UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN ACTION: A CASE STUDY OF A
RESEARCH-BASED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM

By

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To J & A

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By

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During the last twenty years, professional learning for teachers has been promoted

as a viable path for increased teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Because

of the complexities of the school system and the diversity of the student population,

designing quality professional learning opportunities that are meaningful for teachers

can be difficult. However, recent research suggests that there is a sufficient literature

basis to support a set of features and characteristics of professional learning that leads

to increased teacher knowledge and learning.

This study seeks to understand the elements of professional learning through the

lenses of the participants in a professional learning opportunity, which incorporated the

research-based professional learning characteristics. It also seeks to understand how

the participants themselves made sense of their own learning and how they perceived

the impact of their learning on their teaching and students. This research employed

qualitative case study methodology to illustrate the phenomenon under examination.

Participants in this study included a purposefully selected group of three participants

enrolled in a particular professional learning experience.

All three participants made changes in their instructional approaches and reported changes in both content and pedagogical knowledge as a result of participation in the professional learning experience. It is noted that the design of the program, in particular the active learning, coherence, and collective participation aspects, played a significant role in the participants' initial implementation of new instructional strategies in their classrooms. The findings offer insight into the elements of professional learning that impact teacher practice.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

This study explores the phenomenon of a particular professional learning experience through the eyes of the participants, and the impact of the professional learning experience on their teaching. The purpose of this study is to explore with a sample of participants, their perceptions and understandings of their own professional learning and the initial impact of the experience on their classroom practices. It was anticipated that the knowledge gained from this inquiry would afford new insights into the elements of professional learning that impacts teacher practice, and ultimately, student achievement. This research employed qualitative case study methodology to illustrate the phenomenon under examination. Participants in this study included a purposefully selected group of three participants enrolled in a particular professional learning experience.

This chapter begins with an overview of the context that frames the study. Following is the problem statement, the statement of purpose and accompanying research questions. Also included in this chapter is discussion of the research approach and limitations of the study.

Context

In the last twenty years, teacher quality and professional development have become a pressing issue in our nation. National reform efforts promote professional development as a viable path for increased school success and student achievement. The *No Child Left Behind* Act (U.S. Congress, 2001) requires that states provide access to "high quality" professional development that builds teachers' subject-area

knowledge, teaching skills and technological skills. *Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action* (McGowan, 2004) suggests "helping our teachers succeed and enabling our children to learn is an investment in human potential…" (p. 11). In the *American Reinvestment and Recovery Act* (United States Congress, 2009), the Obama Administration outlines professional development as an investment opportunity to jump-start school reform and improvement efforts. In the current *Blueprint for School Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), a document that outlines the Obama administration's reccomendations for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, professional development is once again centered as a critical component of school success.

Focusing on professional development as an approach to reform and school improvement is much more difficult than enacting a new program and teaching teachers how to implement it. Schools are complex ecosystems of students, families, teachers, staff and community members, making the task of designing professional learning a difficult one.

The terms "professional development" and "professional learning" are often used interchangeably; however, there is an important difference. In Fullan's (2007) opinion, the term "professional development" has been "a major obstacle to progress in teacher learning" (p. 35). Indeed, "professional development", leads one to think of workshops, training days and other instances where the focus is on delivering information *to* teachers, as opposed to considering whether or not teachers are learning anything that results in a shift in practice.

The distinction between professional learning and professional development is more than semantics. Professional development has typically been considered as an external approach to instructional improvement, but despite its intent, it does not always lead to learning (Easton, 2008; Fullan, 2007). While some of these opportunities are sessions that are well designed and take into consideration adult learning, they are not powerful enough to lead to sustained change.

Definitions of professional development have changed in recent years. While "one shot" workshops continue to dominate the landscape for teachers, more research into Professional Learning Communities and other collaborative practices have begun to be integrated into schools and districts (Broughman, 2006). This change indicates a movement to the concepts of continual learning and social contexts. Therefore, Fraser, Kennedy, Reid and McKinney (2007) suggested the term "professional learning" be used to describe the processes "that, whether intuitive or deliberate, individual or social, result in specific changes in the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs or actions of teachers" (p. 157) and the term "professional development" be used to "refer to the broader changes that may take place over a longer period of time resulting in qualitative shifts in aspects of teachers' professionalism." (p. 157).

The characteristics of powerful professional learning may still be debated in the literature, and clear evidence of outcome measures of teachers' and students' learning may still be lacking. However, Desimone (2009) posits that there is a sufficient literature base to support a set of features of professional learning that positively impacts teachers' improvement. Although there is no consensus on a set of features, the literature lacks a systematic study of teachers who engage in professional learning,

designed with the identified characteristics in mind. There is little known on the understandings of the teachers of their own learning and how they perceive the impact of their learning on their teaching or their students.

Given the elements of professional learning that have been studied thus far, the present study seeks to understand the elements of professional learning through the lenses of the participants in a professional learning opportunity, which included the research-based professional learning characteristics. It also seeks to understand how the participants themselves made sense of their own learning and how they perceived the impact of their learning on their teaching and students.

Problem Statement

The Teacher Scholars Reading Academy is a professional learning opportunity that begins with a two-week, intensive summer portion that wraps around a summer program for struggling kindergarten through 3rd grade readers and includes follow up during the subsequent school year. The participants in the program, referred to as Scholars, engage in professional learning of reading instruction that seeks to include many of the characteristics of professional learning: content focus, active learning, coherence, collective participation, duration, conceptual inputs and the role of the facilitator, all of which will be described in detail in the literature review in Chapter 2. While self-reports from Scholars have been powerful testaments to the rigor and quality of the program, the Scholars' learning has never been formally studied.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study is to systematically record and deeply understand the Scholars' sense of their learning, both in their content knowledge of reading, and in the enactment of that learning during the Scholars Academy and when

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they return to their schools the following academic year. It is anticipated that the stories of a few teachers, told in depth, may illuminate aspects of professional learning that have been unattainable through self-reports. Additionally, the results of the study may highlight gaps that were previously unrecognized in the professional learning literature.

In order to understand the perceptions of the Scholars, the following research questions were addressed:

- In what ways do the participants in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy make sense of their own professional learning during the two-week Academy?

- How does the Scholars Academy influence the participants' content knowledge of reading? How does Scholars Academy influence their pedagogical knowledge of reading?

- In what ways do the participants make sense of the transfer of the professional learning into their own contexts when the initial academy is finished?

- What insights have the participants gained into their practice as a result of their participation in the Scholars Academy?

Research Approach

The purpose of the study and the questions given above guided the theoretical and methodological choices made to conduct this research. The research methodology used has a qualitative orientation. Qualitative research is flexible, attempts to describe the complexity of the social context and focuses on the individuals' own perceptions about the phenomenon being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This qualitative study is designed to be exploratory and descriptive, and it describes the phenomenon of participation in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy as reflected by a sample of three participants. Qualitative research is well suited for capturing the complex understandings and critical aspects of a phenomenon (Glesne, 2006).

The study took place over the course of the two-week Teacher Scholars Reading Academy during the summer of 2011. Three Scholars were selected through purposeful sampling to provide for the richest information and support the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002). Each Scholar was interviewed twice during the two-week Academy and observed daily. In September 2011, the Scholars were observed in their own classrooms and a final interview was conducted.

In-depth interviews were the primary means of data collection. Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Other methods of data collection included field notes of observations and document analysis. The interviews, observations and document analysis allowed for triangulation of the data in order to provide a thick, rich description of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy and the experiences of the participants.

Data analysis included the process of categorizing, synthesizing and analyzing the transcripts, field notes and document analysis notes for patterns and interpretations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Glesne, 2006). Coding categories were developed and refined on an on-going basis. In addition, peer review and the use of a reflective journal were included in the coding process as the study progressed. A detailed description of the research methodology can be found in Chapter 4.

Overview of the Dissertation

The following chapters review the relevant literature, describe the context for the study, discuss the methodology employed, present the findings and discuss implications. In Chapter 2, a review of the literature on teacher professional learning characteristics, processes and mechanisms is presented. In Chapter 3, the context surrounding the study is described in detail. In Chapter 4, the research methodology

employed is discussed. Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings and relate the findings to

current research. Finally, in Chapter 7, a summary of the study is presented and

implications and recommendations for future research are discussed.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature in the field of professional development and professional learning.   It was developed through a systematic literature search of relevant topics that related to the focus of this study: how participants in a research-based professional learning opportunity make sense of their own learning and the impact of that learning on their own classroom practice. The review of the literature supports the following concepts: features of effective professional learning and mechanisms and processes of professional learning.

Features of Effective Professional Learning

Recent research has identified various characteristics of effective professional learning; however the empirical support for these characteristics is weak. In a recent literature review, Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss and Shapley (2007) found only nine studies of professional learning that had clear outcome measures of student achievement. Previous studies have focused on teacher outcomes and satisfaction measures (Kelleher, 2003). The latest research on professional learning has focused on qualitative literature, research on teacher learning in developed countries, surveys of teachers and data from three administrations of the federal Schools and Staffing Survey (Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education and the National Staff Development Council, 2009-2010). Since most of the research of professional development and professional learning lack methodological rigor, the findings are promising practices (Garet, et al., 2008; National Mathematics Advisory Panel, 2008).

Although a rigorous research base is limited, Desimone (2009) posits that there is a sufficient research base to support a set of features of professional learning that positively impacts teacher improvement and causally impacts student achievement. She identifies content focus, active learning, coherence, duration and collective participation as the research-based characteristics of professional learning. She proposes that there is sufficient empirical evidence to support these features and that further research should include this set of characteristics and begin to look for causal effects in student achievement. Desimone's list encompasses some of the characteristics that are frequently discussed in multiple lists of effective professional learning characteristics. In fact, many lists are published in an effort to promote effective professional learning (American Federation of Teachers, 2002; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Design, 2002; Guskey, 2003; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009), yet the lists differ in many ways, and there is no conclusive set of characteristics that positively affect either teacher or student learning (Guskey, 2003). Additionally, there are multiple providers of professional learning, each with a different set of "guiding principles" for designing effective professional learning experiences for teachers (Astor-Jack, McCallie, & Balcerzak, 2007).

With an emerging theoretical framework and the beginnings of a research base, the characteristics of effective professional learning for teachers will soon be identified. This review will consider empirical and theoretical evidence to support the characteristics that Desimone (2009) promotes while distilling additional characteristics cited in the literature.

Characteristics of Quality Professional Learning Promoted by Desimone

Content Focus

The content of professional learning is most useful when it focuses on increasing teachers' subject area knowledge and/or pedagogical content knowledge and links that knowledge to classroom practice, rather than general learning or behavior techniques (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Multiple studies show strong effects of professional learning on practice when it focuses on specific pedagogy, content, instructional techniques and a focus on student learning of that specific content. For example, Carpenter, Feneman, Peterson, Chiang and Loef (1989) designed a professional development experience to increase teachers' content knowledge in problem solving math techniques, which had a strong effect on teacher learning and student achievement. However, Sloan (1993) found professional development focused on general teacher learning (i.e., direct instruction techniques) yielded no statistically significant results. Kennedy (1999) found in her meta-analysis that professional development focused on general teaching techniques without a content focus, had the weakest influence on student achievement.

A strong content focus is included on many lists as a characteristic of effective professional learning (Guskey, 2003; Hill, 2004; Wei, et al., 2009). This characteristic is based on a belief that, in order to teach effectively, teachers must have not only a solid understanding of the content they are conveying, but also have a deep understanding of how students learn the content best and the common misconceptions students may have while learning the content (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

For example, reading and literacy professional learning, with a strong content focus on increasing teacher knowledge of language and children's reading development has been shown to have a positive impact on students' achievement (Landry, Anthony, Swank, & Monseque-Bailey, 2009; McCutchen, et al., 2002; McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999; Rosemary, Roskos, & Landreth, 2007; Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005). Specifically, McCutchen, et al. (2002) found a significant increase in students' word reading after an intensive professional learning experience that focused on both increasing teachers' knowledge of phonology and orthographics and linking that knowledge to pedagogy.

Additionally, there is significant research on math and science professional learning supporting content focus as a characteristic of effective professional learning (Banilower, Heck, & Weiss, 2007; Carpenter et al., 1989; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Duffy, et al., 1986; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). Professional learning in math and science with a strong content focus typically seeks to increase the teachers' personal content knowledge of math and science theory; however Garet, et al. (2001) found that an exclusive focus on content knowledge without improving teachers' pedagogy had a negative effect on teachers' practices. This suggests that a strong content focus is effective only when the professional learning is directly linked to pedagogy and implications for classroom practice.

Active Learning

Desimone (2009) includes *active learning* as an essential characteristic of effective professional learning. Active learning refers to participants being engaged in their learning through observations, discussions, planning and practice, rather than

passively receiving information that they are later expected to enact. Active learning is

rooted in social cognitive learning theory, which posits that meaningful learning takes

place when the emphasis is on deep understanding and learners are actively engaged

in constructing knowledge and provided many opportunities to apply newly learned skills

(Bransford et al., 2000). Active learning also means situated professional learning

within the same context as student learning. Ball and Cohen (1999) discuss how

professional learning must mimic the areas teachers often seek to foster in their

students: investigation, inquiry, analysis and critical habits of mind. Active learning can

also take form as discussions that situate new learning in the classroom context,

observations of other teachers' practice, and evaluation of their own classroom

interactions by others.

There is much evidence to support active learning as an essential characteristic

of effective professional learning that results in increased teacher knowledge and

student achievement (Banilower et al., 2007; Carpenter et al., 1989; Desimone et al.,

2002; Duffy, et al., 1986; Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005; Harwell,

D'Amico, Stein, & Gatti, 2000; Landry et al., 2009; McCutchen, et al., 2002; McGill-

Franzen et al., 1999; Penuel et al., 2007), yet the discrete learning activities many have

varied effects when considered individually. For example, Kennedy (1999) found that

simply including in-class observations did not significantly impact student achievement.

Coherence

Desimone (2009) describes *coherence* as the alignment between the

professional learning experience and participants' prior knowledge, the school and

district goals and state and national reform efforts. Aligning professional learning with

teachers' beliefs and knowledge systems is grounded in constructivist learning theory,

which suggests that meaningful learning occurs when new knowledge can be related to previous knowledge (Ormrod, 2007). Coherence is also supported by adult learning theory, which suggests adults also draw on their experiences to make sense of new learning (Brookfield, 1995). Many studies suggest that professional learning has the greatest impact on student achievement when it extends just beyond the "known" into the *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1978), yet builds upon teachers' existing beliefs (Carpenter et al., 1989; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Duffy, et al., 1986; Landry et al., 2009; McCutchen, et al., 2002; Penuel et al., 2007; Rosemary et al., 2007; Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005).

Coherence with district and school goals and state and national reform efforts is another factor that has an impact on teacher learning and causally on student achievement. District decision-making on professional learning offerings has considerable influence on the kinds of opportunities teachers may choose to attend, as well as shaping the goals for teacher learning. Firestone et al. (2005) studied the impact of a statewide professional learning effort on three different districts in New Jersey. Their findings indicated that district leadership has a profound impact on the professional learning offerings within the district, and each district's interpretation of the state policy was directly tied to the effectiveness of the professional learning. Although Firestone did not examine differences in achievement, only one district aligned its professional learning and school support with statewide efforts. As a consequence, only the teachers in that district reported greater understanding of the subject matter and how it related to their teaching.

While coherence at the national, state and district levels impacts teacher learning and student achievement, coherence with the goals of school administration is also powerful. Several professional learning studies designed to measure perceived principal or school level support showed an increase in teacher learning and student achievement (Banilower et al., 2007; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Harwell et al., 2000). Clearly, coherence with teachers' prior knowledge, state and district reform efforts, and administrative goals determines the effectiveness of professional learning and its impact on teacher knowledge and student achievement.

Collective Participation

Collective participation refers to groups of teachers from the same district, school, department or grade level embarking and collaborating on their professional learning together. Teachers who share students or who work within the same context are thought to provide support to each other as they deepen their knowledge and change their instructional methods. Collective participation is based on the theories of distributive cognition, which refers to spreading a learning task among multiple people in order to draw on multiple knowledge bases and ideas, as well as on constructivist learning theory, which draws on discussions and social interactions for learning (Ormrod, 2007).

Garet et al. (2001) and Penuel et al. (2007) both found statistically significant changes in teacher instruction when collective participation characterized the professional learning experience. Harwell et al. (2000) found that teachers who had regular, collegial discussions about literacy instruction had higher classroom averages on the Comprehensive Test for Basic Skills. Troubling, however, is Kennedy's (1999) conclusion that whole-school professional development programs had the weakest

influence on student learning. What is not clear however is how the professional development content and activities may have influenced the outcomes as related to collective participation.

Duration

Duration, in both hours and time span, has been studied extensively in an effort to identify research-based guidelines for effective professional learning. Duration, often referred to as "ongoing" was included on five of the thirteen lists reviewed by Guskey (2003). While theories and frameworks for effective professional learning continue to include duration as important to teacher learning and student achievement (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Little, 1993), the empirical evidence is less strong. Desimone (2009) concludes, "The research shows…change requires professional development activities to be of sufficient duration…" (p. 184), yet her three-year longitudinal study of the effects of professional development on teachers' instruction indicates that "surprisingly, there were no effects of duration" (Desimone et al., 2002, p. 120). In Kennedy's analysis (1999), neither contact time nor span of contact hours had a significant impact on student achievement. However, Garet et al. (2001), Penuel et al. (2007) and Banilower et al. (2007), found a positive correlation of time span and contact hours on the levels of content focus and active learning opportunities leading to increased teacher learning and self-efficacy. Perhaps the effectiveness and importance of duration is dependent on the quality, design and focus of the content and activities that comprise the professional learning effort.

Additional Characteristics of Quality Professional Learning

Conceptual Inputs

Findings suggest that there may be another component of effective professional learning - *conceptual inputs* - in addition to those identified (Hoban, 2002). Conceptual inputs refer to outside resources designed to ground the learning in research or conceptual/theoretical basis. Professional learning cannot come without strong conceptual inputs as a way to link research and practice (Hoban, 2002). Hill (2004) studied 13 different professional development sessions in elementary math to see if they met the "standards" for high-quality professional development. Her findings indicated the content presented was "mediocre" and there was no "rich and robust treatment of instruction, mathematics and student learning" (p. 222). Additionally, when surveying teachers about their professional development in California, findings indicated that "intellectual content (was) often thin" (Little, Gerritz, Stern, Guthrie, Kirst, & Marsh, 1987, p. 17).

In most instances, the researcher often delivers the professional learning studied themselves (Borko, 2004). This professional learning experience is usually steeped in research-based practices and theories, since the researchers themselves are experts in their fields. Powerful professional learning must involve more than simply a content focus and active learning events. Many demonstrated instances of strong conceptual inputs that impacted student achievement have resulted from professional learning situated within a university-school partnership (Carpenter et al., 1989; Desimone et al., 2002; Duffy, et al., 1986; Harwell et al., 2000; Landry et al., 2009; McCutchen, et al., 2002; McGill-Franzen et al., 1999; Neale, Smith, & Johnson, 1990; Rosemary et al., 2007; Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005).

