E3: Teacher: Iktomi?
>
> I 4: Teacher: Why was he not fair in this story?
> R4: Student: I do not know.
> E4: Teacher: The muskrat cheated. He swam through the lake and it was supposed to be a race around the lake but Iktomi was not really fair either. What did he do that was not fair? He started off the race.

The IRE pattern of lesson delivery was also prominent in the fourth grade minilessons. For

example, the lesson on understanding the author's purpose is sidetracked to defining a word.

Three cycles of the IRE teaching pattern were completed.

> I 1: Teacher: Today we are going to be reading a passage, or an excerpt, out of the Benchmark Literacy curriculum's reader's theater book which we read yesterday. Does anybody know why it is called an excerpt? Why is it called that? Lacy?
> R1: Student: Because it is like the very beginning.

E1:   Teacher: It could be the very beginning. It could be, but it is not. That is not the reason why it is called an excerpt.

I 2:   Teacher: Do you know, Mike?
R2:   Student: Because it is before the journey began.
E2:   Teacher: Okay, which is kind of what Lacy said at the very beginning, and it could be. But, that still does not quite define what an excerpt is.

I 3:   Teacher: Alex?
R3:   Student: I think it is not the whole story but it is like part of it.
E3:   Teacher: Exactly, and that is why I wanted to give you that vocabulary. It is a section, a small section of the story so that we can work with it.

Explicit instruction on what or how to do something as a reader is not at the foundation of these interactions. In each of these lessons, explicit instruction did not precede the interactive pattern. Consider, too, the interactive IRE pattern does not always reflect guided practice. There is some suggestion of guided practice with completing the graphic organizer. The other interactions all seem to be about supplying answers. The interactions leave an observer feeling uncertain whether or not students are learning to apply reading strategies and gaining experience thinking like readers.

      The IRE interactions also have implications for how to explain teaching relative to the GRR model (Figure 19). The Gradual Release of Responsibility model, when at its best, allows the teacher to hand over performing the thinking and doing to the students—after modeling and explaining first. Instead, when the minilesson does not incorporate explicit instruction but only incorporates teaching moves that engage students in doing, there is no hand over of the task.
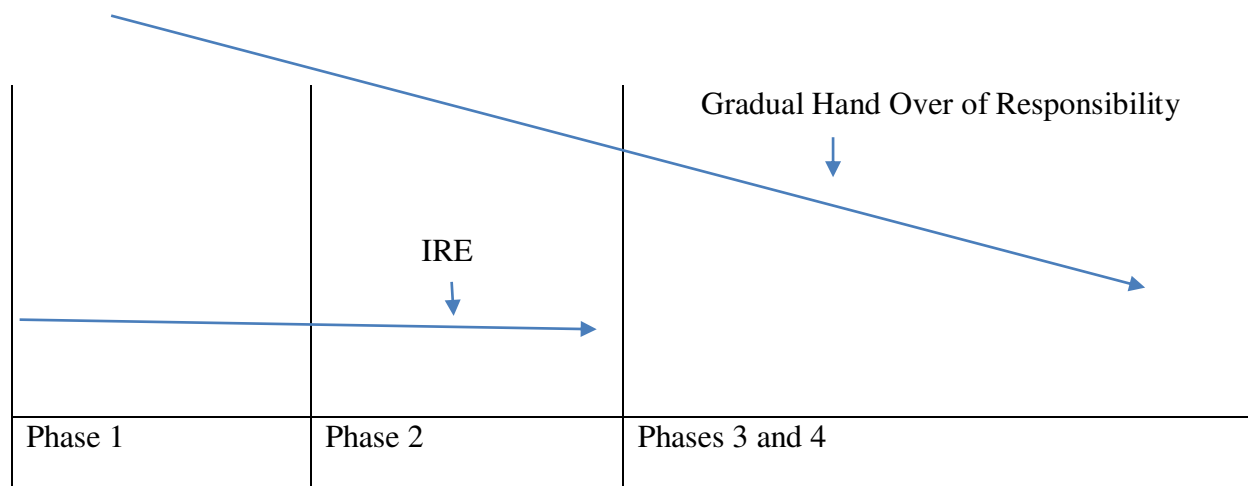
Figure 19. IRE displaces hand over principle. When interfaced with the GRR model, the IRE pattern of instruction flattens the slope of the line of the gradual handing over of the literacy task.

Dominance of a teaching move such as IRE in the minilesson eliminates Phase 1 of GRR model and flattens the slope of the release of responsibility for task performance. With IRE type of teaching, teachers and students are on the same plane of responsibility because the teacher is not performing as the competent other. When IRE dominates the minilesson, it flattens the angle in a minilesson and decreases teacher responsibility for task performance.

It can be theorized that flattening the slope of the line for releasing responsibility by ignoring Phase 1 of the GRR model and using the IRE as the dominate form of guided practice (Phase 2 of the GRR model) has implications for learning. If the teacher has successfully created a ZPD for the students to learn literacy content, but then skips over serving as a model, the invisible, covert reading behaviors remain invisible and covert. Rather, students are expected to use the behaviors and perform the task without a clear sense of what the behavior is and looks like. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) suggest not showing how to complete a task requires readers to make a cognitive leap rather than take gradual steps to complete the task. A cognitive leap

suggests students are asked to jump from being told what to do, to doing it without the benefit of being shown.

Almasi and Fullerton (2012) found in their work that teaching teachers to use explicit instruction was challenging. Teachers resisted using explicit instruction, or thought it was no different than what they were already doing, and found it challenging to work out how to use thinking aloud. I would add that commercial reading programs might also be creating challenges for teachers to use explicit instruction. This was pointed out early in this study. Vanairsdale and Canedo (2011) asserted that teachers may be practicing ineffective instruction because they use teacher's manuals to guide their instruction. Participants in this study mentioned several times that the curriculum was hard to get all the way through because there was so much material. They said some of the text resources were not effective for teaching literacy behaviors. As an observer, I saw "engineered" commercial texts used in minilessons that obscured and overshadowed the reading content or created artificial practice situations when applying reading behaviors. Furthermore, teachers felt pressured by standardized testing to adhere to the manuals.

It seems these pressures may have contributed to teachers altering application of their professional knowledge, as expressed in the interviews. In practice, the teacher participants exchanged what they know about using demonstration and modeling to teach literacy content for initiating interaction between them and their students—that is, using the IRE teaching move.