Role of the Facilitator

Another feature related to conceptual inputs is the role of the facilitator and its impact on teacher learning and student achievement. A professional learning experience may be grounded in solid conceptual inputs, have a clear content focus, be of significant duration, require collective participation and include active learning opportunities. However, these experiences may not have an impact on teacher or student learning due to the facilitator. Borko (2004) found no instances in the literature that studied the effects of professional learning designed for multiple facilitators at multiple sites; however she identified some promising projects (Schifter, Bastable, & Russell, 1999; Seago, Mumme, & Branca, 2004) that suggest that the facilitator is "crucial to the success of the professional development program" (p. 10). Remillard & Geist (2002) found that facilitators often had to reframe the discourse and adjust the activities to respond to the idiosyncratic needs of the particular teachers, while maintaining the goals of the professional learning experience. In order to maintain the integrity of the professional learning design, professional learning designers must communicate effectively to the facilitators the goals and intentions of the experience (LeFevre, 2004).

Mechanisms and Processes of Professional Learning

While the elements of professional learning that are integral to change are important, they are not the only factors. The mechanisms and processes of professional learning are critical to the organizational structure of professional learning for teachers. Three main processes are identified in the literature: professional learning communities (PLCs), teacher inquiry and instructional coaches.

Professional Learning Communities

Research has indicated that a shared understanding of the nature of the innovation and what it can accomplish are integral to achieving a sustained change in curriculum and instruction (Joyce, Showers, & Rolheiser-Bennett, 1987). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are defined as "groups of teachers who meet regularly for the purpose of increasing their own learning and that of their students" (Lieberman & Miller, 2008, p. 2). PLCs provide a consistent structure that aligns with the elements of powerful professional learning for teachers.

Multiple policy groups and educational organizations have promoted PLCs as integral to changing teaching and learning in schools. Learning Forward, formerly known as the National Staff Development Council (2004), specified in its core standards that adults be organized into "learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district" (p. 1). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003), National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2002), The Keys Initiative of the National Education Associate (2010), and the American Federation of Teachers (2004) all endorse the concept of PLCs as powerful agents of change in the teaching profession. In addition, The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2002) and The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2004) have described the fundamental job of principals as "leading learning communities" (p.5).

There are distinct attributes that define a PLC from other collegial groups. First is the shift in focus from schools being centers of *teaching* to centers of *learning* (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005). This is a fundamental change from the traditional view that schools are places where teachers teach and it is up to the students to learn. PLCs

have a driving mission to ensure that *all* students achieve at high levels and that it is up to educators to work together to problem solve issues and concerns related to student achievement. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) were among the first to study PLCs and their connection to student achievement. They noted that the greatest gains in student achievement occurred in PLCs that focused on promoting teacher learning and linking that learning to student achievement. The weakest gains were noted in communities of teachers who enforced traditional notions of schooling, such as tracking, grading on a curve, and the value of seniority among teachers. What sets these communities of teachers apart is the vision that *all* students can learn.

A second attribute is the notion of collective learning. This particular attribute differs from the "collective participation" characteristic of effective professional learning, although collective participation is an important part of collective learning. Collective learning is distinctive, in that it challenges the traditional paradigm of isolationism that is pervasive in school culture. Collaboration is paramount to the success of student achievement. Collective learning positions teachers as leaders of their own growth and development (Lieberman & Miller, 2008) and builds on the premise that two (or more) heads are better than one. Teachers who engage in PLCs with a strong sense of collective learning are better equipped to tackle difficult problems together, rather than on their own. Engaging in inquiry, where groups of teachers discuss problems and solutions relating to teaching and learning, is the essential mission of a PLC (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2010). This kind of collective work leads to better understandings across disciplines, deeper understandings and appreciation of the work of others, and a team spirit that binds PLC members in a shared set of ideas (Sergiovanni, 1994). In

engaging in this kind of work, members of a PLC develop collective responsibility for student success and show evidence that "when groups, rather than individuals are seen as the main units for implementing curriculum, instruction and assessment, they facilitate development of share purposes for student learning and collective responsibility to achieve it" (Newman & Wehlange, 1995, p. 37).

A third attribute of PLCs is shared leadership and vision. PLCs are effective when there is shared leadership and a notion of "we're all on the same team and working on the same goal: a better school" (Hoerr, 1996, p. 381). The notion of a principal as a manager is changed into principal as "head learner" (Barth, 1990). Administrators, along with teachers, delve into the work together wondering, investigating, and seeking solutions to complex problems. The notion of leaders as "heroes" is dispelled and replaced with a collaborative approach (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2002; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004). In their extensive study of leadership, Kouzes and Posner (1996) found no instances of significant achievement without the "active involvement and support of many people" (p. 106). PLCs are effective when all members of the school community share a collective vision of the goals of the school. As addressed in the first attribute, what sets a PLC apart from other structures is the belief that all students can achieve, and that the ultimate goal of school is to ensure that achievement takes place (Louis & Kruse, 1995). In a PLC, members are encouraged not only to collectively develop the vision for the institution, but to also continually use that vision as a marker in making decisions about teaching and learning (Issacson & Bamburg, 1992).

Professional learning communities are powerful structures for promoting teachers' professional learning, but they require a commitment to change at a fundamental level. PLCs challenge schools to rethink the foundations of what it means to be a "school" (DuFour, 2005). If PLCs are implemented with fidelity, they can become agents of change in teaching practice and improved student learning (Lieberman & Miller, 2008). PLCs challenge long-standing ideas of how teachers learn; they allow professional learning to evolve in new ways and teachers to be positioned as leaders in their own professional learning and growth (Lieberman & Miller, 2007; Little & Curry, 2008; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Because PLCs are centered on the relationship between colleagues, school leaders, students, and content, they begin to challenge the isolation that is pervasive in school culture. PLCs provide opportunities for collaborative work, joint problem solving and critical reflection focusing on school-wide improvements in curriculum, instruction and student outcomes (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Lieberman and Miller (2008) contend that PLCs "lead to a transformation in teacher identity; members move from seeing themselves as 'just a teacher' to being part of larger community where new practices are constantly being created and learned rather than a fixed menu" (p. 2).

Teacher Inquiry

Inquiry has been a part of the teacher education vernacular since Dewey (1933) suggested that teachers engage in "reflective action." Inquiry is a formal process that goes beyond being reflective about classroom practice. Inquiry engages teachers in asking questions that are rooted in their practice and in working carefully and systematically to study them (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Inquiry has typically been used as a professional development offering, usually an option that teachers could

choose as part of a menu of activities. When inquiry is chosen as an "option", it is seen as a project or an activity to be undertaken for a fixed period of time (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). While an inquiry "project" could be a beneficial event, it is not sufficient to make a lasting impact. Proponents of inquiry as a vehicle for professional learning specify an "inquiry stance," in which questioning one's own practice becomes part of the fabric of the teachers' work (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009). When inquiry has become a "stance" rather than a "project", it allows for knowledge and practice to be interconnected and positions the teacher as learner.

At the heart of inquiry is the belief that teachers learn best when they are at the center of their learning. Similar to a PLC, inquiry positions teachers as experts. When inquiry is a stance, either at a teacher level or school level, a PLC can provide a vehicle for the cycle of inquiry to develop and reoccur. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008) describe a model for professional learning through inquiry and PLCs. Their term "inquiry-oriented Professional Learning Communities" is defined as a group of teachers who work together in a PLC and engage themselves in continuous cycles of inquiry. Considering the elements of a PLC, inquiry is a natural, effective and complementary facet of professional learning.

Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaches are defined as colleagues who take a mentoring or professional learning stance to work collaboratively with teachers to incorporate research-based teaching techniques into their instructional repertoire (Knight, 2007). Instructional coaching has expanded over the last 10 years, even though there is little empirical evidence to support its effectiveness (Kamil, 2006). Most of the evidence to date is based on practitioner experiences, which report that teachers felt more confident

when coached and felt that their students had better achievement (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Veenman, Dennesen, Gerrits, & Kenter, 2001), although there are mixed findings on the impact of coaching on instructional practices (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Gutierrez, Crosland, & Berlin, 2001). Some comparative studies have shown that teachers who receive coaching are more likely than those who are not offered coaching to enact the desired practices of professional learning (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Knight, 2004; Kohler, Crilley, Shearer, & Good, 1997; Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Most often, instructional coaches are used to continue the learning that teachers receive in initial professional learning opportunities (Wei et al., 2009). In this way, coaches are utilized as the follow-up and continuous segment of the professional learning to ensure that changes take root in teachers' practice (Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2000).

Experts on instructional coaching indicate that successful coaching must involve an accomplished peer who delivers ongoing modeling, specific observations and critiques of practice (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, & Supovitz, 2003). As with other aspects of instructional coaching, empirical evidence for the characteristics of instructional coaches is lacking. However, some case studies and descriptive studies indicate that effective instructional coaches should have three broad areas of knowledge: pedagogical knowledge, content expertise, and interpersonal skills (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). While it is clear that instructional coaches should have considerable expertise in pedagogical and content knowledge, their interpersonal skills may have the most significant effect on their coaching abilities

(Knight, 2004). Dole (2004) notes that interpersonal skills are critical to knowing "when to support and nudge – balancing the fine line between supporting the status quo and placing too much stress on teachers" (p. 469). Additionally, coaches have self-identified interpersonal skills as more important than content knowledge, partly because they felt that they could be "trained" in the content, but the interpersonal skills were inherent to their personalities (Ertmer, et al., 2003).

Instructional coaching is another mechanism that promotes collaborative, collegial learning in a supportive environment best suited to a PLC. Instructional coaching promotes active learning directly linking pedagogical content knowledge to classroom practice. Coaches have the ability to work with teachers in their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) to assist them in moving forward to apply a new innovation. Instructional coaches also have the capability to engage teachers in a learning process in the very environment where the change must take place-in the teachers' own classrooms.

Rationale for the Study

In sum, the literature on professional learning reviewed in this chapter suggest seven characteristics of a quality professional learning experience: content focus, active learning, coherence, collective participation, duration, conceptual inputs and the facilitator's role. In addition, three promising mechanisms and processes for professional learning include Professional Learning Communities, Inquiry, and Instructional Coaching.

Research on professional learning indicates that, despite the literature reviewed in this chapter, the predominant form of professional learning enacted across the country still does not align with these components and processes (Wei, Darling-Hammond, &

Adamson, 2010). Hence, little is known about how these components and processes play out in the real world of schools and teachers.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is in-depth understanding of the experiences of three teachers involved in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy, a professional learning experience that begins with a two-week, intensive summer academy and continues by follow up throughout the subsequent school year. The Scholars Academy is based on the features of effective professional learning outlined in this literature review. It employs the mechanisms and processes of professional learning that have been considered effective in changing teacher practice and student achievement. Given how much is still to be learned about which features have impact and which mechanisms and processes of professional learning make sense in a given context, this study considers the view of the participants; it tells the story of their experiences, through their own eyes.

In the next chapter, the context and background of the study is provided. A detailed description of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy and the corresponding summer reading program (SAIL) is provided. The subsequent chapter provides a full description of the context of this study.

CHAPTER 3
CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The study focuses on the participants in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy, which is a professional learning experience situated in a developmental research school. The Academy is linked with a summer program, *Summer Adventures in Literacy* (SAIL). This chapter describes the roles of the developmental research school and SAIL, as well as the Academy itself. The chapter concludes with a summary of how the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy is built on the characteristics and mechanisms of professional learning as described in the review of the literature in Chapter 2. A detailed syllabus including all topics of instruction, professional readings and protocols can be found in Appendix A.

Much of the information contained in this chapter was derived from careful analysis of various documents collected throughout the study. Each document is cited by the letter D (indicating "document") followed by an abbreviation of the type of document collected (H for "handout", PPT for "PowerPoint Presentation", etc.), followed lastly by the date the document was used during the Academy. A full key to the abbreviations can be found in Appendix C. Document analysis and other data analysis methods are described in detail in the next chapter.

The Developmental Research School

The Teacher Scholars Reading Academy is situated in a developmental research school affiliated with a major state university. One of the research school's missions is to provide professional learning opportunities to teachers and schools in the surrounding area (D-PPT-627). Many professional learning activities are scheduled

throughout the school year and summer, and offerings typically include embedded learning within regular school activities.

The developmental research school is well known throughout the area as a site where cutting-edge instructional practices are implemented on an experimental basis in a diverse setting. The student population of the school mirrors the diversity of the corresponding state. Students are selected by lottery based on race and socioeconomic status to mimic the ratio of those characteristics within the state population. This provides a diverse student population with issues and difficulties similar to other schools. Although it is a public school, required to follow all state mandates related to standardized testing, course offerings and any other state specifications, the developmental research school operates as its own school district within the state. Operating as a district allows the developmental research school some flexibility and decision-making in improvement efforts. The small size of the school, as well as the ability to operate as a school district, allows the developmental research school to delve into solving the problems and issues that occur in most schools, but typically on a smaller scale (D-PPT-627). Being held to the same standard as all public schools within the state allows the school to have credibility in the instructional practices that are utilized. As a result, the professional learning that is situated within the developmental research school is highly regarded as authentic and applicable to schools and teachers throughout the state.

Summer Adventures in Literacy (SAIL)

The SAIL program began as a middle school initiative to assist students who scored below the 50th percentile in reading by preventing summer reading loss, a well-documented phenomenon whereby students lose reading comprehension skills over the

break between school years (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996; David, 1979). SAIL was implemented to maintain and improve reading skills over the summer, specifically in comprehension (D-PPT-627). In 2000, SAIL was expanded to include Kindergarten through 5th grade struggling readers, but it was scaled back to Kindergarten through 3rd grade in 2007. SAIL consistently focuses on building the core reading strategies necessary for growth in the next grade level. Classes are kept small (student: teacher ratio of less than 13:1) and students spend four hours per day for four weeks focused on specific reading strategy instruction.

The guiding principles of SAIL (D-H-627) are built on what are accepted best practices in reading instruction.

- *Maximize the amount of time spent reading* (Brophy & Good, 1986; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990)

- *Maximize opportunities for students to talk about what they are reading* (Guthrie, Wigfield, & VonSecker, 2000; Knapp, 1995; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003; Van den Branden, 2000)

- *Use high interest reading materials* (Allington et al., 2010; Beike, 2009; Guthrie, 1981)

- *Engage students in authentic, meaningful tasks* (National Reading Panel, 2000; Pressley, Dozeal, Raphael, Mohan, Roehrig, & Bogner, 2003)

- *Build background knowledge* (Langer, 1984; Long, Winograd, & Bridget, 1989; Stevens, 1980)

- *Teach comprehension strategies* (Allington, 2006; Block, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2002; Block & Pressley, 2002; Gambrell, Morrow, Neuman, & Pressley, 1999; Mason & Schumm, 2004; Pressley, 2002; RAND Reading Study Group, 2001; Stanovich, 2000)

- *Provide explicit word attack strategies for students with decoding difficulties* (National Reading Panel, 2000)

- *Work with students in small groups* (Heibert, Colt, Catto, & Gury, 1992; Taylor, Short, Shearer, & Frye, 1995)

- *Measure and chart student progress toward identified goals* (Lipson, Mosenthal, Mekkelsen, & Russ, 2004; Pressley et al., 2003; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2002)

- *Have fun! Make it more like summer camp than school.* (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000)

With these guiding principles, a curriculum was chosen as a basis for the program. The TimeWarp Plus (Voyager Expanded Learning L.P., 2004) program includes the relevant aspects of the guiding principles, while allowing for customization of the curriculum to the idiosyncratic needs of the students. It is a comprehensive, summer intervention program with instructional sequences and materials for comprehension, word study, fluency and vocabulary instruction. Each grade level has a different thematic focus designed to engage students in a highly motivating topic for the duration of the summer program. Zoo Animals, Hometown Neighborhood, Ancient Egypt and Ancient Rome were the themes during the period of the study (Summer, 2011). Students in SAIL are engaged in reading and interacting with pertinent high-interest materials on their reading levels. The curriculum also includes reading assessments that enable students to chart their progress toward their individualized goals in fluency and comprehension.

Each of the kindergarten through 3rd grade SAIL classrooms maintains an instructional focus based on specific reading assessment data from the end of the prior school year for that particular group of students. The developmental research school's reading coach and the SAIL teacher carefully analyze the data to ensure that the instructional time spent in SAIL matches the student needs. The TimeWarp Plus curriculum is then individualized to match the agreed upon instructional focus (D-H-627).

Data collected on students attending the SAIL program indicate growth in reading achievement at the end of the SAIL program and into the following school year (D-PL-627). Given the intensity of the reading instruction, some students achieve growth equivalent to one-half of an academic school year, and many score "at grade level" on beginning of the following school year assessments (D-PPT-627).

History and Description of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy

Given the success of SAIL over the past decade and the outreach mission of the developmental research school, the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy was developed in 2006. Previously, the developmental research school held events where teachers from other schools came to observe reading instruction during the regular school day with opportunities to debrief and ask questions of the observed teachers. These events were well attended and feedback from the participating teachers and administrators continually indicated the need for more professional learning opportunities within the classroom walls (D-H-627). Because it is cost prohibitive for most schools to employ substitute teachers to replace teachers during the school year, the developmental research school sought to develop a summer program for teachers. The goal was to provide an opportunity for teachers to practice newly developed skills on actual students similar to those in their own school and work together collaboratively in school teams to customize new learning to their own particular context. The understanding that teachers, like their students, need hands-on opportunities to learn and develop their craft was a compelling reason to develop an Academy where teachers could immerse themselves in practicing reading strategy instruction in a safe, stress-free environment.

Overview of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy

The Teacher Scholars Reading Academy begins with a two-week intensive summer program, during the middle two weeks of the four-week SAIL program, followed by additional opportunities throughout the subsequent school year. Participants, called Scholars, are present from 8 am until 4 pm daily, and the SAIL program runs from 8:15 am until 12:15 pm. Mornings are spent within the SAIL classrooms, observing and teaching students, while the afternoons are reserved for more formalized learning, discussion protocols and collaboration with the SAIL teacher and other colleagues. Beginning on the first day of the Academy, Scholars contemplate a "wondering" that is personal to their own teaching of reading. Each day, Scholars have time to reflect on this wondering as they encounter alternative ways of teaching reading, both during the mornings in the SAIL classrooms and during the afternoon sessions. During the last two days of the Academy, school leaders are required to attend a leadership portion, where they observe alongside their Scholars and work on action planning within their own contexts and schools. Finally, after the summer Academy has ended, one of the follow-up opportunities invites the Scholars and their school leaders back for an observation day during the school year. This day includes observations of the SAIL teachers, now in their own classroom settings, teaching a "regular" class of students, observations of other teachers in the same grade level, debriefing with the Academy facilitators, and a question-and-answer session for the Scholars to discuss issues or concerns that have arisen since they have returned to their own teaching contexts (D-H-627i). Each of the parts of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy is described in detail within this chapter.