Limitations of the Study

This study provides new insights about reading minilessons taught in classrooms. It reveals reading strategy content is sidelined when within the text strategy instruction is obscured by teachers' tendency to prioritize text information. It also reveals the teaching moves in a lesson can result in students being responsible for performing covert thinking tasks before they

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are modeled overtly. The IRE teaching move, for example, subverts modeling and, at best, calls for students and teachers to bear equal responsibility for task performance. In doing so, the architecture of a minilesson is altered and may actually no longer resemble the format of a minilesson.

These findings, however, may not effectively apply to other settings. One point of limitation is this study focused only on the perceptions, content and teaching of 4 elementary teachers in second, third, and fourth grade at one school. Collecting data from middle school or high school teachers may have yielded different information.

Another consideration about applying these findings to various settings is data were collected during a concentrated time frame, from December to March. My research findings would have captured different content at the beginning of the school year compared to the end of the school year. For instance, likely at the beginning would have consisted of a lot of management and procedural types of lessons. Thus, findings may not be as comprehensive as needed for application to some settings.

Related to this, another limitation to consider is that the study occurred during the participants' first year of implementing a new curriculum. Each lesson they implemented from the new curriculum was their first time using it. Perhaps with more experience with the new curriculum, participants would have relied more on their professional knowledge as expressed in the interviews and relied less on the commercial curriculum for content, materials, and methods.

Further, if the study had included teachers from various schools, using different curricula, findings may have been different. Also worth considering as a limitation is the use of reputational sampling for selection of participants. While this type of sampling was productive because it yielded data on reading minilesson instruction, another type of sampling method, such

as purposeful sampling or snowballing, may have provided a broader range of teaching behaviors for minilessons.

Recommendations

This study opened several avenues for offering recommendations to educators including ones for educators in general, classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and reading educators. First, all educators involved with literacy instruction can consider benefits of understanding Fisher and Frey's (2008) GRR model which provides a progression of phases a teacher experiences when gradually releasing responsibility to students for task performance. The GRR model offers a lens that could function as a useful tool for curriculum and lesson design in reading education for teachers and teacher educators. The GRR model shown as Figure 5 could serve as a helpful tool for teaching and learning about theory-based planning that brings together teaching, learning and literacy content.

When planning minilesson instruction, classroom teachers may use the findings of this study like a mirror for self-reflection which may lead to verification and changes in their comprehension reading instruction. Teachers can ask themselves if they are actually providing explicit instruction of invisible reading strategies through modeling and explaining, or are they slipping into a "conversational swamp" (Calkins, 2003b, p. 49). Teachers can video record their own minilessons to assess whether or not they are modeling reading content or if they are engaging in the IRE teaching move which ends up having students perform the task before they have had the benefit of modeling. Teachers may find it helpful to use the progression of the GRR phases and discover they need to adjust their minilessons to provide more modeling. Further, teachers can reflectively question the type and amount of guided practice they offer during the minilesson. Also, teachers can use these findings to reflect on the quality of the

literacy content in their minilessons. Does the content call for students to think within, beyond and about text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006)? Are the minilessons content rich, and do they use text that is engaging and meaningful?

While cautioning against generalizing the findings based on the experiences of four teachers, this study seems to point toward a need for ongoing professional development on how to incorporate explicit instruction in minilessons. Literacy coaches could use this GRR model and Calkin's (2010) minilesson architecture to model for teachers how to implement minilessons. This aligns with Theme 2 of this study: What Walking the Talk Looks and Sounds Like. Literacy coaches could use Phase 1 of the GRR model to show how the teacher is front and center when implementing a minilesson and uses explicit instruction to model and show students how to use a strategy or skill. The literacy coach could teach reading lessons to groups of students with teachers observing how to implement minilessons. The literacy coach could model the four parts of a minilesson: connection, teaching, active involvement, and link so teachers see the connection between the phases.

Literacy coaches need to observe classroom settings where they can see for themselves how teachers implement minilessons. Because minilessons are a component of commercial reading programs it is particularly important to prepare teachers on how to implement minilessons. The overall efficiency of the curriculum delivery would be increased thus leaving time for the other components of reading workshop. The GRR model provided in this study has an effective framework upon which to scaffold various learning experiences targeting student release to work independently. The powerful conversations, according to Douglas (2009), about the influence of teachers and different aspects of their training, certification, knowledge, and

experience on student learning alludes to differing and imprecise evidence that teaching is definitely a significant component in fostering student outcomes.

Reading teacher educators have a wide-reach for influencing future teachers. In their courses, they can provide preservice teachers with instruction on how to implement explicit, content rich minilessons in both reading and writing methods courses. Preservice teachers can practice delivering minilessons that include modeling and explaining literacy strategies before they enter the field. During field work, preservice teachers can be required to video record their lessons and engage in peer review to reflect on instruction that supports readers' readiness to independently perform reading tasks.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was designed to help fill a pronounced gap in reading education. The gap is lack of information about how reading content is taught during minilessons. Minilessons are widely written about in the practical literature on literacy education, and they are well-described. Also, they are widely used, but what is occurring in practice is not well-known. This study is an effort to describe how teachers perceive their minilesson instruction, reveal what content is taught and how it is taught in the context of the minilesson. This study has opened the door for future research on this topic, as there is a need for evidence on how to enhance classroom instruction (Douglas, 2009).

One direction for a study would be to ask students to share their views and perceptions about minilessons during reading workshop and ask how the minilesson helps them understand reading strategies, skills and literary information. Following students, who over several years have experienced content rich, archetypal minilesson instruction could reveal long term impacts on the students' reading comprehension. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006), "Readers

need a wide variety of understandings, which you introduce through minilessons in a number of categories" (p. 360). A study could probe whether students who have experienced archetypal minilesson instruction are applying reading strategies and skills to their everyday reading.

Another area of research focuses on teachers and reading minilessons. Could professional development on teaching moves such as modeling and explaining impact the quality of teachers' minilessons? Would teachers' years of experience, amount of education in literacy instruction, and grade level taught have any bearing on learning to teach covert reading processes explicitly to readers?

Studying a school district that uses a commercial reading program but provides development for teachers on how to adapt the program to implement archetypal minilessons would be interesting. The teachers in this study seemed to possess the professional knowledge base to teach effective minilessons but the commercial program seemed to overpower their professional knowledge. Their minilessons seemed to obscure reading strategy instruction and to devolve into cumbersome question/answer exchanges (Barrentine et al., 1995).

Another study could involve video recording teachers and having them identify how they could make their minilesson instruction more content rich and explicit. The GRR model of instruction, particularly Phase 1, (I do it) could be used to guide their reflections and changes. Teachers could be interviewed about resistance and acceptance of "being sage on the stage" for explicit instruction.