Mornings-Observations & Teaching

The mornings of the Scholars Academy are spent with the Scholars in their assigned SAIL classrooms. Each scholar is assigned to a SAIL classroom, which is either serving students entering the grade level in which the Scholars normally teach or serving students who just finished the grade level the Scholars normally teach. Scholars are assigned to this classroom for the duration of the Academy to build rapport with the students and to build a relationship with the SAIL teacher.

The focus of the morning in the SAIL classroom is centered on observations of strategy instruction in action, peer observation protocols, and hands-on practice of new instructional techniques by the Scholars. Beginning on the first day of the Academy, Scholars are asked to consider a wondering, problem or issue that they face within their own reading instruction and to observe the SAIL teacher and students with their own concerns at the forefront of their minds (Figure 3-1). All observations and peer observation protocols are designed to keep the Scholars' own contexts and needs at the center of focus, thereby keeping in mind that they are looking at instructional techniques, rather than curriculum materials as an agent of change.

In addition to the focused observations, throughout the Academy, Scholars teach lessons to the SAIL students using the instructional techniques learned, discussed, and developed during the afternoon portion of the Academy. This immediate hands-on application helps the Scholars solidify the practice in their minds and makes it more likely that they will incorporate the technique into regular practice. The hands-on practice also allows Scholars to observe one another and discuss their practices together. It is rare to have extended opportunities to observe other teachers and have the time to discuss what was observed. This practice happens for the Scholars in an

environment that is quite different than their own classroom settings. They are free to experiment and try various techniques without the stress of their own classrooms (i.e. grading, parent involvement and administrative pressure). The Scholars are encouraged to try practices that they would normally shy away from in an effort to add to their instructional repertories.

First SAIL Classroom Visit

The purpose of this first visit to a SAIL classroom is to enhance your understanding of your own practice. Before beginning your classroom visit, think hard about a question that you have about teaching reading. Is there a question that gnaws at you…that keeps you up at 3 AM…that you feel some passion about? Make your question broad and deep enough that any class will give you a window on some new learning.

You are visiting this class to gain insight into a question that you have framed related to your own teaching.   You are not visiting to evaluate or give feedback to the teacher whom you visit.   Be prepared to debrief with the teacher(s) you observed.   What did you learn?

Please keep a journal or notebook with your notes and reflections from your visit. These reflections (though private) will serve us in our collective dialogue.

My question is:

Possible questions to guide your reflections in your journal:

- What evidence do I see in this classroom that might address my question [or portions of my question]?

- What particular reading strategies in the classroom are striking to me? Why?

- As I leave this class, what have I learned about myself as a teacher or about teaching reading? What new questions or insights do I have?

Figure 3-1. The First SAIL Classroom Visit Protocol

The curriculum materials used for SAIL mimic a traditional basal reading program in that it provides an outline of instructional language for teachers to use, as well as reading materials and instructional routines for the students in all five areas of reading. Because many schools utilize a curriculum similar to this, Scholars are encouraged to think about using their own curriculum as a guide to customizing instruction for their own students. Portions of the mornings in the SAIL classroom are spent observing the SAIL

teacher customize the curriculum for the particular needs of the students in that class.

Scholars then practice customizing the SAIL curriculum and teaching the students

based on their observations and discussion with the SAIL teacher. This provides a

significant amount of practice in adjusting curriculum materials without compromising

the instructional goals of the curriculum.

Afternoons – Collaboration & Learning

The afternoons of the Academy are spent in collaborative school groups with a

facilitator to expand the Scholars' reading content knowledge and pedagogy. The

afternoons also provide time for the Scholars and SAIL teachers to discuss and plan for

instruction during the morning portion of the Academy.

When schools elect to attend the Scholars Academy, it is required that they send a

team of teachers and their reading coach to attend the entire two-weeks together as a

team (D-H-627i). This team approach helps provide support for making changes in the

classroom, as well as in the school. During the afternoon sessions, teachers sit in their

school-based teams, so that they are able to make connections to their own contexts.

Typical afternoon sessions begin with a protocol to discuss the previous night's

professional reading. Scholars mix with others from various schools and spend time

discussing new learning and connections that they may have had while reading. Similar

to the morning in the SAIL classroom, Scholars are encouraged to consider their own

wonderings and contexts as they discuss the information from the reading. For

example, after reading *Word Study Instruction in the K-2 Classroom* (Williams, Phllips-

Birdsong, Hufnagel, Hungler, & Lundstrom, 2009), Scholars use the Text Rendering

Experience Protocol (National School Reform Faculty, 2012) which asks them to

personally select a sentence, a phrase and finally a word that was particularly

meaningful to them as they read the article. Each small group then works in rounds to explore and discuss their choices and their personal connections to the reading. After each small group discusses the reading, then the sentences, phrases and words are charted and a large group conversation ensues. (Figure 3- 2).
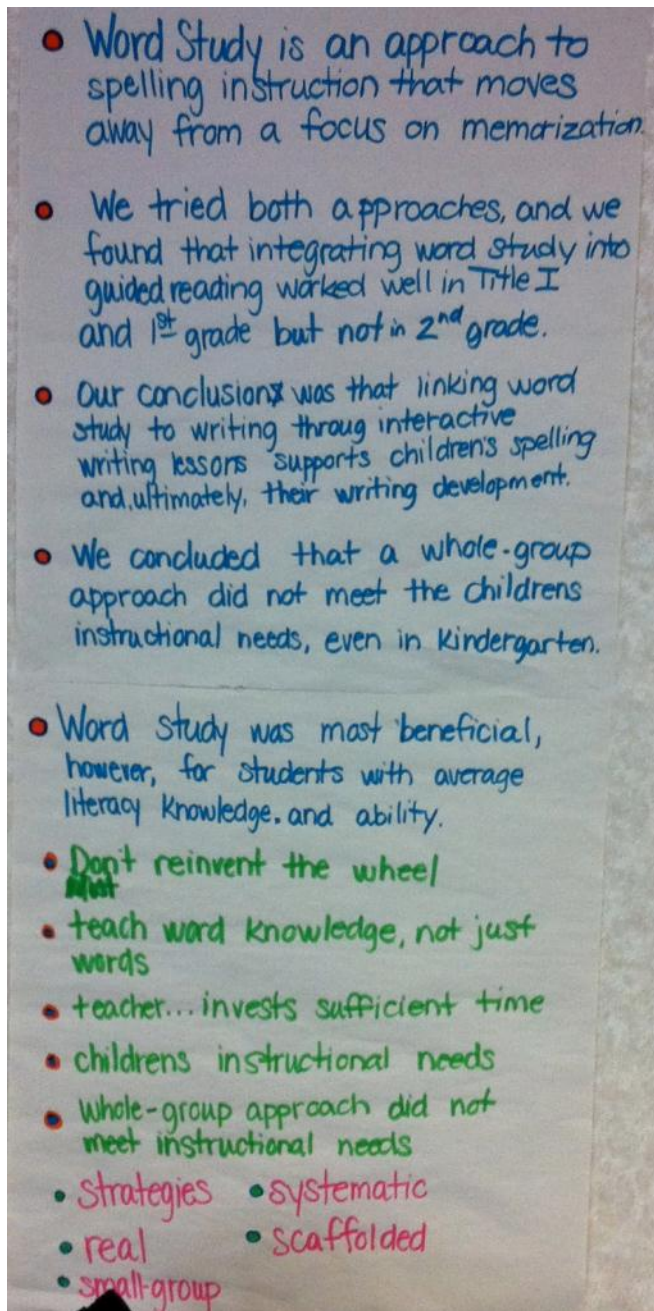
- Word Study is an approach to spelling instruction that moves away from a focus on memorization.

- We tried both approaches, and we found that integrating word study into guided reading worked well in Title I and 1st grade but not in 2nd grade.

- Our conclusions was that linking word study to writing throug interactive writing lessons supports children's spelling and, ultimately, their writing development.

- We concluded that a whole-group approach did not meet the childrens instructional needs, even in kindergarten.

- Word study was most beneficial, however, for students with average literacy Knowledge. and ability.

- Don't reinvent the wheel

- teach word knowledge, not just words

- teacher... invests sufficient time

- childrens instructional needs

- Whole-group approach did not meet instructional needs

- Strategies • systematic

- real   • Scaffolded

- small-group

Figure 3-2. A group chart with the sentences, phrases and words chosen from the Text Rendering Protocol.

After the discussion protocol, the facilitator provides an interactive presentation of the reading content. The two-week Academy focuses on building reading content knowledge, as well as pedagogical knowledge in the following areas: comprehension, fluency, vocabulary and word study. Additionally, establishing a reading focused environment, as well as motivation and engagement in reading, are major topics for professional learning. Table 3-1 outlines the topics explored and the accompanying research basis for each area.

Since comprehension is the goal of reading (Snow, 2002), a large portion of the afternoon sessions is devoted to understanding the role of comprehension: how to best teach students how to comprehend and how all of the other aspects of reading interact in order to support reading comprehension. Discussions of comprehension strategies and how they differ from skills, how fluency impacts comprehension, the role of vocabulary and its impact on comprehension are prominent during the afternoon sessions (Table 3-1 for research basis). Scholars spend time observing sample lessons, classroom materials, student work samples and teaching guides to consider new ways or alternative approaches for their current reading instruction. Scholars are encouraged to question, think aloud and consider their own classrooms and schools during this time.

In addition to the content described above, Scholars are taught how to adapt and customize published curricular materials to the needs of their particular students. For example, reading curricula often provide literature examples to support a particular reading comprehension strategy. At times, the literature selection provided may not relate to a particular student population, or the students may not have adequate

background knowledge to understand the goal of the example. Teachers learn to recognize the goal of the literature example and to seek out ways to change the example without losing the goal of the lesson as one way to customize a published curriculum.

Table 3-1. Afternoon Professional Learning Topics and Research Basis

Understanding student data and it's role in planning instruction	Allington, 2006 Guskey, 2003
What does comprehension mean anyway? How do all the parts of reading impact comprehension?	Pardo, 2004 Pressley, 2000 RAND Reading Study Group, 2002
Understanding comprehension skills vs. comprehension strategies Developing Anchor Charts and Strategy Lessons	Afferbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008 Harvey & Goudvis, 2007 Keene & Zimmerman, 2007 Pressley, 2002
The role of vocabulary in comprehension How does word study impact comprehension and how can I make it engaging for kids?	Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2004 Edwards, Font, Baumann, & Boland, 2004 Nagy, 1988 National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000
Fluency: Not just about how many words can you read in a minute	Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005 National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000
Developing a language and print-rich environment Motivating and engaging your students in reading Accountability for reading-based discussions	Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000 Ketch, 2005 Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998 Roskos & Neuman, 2001
Designing a personal inquiry	Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009

Setting up the classroom environment to support reading instruction and methods to motivate and engage students in reading are discussed as well. For example, classroom organization of reading materials for student accessibility and a print-rich environment are important parts of the reading instruction. Much of the afternoon sessions are devoted to helping the Scholars understand *how* to teach reading, rather than *what* to teach or *why* it is important to teach various parts of reading.

Each afternoon session comes to a close with Scholars taking time to reflect and write about their own personal "wondering" and new learning. Feedback is gathered and routed back to the facilitator on the relevance, pacing and content of the afternoon session (Figure 3-3). Scholars are then given a reading assignment to complete during the evening to prepare for the following day's session.

Teacher Scholars Reading Academy Daily Feedback

Pacing?
It was fast, but I love fast paced work it keeps me engaged!!!

Relevance?
Everything that we have done thus far is relevant.

Activities?
The activities that we did were beneficial. I took a lot from the charts that were created using the comprehension strategy.

Suggestions?
I would love to have the opportunity to spend sometime in another classroom to see the scaffolding done in unison throughout the school.

Figure 3-3. Daily Feedback Form

School-based teams and instructional coaches

Teams, consisting of a minimum of four teachers and a reading coach from each individual school are required to attend the Scholars Academy (D-H-627i). A team approach provides the Scholars with support from colleagues who are in the same context and face similar requirements and issues. A reading coach is required to attend with the team as a co-learner. Coaches are often tasked with the professional learning of the teachers within their school building. Having the reading coach learn alongside the teachers from his or her school provides a level of leadership and support, and it also potentially increases the coach's content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge.

Personal inquiry

Beginning on the first day of the Academy, Scholars contemplate a "wondering" that is personal to their own teaching of reading. Each day, Scholars have time to reflect on this wondering as they encounter alternative ways of teaching reading, both during the mornings in the SAIL classrooms and during the afternoon sessions. As the two weeks pass, the Scholars are led to refine their personal "wondering" culminating in the design of an inquiry project for the following school year. Scholars are led through the process of writing an outline of their anticipated inquiry, which is shared with the other Scholars, SAIL teachers and their own principals during the Leadership days.

School Leadership Days

The final two days of the Academy are designed as Leadership days, in which the principals of the participating schools are invited to observe the SAIL classrooms alongside their own teachers and reading coach. The Scholars design their principal's schedule highlighting the instructional practices that may be happening in the SAIL classroom that the Scholars themselves would like to implement during the following

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school year. Ample time is provided for the Scholars to share with their school leadership their personal inquiries and the collective action plans that have been designed throughout the Academy. Guidance is provided by the Academy facilitator on the last day to help schools consider what impact their learning may have on their own personal classrooms and the school as a whole.

A Sample Day at the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy

The following descriptions use collected documents and observations during the data collection period to build a thick, rich description of a sample day as a Scholar. Following this description, the features and mechanisms of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy will be linked to the literature review in Chapter 2, in order to provide the research basis for the present study.

Sample morning session

Scholars arrive early, mingling and enjoying coffee, as they prepare to go into the SAIL classrooms. Today, most of them will teach a comprehension strategy lesson to the students, while being observed using the Focus Point Protocol (National School Reform Faculty, 2012). The Focus Point Protocol (Figure 3-4) engages the Scholar as an observer of a fellow Scholar in a structured process to focus on a single aspect of instruction important to the fellow Scholar. Each team of Scholars has engaged in a pre-observation conference and will debrief as the protocol dictates. As the time to go to the SAIL classroom grows closer, the Scholars are meeting together to review their protocols for observing each other as they teach. The focus of each observation is solidified.

As the Scholars enter the SAIL classroom, the students warmly greet them. They are comfortable with the students and have built a rapport with them as well as the SAIL

teacher. The Scholars immediately join in the morning circle activity. As the opening

ends, one Scholar moves to the teaching table in the room and prepares herself to

teach a lesson on making inferences while reading. She double checks the reading

she's selected to model making inferences and ensures that there are enough copies of

the practice text for the students. She reviews her notes as a group of students makes

its way to the table. She begins her lesson as another Scholar observes and takes

notes. A different Scholar is working with a separate group of students on a fluency

program on the computer, and the SAIL teacher is meeting individually with readers on

self-selected texts.

Observation Protocol #2: Focus Point

This protocol is designed to help deepen the observed's understanding of his or her practice. The observer(s)' role is to note those events that relate to a particular aspect of the observed's practice and to then act as an active listener as the observed attempts to make sense of those events.

Pre-Observation Conference: In addition to outlining what will be occurring during the observation, the person to be observed asks the observer(s) to focus on a particular aspect of his practice. Example: "Would you look at how I respond to student questions?"

Observation: The observer(s) focus on that aspect of practice raised during the pre-observation conference. Field notes include both descriptions of "focus" events and related questions that the observer may wish to raise during the debriefing. The observer(s) may also wish to note events and questions outside the focus of the observation, but these may or may not be discussed during the debriefing.

Debriefing: The observer(s) begin by restating the focus and asking the observed to share her thoughts. Example: "What did you notice about how you responded to student questions?" As the observed talks, the observer(s) 1) supply specific events that either corroborate or contrast with the observed's statements, 2) summarize what the observed is saying, 3) ask clarifying questions, and/or 4) raise questions related to the focus that were noted during the observation.

Figure 3-4. Focus Point Protocol

        As the Scholar finishes her lesson, the groups rotate, as do the Scholars. Now,

the Scholar who was observing and making notes assumes the teaching chair, as a

new group of students comes to the table. She teaches a very similar lesson on making

inferences while the other Scholars takes notes and observes. Each Scholar takes a turn and, along with the SAIL teacher, observes and takes notes. These observations will be discussed in depth, utilizing the debriefing section of the Focus Point Protocol, during an afternoon session.

While the Scholars are not engaged in teaching or observing a specific lesson, they are actively engaged in the instruction happening in the classroom. Some time is spent listening to the SAIL teacher who is providing individualized instruction to a particular student who is struggling with prosody while reading a self-selected text. One of the Scholars is particularly interested in how to provide individualized, "just in time" instruction to her students. Each Scholar has time to explore, practice and experiment both with each other and with the students in the classroom.

Sample afternoon session

Scholars arrive after lunch and settle into their respective school groups. Many have taken out last night's reading and are reviewing their notes and highlights. The facilitator welcomes everyone back and points out the charts and classroom samples that are now displayed. The walls of the room have been covered with various charts, both teacher- and student-made, showing how reading comprehension is taught. Four large tables are covered with trade books used in comprehension mini-lessons and student work samples of various elementary grades. The facilitator invites the Scholars to do a Gallery Walk of the room. They are to use sticky notes to ask questions, make comments or share observations of what they see in the classroom samples. The facilitator explains that as they go through the rest of the afternoon, these sample materials will play a large role in understanding comprehension strategy instruction. The Scholars move around the room as soft music plays. They make comments to

each other regarding the language of instruction shown on the chart and whether or not

the students also use the sophisticated words displayed. They make comments, such

as, "Look at this! The word 'metacognition' is on a student chart. That's awesome," and

"I love it! I like how you can see the progression from definition to application"

(FN62911).