Concluding Thoughts

"To love to read," "reading is fun for kids," "love reading," and "feel confident" are the teaching goals of the four participating teachers in this study. The four teachers had background knowledge in teaching minilessons which was influenced by the Benchmark Literacy and

Literacy Collaborative programs. The teachers' backgrounds in Literacy Collaborative seemed to make them extremely knowledgeable about explicit instruction and minilessons. They are "talking the talk" but what appears to be more challenging is "walking the talk." When implementing their minilessons there was a discrepancy between what the teachers knew about minilessons and how their minilessons worked using their new reading program, Benchmark Literacy.

Explicit instruction was sacrificed in their minilessons and instead, students in the learning setting mostly experienced interaction through an exchange of questioning and responding, what I have come to call the IRE teaching move. Modeling and explaining the invisible reading behaviors and other reading content was either absent from the minilessons or extremely limited. Additionally, the development of the reading content in the lessons seemed to fall short of content rich reading instruction. Guided practice took on the form of a back and forth question/answer process of teaching and learning. Students were put in the position of leaping into task performance rather than experiencing gradually taking on responsibility for the task. Teachers may have sacrificed what they know about modeling and explaining due to pressures of how the basal program structured the minilessons. The newness of the program, too, may have caused teachers to stay close to the teaching manual. Nevertheless, the teachers possess a rich set of professional knowledge. Likely, when they reground themselves in it, they will not only continue to "talk the talk" of reading minilesson instruction, they will "walk the talk."

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Lucy Calkins Four Phases of a Minilesson

Minilesson 1

Connection

"When we were little, my sister always drove me crazy with the way she ate cereal. She'd eat one cornflake at a time. Or scoop up one, single, measly Cheerio with her spoon at a time. 'You're driving me nuts,' I'd say, 'You'll never finish the entire bowl in one sitting that way!' I love cereal; I respect it. To me, the way she ate cereal was an insult to the cereal. I'd say, 'How can you know the true taste till you take a proper mouthful!'"

"Of course, now I realize my sister ate her cereal that way to get me all worked up. This was something *she* could control, and she'd flaunt that control in front of me. Little sisters can be like that, right?"

"But sometimes I see people reading their books the way my sister ate her cereal. One word at a time. 'How can you know the real taste of the story if you don't eat proper mouthfuls of words?' I want to say. Or 'You'll never finish a big chunk of your book in one sitting if you read it one word at a time.'"

Teaching Point

"Today, readers, I want to teach you that we read faster, longer, and stronger by reading groups of words at a time. When we set our goals to make this year the best reading year ever and to read faster, longer, stronger, we *didn't* mean we'd read one word, the next word, and the next word and do *that* kind of reading faster. To make meaning from the text, we read a group of words, then another group of words, and then another group of words."

Teaching

"Readers, when we're really into a story, we don't read a word at a time. We don't pause after each word. If we pause at all, we do so after reading a whole group of words that makes sense. I'm going to show you how."

"Here are two sentences from page 50 of *Fantastic Mr. Fox."*
Mr. Fox grinned slyly, showing sharp white teeth. 'If I am not mistaken, my dear Badger,' he said, 'we are now underneath the farm which belongs to that nasty little potbellied dwarf, Bunce.'

"Let me tell you, first, how not to read these sentences."

Mr. Fox. . . grinned. . . slyly,. . . showing. . . sharp. . .white. . . teeth. 'If I am. . . not. . . mistaken, my. . . dear. . . Badger,' he said, 'we. . . are now. . . underneath. . . the farm. . .'

"Readers, could you see how the way I just read that made it feel like I was eating one or two cheerios at a time? Wasn't it frustrating? Didn't you feel like saying, 'I need to hear not just

one word, *one* word, *one* word but one *mouthful* of words, another *mouthful* of words if I'm going to understand!' This is because reading is like talking. We don't pause after every word we utter. We only pause after we've said a *group* of words that makes sense."

"Let me read the two sentences again, and this time watch out for the pauses. Note that I don't pause after every word, I only pause after a group of words that makes sense."

Mr. Fox grinned slyly. . . showing sharp white teeth. . . If I am not mistaken. . . my dear Badger. . . he said,. . . we are now underneath the farm. . . which belongs to that nasty little potbellied dwarf,. . . Bunce.

"Did you see how I waited for a complete thought before I paused? I still paused often because it was a pretty long sentence. In some shorter sentences, I wouldn't pause at all. But in any case, I wait for a group of words to make sense before pausing so that I can reach across the group of words to grab meaning. It's almost like each word group is a complete thought. You see how meaning is in word groups, not in individual words?"

Active Involvement

"Right now, find a passage you like—an important one, maybe one where there's some story tension. Signal to me when you've found the passage." I waited until many had signaled. "Try reading this passage to your partner, taking care to pause only at a spot where a thought has been completed. Try to make your reading smooth, like the read-aloud, so that your partner follows the meaning of the story clearly—so that your partner actually begins to have a mental movie from just hearing you."

"Here's a tip, you'll want to think about who is talking too, even if the author doesn't tell you. You'll want to think about the character's feelings. Try reading the passage, then talk about the changing feelings of it, and then reread it to show those feelings."

Link

"So today, you will continue to work on reading faster, stronger, longer. But your reading is not like this: 'Mr.. . . Fox. . . grinned. . . slyly. . . showing. . .sharp. . . white. . . teeth.' Instead, your reading is like this: 'Mr. Fox grinned slyly, showing sharp white teeth.' As you continue reading today, try to make the voice in your head work so you aren't just seeing the story. You are also learning the story."

(Calkins, 2010, p. 49-50).

<u>Minilesson 2</u>

Lucy Calkins Writing Minilesson

Stretching and Writing Words
The Minilesson

Connection
Tell children they are writing like the authors they admire. Tell them you'll teach them how to write words.

    "Writers, I took your writing home last night and it felt like I'd taken a big pile of books home from our library." I said, I held up familiar books by Charlotte Zolotow, Eric Carle, and Bill Martin. "Just like these authors write about all sorts of things—a caterpillar, a dance, a girl looking in the mirror—you kids write about all sorts of things. And just like these authors use pictures and words, most of you do that too. We'll keep working on that. Now watch how I decide what letters to put on the page when I'm writing my words."

Teaching
Write publicly, demonstrating what you want children to try.

    "I first decided to write about a wooden boat I made, so on this page I drew the boat floating. And on this page, I show that I added a lot of things onto the boat and it tipped over. Now, I'm going to write in front of you. Watch how I write my words."
    Shifting into role of being a child, I said, "Umm, I think I'll write, 'I made a boat.' Okay. *I.*" I muttered, "That's easy." I wrote *I.* "Let me reread," and I did, with my finger under my print. I then articulated the still-unwritten word *made.* Breaking it down, I said, *"/m/"* and wrote *m.* I again reread with my finger under the letters *I m* and soon I'd progressed to saying */ade/, /ade/."* I wrote *ad* and again reread.
    "Did you notice that I first said what I wanted to write, then I broke it down to just the first word-then I wrote and reread that? Then I said the next word—I broke down the sounds. And I wrote the sound and again I reread."

Active Engagement
Ask children to join you in writing the sounds you hear in the words you write.

    "Will you help me to keep going? First I'll reread what I wrote. Let's do that together." I waited for the class to be with me, and together, with my finger under the print, we read, "'I made. . . .' Now let's say and write what's next—*a.* On your hands," I pointed to the palm of my hand, "pretend to write that word and I'll do it up here." I wrote *a.* "Now what do we do? We reread don't we? Let's do it together. 'I made a. . . .'"
    "Boat!" the children said. I pointed to the place on the paper where I'd soon write *boat* and moved my hands as I said the word slowly and fluidly (not in a staccato /b/ /o/ /t/). "Say it with me, I said. "We are stretching the word like a rubber band." After saying *boooaaat* together

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a few times, I said, "What sound do you hear first?" /b/? Okay. We hear a /b/ sound and that is spelled with a *b*. Soon the class had written *bot,* and reread the sentence.

Link
Tell children to try on their own what you have done together.

"Today, try to write words on your page, just like real authors do. Say them, stretch them out, write what you hear, reread and say more."

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point
Point out the initiative of a student who has done some independent revision.

"Jose did something so smart. He wrote a story about how he took the subway to the baseball game." I showed one page, "and then he realized he needed another page to show what happened when he got there! So he got another page from the writing center and he stapled it. May I show you how he did it?"

(Calkins, 2003a, p. 52-53).

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE: *A Case Study of Elementary Classroom Teachers'*
Instruction of Reading Content and Process

PROJECT DIRECTOR: *Cindy Gregg, Ph.D. Candidate*

PHONE # _____

DEPARTMENT: *Teaching and Learning*

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

A person who participates in research must give his or her informed consent. Your consent is based on understanding of the nature and risks of the research. This document provides information for your understanding, about the research I am doing. You will only be included in this study, as a participant, if you choose to participate. Please read this form. Take your time in making your decision about participating. If you have questions at any time, please ask.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

You are invited to be a participant in this study that is about how teachers instruct young readers about what experienced readers know and are able to do.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

You would be one of 3-6 teachers who will take part in this study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this study will last until July 2016. There will be concentrated time for participation which will last for about 3-6 weeks. The targeted times are December, January and February.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to video record 6-9 observations of yourself conducting reading instruction. The lesson segment you will record is when you are conducting class lessons, usually large group, about what readers need to know and be able to do to become proficient readers and comprehenders. This is usually a 10-30 minute segment of your lesson, but could be shorter or longer, depending on your lesson for the day. You would have the option to record these lessons within a 2-6 week time period. I would confer with you about how many recordings you would make, that is, a minimum or 6 or maximum of 9.

The camera would be focused on you so that in the recording, I was able to see and hear you teach, and view teaching materials such as charts and books used. It is not necessary to capture

the children in the recording. Though it would be of value to hear any interactions with you during the lesson, it is not important for me to see their faces or know their names.

Here is more information about how this will work:
- I would not be present for the lessons or video recordings.
- I will explain to you about what part of the lesson to record and show you how to record your lesson.
- I will supply you with a tripod, camera, batteries, charger, and video recording chips for storing the recordings.
- You and I would set up a loose plan for when to record your lessons—for example, what days or weeks.
- You will be given envelopes with my contact information on them, and when you have recorded lessons, you will place the data storage chips in the envelopes. I will pick up the envelopes from the staff in your school office, or from you—whichever is your preference.
- After the video recordings are completed, I will pick up the equipment and remaining data storage chips from you.

Because children are in the research setting, parents need to be informed. You can let me know how you prefer that to occur. For example, I can provide copies of letters to be sent home or, provide you with a digital letter which you could email to parents. I have attached a copy of that letter here.

You would also be asked to participate in two face to face interviews. I would come to your classroom at a prearranged time, and these would be spaced apart in time. The interviews would each take about 60 minutes and, I would audio record them. In the interviews, you will be asked to discuss your teaching background and lessons that were recorded. You are free to not answer any questions during the interview you are not comfortable answering.

After the lessons are recorded and the interviews complete, it will still be important for me to have the opportunity to be in touch with you. I might have questions about something I see on a video or a follow up question from the interviews. In these instances, I would call or email to confer with you up until July 2016.

RISKS OF THE STUDY:
There are "no foreseeable risks" to participating in this study. The methods do ask that you record your teaching and be interviewed which can place pressure on your time. Also, the study does involve your students, though at a very limited level. The focus of my study is on the teacher not on the students. As a student in the classroom, the students will be present when the study is going on and while data is collected. I will not be interacting with the students or collecting their work.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?
Beyond the satisfaction of contributing to the field of reading education, you might not benefit personally from being in this study. I hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from

this study because the findings will add to the knowledge about reading instruction in the classroom.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?
You will not have any costs for being in this research study. Video recording cameras and tripods will be provided to participants for recording your lessons. I will supply you with the data storage chips. I will travel to your school to bring and pick up the video recorders, storage chips, and for the interviews.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?
You will not be paid for being in this research study. No one, including me, the researcher, will receive any payment for participating.

WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?
There is no funding agency for this study. The University of North Dakota is not receiving any payment from any agency, organization, or company to conduct this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The records for this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. In any report about this study that might be published, you will not be identified. Your study record may be reviewed by Government agencies, the UND Research Development and Compliance office, and the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Participation is confidential and, I will use pseudonyms to strengthen confidentiality. I will not disclose the link between participants' names and pseudonyms to research advisors or committee members. When coding data, I will maintain confidentiality by using pseudonyms.

Any information that is obtained in this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else. The study information will be kept in a locked and secure location with only me, the principal investigator, Cindy Gregg, having access to the consent forms and data.

For my dissertation and any other report or article written about this study, I will describe the study results in a manner in which you cannot be identified. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings but your identity will not be revealed.