The facilitator allows approximately 15 minutes for the Gallery Walk to continue

and then displays a PowerPoint slide with the instructions for a 3-2-1 Discussion

Protocol (Figure 3-5).   This protocol instructs the Scholars to review the reading from

the previous night and select three major ideas they encountered as they read, two

connections to their own context and finally, one burning question that is lingering after

they read.
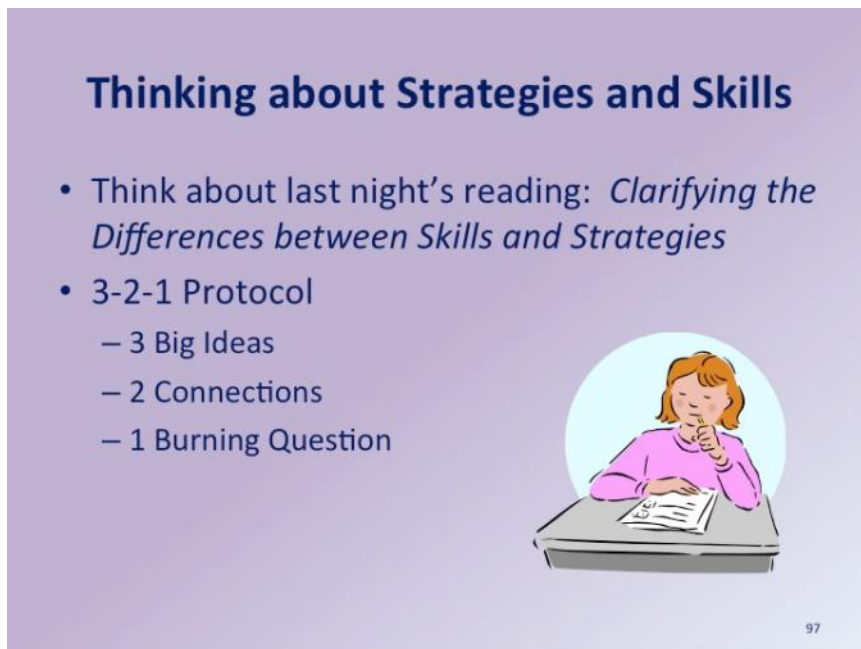
Figure 3-5. Slide directing the 3-2-1 Discussion Protocol

The facilitator redirects the Scholars to last night's reading and the Scholars have

5 minutes to prepare themselves for the discussion and then it begins. Scholars first

take turns discussing their three ideas from last night's reading, *Clarifying the Difference Between Reading Skills and Reading Strategies* (Afferbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008). As they each explain the ideas from the article that were particularly meaningful to them, the talk often turns to what they would like to change in their own instruction. The protocol moves the Scholars through discussing two connections to their own practice, and finally, a burning question that remains for them and they would like to explore further in their learning today.

After the discussion protocol has ended, the facilitator begins highlighting reading comprehension strategies that are often articulated in core reading curricula and positions them alongside common reading comprehension skills. She shows the Scholars the relationship between strategies and skills and connects this new information with the discussion that just occurred. The Scholars remark that they had never looked at the skills and strategies in this way before, and that it was a very "eye opening" moment for them. The facilitator breaks from her presentation and gives the school groups time to digest and discuss what was shared. She moves from group to group helping to answer questions and provide clarification.

After a short discussion, the facilitator begins with a list of research-based comprehension strategies and shares with the Scholars that they will break into small groups and read a short research summary of their assigned strategy. Then each group will present to the whole group a definition of the strategy, as well as the language that would be used when teaching the strategy to students. After each small group presentation, the facilitator will share classroom examples, student work samples

and/or a video recording of that particular strategy being taught in a classroom. The Scholars break into mixed school, small groups and begin working.

After the work period, each small group presents and the facilitator follows up each presentation with real life examples of the reading comprehension strategy in action in elementary classrooms. The facilitator spends time showing the student samples, highlighting the teaching that went into making the charts and debriefing the video clips that were shown after each strategy was discussed. The Scholars ask many questions regarding the lengths of the instructional sequences and the grade levels represented in the student work samples.

Once this section of the afternoon is over, Scholars are given time to reflect on their learning by writing in their personal reflection logs (Figure 3-6), using the following stems:

- I need to think more about…

- I need to "stretch" my practice by implementing…

- I am thinking about my current reading instruction, and perhaps I will place more emphasis on…

- I am wondering…

Scholars take the time to process their thoughts in writing. After approximately 10 minutes of writing time, the facilitator reminds the Scholars that she will be happy to answer any lingering questions they may have, and she describes the focus for their next morning's observation. They are to use the Classroom Visit Protocol (National School Reform Faculty, 2012) to observe their SAIL teachers during a comprehension strategy lesson. This protocol engages the Scholars to pose questions about their own comprehension instruction and to look for evidence of their wonderings while observing

the SAIL teacher. The observation will be debriefed in collaboration with the SAIL

teacher the following afternoon and the Scholars will spend time designing their own

lesson to teach later that week or the following. The facilitator reassures the

participants that this is their time to experiment and try things that they would normally

avoid. She then gives the Scholars their reading assignment for the evening and

reminds them to please provide feedback on the day before they leave.

Figure 3-6. Personal Reflection Log

How the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy is Aligned with Features and Mechanisms of Effective Professional Learning

The Teacher Scholars Reading Academy was designed with the features of

effective professional learning outlined in the review of the literature (Chapter 2). The

mechanisms of effective professional learning are also evident in the design. A

synopsis of the features and how the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy addresses

those features follows below, as does an explanation of the reading coach's role and the school leadership role in the Academy.

Content Focus

Evidence over the past decade links professional learning that focuses on subject matter content and how that content is best taught to students to improvement in teacher knowledge, skills and practice (Desimone, 2009; Kennedy, 1999; Yoon et al., 2007). The Teacher Scholars Reading Academy is solidly linked to a content focus in reading and aims to increase teachers' knowledge of reading and reading strategies. It also focuses on increasing teachers' pedagogical content knowledge as related to reading.

The Teacher Scholars Reading Academy provides participants with practical knowledge and application of reading strategies in four areas of reading: phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. All of these areas are intertwined and connected and the Scholars Academy strives to help teachers understand the interconnectedness of these aspects and provide the knowledge of how to teach each of these components.

Conceptual Inputs

Conceptual inputs provide the theoretical or research-based resources to ground the professional learning experience (Hoban, 2002). The Scholars Academy uses conceptual inputs in the form of research articles, practical articles, and readings from the current literature to probe Scholars' thinking about the reading process. Scholars read these articles for homework and the following day, discussion protocols are used to deepen their knowledge about practice (Appendix A for the full reading list).

The Role of the Facilitator

A strong facilitator is "crucial" to the success of the Academy (Seago et al., 2004; Schifter et al., 1999). Often, the facilitator must reframe the conversation and adjust the activities to the meet the needs of the particular teachers, while maintaining the goals of the Academy. The Scholars Academy facilitator is an expert in her field and is adept at flexibly meeting the needs of the Scholars, both in their personal learning needs, as well as the needs related to their schools as a whole. She has facilitated the Scholars Academy in previous years and has been responsible for many of the professional learning experiences situated within the developmental research school. Since the Scholars Academy facilitator is well versed in current reading research and has spent significant time as a classroom teacher of reading, her experiences lend themselves to explaining and connecting the research to practice. In addition, many of the classroom artifacts and videos come from her students and her classroom, allowing her to provide the Scholars with rich explanations of the samples.

Active Learning

Active learning is another component of effective professional learning. Teachers must be actively engaged, just as students must be actively engaged in their learning. Active learning can take form via observing expert teachers or as being observed with follow-up interactive feedback and discussions, by reviewing student work and engaging in conversations, and participating in activities that simulate the "student experience" (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2003; Hoban, 2002; Kennedy, 1999; Little et al., 1987; Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005). As described above in detail, the Scholars Academy provides teachers with the opportunity to utilize their new learning about reading instruction in a real classroom with real children who struggle with

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reading. Scholars work alongside SAIL teachers and use structured observations with each other to provide immediate feedback on practice. The ability to try a learned teaching strategy right away with students provides the Scholars with an opportunity to practice without the added stresses of the school year and the additional responsibilities of grading, consultations with parents and other contextual factors that make attempting a new teaching strategy difficult.

In addition to the hands-on experience in the SAIL classroom, active learning also takes place in the form of the structured observations and text-based discussion protocols used during the afternoon portions of the Academy. These protocols are specifically designed to provide structure to the conversations and observations and equip the Scholars with mechanisms for discussing their work with a critical eye and for collectively problem solving.

Other forms of active learning are analysis of student work samples and video and real-time demonstrations of instructional strategies. Scholars have time to explore classroom artifacts and ask specific questions about student work. This in-depth exploration provides rich examples that they can take back to their own contexts.

Duration

Sustained time to learn is critical to the success of any professional learning endeavor. While the exact duration of professional learning needed for successful change is not known, research has shown positive correlations between time span and contact hours and increased teacher learning and self-efficacy (Banilower et al., 2007; Garet et al., 2001; Penuel et al., 2007). The Teacher Scholars Academy is a two-week sustained learning opportunity with follow-up events in the year following the Academy. In addition to the length of time, the intensity of the learning contributes to its long-term

efficacy of the program. Scholars often maintain contact with the facilitator and the SAIL teachers throughout the following school year.

Collective Participation

Collective participation characterizes the school-based team approach utilized during the Teacher Scholars Academy. Collective participation has been shown to help teachers change their instruction as a result of collegial conversations by learning together and supporting each other in the change process (Garet et al., 2001; Harwell et al., 2000; Penuel et al., 2007). Since the Scholars Academy requires that the school send teams of at least four teachers, collective participation is inherent in the design.

Many of the learning activities during the Scholars Academy require collective participation. Discussion protocols, observation protocols, and action planning all involve a team effort. In order for the teachers to feel supported in their plans to make changes to their instruction, reading coaches must also attend the full Scholars Academy. In many schools and districts, the reading coach is responsible for part of the professional learning of the faculty as it relates to reading. By requiring the reading coaches to attend with the teachers, the collective knowledge and experience built during the Academy are shared, so that all can build on them in the coming school year.

Coherence

Alignment in the teachers' beliefs about reading and teaching reading, as well as coherence with the national, state, district and school level goals, is essential to the effectiveness of any professional learning experience (Banilower et al., 2007; Carpenter et al., 1989; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Desimone et al., 2002; Duffy, et al., 1986; Firestone et al., 2005; Harwell et al., 2000; Landry et al., 2009; McCutchen, et al., 2002; Penuel et al., 2007; Rosemary et al., 2007; Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005). The Teacher Scholars

Reading Academy is designed to build on previous professional learning about reading instruction and it is also aligned with state, district and school goals in reading. Every participating school has voluntarily enrolled in the Scholars Academy and many schools continue participation year after year.

While coherence with national, state and district level goals is important, research has shown that building level support for a professional learning endeavor has resulted in increased teacher learning and student achievement (Banilower et al., 2007; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Harwell et al., 2000). It is on this basis that the aforementioned Leadership Days form an essential part of the Scholars Academy. When Scholars share their learning with their administrators on the Leadership Days, the administrators become partners in the change process. The action planning that takes place is essential to supporting the Scholars in their endeavors to make changes in their instruction. In addition to administrator support, the attendance of the reading coach during the entire Academy leads to further coherence at the school level.

Professional Learning Communities

The Teacher Scholars Reading Academy is built on the same principles that govern a PLC; shifting the focus from *teaching* to *learning* and *collective learning*. The Scholars Academy is itself a PLC, and within it, each schools' group of Scholars becomes a PLC. Each of the attributes and how the Scholars Academy builds on them are described below.

The Scholars Academy is centered on learning, by teachers as well as by students (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005). As indicated by the name itself, Scholars are engaged in intense learning, of both reading instruction and its customization to their students. Because PLCs have a driving mission for all students to succeed, the group

of Scholars acts as a PLC, and they spend significant amounts of time during the Academy working together to problem solve SAIL student learning difficulties. Since the SAIL students are all struggling readers, they represent some of the most difficult cases for devising strategies that work to increase their achievement. As a PLC, Scholars and SAIL teachers work together to keep learning at its center.

The second attribute of a PLCs is collective learning, which positions teachers as leaders of their own growth and development (Lieberman & Miller, 2008) and builds on the premise that two (or more) heads are better than one. As teachers engage in PLCs with a strong sense of collective learning, they are better equipped to tackle difficult problems together, rather than on their own. Collective learning is apparent in the Scholars Academy, not only in the design of the opportunity, but also in the lasting effect of the experience on the Scholars. Isolationism is pervasive in the teaching culture and PLCs work to combat that tendency. During the Scholars Academy, Scholars work with each other and SAIL teachers to consider instructional changes for the students in their SAIL classrooms. In addition, Scholars use that experience to work together to begin problem-solving issues apparent in their own contexts. Action planning and anticipated changes in the instructional strategies are direct results of the collective learning that happens during Scholars. As evidence of the lasting effect of the Scholars Academy, the Scholars themselves are sometimes positioned as leaders of PLCs in their own schools as a result of their experience during the Academy. Scholars have described their experiences working together and observing each other as a rare opportunity. During the Leadership Days, principals have often noticed the growth in the

Scholars and tap them for leadership opportunities, such as team or grade-level PLC leader.

Teacher Inquiry

Teacher inquiry positions teachers at the center of their own learning, and the Scholars Academy builds on that concept. From the first day, Scholars are encouraged and assisted in posing a "wondering" about reading instruction that is personal to them. They are guided throughout the Academy to revisit that wondering continually and to use it as a lens to view all of their learning. Because the Academy addresses so many facets of reading instruction, it can be overwhelming to consider so many new ideas. Positioning teaching inquiry at the center and helping the Scholars to view themselves as in charge of their own learning, allows them to feel empowered and able to make the instructional changes that they see as most beneficial to themselves and their students. By the end of the Academy, the Scholars have a well developed wondering, and they are encouraged to continue that wondering as they enter the following school year. Scholars are invited to present their inquiry findings at an annual Inquiry and Innovation Showcase.

Instructional Coaches

The Scholars Academy requires reading coaches to attend the entire Academy with a group of at least four teachers from the same school. Since in many districts, reading coaches are positioned to follow up and/or continue the professional learning that teachers' experience, it is essential that coaches have content expertise (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Poglinco et al., 2003; Wei et al., 2009). Positioning the coaches alongside the teachers as learners promotes shared leadership and provides the coach with the same experiences for future reference.

This chapter outlined the processes and mechanisms of effective professional learning as related to the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. A summary of the features, processes, mechanisms and their enactment in the Scholars Academy can be found in Table 3-2. The context of the study is integral to understanding the story as told through the Scholars' eyes. The following chapter presents the methodology utilized in collecting and analyzing data that contribute to the rich story of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy experience.

Table 3-2. Summary of Characteristics, Processes and Mechanisms of Quality
Professional Learning

Characteristic, Mechanism or Process of Quality Professional Learning	Research Basis	Enactment in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy
Content Focus	Ball & Cohen, 1999 Banilower, et al., 2007 Bransford, et al., 2000 Carpenter, et al., 1989 Cohen & Hill, 2001 Desimone, et al., 2002 Desimone, 2009 Duffy, et al., 1986 Garet, et al., 2001 Guskey, 2003 Hill, 2004 Landry, et al., 2009 McCutchen, et al., 2002 McGill-Franzen, et al., 1999 Penuel, et al., 2007 Rosemary, et al., 2007 VanKeer & Verhaeghe, 2005 Wei, et al., 2009	The content focus is reading instruction including comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and word study. Environments that support quality reading instruction provide additional content focus.
Active Learning	Ball & Cohen, 1999 Banilower, et al., 2007 Bransford, et al., 2000 Carpenter, et al., 1989 Desimone, et al., 2002 Desimone, 2009 Duffy, et al., 1986 Firestone, et al., 2005 Harwell, et al., 2000 Landry, et al., 2009 McCutchen, et al., 2002 McGill-Franzen, et al., 1999 Penuel, et al., 2007	Focused observations with specific protocols are utilized. Collaborative planning and teaching with SAIL teachers and other Scholars are emphasized. Scholars Immediately apply learned skills within the SAIL classroom.

Table 3-2. Continued

Characteristic, Mechanism or Process of Quality Professional Learning	Research Basis	Enactment in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy
Conceptual Inputs	Carpenter, et al., 1989 Desimone, et al., 2002 Duffy, et al., 1986 Harwell, et al., 2000 Hill, 2004 Hoban, 2002 Landry, et al., 2009 Little, et al., 1987 McCutchen, et al., 2002 McGill-Franzen, et al., 1999 Neale, et al., 1990 Rosemary, et al., 2007 VanKeer & Verhaeghe, 2005	Research and practical articles are used to inform Scholars of current research and to spark discussion. Curriculum enacted in the SAIL classroom is built on current reading research.
Facilitator Role	LeFevre, 2004 Remillard & Geist (2002) Schifter, et al., 1999 Seago, et al., 2004	Facilitator has a significant amount of experience leading professional learning experiences and is adept at meeting the needs of adult learners by tailoring activities to their needs. Facilitator is an expert in the field of reading having facilitated the Scholars Academy in the past, as well as serving as a district leader in reading.
Duration	Ball & Cohen, 1999 Banilower, et al., 2007 Desimone, 2009 Garet, et al., 2001 Little, 1993 Penuel, et al., 2007	The summer Academy is a two-week, intensive learning experience with follow up activities throughout the following school year.

Table 3-2. Continued

Characteristic, Mechanism or Process of Quality Professional Learning	Research Basis	Enactment in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy
Collective Participation	Desimone, 2009 Garet, et al., 2001 Harwell, et al., 2000 Penuel, et al., 2007	To ensure a "critical mass" to facilitate making changes during the following school year, schools are required to send a team of at least four teachers and their reading coach to attend the entire Academy.
Coherence	Banilower, et al., 2007 Carpenter, et al., 1989 Cohen & Hill, 2001 Desimone, et al., 2007 Desimone, 2009 Duffy, et al., 1986 Firestone, et al., 2005 Garet, et al., 2001 Harwell, et al., 2001 Landry, et al., 2009 McCutchen, et al., 2002 Penuel, et al., 2007 Rosemary, et al., 2007 VanKeer & Verhaeghe, 2005	Schools voluntarily participate in the Scholars Academy based on the learning goals for their particular contexts. Leadership Days constitute an integral part of the Academy to ensure that learning acquired as part of this opportunity is supported when returning to the school context.
Professional Learning Communities	Lieberman & Miller, 2008 McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001 Vescio, et al., 2008	The Scholars Academy itself becomes a PLC as teachers work together to solve student difficulties in SAIL. Problem solving occurs in the school groups as a way to use collective learning as a change agent in their own contexts.

Table 3-2. Continued

Characteristic, Mechanism or Process of Quality Professional Learning	Research Basis	Enactment in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy
Teacher Inquiry	Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2001 Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008	Inquiry is an integral part of the Scholars experience and positions teachers to be in charge of the learning that is central to themselves and their students.
Instructional Coaches	Cornet & Knight, 2008 Joyce & Showers, 2002 Kamil, 2006 Knight, 2004 Kohler, et al., 1997 Newfeld & Roper, 2003 Veenman, et al., 2001	Coaches are often positioned for follow up professional learning within the school building. By ensuring that Coaches have the same learning experiences as the teachers, the Scholars Academy builds common experiences and shared leadership.

CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter addresses the research methodology used to conduct this study.

First, the design of the study will be discussed, followed by data collection methods, and

then the analysis and interpretation of data. The selection of participants is outlined

along with my background as a researcher. Finally, credibility and validity measures are

described, as well as the timeline for the study.

Research Design: The Case Study

The purpose of the study and the questions posed in Chapter 1 guided the

theoretical and methodological choices made to conduct this research. The research

methodology has a qualitative orientation, because of the nature of the research

questions and the purpose of this study. Qualitative research is flexible, attempts to

describe the complexity of the social context, and focuses on the individuals' own

perceptions about the phenomenon being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This

qualitative study is designed to be exploratory and descriptive and aims to describe the

phenomenon of participation in a professional learning experience which encapsulates

much of what is known about a quality professional learning experience (as described in

Chapter 2). Qualitative research is well suited for capturing the complex

understandings and critical aspect of a phenomenon (Glesne, 2006).