IS THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Taking part in the study is your decision. Without consequences, you may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS?

The researcher conducting this study is Cindy Gregg. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Cindy Gregg at _____ and at cindy.gregg@my.und.edu or my faculty advisor Dr. Shelby Barrentine at _____ and shelby.barrentine@UND.edu.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at **(701) 777-4279**.

- You may also call this number about any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this research study.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is independent of the research team.
- General information about being a research subject can be found by clicking "Information for Research Participants" on the web site: http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.cfm

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study.

Please initial: ___ Yes   ___ No

I give consent to be videotaped during this study.

Please initial: ___ Yes   ___ No

I give consent for my quotes to be used in the research; however I <u>will not</u> be identified.

Please initial: ___ Yes   ___ No

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subjects Name: _____

_____   _____
Signature of Subject   Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

_____   _____

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent   Date

November 2, 2015

School Address
_____
_____

Re: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Principal ____:

My name is Cindy Gregg, and I am a graduate student at the University of North Dakota. I am in the process of conducting my dissertation research on reading instruction under the supervision of Dr. Shelby Barrentine and I am writing to request permission to conduct a study at your elementary public school.

All information collected will be treated in strictest confidence and neither the school nor the individual teachers will be identifiable in my study. The focus of my study is on the teacher, not on the students. As part of the research approval process, teachers will provide informed consent to participate. Because their students will be in the classroom at the time of data collection, parents will be given a letter of notification about the study. There will be concentrated time of participation, and I anticipate this to occur during January and February. Participants, however, may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

For your convenience, I have attached a permission letter which I will submit to the UND Review board for Human Subjects Research. Please kindly print the attached Letter of Permission on your school's letterhead and then sign and date acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this study at your school. When I receive IRB approval, likely in December, I will contact four to six teachers at your school.

Thank you for your permission. You can scan the letter and email it to me at my email address provided here. If you have questions, you may contact me at _____ or at cindy.gregg@my.und.edu. You may also contact my advisor Dr. Shelby Barrentine at shelby.barrentine@UND.edu or at _____.

Sincerely,

Cindy Gregg
UND Graduate Student

Attachment

Hi _____,

My name is Cindy Gregg and I am a doctoral student at the University of North Dakota. My advisor is Dr. Shelby Barrentine.

For my dissertation research, I am studying reading instruction. I have been in contact with _____, and he has given me permission to contact you since you are recommended as a participant for my study about reading instruction.

I am sending this email to let you know that within the next day or two, I will call you at your school. When I call, my goal is to make an appointment with you so I can share more about the study and explain what it would be like to be a participant.

If you have questions before I call, my contact information is below. Here is my advisor's contact information: Dr. Shelby Barrentine; _____; shelby.barrentine@UND.edu.

Sincerely,

Cindy

Cindy Gregg, Graduate Student
University of North Dakota
_____, Email: cindy.gregg@my.und.edu

Appendix E
Parent Letter

Dear Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s),

My name is Cindy Gregg and I am a graduate student in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the University of North Dakota. As part of my degree program, I am required to complete an in-depth study. For my research, I am studying reading instruction.

Your child is in a classroom that has a teacher who is participating in my study. Your child's teacher will video record 10-30 minute segments of her reading instruction on as many as nine separate days. The recording will occur within a 2-6 week time frame, most likely during December, January, and February.

The focus of my study is on the teacher not on the students. As a student in the classroom, your child will be present when the study is going on and while the teacher records her lesson segments. I will not be present when the teacher records her lessons, so I will not be interacting with your child or collecting his or her work. Still, your child might appear in one of the recordings, or your child's voice may be captured on the recording. If so, your child's name will not be sought out or used in the study in any way. Though this is not expected, if a comment from your child is used in the study, your child would not be identified.

There are no foreseeable risks to this study. Instruction will not be changed or disrupted by the study. In any report about this study that might be published, the teacher's identity will not be revealed. There will not be any costs for being in this research study and no one is receiving any payment for participating. The records of this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

If you have any questions about this project, you may contact me, Cindy Gregg at _____or cindy.gregg@my.und.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Shelby Barrentine at UND. Her contact information is _____ and shelby.barrentine@UND.edu. You may also contact your child's classroom teacher or school principal with any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Cindy Gregg, Graduate Student
University of North Dakota
_____
cindy.gregg@my.und.edu

Interview Protocol for Participants
Elementary Teacher's Education Background, Content and Instruction

Interview Code: _____

I. Prepare and test digital recorder and back up batteries are available.

II. Verify Consent Form has been signed.

III. Review purpose of this interview.
The purpose for this interview is to learn more about the teacher's whole group reading instruction. During our conversation, I will ask you questions about your professional and personal background to help me better understand who you are and your experience at your school. There are no right or wrong responses. Instead, I am interested in learning about your perspective. When I write about your experiences, I will use a pseudonym for you. You do not need to answer every question and you can skip a question or ask me to clarify a question. The interview will take 45-60 minutes. With your permission, I will digitally record our conversation.

IV. About this interview:
Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

V. Teacher:
Grade:

VI. Interview Questions
Interview One

Background
1. Briefly describe your educational history.
   - To include college degrees, trainings, certificates, teaching experiences
   - How long have you been a teacher? Explain
   - Number of years teaching, grades taught, grade you re teaching now
   - What did you do before coming to the school you are at now?

2. Tell me about your professional development in reading.
   - What trainings have you had for your approach to teaching reading?

3. How long have you worked at the school you are at now? How did you decide to teach at this school?
   - Tell me about your history of teaching at the school you are at now.

Reading instruction

4. What is your overall approach to teaching reading?

5. Within any of these approaches, do you provide instruction on strategies or literary elements or skills? How do you organize or structure this type of teaching?

6. If I were to do a walk in observation of your reading instruction, what would you be teaching? What would the lesson look and sound like?

7. List as many reading instruction topics as you can think of that you teach to your students, especially in a whole group setting.

8. Where do your ideas for your whole group lessons come from?
   - What do you call or the names of these types of lessons?

9. What do you think is most important for your readers to know and be able to do?

10. What is your teaching style? What actions or behaviors do you demonstrate when implementing your reading instruction?

11. What are your challenges in teaching reading?

12. What are your strengths, despite any challenges?

To strengthen this study, follow-up Interview II about teachers' instruction will be linked to observation data, where conversations can reflect and inform the types of questions that are rich and relevant to what was observed during the teaching lessons. These types of questions will be more open-ended questions

Interview Two

1. Can you share with me how you would define Benchmark Literacy in your reading program? How you would define Literacy Collaborative in your reading program?

2. Please draw and label each part of what your reading program would look like using this pie chart?
   - Can you tell me about each part of your program and what it consists of?
   - (Components, elements, parts)
   - Please explain the time of your reading block, order that it happens, how long it lasts.
   - How do you implement your whole group instruction in your classroom?
   - Is there a certain order or format that you follow in your lessons?

3. According to your pie chart, what is your role in your reading instruction/lesson? Please explain your role in each area listed in the pie chart? How do you see yourself (facilitator, competent other, etc.)

4. According to the pie chart, what is the student's role in this reading instruction/lesson? What are the students doing in each area of the chart? How do you see the students (listeners, speakers, etc.).

5. Please explain in your first lesson how did you choose the topic for this lesson? Were the topics chosen for you?

6. It looked like you initiated a teaching point with a question, then the kids responded, then you did a follow up. Can you explain that?

7. Please explain the types of strategies you use to make curriculum meaningful and relevant to students? What strategies are important to teach?

8. In interview one you indicated Benchmark Literacy was your reading instruction. Were Benchmark Literacy and Literacy Collaborative mixed in your lessons?

9. I noticed you used a text in your whole group lesson. How was the text selected?

10. Do you use books in your whole group lessons? If so, how are they incorporated into your whole group lessons?

11. On some days, after the students broke up into groups then you called them back. What was your perceptions of that call back? Explain?

12. I let you know that I wanted to see whole group reading instruction. Did that effect your reading instruction in anyway? Explain

13. Is your whole group reading instruction what you would call your minilesson? Explain?

14. I noticed you wrote on the marker board and used graphic organizers during your whole group instruction. What materials did you acquire to help develop this lesson for your students?

15. Reflecting upon yourself, is there experiences/teaching practices that you found valuable? Are there experiences/teaching practice that you found less valuable?

16. What strategies do you use to make curriculum meaningful and relevant to students?

17. When lessons carry over to Day 2, does that change the format of your whole group lesson? (How you begin, the middle, the end)

18. What do you think is accomplished at the end of the whole group lesson? Is there a certain guide/checklist you use for your whole group lesson to make sure you cover a certain criteria when teaching (Objective, purpose, etc.)

19. How does knowing a student make a difference in the classroom curriculum? Is the lesson created around student needs?

20. Do you use any specific language or wording when teaching your lessons? I noticed you start off your lessons with Yesterday, Today

Closing
- Is there anything else you think I should know about your experiences as a teacher at your school?
- Thank you for sharing your experiences and ideas with me today.
- Do you have any questions for me?

Sample Probing Questions
- Could you tell me more about that?
- Could you give me a specific example of that?
- Could you describe that in more detail for me?
- What was that like for you?
- You mentioned. . .
- What's your thinking behind that?
- Walk me through. . .

The interview protocol has been developed and adapted from Lock, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2014). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals* (6th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Data to Significant Statements

A section of Interview 1 with Ms. Thompson
C = Researcher T= Ms. Thompson ST = Significant Statement

C: What would happen in the middle of the mini lesson that you're implementing?

1. T: In the middle of the lesson? Well, it would depend on what we're doing. You know, sometimes it's kind of just me talking and explaining.

    ST: Middle minilesson teacher talking, explaining

2. T: Sometimes it might be….I might say, turn and talk to your neighbor about…..see if you guys can pull out those words together.

    ST: Middle minilesson turn and talk

3. T: Sometimes I have them write something down in their notebook that I want them to have. So it depends.

    ST: Middle minilesson write in notebooks

C: And then would you end it [minilesson] in any certain way?

4. T: If they have a job for today, I'll remind them that their job is to do something in their notebook.

    ST: End minilesson job in notebook

5. T: We talk a lot about in 3rd grade that…..I tell them that they have, to be able to find that balance. They can't…..spend their whole time reading and forget to do what I ask them to write down.

    ST: End minilesson can't just read, find balance

6. T: And I don't give them huge assignments.

    ST: End minilesson not huge assignments

7. T: It's like, you know, write a few sentences on two character traits that you noticed about the character in your book.

    ST: End minilesson write character traits in notebook

8. T: But they can't read the whole time and forget to do that.

    ST: End of minilesson can't read whole time

9. T: And they can't just sit….they have to balance their time and do both.

    ST: End minilesson can't just sit, balance time

10. T: So at the end of the lesson I will tell them what their job is and they'll go to their spot, if they have one.

    ST: End minilesson tell them their job and spot

11. T: And then I usually ask them who can head to their spot quietly and just remind them what they're supposed to be doing when they go to their spot. Kind of reiterate what we did in our lesson.

    ST: End minilesson find spot quietly

C: List as many reading instruction topics that you can think of that you teach to your students in a whole group setting.
T: Workshop topics…..well, do you want like units?
C: Anything. It could be both.
Time: 18:56

12. T: Well, we'll do a non-fiction unit and we will talk a lot about the fiction and non-fiction and determining importance and how to read non-fiction texts.

    ST: Topics: nonfiction, fiction, determining importance

13. T: We do a realistic fiction unit.

    ST: Topics: realistic fiction unit

14. T: So we read lots of realistic fiction books and talk about character and setting and lots of story elements there.

    ST: Topics: talk about character, setting, story elements

15. T: We do traditional literature and talk about different types of traditional literature, fables, tall tales, folk tales. Those are kind of the big, big things.

    ST: Topics: traditional literature, fables, tall tales, folk tales

C: Um, hum.

16. T: Then they're all kind of broken down, like I told you, we're doing sequence of events. We mention the importance.

ST: Topics: sequence of events, [text] importance

17. T: We talk a little bit about historical fiction but more in 3rd grade it's more realistic fiction.

ST: Topics: historical fiction and realistic fiction

18. And then some other small things…..we'll work a lot on fluency, lots of story elements, lots of plot.

ST: Topics: fluency, story elements, plot

19. T: We talk a lot about character, character traits, and setting.

ST: Topics: character, character traits, setting

20. T: Then we analyze characters. Summarizing and telling is big in 3rd grade too. I mean, that's where you tell the story and pulling out the important information.

ST: Topics: analyze characters, summarizing

21. T: Important facts, especially if they're related to the MCA tests this year, they've got to know how to do that.

ST: Topics: important facts, MCA tests

T: I guess I could probably go on if I kept thinking about it.
C: So where do you get your ideas for your whole group lessons and where do they come from?

22. T: Well, right now they come from our teacher manual, I guess.

ST: Ideas from teacher manual

23. T: In the past before we had this, they would come kind of from the standards and what it is that we wanted them to know about a certain topic based on our standards. We worked a lot off the standards.