In this particular study, an interpretive case study was used. An interpretivist

mode of inquiry assumes that reality is socially constructed and that the variables are

interrelated. The purpose of such a study is to understand and interpret the

phenomenon being studied. This study involved the researcher as an instrument to

search for patterns and descriptive reporting (Glesne, 2006). A case study typically consists of a description of a phenomenon and an exploration into the "hows" and "whys" of the phenomenon (Thomas, 2003). A well-built case study is "holistic and context sensitive" (Patton, 2002, p. 447). It may incorporate one organization or unit of analysis. Its purpose is to gather comprehensive information about a phenomenon, focusing on the process.

The process of building a case study involves three steps: gathering data about the program and its participants; organization and editing of the data into a manageable file; and preparation of a written narrative about the organization (Patton, 2002). The case in this study was the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy during the Summer of 2011. There were three participants who were interviewed three times and were observed while engaging in various aspects of the Academy as well as in their classroom settings. Analyses and interpretations of these data describe how the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy impacted these particular participants. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that a qualitative study "calls for sensitivity to the nuances in data, tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility in design and a large dose of creativity" (p. 34). The data collection methods outlined below allowed for the sensitivity, flexibility and creativity necessary for a rich, descriptive study.

Data Collection Methods

Three different forms of data collection – observations, interviews, and document analysis – were used to gain insights into the participants' professional learning experiences during the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. These methods allowed for a triangulation of data in order to provide a thick, rich description of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy.

Observations allowed for deep understanding of the context and phenomenon occurring in the natural settings of the participants. Patton (2002) advised that the world is viewed through open-minded observation. Glesne (2006) suggested that observations should occur before the interview in order to develop understandings of the settings and the participants. As described in Chapter 3, there were two distinct parts of each day of the two-week academy. In the morning, the participants were situated in the SAIL classroom observing and teaching alongside the SAIL teacher. Observations of this portion allowed for exploration into the interactions between the participants and the SAIL teacher, as well as the interactions of the participants as they utilized teaching strategies that may be new to them. The afternoon portion engaged the participants in professional readings, discussion protocols, simulations of teaching scenarios, video examples of teaching strategies and action planning. Participants were situated in their school groups, where they were able to interact with their same-school colleagues, as well as engage in learning with SAIL teachers and other participants who may have come from a different school.

Each of these portions allowed for different observations of the ways in which the participants made sense of their learning and how their learning may impact their own contexts after the Academy. Field notes were taken to capture the aspects of learning that were relevant to the understandings of the participants. Particular attention was devoted to evidence of changes in participants' content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and their understandings of student difficulties in reading. Additionally, observations also occurred two months after the initial Academy, in the classrooms of the participants. This allowed insight into the changes in classroom practice that the

participants attributed to their participation in Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. During the final observation, particular attention was paid to evidence of the participants' initial transfer of their learning into their own contexts and evidence of strategies that were discussed during the Academy and were present in their teaching.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that interview questions and observations should be based on literature findings and from fieldwork. Interview questions were open ended to allow for the opportunity to share important information. Interview protocols were developed to understand the participants' behaviors, feelings, opinions and knowledge. Interviews were conducted at three critical junctures in the participants' experience, twice during the initial two-week academy and once two months later following the observation in the Scholars' school. The first interview on Day One of the Academy captured the participants' initial expectations of the Academy and approaches to reading instruction, as well as their background in reading professional development. The subsequent interviews allowed for deeper exploration into the participants' learning during the Academy and their reflections on how their practices changed. A multiple interview structure provided the opportunity for both the interviewer and the interviewee to reflect upon the shared experiences in order to clarify or elaborate as needed. The sessions were scheduled at the convenience of each of the participants in a quiet, distraction-free location to allow full attention to be given to the interview. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to allow for in-depth analysis and continued understanding. The interview protocols for all three interviews are contained in Appendix B.

Document analysis provided additional data on which to build a thick, rich

description of the participants' experiences. The documents gave direction to the

subsequent observations and interviews (Patton, 2002). All documents pertinent to the

professional learning of the participants were collected and field notes were maintained

during document review. Documents included presentation materials, professional

readings, discussion protocols, feedback forms, and inquiry briefs.

Combination of these three means of data collection-observations, interviews and

document analysis-is widely accepted in qualitative research (Glesne, 2006) and

contributes to the trustworthiness of the conclusions. The triangulation of data allowed

for crosschecking during analysis and interpretation (Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In order to gain meaning from the data, interview transcripts, field notes and

document analysis notes were collected, categorized, synthesized, analyzed for

patterns and interpreted (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Glesne, 2006). Data analysis began

simultaneously with data collection to allow for the continued refinement of the study as

it proceeded.

Coding was used to organize, classify, find patterns and make connections in the

data (Glesne, 2006). I was solely responsible for coding, analyzing and interpreting the

data, since codes and categories were not preset and were generated continuously

(Glaser, 1978). The first level of coding, open coding, broke the data into small pieces

(Glesne, 2006) to develop a rudimentary coding scheme. Categories began to emerge

that continually became more complex with further collection and analysis. Data were

assembled into like-minded clumps in order to begin a rudimentary analysis. Use of

coding memos enabled initial development of coding schemes and laid the groundwork

for the developing story. Each entry in the electronic codebook had its own number and page, and subcodes were further numbered. Initial explanations of codes aided in continual refinement of the data. Coding memos were also located in the codebook, so that all data pieces were kept in a single location.

The second level of coding consisted of analytic coding and focused on classifying and categorizing the units of meaning (Glesne, 2006).   Each of the initial codes was further analyzed for subcodes that may have emerged and each piece of data received a code name and number to assist in the analysis process. Interview protocols were listed with the participant's first initial, followed by the letters IP to indicate interview protocol, followed then by the number of the interview. For example, Marian's first interview was coded as MIP1. Similarly, observations and documents were also coded using initials and dates. A full description of the data key can be found in Appendix C. As codes and subcodes were further developed and refined, data were continually added until the point of saturation, where further examination of data yielded redundant information (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All of the above analysis was kept in the codebook to allow for continual reflection and refinement.

The process outlined above follows the constant comparative method, which consists of four distinct stages (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The first is comparison of incidents applicable to each category; this occurred in the first level of coding as described above. The second stage is integration of categories and their properties, outlined above as analytic coding. The third stage, delimiting the theory, refers to the saturation of codes and establishment of higher-level concepts that have emerged from the data. The final stage is writing the theory, but this could occur only after the data

had been transformed into interpretation (Glesne, 2006). Interpretation occurs when the researcher "transcends factual data and cautious analysis and begins to probe into what is to be made of them" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 36). Data interpretation led to an understanding of how the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy participants made sense of their learning and practice and gave insight into a professional learning opportunity and the impact on its participants.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was the strategy used for this study. Patton (2002) suggests that people and organizations should be selected based on the richness of information they can provide to support the purpose of the study. Three Scholars were chosen to participate in the study. They were from the same school to provide for a similar context, in which they may approach, interpret and transfer their understandings of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy experience. Additionally, having participants from the same school context allowed for a deeper exploration into the element of collective participation in a professional learning opportunity (Desimone, 2009).

The targeted school, Knowles Elementary (a pseudonym), has demonstrated its commitment to professional learning for its teachers. The principal of the school has attended various professional learning opportunities alongside the teachers and has repeatedly advocated to the district that her staff be funded to attend the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. This strong relationship allowed further exploration into the characteristic of coherence of professional learning with school, district and state goals (Desimone, 2009).

Background of Knowles Elementary

Knowles Elementary serves approximately 500 students in grades Kindergarten through 5th grade. It is considered to be an urban neighborhood school located in a large city. The majority of the students at Knowles Elementary come from low-income families: 96% of the students qualify for the Free/Reduced Lunch Program; 90% are of African-American descent; 4% are of Caucasian decent; 4% are mixed race and 1% are of Hispanic decent (district website).

Knowles Elementary has not demonstrated Adequate Yearly Progress for the past 10 years. It is considered a "school in need of improvement" and qualifies for additional professional development assistance from the state. Additionally, the students at Knowles Elementary are required to stay for an hour of additional instructional time due to the school's designation as a "school in need of improvement."

Knowles Elementary underwent a restructuring process in 2009 and a new principal was hired (Knowles Elementary School Improvement Plan 2009). The principal, Mrs. Green (a pseudonym) had a proven track record of increasing achievement of students in the bottom quartile. In her tenure as principal of Knowles Elementary, Mrs. Green moved the school from a grade of "F" to a grade of "B" on the state assessment of schools (district website).

Biographical Sketches of Participants

The unique backgrounds of the three participants provided different lenses to view their experiences in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. Adrienne, Catherine and Marian (all pseudonyms), who each voluntarily elected to participate in the study, are described in the following brief background sketches. Their cases are further elaborated on in Chapter 5.

Adrienne

Adrienne is a second year teacher who came to the teaching profession as a second career. She originally graduated with a degree in graphic design and volunteered with an afterschool art project. It was there that she realized she loved working with children and decided a career change was in store. She began an apprenticeship program for alternative certification in elementary education. She did her apprenticeship under a second grade teacher at Knowles Elementary and when the apprenticeship ended, a job opportunity presented itself in the same school and grade level. Adrienne currently teaches second grade.

Catherine

Catherine has been teaching six years and has had experiences in all grade levels between kindergarten and sixth grade. Like Adrienne, she came to teaching as a second career after spending 12 years in the banking industry. She explored teaching as a career after being unemployed and found that she really loved teaching students to read and write. Catherine describes herself as "getting pretty good results" with students who are of a lower socioeconomic status. She feels as though she can relate to their struggles and wants to be a positive influence in their lives. Catherine currently teaches first grade.

Marian

Marian's first career choice was photography, but at the insistence of her grandparents, she took an elective education course in college. She loved the class and decided to pursue education and become a teacher. She has worked at Knowles Elementary for the past five years with experiences in kindergarten, second and fourth grades. She describes herself as loving "a challenge." She specifically sought out a

lower socio-economic school, because she feels passionate about reaching students who struggle. Marian currently teaches third grade.

Researcher Background

Throughout this study, I have participated as both a learner and an instrument, with my experience, training and perspective. (Maykut & Morehouse,1994). My interest in professional learning began when I took my first doctoral class. Learning about various roles of teacher leaders and coaches was incredibly interesting to me and I was curious as to how to expand my personal role as a first grade teacher. My first opportunity to work directly with other teachers in the professional learning capacity was leading large district-wide professional learning events in reading instruction. Leading these events taught me the power of collaborative and active learning as I continually looked for ways to engage the participants in my sessions well beyond surface level understandings of reading techniques.

In addition to leading reading professional learning, I had begun to take on various leadership roles within my own context. Leading job-embedded professional learning became my primary duty. Through these experiences with my own faculty, I continually learned more about how teachers needed to learn in order to make changes in their instruction. I also began to see the power in how changes in teacher knowledge led to changes in student achievement.

Given my prior experience with reading professional learning, I was involved in the initial design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy five years ago and my interest in reading education sparked the collaboration with another colleague. Participants in past Academies had continually provided feedback that their experience was one unlike any other and were testaments to the power of this unique professional learning

endeavor. Although, prior to the initial Teacher Scholars Reading Academy, I had little

background knowledge of the elements of effective professional learning, I studied

these concepts throughout several graduate courses. My realization that the Scholars

Academy was designed with many of the research-based components led to this study.

Although I have previously led the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy, during the

study period, another professional led the Academy so that I could be fully immersed as

a learner and observer. In this role, I was able to experience the Academy in a different

way than I had previously. I was able to sit among the Scholars and truly listen to how

they received, digested and interpreted what they were learning. This unique

perspective led me to deeply understand their experience.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) propose that the characteristics of a qualitative

researcher include the ability to analyze situations, recognize biases, think abstractly,

listen intently and be flexible and open to varying perspectives. My education,

professional experiences, and passion for expanding my knowledge of teacher

professional learning makes this study a valuable addition to the professional learning

research base.

Validity and Credibility

Validity, or trustworthiness, is an important consideration in this qualitative study.

As described above, I have been invested in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy

for a significant period of time and am dedicated to the quality of the professional

learning offered to participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that ensuring credibility

is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. In addition to

stepping down as facilitator of the Academy during the study, I also employed the

following procedures to ensure credibility: prolonged engagement and persistent

observation, triangulation of data, peer review, and clarification of researcher bias (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009).

I was involved in the study for a prolonged period of time and spent a significant amount of time in the field. I observed each day of the two-week Academy so I was able to develop trust, learn the culture of the experience and continually verify my suppositions. Credibility was also ensured by my use of multiple data collection methods and multiple sources: interviews at three critical junctures, observations throughout the experience, and the document analysis described above.

Peer review, at each of the critical junctures to review my initial "hunches" and codes, also increased validity and credibility (Merriam, 2009). As an original developer of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy, my peer reviewer is considered an expert in teachers' professional learning and school change, and she has also made extensive use of qualitative methodology during her doctoral work.

Lastly, researcher bias is inherent in the design. Instead of attempting to control these biases, their presence throughout the study is acknowledged. As Peshkin (1988) notes, "objectivity is impossible because one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed." (p. 17). In light of the above, it is important to acknowledge some assumptions that were a part of designing this study:

- Teachers are a rich and worthy source of knowledge about teaching and their own practice.

- Teachers are not executors of curriculum; they have their own pre-existing beliefs and values that guide and shape their teaching.

- Professional learning can make an impact on teachers' practices and beliefs.

In order to understand the impact of professional learning, it is important that we enhance our understanding of their understandings as they engage in learning and transfer it to their own contexts.

Time Frame for the Study

As noted earlier, the initial interview occurred during the first day of the Scholars Academy, which began the third week of June, 2011. The second interview occurred at the end of the two-week Academy. The final interview occurred in September, 2011 at the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year and coincided with a classroom observation. Observations occurred each day during the two-week Academy and were alternated with time to expand the field notes from the previous day. Document analysis occurred during the two-week Academy, in order to better understand and make sense of the observations, as well as after the Academy was completed. Table 4-1 outlines the schedule of observations and document analysis. Table 4-2 outlines the schedule of interviews. Table 4-3 outlines the schedule of data analysis and interpretation.

Table 4-1. Schedule of Observations and Document Analysis during the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy

Week 1	6/27/11	6/28/11	6/29/11	6/30/11
AM: In SAIL Classrooms	Complete consent forms	Document Analysis	Observation/Field Notes	Expand Field Notes
PM: Structured Professional Learning	Observations of Scholar/SAIL teacher interactions Conduct first interview	Observation/Field Notes	Expand Field Notes/Document Analysis	Observation/Field Notes
Week 2	7/5/11	7/6/11	7/7/11	7/8/11
AM: In SAIL Classrooms	Expand Field Notes/Document Analysis	Observation/Field Notes	Observation/Field Notes	Conduct Interviews
PM: Structured Professional Learning	Observations of Scholar/SAIL teacher interactions	Expand Field Notes/Document Analysis	Observation/Field Notes	Conduct Interviews

Table 4-2. Interview Schedule

Interview Number	Date	Focus
1	6/27/11	Initial expectations of the Academy Background in reading professional learning Current approaches to reading instruction
2	7/8/11	Deeper exploration into participants' learning during the academy Reflections on how practice may change
3	9/12-9/13/11	Further exploration into participants' learning during and after the Academy Reflections on how practice may have changed Reflections on how the Scholars Academy may or may not have impacted current reading instructional practices

Table 4-3. Schedule of Data Analysis and Interpretation

July 2011	Transcribe 1st and 2nd interviews
	Continue document analysis
	Begin coding and initial analysis
August 2011	Continue coding process, including all relevant data collected
	(1st and 2nd interviews, field notes, document analysis
September 2011	Conduct final interview and observation
	Transcribe final interview
	Continue coding process with all data collected
	Continue analysis
October 2011- May 2012	Complete analysis Develop interpretations and findings

CHAPTER 5
CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY INTO PRACTICE: THE EVOLUTION OF SCHOLARS'
TEACHING OF READING

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to systematically record and deeply understand how

the Scholars make sense of their learning, both their content knowledge of reading, and

the enactment of that learning during the Scholars Academy and in their classrooms the

following school year. This chapter explores each Scholar individually, explaining their

backgrounds, their reading instruction and experience, and the content knowledge and

pedagogical changes that they attribute to their participation in the Teacher Scholars

Reading Academy. This chapter explores the following research questions:

- How does the Scholars Academy influence the participants' content knowledge of reading? How does the Scholars Academy influence their pedagogical content knowledge?

- In what ways do the participants make sense of the transfer of the professional learning into their own contexts once the initial academy is over?

Adrienne

Adrienne is a second year teacher who came to the teaching profession as a

second career. She originally graduated with a degree in graphic design and

volunteered with an afterschool art project. It was there that she realized she loved

working with children and decided a career change was in store. She began an

apprenticeship program for alternative certification in elementary education. She did

her apprenticeship under a second grade teacher at Knowles Elementary and when the

apprenticeship ended, a job opportunity presented itself in the same school and grade

level. Adrienne currently teaches second grade.

Who She Was: Adrienne as a Reading Teacher Prior to the Academy

Prior to the Academy, Adrienne described her reading instruction as having three distinct parts; skills block, reading workshop and RtI Intervention. The skills block refers to the time of the day when she would spend 30 minutes on the word study, phonics and/or grammar lesson for the week. This was delivered as a whole group lesson and the skills were chosen out of the core-reading curriculum in correspondence with the reading selection for the week. The reading workshop portion of the day was where the selection story, the reading comprehension skill of the week and the vocabulary for the selection was introduced and taught. Each week, on Monday, a read-aloud was presented to introduce the comprehension skill of the week. On Tuesday, the vocabulary words for the selection were introduced and interacted with. Adrienne describes using technology to make the words more relevant to her students. On Wednesday, Adrienne introduced the reading selection and a group reading took place. By the end of the week, the students were required to take a test based on the reading selection, and this test was used for grading and evaluating student learning.

The Response to Intervention (RtI) was an additional hour designated for intervention due to Knowles Elementary's status as an underperforming school. Adrienne described this time as "something that saved me this year" (AIP1/2/72). The grade level team decided to provide intervention as a whole, rather than to have each teacher provide intervention to his/her assigned students. Adrienne described the process as "taking all the kids in second grade and breaking them up into groups based on skill need" (AIP1/3/91). Each teacher in the second grade would then be assigned a skill-based group and work with those particular students on their particular skill need until it was remediated. Adrienne described the results as "outstanding" (AIP1/3/92).

Many students were showing improvement on their diagnostic assessments and Adrienne felt as though this type of intervention was just what her students needed.