ST: Past ideas from standards

Appendix H
Ms. Smith's Minilesson

Note: Italicized text reflects the researcher's commentary about the lesson.

1. Ms. Smith
All names are pseudonyms

15 Minutes
Topic: Story Elements/Lost Color Poster

Lesson Beginning
2. Ms. Smith: So yesterday we had talked about my other poster about the puppy: The dog who was chasing the ball and two friends that were trying to find him. Then they were in the park.
Reviews the story from yesterday.

3. Ms. Smith: Today we're going to continue working on the idea of story elements.
Reintroduces the content from yesterday.

4. The way that it helped me to figure out what was going on in that picture about the puppy, was thinking about the most important parts.
And foreshadows the story elements on the upcoming content, summarizing.

5. Thinking about the characters. Thinking about the setting. Was there a problem?
Reintroduces the cueing language of story elements.

And then we kind of talked about a little bit of how they could have probably solved that problem. And I'm going to show you again how to do this today.

****

Lesson Middle

6. I*n this part of the lesson, she models her thinking.*

Ms. Smith: But today our poster is a little bit different. This is called *The Lost Color.* And unlike our poster from yesterday, this poster does have quite a few words. This poster does have quite a few words so it's going to give us even more clues as to what's going on. So this is called *The Lost Color* and I'm just going to read a couple of the paragraphs right now.

The Crayon Man made crayons in every color. He worked in his Crayon factory day and night. One day, the Crayon Man walked through his factory. Something was odd. He saw red, yellow, blue, orange, and purple crayons. But there were no green crayons!

7. Ms. Smith: As I read these first short little paragraphs, I'm already noticing a lot of things. I'm noticing that the story begins with the Crayon Man, with a character.
Thinks aloud on the element of character.

8. Ms. Smith: Who works every day and night in the __?
Seeks student input on the element of setting and then connects the location as setting.

Brenda: Factory.
Ms. Smith: The factory. The Crayon factory. Guess what we already have? A setting. Right? Because he is there all the time and makes crayons, he knows all the colors.

9. Ms. Smith: And he notices that what is missing?
Again, using a guessing game or fill in the blank questioning format to have students offer their input on the story problem, which is called a story element in this lesson (e.g., vs. the more typical term, plot).

Kevin: Green.

10. Ms. Smith: Green. Do we have a problem?
Explicitly uses the language of the lesson content—problem.

Aubrey: Yeah.

Ms. Smith: Let's keep reading.

"Oh, dear. We have lost our green!" the Crayon Man cried. "What will we do? How will children draw grass, frogs, and big green monsters?"

Ms. Smith: So right there it's really showing us that we do have a problem because I know, as a teacher, that kids love to draw.

11. Ms. Smith: And these are things that kids actually draw a lot…grass, frogs, big green monsters. Especially like the grass, right? And kids use green crayons a lot.
Elaborates on the problem.

Ms. Smith: That could be a problem, if there were no green crayons.

Ms. Smith [reads]: *He thought and thought. Then the Crayon Man had an idea.*
He went into his lab and mixed the blue crayon potion with the yellow crayon potion. A big smile grew on the Crayon Man's face.
"We have green crayons again!"

****
12. N*ow the lesson transitions to explanation about summarizing, e.g., brevity and own words.*

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13. Ms. Smith: Now yesterday we talked about the importance of summarizing and synthesizing.
Switches lesson topic to summarizing and seems to use synthesizing as a synonym.

Ms. Smith: That was taking the story, all these words that this author wrote and putting them into my own words to explain to somebody what's going on here.

14. Ms. Smith: Now when I'm summarizing and synthesizing, should I read right off the page the whole thing again to you?
Quizzing students about summarizing.

Katie: No.
Ms. Smith: Would that be in my own words?
Bill: No.
Ms. Smith: No. I just read this story so it's in my brain.

15. Ms. Smith: Now if I had to retell to you what was going on, I don't need every little tiny word that the author has [written].
Introduces a new term into the lesson [retell].

16. Ms. Smith: But I need some of the big ideas.
Students could infer that the big ideas are the story elements, e.g., problem.

Ms. Smith: So I might say, well, there's this guy named the Crayon Man and he works in a Crayon factory. And one day he notices a problem. What's his problem?
Chad: Missing a color.
Ms. Smith: They're missing a color. They're missing __?
Jackie: Green.

17. Ms. Smith: The green crayon. And he thinks to himself, oh man, the kids can't draw like grass and green monsters and all kinds of fun stuff in green. So to solve his problem, the solution that he comes up with is to mix the blue crayon potion with the yellow crayon potion. And he knows that blue and yellow make what color?
Thinking aloud using the language of the story elements.

Paul: Green.
Ms. Smith: Green. So he solved his problem and created a green crayon. Okay.

18. Ms. Smith: That was summarizing and synthesizing this story.
Announces she modeled summarizing—used her own words.

Ms. Smith: I didn't read it off there. I didn't even look on here, did I?
Liz: No.
Ms. Smith: I have to look at you and from my brain I used my own words and I told you exactly what happened in the story.

19. Ms. Smith: And it was a lot shorter than what the author wrote.
Conveys an attribute of a summary—short.

20. Ms. Smith: I'm kind of squishing the story down to give you the main important things.
Using "kid friendly" language.

21. Ms. Smith: The story elements.
Seems to explicitly link summaries to using the story elements as the important content of the story.

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22. N*ow the lesson transitions to releasing responsibility to the students.*

23. Ms. Smith: So what I want you to do now, I'm going to read it one more time to you. Make sure you're being really good listeners because then it's going to be your turn to turn and talk to a partner and summarize and synthesize it in your words. They might be similar to my words. That's Okay. But we're just practicing.
Setting up to release responsibility to students.

Ms. Smith: So I'll read it one more time.

The Lost Color

The Crayon Man made crayons in every color. He worked in his Crayon factory day and night. One day, the Crayon Man walked through his factory. Something was odd. He saw red, yellow, blue, orange, and purple crayons. But there were no green crayons!

"Oh, dear. We have lost our green!" the Crayon Man cried. "What will we do? How will children draw grass, frogs, and big green monsters?"

He thought and thought. Then the Crayon Man had an idea.

He went into his lab and mixed the blue crayon potion with the yellow crayon potion. A big smile grew on the Crayon Man's face.

"We have green crayons again!"

Ms. Smith: Now, in a Level 1 voice, remember that direction. In a Level 1 voice, you're going to turn and talk to your partner.