Adrienne felt that the core curriculum did not do enough to address the comprehension skills that her students needed. For example, she described the instructional sequence as "too fast" and students were unable to grasp the goal of the comprehension skill before the week was over and it was time to move to another skill (AIP1/4/166). She also felt that she was unable to incorporate authentic literature into her lessons and that many of the read aloud stories and selection stories were irrelevant to her students. Because she was required to give the students the test on the stories at the end of the week, she felt that she was unable to make any changes to this area of her instruction. Although she described dissatisfaction with the above aspects of her reading instruction, she felt as though a core curriculum was necessary due to the complexity of reading instruction. She felt at odds between the need to "hit all the skills" and make the instruction meaningful for her students (AIP1/4/165).

Adrienne described the most challenging aspect of teaching reading as the students' lack of interest or motivation in reading. She described her students as "discouraged" and "not believing in themselves" (AIP1/7/281). She wanted to have her students feel comfortable with taking risks in the classroom and to know that it is alright to make mistakes.

Who She Became: Adrienne's Learning As a Result of the Scholars Academy

> This was so motivating, so inspiring and it felt really, really good to know
> that even though I have a different situation at my school, I can do so many
> of these things and make them what my kids need. (AIP2/6/261)

At the end of the summer Academy, Adrienne expressed learning in multiple areas. Specifically, she discussed changes in her knowledge regarding comprehension

skills/strategies and fluency. How Adrienne's learning on these topics evolved and the

initial transfer of these instructional changes into Adrienne's classroom at the beginning

of the following year are explained below.

Comprehension scope and sequence of strategies and skills

As Adrienne explained in her initial interview, the pace of the comprehension skills

and strategies outlined in the core reading curriculum was too fast for her students. The

students had one week to work on a comprehension strategy or skill. They were then

introduced to a different strategy/skill; sometimes weeks elapsed before they had an

opportunity to practice an earlier strategy again.

During one of the afternoon professional learning sessions on effective

comprehension strategy instruction, Adrienne committed to changing her reading

instruction to allow her students to have more practice of a particular comprehension

strategy.

> I'm going to take the comprehension skill for the week and be more
> adamant about it. For example, if this week, it's main idea, then, the next
> week, main idea will be the skill in my reading centers. So then the kids
> have a chance to continually get hit with it and take a skill or strategy and
> apply it. (AIP2/7/295)

Adrienne also added that she would work with her team teacher to give the students

opportunities to practice that particular comprehension skill or strategy in other content

areas.

> And team teaching with [Mary], it will be easy [to implement] because she
> gets the idea and she understands how to implement it in writing and in
> math because she's a big reading person. (AIP2/7/299)

When Adrienne began the school year, this area was one she was able to

implement. By the fourth week of school, her students had already spent more time on

a comprehension skill than in the past.

This week, the skill is fantasy and realism, so next week during guided reading, I'll continue with fantasy and realism. So I'm really able to get a lot more time on a skill than before. This week's strategy is monitoring and clarifying, so that will be added into guided reading as well. We've really been able to extend the time to a lot more than before. (AIP3/5/184)

Evidence of continued application of comprehension strategies and skills was apparent in the observation of Adrienne's classroom. She had collaborative charts on the walls explaining various comprehension strategies and the students had contributed their ideas to charts as well. The reading journals of Adrienne's students showed multiple opportunities to apply comprehension strategies. Adrienne noted that this was different from the way she provided comprehension instruction in the past.

Fluency

Adrienne felt that fluency and its relationship to comprehension and how to implement meaningful fluency practice was a significant area of learning for her. In the past, she knew fluency was important, but she "just didn't know how to implement it" (AIP3/5/174). However, after learning about the parts of fluency (accuracy, automaticity, rate and prosody), Adrienne felt as through this may have been a missing link in her reading instruction in the past.

A large contribution to Adrienne's learning about fluency was the instructional strategy of fluency warm-ups that she saw implemented in the SAIL classroom. Fluency warm-ups, based on an instructional routine designed by Read Naturally (Read Naturally, 2012), consist of three parts: (a) teacher modeling, (b) repeated reading and (c) progress monitoring. In the SAIL classroom, the SAIL teacher would direct the students to a text and each student would do a "cold" reading circling the final word they read in one minute. Then the SAIL teacher would project the text and model the reading aloud, emphasizing proper phrasing, pronunciation and pace. Next, the

students were divided into pairs, which have been carefully chosen by the teacher using a ranking system to match students by ability. These pairs then took turns reading paragraphs of the selected text and providing feedback to each other. Finally, the students performed a final "hot" read (one minute duration) of the text and charted their progress, noting a difference in words read correctly from the "cold" reading compared to the "hot" reading (FN62911).

Adrienne felt strongly that this practice would translate well to her classroom and provide her with a framework for fluency practice that she did not have in the past.

> It opened my eyes to try new things with my class like choral reading and a lot more modeling out loud of what I'm doing and what I want them to do. I think it's going to have a big effect…also, seeing those kids read the same passage over and over again really hit home with me and let me go "oh wow, that's really going to help them." (AIP2/4/155)

She also indicated that the progress monitoring aspect of the routine would help motivate her students because "they would love to see their progress" (FN62911).

Adrienne noted that she would "definitely do the fluency warm-ups next year" (AIP2/7/285) and that it would be "easy to implement" (AIP2/7/306). She was committed to making this change in her fluency instruction because she felt she needed to "stretch her practice by implementing more fluency activities" (D-A-63011). Adrienne made the fluency warm-ups the focus of her inquiry by wondering, "If I increase fluency activities [in my classroom], what effects will it have in other areas?" (D-A-63011).

During our last interview in the Fall of 2011, Adrienne was excited to report that she had fully implemented the fluency warm-ups.

> We are doing the fluency warm-ups, which I love! We started out doing it every day to make sure they were used to it and now we do it at least twice a week. I want to make it a center also, where they can go and keep doing the partner part of the routine on their own. (AIP3/4/164)

She also felt that this was a significant difference in her teaching of fluency.

> Last year, I wasn't big on fluency because I didn't know how to implement it. And so now, like getting the kids trained on [the routine] so early, I'm going to be able to make a fluency center much more useable and much more successful. So, I'll have little times for the kids to use and do all their [progress] monitoring. I think it's going to be a lot more successful this year and it will really help. (AIP3/5/174)

Adrienne made definite changes in her instruction, both in content and routines, as described above. Each of the changes outlined can be traced back to specific learning during the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. Adrienne described her experience as "learning in a really safe place. The things we were learning…I knew it was going to change me and it did. It's changed my way of teaching this year. So, it's all good!" (AIP3/13/571)

Catherine

Catherine has been teaching six years and has had experiences in all grade levels between kindergarten and sixth grade. Like Adrienne, she came to teaching as a second career after spending 12 years in the banking industry. She took an opportunity to explore teaching as a career after being unemployed and found that she really loved teaching students to read and write. Catherine describes herself as "getting pretty good results" with students who are of a lower socioeconomic status. She feels as though she can relate to their struggles and wants to be a positive influence in their lives. Catherine currently teaches first grade.

Who She Was: Catherine as a Reading Teacher Prior to the Scholars Academy

The structure of Catherine's reading instruction was similar to that described by Adrienne. She used the core reading curriculum and felt that she was responsible for teaching all of the skills contained within the teacher's manual and using the materials

that correspond with the curriculum. She began each day with a Morning Message, in which the students interacted with a written message on a small whiteboard, or a phonemic awareness game. She described the rest of the reading block as "following the script of what we're supposed to do" (CIP1/3/111). Each section within the reading curriculum was presented on a weekly schedule, with a comprehension skill, a comprehension strategy, a sound of the week and vocabulary words that corresponded to the story. She followed the daily schedule outlined in the curriculum with a selection test at the end of the week. Each of the sections of the reading curriculum was presented to the students in a whole group format for part of the block and the rest of the time was spent in small groups.

Her reading block differed from Adrienne's in that Catherine teamed with a co-teacher with a class double the normal size. After the main whole-group lesson, the co-teacher worked with the lowest 10% of the students and taught them separately, "at their pace", while Catherine taught the remainder of the group divided by achievement level (CIP1/3/120). During this portion of the block, the small groups were either engaged with Catherine in guided reading instruction on their level or were engaged in some independent reading, computer or other reading related activity.

Like Adrienne, Catherine expressed frustration with the requirement that all reading instruction come from the core curriculum. She felt that she would prefer to "take the gist of what the lesson is supposed to be for the week and apply another story or whatever that I think they maybe would like better or relate to them more" (CIP1/4/154).

Like all teachers in the district, Catherine received a published learning schedule that outlines the required lessons within the core curriculum to be accomplished during a certain week of the school year. Catherine expressed frustration at being expected to fit all the required aspects of reading instruction within the block of time provided.

> I feel I'm required to stick to that [core curriculum] manual. According to the scope and sequence, I've got five days to get through it. I think a lot of things they ask us to do, there's no time for. There's not a lot of time to have a morning message, morning meeting, comprehension lesson, then do a 90-minute reading block that *has* to be out of this curriculum. (CIP1/4/147)

Catherine was also required to test the aspects of the curriculum described above using the core curriculum benchmark and skill tests each week.

At the start of the Academy, Catherine described the most important aspect of reading to be a strong basis in phonemic awareness and phonics. She described it as "a puzzle and you have to figure out how to get your kinds to understand how to make that puzzle work" (CIP1/5/201). She described the most difficult aspect of teaching reading as getting the families of her students to take reading seriously.

Who She Became: Catherine's Learning As a Result of the Scholars Academy

> This was a mind-opening experience. You can't go in thinking "my kids won't…or my kids can't"…they can and they will. You learn how to do it. (CIP2/7/288)

At the end of the summer Academy, Catherine expressed learning in multiple areas. Specifically, she discussed changes in her comprehension skills and strategy instruction, phonics instruction and in the instructional language utilized. How Catherine's learning on these topics evolved and the initial transfer of these instructional changes into Catherine's classroom at the beginning of the following year are explained below.

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Comprehension strategies and skills

While all areas of reading are addressed during the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy, comprehension as the goal of reading is an emphasized area. Catherine's learning of comprehension strategies and skills stemmed from a slide that was presented during one of the afternoon sessions (Figure 5-1). The facilitator was discussing how comprehension strategies are different from comprehension skills. The Scholars had also read the article *Clarifying the Difference between Reading Skills and Reading Strategies* (Afferbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008). Core reading curricula often present reading strategies and reading skills as separate areas to teach, rather than show the relationship between them.

Figure 5-1. Strategies and Skills Slide

This slide sparked a big "aha" in Catherine's content knowledge regarding the difference between skills and strategies. She made connections to her own teaching and started to question the way she had instructed before.

My personal aha moment came when I read and heard about skills and strategies [and how they are related]. I really wanted to jump up and down and shout about it, because this made so much more sense to me. I'm going back to my classroom looking at that area in [my core curriculum] much more carefully. (D-PS-C)

Catherine also sought out the facilitator the next day to discuss her new insights. Catherine felt that she wanted to reflect back what she had heard to make sure she understood the concept correctly (FN63011).

Although Catherine was empowered with this knowledge, she was apprehensive about how to make the changes in her instruction, given the instructional time constraints and a learning schedule that dictated the scope and sequence of both comprehension skills and strategies. Catherine wrote,

I need to think more about the schedule…when will I begin teaching the skills and strategies in a new way and how can I extend the time I'm teaching to make sure my students truly understand without throwing myself off on the scope and sequence I must stick to. (D-C-62911)

Catherine also discussed changing the pace at which the comprehension skills and strategies are introduced. "I am thinking about my current reading instruction and perhaps I will place more emphasis on taking more time to teach comprehension and thinking" (D-C-62911).

By the end of the two-week summer portion of the Academy, Catherine felt that understanding the relationship between skills and strategies was both an area of new learning and an area that she wanted to pursue during the following school year. She especially wanted to reconsider the pace at which the skills and strategies are introduced and to give her students more time to work on a given strategy or skill.

I'm going to figure [out] a way that I can teach a skill or strategy for more than just five days…[I need] some kind of continuum to it…where it's not just compare and contrast this week, okay, main idea next week, okay,

cause and effect the following week and then main idea six weeks from now knowing they haven't ever grasped the skill… (CIP2/4/168).

Evidence of this learning was apparent in Catherine's classroom. She had charts displayed with instructional routines of comprehension and collaborative definitions of comprehension strategies. Each chart had been made in collaboration with her students. In addition, students were reading self-selected books and were using sticky notes to track their thinking while reading, giving them an opportunity to practice a comprehension strategy that had been previously introduced.

When Catherine and I met for the final interview in the Fall of 2011, she described how her desire to change the pace of the comprehension lessons was more difficult than she had anticipated, due to the pressure of making sure that her students had all of the required tests completed.

> I'm still being pushed to do [one skill a week] because I'm asked to have these weekly skill tests done. I have to have a certain amount of grades [in the grade book] every week and I honestly feel like the kids aren't getting it. For example, last week was predict and infer. This week, it's compare and contrast. Really? And we're not going back to predict and infer for at least four weeks, and the struggle for me has been trying to figure out a way to continuously do what I'm supposed to be doing while doing what I think [the kids] need. The skill just changes every week and a six or seven year old can't predict and infer in just a week. They can't compare and contrast in a week. They just can't. (CIP3/6/232)

Catherine explained that the learning schedule that the district requires her to follow hinders her ability to try various pacing schedules to meet the needs of her students.

Even though Catherine felt constrained in her ability to adjust the pace, she was committed to trying a different way to continue the students' learning of a comprehension skill or strategy for a longer period of time.

> I've talked with my co-teacher and I think we're going to end up making up our own little centers. Like, if we want to do predict and infer for a while, then we'll do it [in the center]. They will predict and infer in their own

stories. We've got to find a way to keep it going even when we have to
move on to compare and contrast. (CIP3/6/238)

Catherine felt that she had made strides in her ability to teach her students to think

more deeply about text through the teaching of specific comprehension strategies.

During the first five weeks of school, Catherine had worked with her students the most

on understanding how their schema impacts their comprehension. She described how

she used collaborative charts and how the students have incorporated both the word

and concept of schema into their vocabulary.

> We came in this year talking about schema a lot. Instead of me just
> knowing the word and trying to get at it for my kids, it's an open
> conversation about what schema is. We have the chart on the wall. …And
> they use it a lot. I'll ask them, "how do you know that?" and they'll say to
> me "I used my schema…because I know this is… or I went to this…." And
> they're really able to relate things. (CIP3/2/74)

Catherine elaborated that she felt as though her students this year were better able to

gain meaning from text than students in the past. She attributed this to her more explicit

teaching of schema at the beginning of the year.

Phonics instruction

Catherine's other significant area of learning involved pronunciation and dialectal

differences in phonemes and the impact on decoding and encoding. This learning

stemmed from a slide (Figure 5-2) and the corresponding discussion, which described

how students' oral language impacts their ability to decode and encode words. As

students decode a word phonetically, they typically try to connect that word with a

known word from their oral language (Chard, Pikulski, & Templeton, 2000). Often,

regional dialects can impact a student's understanding of a particular word and the

spelling of that word. For example, the vowel sounds in "pin" and "pen" are similar in

the southern U.S., but are different sounds in the Northern regions (Fillmore & Snow,

2000). Teachers must be sensitive to these differences to help students notice the differences between their oral and written languages.
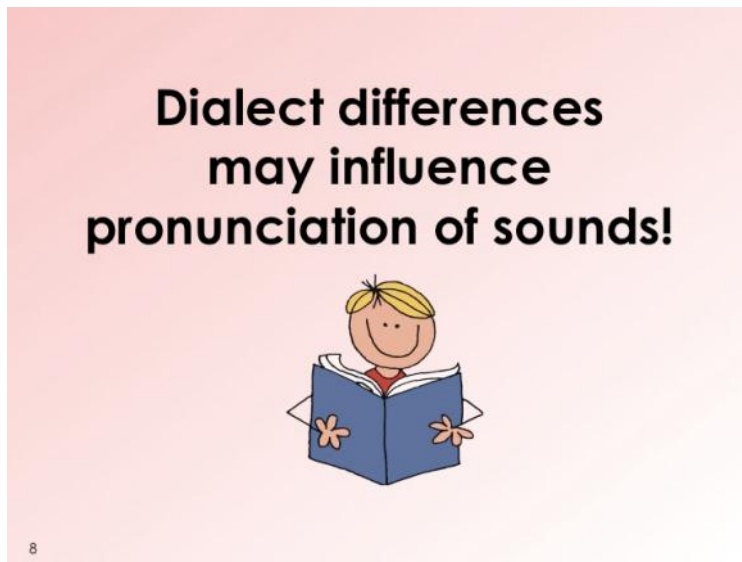
Figure 5-2. Pronunciation of Sounds Slide

Catherine was struck by this difference and considered this new learning carefully. She wrote in her reflection, "I need to think more about how home language with my students affects their reading and writing and how this eventually causes a problem with comprehension and fluency" (D-C-7611). In a discussion with her colleagues on the same day, Catherine noted her students had difficulties understanding the differences between the dialectal ways they would pronounce certain words and how the word is conventionally spelled. Catherine noted particularly her students' use of "day" instead of "they" and "dis" instead of "this" (FN7611). She described how these dialectal respellings continually appeared in her students' writing and how that was eye-opening to her.

Catherine felt that this "aha" was going to have an impact on her instruction in the coming school year. She considered how she might instruct differently given what she now knew about the connections between oral and written language.

> One of my greatest aha moments came when I determined that I have students who speak an entirely different language in their home and community than what I am teaching them. In thinking about my students, I realized that they are using the skills that I have given them. They are sounding out the word "they," just as I am asking them to, but what they hear at home is "day" and when they're writing it in their papers, they are writing it exactly as they are hearing it. It is almost as if I'm teaching an ESOL class because the students must translate what they hear every day into what they are reading. Amazing!" (D-PS-C).

Catherine was committed to changing her approach to phonemic awareness instruction based on this new learning. She developed her wondering around the explicit teaching of phonetic variances of specific phonemes (Kohler, Bahr, Silliman, & Bryant, 2007) using the instructional technique of Making Words (Cunningham, Hall, & Heggie, 2001) and the use of a word wall in her classroom. Each of these techniques was discussed at length during the Academy and was modeled in both the afternoon sessions and in the SAIL classrooms.

Evidence of this learning was apparent in Catherine's classroom. A Word Wall was prominently displayed and vowel patterns were highlighted. During my observation, Catherine was engaged in instructing the students on their word wall words for the week. During this time, she highlighted for the students the differences between the words "sing" and "sang" noting the vowel difference in how "you might say it at home" and how "it is spelled in books" (FN92111).

Impact of instructional language

Catherine's other significant area of learning involved the instructional language used to convey complex processes to students. During some of the afternoon sessions

of the Academy, the facilitator showed various classroom artifacts that utilized the sophisticated language that explained comprehension processes. The facilitator went on to explain that the use of instructional language needed to be consistent from grade level to grade level, so that students, especially those who struggle, would not have to relearn terms that may represent the same concept. For example, many times the terms "schema" and "background knowledge" are used interchangeably.   For students who struggle or have language difficulties, an inconsistent language of instruction can cause unnecessary confusion.