24. Ms. Smith: And you're going to just very quickly summarize the story and tell them what happened.
Releases the task to the students.

25. Ms. Smith: Who was there? Where was it? What was the problem? How did they solve it? *Scaffolds the summarizing with the key facets of a "story elements type" of summary.*

Ms. Smith: Okay. Turn to your partner right now and start talking.
S: Students turn and talk.

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26. U*sing the poster? Checking the "right" answers. Lesson moves to assessing how the students did with the task and though I can't tell exactly, it sounds like she uses the poster to go over, AGAIN, summarizing this same story using story elements as cues for what to include in a summary.*

Ms. Smith: Okay. Turn your bodies so you can see up here. This is going to set you up for what you're going to do in your center and your independent work. So if you're watching right now, you're pretty much going to get some free answers. So I would pay attention so you know exactly what to do.

27. Ms. Smith: Now that we've read the story I really thought a lot of you did a wonderful job summarizing and synthesizing the story to your partner. You did a good job of using your own words. People were not looking up here and rereading it. You really took the important story elements and you made sure your neighbor knew what they were. And you explained the story in your own words so that was really, really nice.
Generally assesses and using "reminding" language of what the criteria is for successfully summarizing.

28. Ms. Smith: Now we're going to think about the elements that make up the story. Okay. So let's take a look. First of all, we have in a story, the first story element we think of is the character. Who is the character in this story?
Full repetition of this same story and the elements for a summary—though we have yet to hear the summary in a continuous text.

What is the purpose of summarizing—not stated anywhere. Why summarize?
retell in an organized way
retell the critical aspects of the story
organize information for understanding
identify the critical parts for later use
prepares readers to discuss
provides a way of talking about and recalling the story
condenses the story into a communicable format.

Ms. Smith: There's only one. Avery?
Avery: Crayon Man.

Ms. Smith: Crayon Man. Crayon Man is our character in this story. Then after we think about the characters and maybe even if there's a lot of characters, we identify the main character. We would want to talk a little bit about the setting. Remember the setting is where the story takes place. Katie what was the setting here?

Katie: Crayon factory.

Ms. Smith: The Crayon factory was the setting. Can stories have more than one setting?

Aaron: Yep.

Ms. Smith: Yep. Just like you can have more than one character.

Ms. Smith: Nope, Lisa, we don't get up during story and reading time.

Ms. Smith: So yes, the Crayon factory is our setting. Now, I think we had a problem in this story right? That is our third story element. Aubrey what was the problem in this story?

Aubrey: When he went into his factory there was no green.

Ms. Smith: There were no green crayons, right? And that was a problem he thought because kids like to color with green. There needs to be green. So the Crayon Man had to find a solution to his problem. And that's our fourth story element. Finding the solution. Lori, how did the Crayon Man solve his problem?

Lori: He took the blue, mixed it with the yellow crayon potion and that's what makes green.

Ms. Smith: That's right. Yep. The Crayon Man mixes blue and yellow crayon potions and makes a green crayon. Problem is solved. Holly, solved.

Ms. Smith: Today you guys are going to get a sheet that looks like this and you guys are going to fill this in. Look at this. Pretty simple, right? They don't write a lot. Just enough to explain what they are.

29. Ms. Smith: Luke and Jake go take a break. That's not acceptable. I really appreciate how quietly Chloe is sitting and her body is ready to listen. We're just about done.
Starting to have management issues.

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30. Moving towards the end of the lesson, she asks students to think about the purpose of summarizing.

31. Ms. Smith: Now before we head out and we do centers, someone's got to tell me, what does it mean to summarize and synthesize?
Brings this in again but it is not really a synonym for summarize.

Ms. Smith: What we just did. What does it mean to summarize and synthesize something? Lenny?

32. Lenny: It means that you could, read that and then you can think and then you can like talk about it. And you can talk about what's the main stuff that happened when you remembered it.
Student does a good job of stating what is involved in summarizing.

Ms. Smith: Did you guys just hear what Lenny just said? He had one big word in there that I really appreciated him using. He said we would read the story. Or we would take a look even if it was the poster, like the puppy. We would take a look at the picture or whatever we're trying to THINK about and we would THINK. Right? Because good readers are always doing what?
Denice: Thinking.
Ms. Smith: Always thinking. He said I would think about it and then I would try to explain what is going on or what happened in the story in my own words. That's the key here. It's not what the author wrote. It's not what your neighbor thinks. It's your own words.

33. Paul: So you can take the story and shrink it.
Student uses helpful language to describe a summary "shrink."

34. Ms. Smith: Take the story and shrink it and give me the most important details. Which are usually the story elements. Right? Character, setting, problem, solution.
Repeats the cues for summarizing using story elements.

35. Ms. Smith: So today, I want to know how you will use what we practiced today when you read your own story. How could you use that? Why is it important to know story elements? Summarizing and synthesizing. How in the world would we use this in our own everyday reading?
Why do this, she asks! Great!

Ms. Smith: Any ideas? Robert? Want to think about it? Liz, how would you use this?

36. Liz: Synthesize.
Uses the incidental term!

37. Ms. Smith: Why would you do that ever?
Raises the question of why summarize?

38. Liz: Because then it gives you what you say because then it gives you the characters, setting, problem and solution.
Actually, a very good response.

Ms. Smith: Okay. Liz so if I was reading like a really good book and you came up to me and said, hey, what's that book about? Would I want to sit here and read you the whole story?
Barb: No. We could never tell the whole story.

39. Ms. Smith: Holy cow that'd take forever.
Her emphasis is on brevity.

Ms. Smith: What could I do though? What could I do, Holly?
Holly: You could tell about it like the character in the story.
Ms. Smith: I could summarize and synthesize it using the story elements. Right?

40. Ms. Smith: It gives you a chance to explain something that you've read or explain something that you've seen without having to go into a lot of detail. And it's something that you use throughout your life.
Concludes with a clear statement about why summarizing is useful to learn which is very explicit and aligned with the GRR model—all phases.
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Lesson Ending

Ms. Smith: So today, when you're in small group with me, like if you're meeting with me and reading at my back table, or, if you're in independent reading or even listening to reading today, I want you to think when you're reading a story. What are the four story elements in this story?

41. Ms. Smith: Who are my characters? My setting? My problem/solution?
Cycles back to the content posed in the lesson beginning, using the same terminology. Releases the students to apply the content of the lesson to their independent and individual reading situations.

Ms. Smith: And then, think about how you would explain that if somebody asked you about it.

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