Catherine noted in a discussion with her colleagues that Knowles Elementary had a tendency to use various phrases that mean the same concept. They discussed how some teachers called the rime of a particular word, the "chunk," and others called it "the word family" (FN7611). She also noted that the lack of addressing this issue may be due to the expectations for the students at Knowles Elementary.

> I've learned that I need to start speaking a different language to my kids. I need to start expecting…I've always expected a lot of out them, but I've expected a lot out of them based on *our* school. I need to start expecting a lot out of them because [they] can do it and learn it. (CIP2/2/55)

By the end of the summer portion of the Academy, Catherine was committed to using more authentic language for her students and expecting her students to do the same. She wrote in one of her reflections, "I will raise the expectation" (D-C-7611). Catherine committed to work with her colleagues to provide a more systematic use of instructional language for students.

> I have learned that, in order for my students to learn and be able to take that learning to the next grade level, I have to be more authentic in my language. In order for this whole thing to actually work, it will take me working with my colleagues to develop a language that spans all grade levels. My students must be taught the actual language for what I want them to know. And this language must be used through the grade levels to

ensure that our students do not have to constantly reprocess information every year. (D-PS-C)

During the last interview in the Fall of 2011, Catherine expressed that her instructional language had changed significantly and she noticed a difference in her students and her colleagues.

> I've always tried to use the words with them and they would get it, but then the other teachers weren't using the language and a lot of time the kids would either have to transfer into another classroom and [learn another word]. Like, I would say "noun" and another teacher would say "naming word"…it kind of banged heads. This year, I've talked with every grade level and we're using the real words for everything. (CIP3/3/91)

Catherine also added that she felt as though her students were becoming more adept at utilizing language that she would have considered "too sophisticated" for them in the past.

> [The kids] are using the words correctly, they can…and it didn't take us as long as I thought. I thought it was going to take me weeks to get them to use the word "schema." [Since we made] the chart together, the word "schema" and what it means is right there on the wall. I would keep pointing to it and reminding them. Now they do it themselves. (CIP3/5/217)

Catherine was able to make changes in her instructional techniques as described above. Each of the changes outlined can be traced back to specific learning during the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. Catherine's experience was "eye opening," and it "has truly changed how I approach reading in my classroom" (D-PS-C).

Marian

Marian's first career choice was photography, but at the insistence of her grandparents, she took an elective education course in college. She loved the class and decided to pursue education and become a teacher. She has worked at Knowles Elementary for the past five years with experiences in kindergarten, second and fourth grades. She describes herself as loving "a challenge." She specifically sought out a

lower socio-economic school because she felt passionate about reaching students who struggle. Marian currently teaches third grade.

Who She Was: Marian as a Reading Teacher Prior to the Scholars Academy

The school year following the summer Academy, Marian would be teaching third grade with the same group of students she had taught the previous year in second grade. Since she taught second grade just prior to the Academy, her reading instruction was similar to the structures described by Adrienne, who also taught second grade.

Marian utilized the core curriculum, but added "I try to incorporate my personality and things that my students need in it" (MIP1/3/71). Similar to Adrienne and Catherine, she felt that the core did not always meet the needs of her student population and that she was required to use the stories in the core, because she was required to give the weekly test that accompanied the story.

> With our district, I have to stay with that core and it's not at all how I'd want to teach reading every year…We have to have the weekly tests that go with the core, so we have to read that [specific] story. I try to make it mine, like they give me vocabulary words, but I try to add extra ones and expand on it. I typed out the read aloud and then [I'd] have the kids do a story map to go with it and make it more engaging because the series is just so blah… but, we have to stay on that curriculum day for day. (MIP1/3/95)

Marian also discussed the district learning schedules and explained that district and state officials held the teachers at Knowles Elementary accountable to the daily outline of the core curriculum indicated by the learning schedules.

> The state constantly is in our classrooms. We're a [School in Need of Improvement] so they live at our school…little clipboard coaches…they're like "Hey, what are you doing? This is what you should be doing." (MIP1/4/126)

Marian described her reading instruction as very similar to Adrienne's, including the additional block of time for RtI that the entire second grade team worked on

together. Like Adrienne, Marian felt that this was a beneficial use of the additional

instructional time and that students who struggled made good gains in this structure.

Similar to Adrienne and Catherine, Marian expressed frustration at the rapid pace of the

comprehension skills and strategies. "The [core curriculum] is all wobbly-gobbly. Every

week, there's a different skill and it never seems to go back." (MIP1/6/230). She

attempted to give her students more practice with comprehension skills and strategies

by extending the time spent practicing the skill during a separate part of the reading

block. "I would use guided reading [time] to go back to a comprehension skill that they

may not have mastered" (MIP1/7/243)

Marian expressed that for her, the most challenging aspect of reading instruction

was finding the time to instruct her students at their particular levels. Due to the wide

range of levels in her class, she had to group students who had different needs together

in order to meet with each student.

> It's so hard to get to all the needs of kids in reading. I try to manage it
> pretty well, but sometimes I feel like I'm just gulping for air, and then I'm
> coming back down and drowning again when it comes to grouping my kids.
> I have to have like an L, M and N [reading level] in the same group and then
> I choose an M level book and then my L is struggling and my N is finding it
> too easy, but the M kid is happy as a clam. I feel like I can't win.
> (MIP1/10/388)

Who She Became: Marian's Learning As a Result of the Scholars Academy

"Everything [in my reading instruction] is different. I'm not doing anything
the same" (MIP3/9/382).

At the end of the summer Academy, Marian expressed learning in multiple areas.

Specifically, her learning focused on integrating robust instructional routines in

vocabulary, word study and comprehension. How Marian's learning on these topics

evolved and the initial transfer of these instructional changes into Marian's classroom at the beginning of the following year are explained below.

Vocabulary instructional routine: Text Talk

As Marian explained in her initial interview, her vocabulary instruction prior to the Scholars Academy consisted of teaching the words that the core curriculum dictated to accompany the story and adding some others that she thought her students may have trouble decoding or understanding while reading (MIP1/4/100). The content of the professional learning surrounding vocabulary focused on helping the Scholars understand the link between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension and how students from disadvantaged backgrounds have significantly more vocabulary deficits than their more affluent counterparts. Additionally, the link between vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge was a major topic of discussion.

Marian felt that this was a critical area for her students, and she and her colleagues discussed their concerns about their current approach to vocabulary instruction. They often used YouTube videos to show their students some of the vocabulary words that were targeted for the week and they felt as if that practice gave the students more background knowledge (FN7511). However, Marian also felt that there was more she could do. She expressed concern that the words targeted by the core curriculum were not always words that students needed to know the meaning of in order to understand the central idea of the reading selection.

> I need to think more about how to build my students' vocabulary and schema to improve their comprehension. I need to stretch my practice by incorporating the words that will actually help my kids understand the story rather than just the words the [core curriculum] "tells" me to use. (D-M-630)

An instructional routine called Text Talk was a major area of focus during the afternoon professional learning on vocabulary instruction during the summer portion of the Academy. Text Talk is a systematic approach to vocabulary instruction that situates the instruction within the context of a piece of literature and devises instructional techniques that link new word knowledge to related concepts and how the word is used in various situations. Text Talk also focuses on repeated uses of the targeted words over time to increase the likelihood of retention of the meanings (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).

Marian felt that Text Talk would be a beginning step for her to take in changing her vocabulary instruction during the school year. The area was so important to Marian that she developed it into her inquiry focus, asking, "How can using Text Talk impact student word knowledge and comprehension?" She was committed to systematically studying this instructional routine in the coming school year.

When visiting Marian's classroom during the classroom observation, it was evident that she had implemented Text Talk and that her students were excited and thriving with the practice. She had wall displays of the vocabulary words with a picture of the cover of the literature used to contextualize the vocabulary words, (Figure 5-3). She also developed vocabulary notebooks for each student, with record sheets for them to write their own uses of the word and the context in which they learned the word (Figure 5-4). During my observation, three of her students utilized previous targeted words in their conversation (FN92011).

Marian discussed her students' excitement about Text Talk and her perception of their learning differences from the past.

They're taking [Text Talk] very seriously. I've been so impressed with how much they've learned. They're using the words over and over again. I'm seeing the words show up in their writing, too. I take each lesson and do it over four days. First, I introduce the words in context on Monday and we read the story. Then we work on the student friendly definitions. Next, I have them record the sentence that the word is used in from the story. Then, we act out the words and apply it in our own sentence. …All of these things, they're writing on their Text Talk sheets. (MIP3/5/215)

Marian attributed the repeated use of the targeted words to the Text Talk instructional routine, and she felt that her students' comprehension was positively impacted by the new words they had acquired.

Figure 5-3. Marian's Text Talk Wall
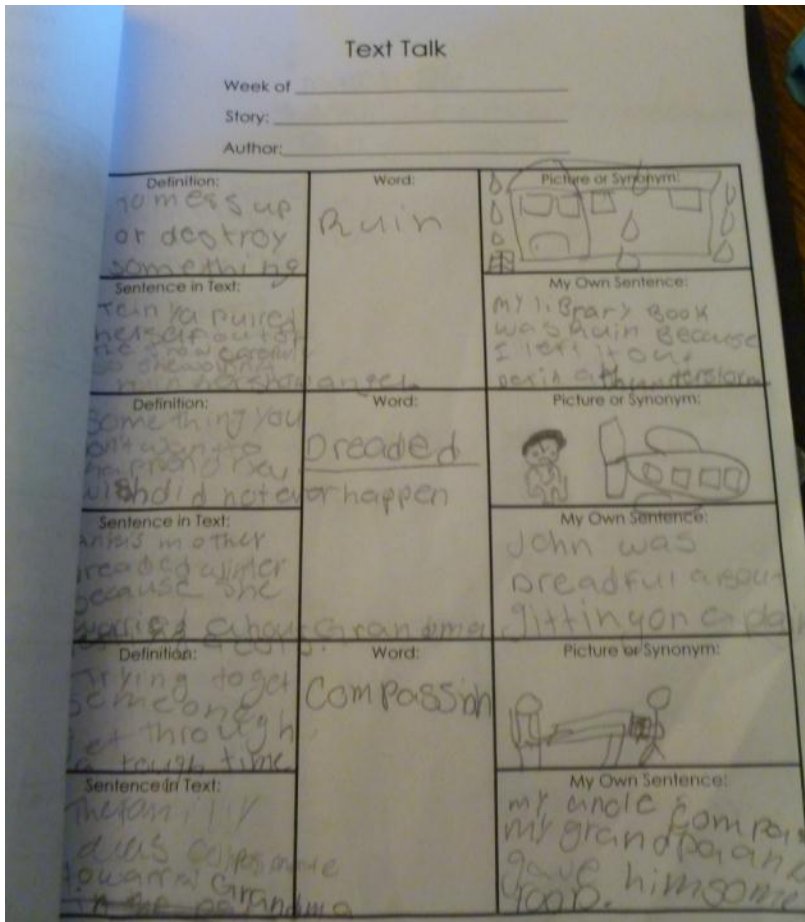
Figure 5-4. Text Talk Notebook Entry from one of Marian's Students

Word study instructional routine

Marian made significant changes in her word study teaching based on her experience in the Scholars Academy. Word study refers to the systematic effort of teaching phonics and morphology in an integrated way (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2004; Cunningham & Hall, Month by Month Phonics for Third Grade, 2008). The goal is to teach students *how* words and sounds work, rather than memorization of lists or rules. Instructional routines such as the use of a Word Wall, explicit teaching of onset and rime and how that knowledge applies to decoding and encoding other words were specifically discussed during the afternoon portion of the Scholars Academy. (D-PPT-630; FN63011). Particular attention was given to the use of a Word Wall in the

classroom and interactive instructional routines engaging students in the manipulation of letters, sounds and words. The instructional routines were modeled for the Scholars and they had opportunities to practice these routines within the SAIL classroom (FN63011). Marian was intrigued by the students in SAIL having "deep, meaningful conversations about words and how they are put together" (D-PS-M).

Evidence of this learning was apparent in Marian's classroom. She had a word wall displayed with exemplars of spelling patterns. During my observation, her students engaged in a Guess the Covered Word activity, which uses a portion of text with key words removed so that students can develop and apply decoding strategies to discover this missing word. It was clear that Marian's students were used to the routine and had engaged in the activity in the past (FN92011).

It was also apparent that the instructional routine of Making Words was utilized in Marian's classroom regularly. Making Words is a multi-level activity where students manipulate small letter cards to form words that are of increasing difficulty (Cunningham, Hall, & Heggie, 2001). The focus of the activity is on letter-sound correspondence and relationships. Marian had a pocket chart displayed with large manipulative letters and various words on cards that were made from that particular selection of letters. During the final interview in the Fall of 2011, she indicated that the students were quite engaged and excited about this hands-on approach to spelling and phonics. "[The kids] love Making Words. They love moving the letters around. It's so much more fun" (MIP3/8/326).

Marian made use of the scope and sequence of the phonics and spelling instruction outlined in the core curriculum, while adapting the activities with the more

engaging activities she learned during the Scholars Academy. She also consolidated

the lists of words provided in the core curriculum to one or two exemplars of spelling

patterns and then provided instruction on how to transfer that knowledge to the spelling

of other words. (FN92011). Marian attributed an increase in her students' word study

performance to the changes she had made in her instruction.

> Their use of spelling patterns has increased a lot from last year, because the spelling patterns are making sense. Like the spelling words that went with [the core curriculum] would be all short /i/, and there are a lot of patterns that go with [that sound]. Now, we take two or three patterns and apply it to a ton of words. I would say 85% of the kids are getting it every week. (MIP3/16/728)

Marian also implemented a word study notebook as an additional way to assess her

students' performance. She indicated that this was also a departure from her previous

way of instruction.

> Last year, I had a reader's response and word work all in one notebook, but after I came to Scholars I definitely needed to have two journals. One needed to be specifically for word study. …They can always go into their journals to figure out the words they've worked on. I'm seeing them go back through those [journals] all the time like when they're writing. It's really transferring over. (MIP3/6/261)

Comprehension strategy instruction

Comprehension instruction was the area that Marian was most passionate about

during the Scholars Academy. She was dissatisfied with the approach she had been

using in the past and felt that her students were not receiving the depth of instruction

they needed. During one particular afternoon session, the facilitator had artifacts of

comprehension charts that were used in a first and third grade classroom. As Marian

looked at these charts, she engaged in a conversation with her colleagues regarding the

comprehension instruction provided in the core curriculum.

Our kids get gypped. There's not enough time for them to really get it. Every week, it's different and they never go back [to the same strategies]. When I see these charts, I know that these kids have really had time to think and process and that's why [they can do it]. (FN62811)

As Marian spent time reading and learning about the research behind comprehension strategy instruction, she was committed to changing her instructional approach.

I need to think more about how to work [these comprehension strategies] into my core. I need to stretch my practice by teaching [comprehension] skills and strategies with a more connectedness. I WILL LET MY STUDENTS SPEND MORE THAN ONE WEEK ON A [comprehension] STRATEGY. (D-M-629)

When I arrived at Marian's classroom for the final interview and observation, her students were engaged in reading self-selected texts and responding to their reading in journals. Marian was circulating in the room, meeting briefly with each student and discussing their comprehension of the book they were reading.

After a short time, Marian called her students to the rug to begin their comprehension lesson. It was clear from the charts on the wall that she and her students had been engaged in comprehension strategy lessons similar to those discussed at the Scholars Academy. During her morning lesson, the students were engaged in thinking deeply about the text Marian had chosen and were participating in creating a class chart on story structure. It was evident that this was a departure from the core curriculum.

Marian indicated that her comprehension instruction was the most significant change she had made in her instruction. "I'm not using the [core curriculum]. I'm using real, authentic text" (MIP3/11/386). She explained that she had reviewed the skills and strategies provided by the curriculum and reordered them to help give her students

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more time to practice a particular strategy before having to move on. She had already

noticed significant differences in her students' engagement and depth of learning since

implementing this new approach.

> They're really doing it on their own. I did the Story Mountain [a graphic
> organizer] with them last week, and now they're doing it. The conversations
> they're having about their books are a lot better, especially after the
> metacognition lessons I did. They actually get out their sticky notes and
> they're getting it. That's not something they did before. They would write
> things like "the cat is blue and I have a blue shirt" but now they're writing
> real responses and they're eager to share it and they're so excited.
> (MIP3/13/593).

During the summer, one of Marian's main worries about implementing a longer

time for each comprehension strategy involved the tests that accompanied the core

curriculum. She felt that she was required to give the particular test that accompanied

the reading selection from the textbook. However, she discussed her new approach

with her school administration and was given permission to deviate from the core

curriculum, provided that she assessed students and could provide evidence of their

learning.

> I'm still doing the benchmark tests [from the core curriculum] but they have
> nothing to do with a specific story in the book. I make up performance
> assessments for them to do as we complete a strategy. Like this week, we
> were doing the Story Mountain, and then next week, they will get a book
> that's actually on their level and they'll have to complete a Story Mountain
> to show their understanding of how to apply the strategy. It's a
> differentiated assessment, because it's a book on their reading level. This
> allows me to really assess their comprehension. (MIP3/15/656)

Marian made definite changes in her instruction both in content and in routines as

described above. Each of the changes outlined can be traced back to specific learning

during the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. Marian summarized her experience

with the following statement:

Being [in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy] should be mandatory for all reading teachers. It changes everything…at least it did for me. It changes the way you teach. I learned so much and I was able to come back and make all of these things happen here, and my kids are on fire for comprehension. (MIP3/20/927)

Learning Across All Three Scholars

While it is evident that each of the Scholars' learning was different, there were two common themes consistent throughout all three stories: changing the amount of instructional time and techniques devoted to comprehension instruction, and changing their classroom environments to allow more student independence and accountability for their learning. Each of those areas is explored and illustrated with examples from their interviews and classroom observations.

Comprehension Instruction

All three Scholars devoted significant time to changing their reading comprehension instruction, both in routines and in the amount of time spent on particular reading comprehension strategies and skills. During the initial interview, each of the Scholars discussed dissatisfaction with the rapid pace of the comprehension strategies in their core curricula and their district-provided learning schedules. By the end of the Academy, all three Scholars committed to changing the pace of the comprehension strategy instruction, but were still apprehensive about how to go about doing so given the constraints.

Although each Scholar varied in her approach, each made significant changes in the amount of time given to students to practice a learned strategy. Adrienne committed to providing additional practice time to her students by carrying the focus strategy into her small group reading instruction. Catherine included additional practice time with comprehension strategies in her students' self-selected reading and also

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worked with her co-teacher to implement an additional practice time within their small group reading instruction. Marian made the most significant change, in that she worked with the administration to revise the entire sequence of comprehension strategies to allow for more in-depth learning.

In addition to the above instructional approaches, each Scholar had evidence of collaborative charts in her classroom explicitly stating what a comprehension strategy was and how it helped the reader. This was a direct reflection of the artifacts displayed during the summer portion of the Academy. Each of the Scholars noted that this was a departure from the ways in which they had instructed in the past and was a direct result of their participation in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy.

Reading Environment and Student Expectations

In addition to comprehension, the other common thread among the three Scholars was establishment of a reading environment and expectations for students. In their initial observations of the SAIL classroom, the Scholars were concerned less about the instructional content and more about the ways in which the students in the classroom interacted with each other and the adults. They noted in particular the sense of community and collaboration that the students had with each other and that the students felt comfortable taking risks.

> In the [SAIL] classroom today, [the SAIL teacher] asked them whether the sentence was a main idea or a detail and one kid said "well, that's a main idea" and she said "why?" and he started telling her why [he thought it was a main idea]. A lot of my kids, who are already discouraged and don't believe in themselves, wouldn't tell me why. If I asked why, they would immediately change their answer and say "Oh, I mean detail." (AIP1/7/282)

Adrienne noted during the first interview that to her, the most challenging aspect of teaching reading was overcoming her students' lack of motivation and belief in

themselves. Similar to Adrienne, Marian also expressed in her initial interview that her goal as a reading teacher was for her students to independently set their reading goals and to "love reading" (MIP1/8/296). Extended conversations with the SAIL teacher on how she established the rituals and routines in her own classroom gave the Scholars some ideas on how to provide more structure, so that their students would feel more comfortable taking risks (D-PS-A).

For Adrienne, the environment in the classroom and the relationship between the students themselves and the teacher was essential to her implementation of the fluency warm ups. She noted at the end of the two-weeks that establishing the way partners work together would be essential to the fluency warm up activity working.

> I think that once I get a little bit of community built in my classroom that the fluency warm up shouldn't be too hard to implement, but it's going to take a couple of weeks, getting used to working with your partner. [I'll need to explain] this is how you talk to your partner and stuff like that because we have a lot of social skill issues. I think that part will be a little harder to implement, just because we need to get that community built between everyone. (AIP2/7/309)

She added that she felt establishing the community aspect was going to be the most difficult thing to implement.

> Even at the end of this school year, our kids have had a hard time. Kids were coming to me, like "He looked at me" or "They said this to me" and I had to say "I'm not helping you. You know what words to say and what you need to go and do." And so it's an ongoing struggle, but I think that it would actually help doing the fluency warm up. It would help them find ways to work with each other. (AIP2/8/327)

When Adrienne and I sat down for the final interview, she noted significant changes in her students during the current school year as opposed to years past.

> It feels like I'm giving a lot more ownership to the kids. And it feels like they're taking a lot more responsibility for their own learning. So, they're taking direction a lot better too. Their independent work time feels a lot clearer. At first, I was like, "what's going on?" because they weren't coming

to me going "I don't know what I'm supposed to do." I don't know if it's because I'm [modeling] more or if doing the activities like fluency warm-ups where they're accountable [to a partner] and to me. I think it's really having an impact on them working independently. (AIP3/5/208)

When probed on what led to the change, Adrienne felt like she "wasn't dumbing it down" (AIP3/6/225) for her students and she was not doing "all the talking, but getting them to talk more." (AIP3/6/226) These were aspects of the classroom environment that she saw modeled by the SAIL teacher and also during the afternoon professional learning sessions. She was clear that this year, her students were responding differently.

In years past, even midway through the year, I would have kids going "I don't know what to do. I don't know how to do this." But this year, there's a whole lot more independence on the kids' part. It feels like I'm not having to spoon-feed them this year, which is really exciting to me. (AIP3/6/238)

For Catherine, changing the instructional language and expecting more from her students was a change in her classroom environment and in student expectations. She reflected at the end of the Academy that she saw in the SAIL classroom what was possible for her students. She noted, "the more I watched, I was like 'I can do all of these things' and I just need to go back and revise. I need to start expecting them to rise up. They can do anything any other classroom can do" (CIP2/2/53).

Catherine's change in classroom environment and student expectations was evident in her use of language during the final observation. Her students were clearly involved in the making of charts explaining desired behaviors during reading instruction. Her students also used the language that Catherine modeled for them, including the sophisticated instructional language that at first, during the Academy, Catherine doubted her students could use.

For Marian, her classroom environment and student expectations were also different following the Academy. Her interactions in the SAIL classroom led to a change in her perspective about what her students were able to do.

> What I saw blew me away at first and I will admit, at times, I felt very jaded to the situation. I would think to myself "Great. That kid just said 'correlate'", but then I began to ask myself why I was feeling that way. I realized that it's because I get frustrated when I think about what I want to have happen in my classroom versus what is happening. I learned that there are different ways to do things and I now have the ability to make that happen. (D-PS-M)

Marian felt that, having seen and been a part of a classroom environment that empowered students to take charge of their own learning, she too would be able to create a similar environment within her classroom. "I learned there is a method to creating independent children, and I will strive to make that happen" (D-PS-M).

The classroom environment and student expectations were clearly evident in Marian's classroom during the final observation. Upon entering her classroom, her students were engaged in reading self-selected texts and were responsible for tracking their thinking while reading. I observed over 90% of the students engaged in the task. (FN92111). Additionally, her walls had charts that were made collaboratively with the students indicating their co-construction of the desired behaviors during reading instructional time. Each of these areas indicated a departure from Marian's past classroom environment and a forward movement toward her goals of higher expectations for her students.

In sum, each of the Scholars individually learned different instructional routines from the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy and implemented them into their own classrooms in the following academic year. Although their initial implementation varied,

it was clear that all three made changes in their comprehension instruction and in their classroom environments.

While the Scholars' individual changes are important to understanding the impact of this particular professional learning experience, it is also important to discuss the participants' perceptions of the characteristics and mechanisms of the experience having the greatest impact on their learning. The following chapter will discuss the characteristics and mechanisms of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy that the Scholars found to have the most impact on their learning.

CHAPTER 6
ATTRIBUTES OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE IN
PRACTICE

Introduction

While the preceding chapter discussed the individual learning of each Scholar, this

chapter will discuss the characteristics and mechanisms of the Teacher Scholars

Reading Academy that contributed to the Scholars' learning and initial implementation.

Each of the characteristics and mechanisms presented in the literature review (Chapter

2) and linked to the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy (Chapter 3) will

be discussed.

This chapter will address the following research questions:

- In what ways do the participants in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy make
  sense of their own professional learning during the two-week Academy?

- What insights have the Scholars gained into their practice as a result of their
  participation in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy?

**Characteristics of Professional Learning Contributing to Scholars' Change in
Content Knowledge and Practice**

According to the research reviewed in Chapter 2, the characteristics of

professional learning that lead to a quality experience are content focus, active learning,

conceptual inputs, the role of the facilitator, duration, collective participation and

coherence. Each of these characteristics had an impact on the Scholars' knowledge

and practice. Exploration of each characteristic will begin with a definition and how that

particular characteristic was incorporated within the Scholars Academy.

Content Focus

As described in Chapter 2, *content focus* within professional learning is defined as

the content of the experience, which increases teachers' subject area knowledge and/or

pedagogical knowledge and which links that knowledge to classroom practice. Reading instruction is the content focus during the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy, and the instructional strategies practiced and discussed are all focused on the following aspects of reading instruction: comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and word study.

Reading as the content focus had an impact on the Scholars' learning. Adrienne felt as though the content focus contributed to her learning by allowing her "to be able to concentrate just on reading" (AIP3/12/553). Each of the Scholars delved deeply into different aspects of the reading content. Adrienne's learning focused on fluency instruction. Catherine's learning primarily involved phonics instruction and the instructional language used with her students. Marian concentrated her learning on vocabulary and word study. All three Scholars experienced a substantial change in their knowledge about comprehension strategy instruction.

In order to ensure that the content focus was clear and the pedagogical strategies were strong, current theoretical research and powerful research-based instructional strategies were combined to increase the robustness of the content focus for the Academy. Although each Scholar actualized her learning differently, reading as a content focus made an impact on both their knowledge and instructional skills, as evidenced by their initial implementation of a wide variety of strategies in their own classrooms during the year following the summer Academy.

Conceptual Inputs

As described in Chapter 2, *conceptual inputs* refer to outside resources designed to ground the learning in research or conceptual/theoretical basis to link research and practice. Conceptual inputs are evident in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy design through the use of research and practical articles that the Scholars read and

discussed. Additionally, the curriculum enacted in the SAIL classroom is built on current reading research.

The Scholars had mixed feelings about the relevance and necessity of the conceptual inputs given their background knowledge. Adrienne felt as though, at times, the readings were repeating readings they had done in the past as part of the professional learning events Knowles Elementary was required to attend. "We have all of these trainings we have to go to, we've done so much of those trainings that the articles were reviews" (AIP3/11/488). However, she felt that "the fact that we were able to talk about them with others was good because we were able to go more in depth with [the concepts]" (AIP3/11/489). Catherine felt that the conceptual inputs added to her depth of knowledge. "Who the heck wants to do this 30 page reading, but I found myself enjoying them and picking things out and being able to discuss [my thoughts] with other people really opened up my mind" (CIP2/5/183).

As the participant quotes in the above paragraph indicate, conceptual inputs provided the research-based theory that was necessary to frame the Scholars' learning, but how the conceptual inputs were utilized was equally important. Without the discussion protocols, the conceptual inputs themselves may have had little significance. Facilitated discussion protocols and writing activities were used to deeply engage the Scholars with the conceptual inputs, making the role of the facilitator another important contributing factor to the Scholars' learning.

The Role of the Facilitator

As described in Chapter 2, the *role of the facilitator* is crucial to the success of a professional learning experience, because the facilitator must reframe the discourse and adjust the activities to the idiosyncratic needs of the particular group, while

maintaining the goals of the experience. The role of the facilitator is addressed in the

Teacher Scholars Reading Academy through the qualifications and expertise of the

facilitator. The facilitator has significant experience in leading professional learning

experiences and is adept at tailoring the activities to the needs of adult learners. The

facilitator is also an expert in the field of reading having facilitated the Academy in the

past and having served as a district leader in reading for six years.

The facilitator's role was critical to the Scholar's learning as she enabled them to

unpack the conceptual inputs. The facilitator selected the discussion protocols that

were most aligned with the information contained in the conceptual inputs and the

learning that was desired. For example, during an afternoon discussion of vocabulary

instruction, the facilitator used the Wagon Wheel Protocol (National School Reform

Faculty, 2012) to stimulate generative thinking of powerful vocabulary strategies from

the previous nights' reading. The Wagon Wheel Protocol arranges the participants in

an inner and outer circle so they can have discussions with multiple people within the

allotted time. Each of the participants on the outer circle rotated to the participants on

the inner circle, generating powerful vocabulary strategies that were discussed in the

previous night's reading (Figure 6-1). The facilitator chose the protocol based on the

learning desired and led the Scholars to generate multiple ideas about vocabulary

instruction that they could then compare to the research-based strategies presented

next. This is just one example of the ways in which the facilitator cultivated the learning

space to make the conceptual inputs meaningful.

The role of the facilitator was also instrumental in bringing the student and

classroom artifacts to life for the Scholars. As is discussed in the forthcoming active

learning section, the Scholars felt as though seeing actual artifacts from students was

instrumental in their learning and helped them transfer their learning from the summer

Academy into the following school year. The facilitator was able to relate the exact

instructional sequence that accompanied the artifact in order for the Scholars to fully

understand the reasons why a particular strategy was used and the related student

understanding.

Figure 6-1. Wagon Wheel Protocol (Photo courtesy of author)

Many times throughout the summer portion of the Academy, Scholars approached

the facilitator for further discussion of the concepts and strategies learned. For

example, Catherine sought out the facilitator for further clarification of the difference

between comprehension strategies and comprehension skills (FN63011). This, as well

as many similar instances, clearly indicates that the facilitator's role was essential to the Scholars' learning.

Additionally, well beyond the scope of this study, the facilitator remained in contact with the Scholars and frequently answered questions or provided clarification for concepts and strategies discussed during the Scholars Academy. The Scholars utilized the expertise of the facilitator past the initial Academy and subsequent follow-up throughout the school year. The facilitator provided a strong structure, in which the Scholars could engage in active learning strategies to see how the theories and activities learned in the Academy could impact their instruction within their own contexts.

Active Learning

As described in Chapter 2, *active learning* refers to participants being engaged in their learning through observations, discussions, planning and practice, rather than passively receiving information that they are later expected to enact. Active learning is evident in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy design through the use of focused observations according to specific protocols used to both direct the observation and guide the discussion, collaborative planning and teaching with SAIL teachers and other Scholars, and the immediate application of learned strategies within the SAIL classroom.

The Scholars attributed a significant amount of their learning to the active learning aspect of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. The ability to see real classroom artifacts, student work samples and demonstrations of teaching strategies, coupled with the ability to try those instructional strategies immediately with a group of students helped the Scholars solidify their learning and feel confident in applying those strategies

in their own classrooms. This was a considerable departure from their past professional learning experiences.

As often cited in the research (Broughman, 2006), the Scholars described their previous experiences with professional development as less than relevant and often included very little modeling. Marian described one experience;

> It was a complete waste of time. People were in there knitting. So, you know we're getting a lot out of this workshop!...What I hear a lot of teachers say when we leave [a workshop] is like, 'you want us to do this in the classroom, then you need to show us how to do it in this workshop.' (MIP1/5/177)

Since their school was labeled as a "school in need of improvement", the Scholars had attended a significant number of professional development events throughout the previous school year. Those events were described as "a lot of theory" and presentations on "what our *kind* of kids need." Specifically, the events focused on vocabulary development and engagement of lower socioeconomic students (FN62811). Although the Scholars saw some value in attending these events, they lamented that they were never given choice in what to learn or what could benefit themselves and their students.

> I wish they would ask us what we want to do for professional development, because me going to a guided reading professional development may not be what I need right now because I have that down. What I need is specific strategies on inferring, because you can't get that from a book. (MIP1/5/158).

It is interesting to note that, although the design of the Scholars Academy was built on what the participants shared was absent from their previous professional learning activities and provided what they yearned for – active learning – the Scholars entered the experience with a great deal of initial trepidation. They did not know the structure of the two-week Academy when they agreed to attend and upon hearing that they would

spend the mornings observing and teaching alongside each other and SAIL teachers,

they were nervous. Even though they had indicated that they would like to learn

differently, they were unaccustomed to showing their teaching skills in such a public

way.

Although they were hesitant at first, by the end of the summer portion of the

Academy, each of the Scholars expressed the structure of the Academy as providing

the practical knowledge base missing from other professional learning experiences.

Marian expressed that "you go [to Scholars Academy] and you learn *how* to do things

and you can make it happen" (MIP2/5/217). She also added that

> For me, it was you guys giving me more of a "how." Being in a [school in
> need of improvement] we get tons of the research and what we need to be
> doing, but I need more "how" stuff, like I need to be able to put this into my
> tool box and know how to make it work. And so, just to have somebody
> show us the "how" and show us different posters…I wouldn't have thought
> of all that on my own, so it was really nice to see all of those things,
> because I need that, I need more [of the] "how." (MIP2/3/91)

Adrienne discussed similarly that the Scholars Academy provided an essential

piece that was often missing in other professional learning opportunities.

> What we get constantly in our trainings that we are going to all the time is,
> "Well, this theory says and this research says, you should do this, and this
> and this and this will happen." But it doesn't exactly show you how to
> implement it in your classroom. It doesn't say, "Oh, use a journal and then
> do this" or it doesn't say, "Use this schema folder and put it on the chart like
> this and see if that works for you." Those ideas are never there, so that
> was huge for me. (AIP2/4/139)

When asked what the most beneficial aspect of the entire two-week Academy

was, Marian was clear that the practice aspect of seeing and analyzing the artifacts was

essential to her learning.

> Seeing the stuff you guys actually made, like seeing the charts and the kids'
> actual work, was the most beneficial to me, because it was nice to actually
> touch things that I could use. Like, "here's how we taught print conventions.

You can use this, too." That was the most beneficial for me. All the charts…I tried to take as many pictures as possible. I had a QAR (Question-Answer-Relationship) chart before, but I liked the one that was shown better, so I recreated it. That's just an example how it helped me. (MIP3/20/901)

In addition to the examination of student work samples, classroom artifacts and video lessons, the Scholars reported that being able to try the instructional strategies out immediately in the SAIL classrooms led to increased confidence in their initial implementation in their own classrooms. This was especially true for Adrienne, who said, "I feel like I'm a hands-on learner. I have to try it a little bit or I have to see it in action to get it. That was huge for me" (AIP2/5/212). In her final interview in the Fall of 2011, she added, "I've actually implemented more things that I either saw a sample of or tried in the classroom. These are like boom, they're my go-to things now."(AIP3/10/434). Catherine spoke to the lack of additional pressures that typically hinder teachers from trying new instructional strategies during the school year. "You get to go and practice with other kids whose momma you don't have to call" (FN7811).

Additionally, active learning also took place in the form of observations followed by specific protocol discussions. The Scholars attributed significant learning during these observations and discussions. Adrienne specifically reported that her time observing was essential to her learning and initial implementation. In the second interview at the end of the two-week portion, she said, "I definitely think being in the SAIL classroom observing was hugely important to me because I was able to see it in action" (AIP2/3/84). During the final interview in the Fall of 2011, it was still at the forefront of her mind.

I think the observations and the hands-on experiences with the students were the most critical to my learning because I was able to see how it really

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works in a classroom, how the teacher tracks it, what the outcome is and I was able to see it all. (AIP3/10/434)

Catherine also noted how important it was to observe other teachers. "It's inspiring. Bring a camera. Write down all the things you see. We don't get to observe other teachers [very] often," (FN7811) and she added,

At first, I was kind of "ugh" about being [in the SAIL classroom], but when I thought about it, I was like, this is the best place for me because this is really symbolic of what my classroom is like on a daily basis. The same type of behaviors, how to control those behaviors and how to bring the instructional ideas that you guys use here, to my classroom. So the more I watched [the SAIL teacher], the more I was like "I can do this…my kids can do everything these kids are doing. I just need to go back and revise. (CIP2/2/50)

The discussion protocols were also important to deepening Scholars' content knowledge and helping them consider alternative ways of handling similar issues.

The [discussion] protocols were really insightful. Talking with other teachers, hearing their connections and finding out how they deal with situations similar to mine was not only helpful, but relieving to know that I wasn't the only one out there struggling. (D-PS-A)

Collaboration with the SAIL teacher was another aspect of active learning that the Scholars reported as being important to their learning. The Scholars saw the SAIL teachers as "experts" in the kind of teaching they wanted to implement. Their conversations rarely stayed focused on specific reading content or observation debriefing. Instead, they encompassed all that the Scholars wanted to know about how to create the environment of learning that they were experiencing as a part of the SAIL program.

After debriefing with [the SAIL teacher], I had several aha moments. I was able to discuss with her how she implements her rituals and routines, the differences between SAIL and the regular school year and some of the challenges she faces. (D-PS-A)

According to the Scholars, the active learning aspect of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy was essential to both their learning and their initial implementation of various instructional strategies learned during the summer Academy. It was clear, however, that if all aspects of active learning were not enacted, then the transfer of a particular strategy was not as strong. For example, there were many instructional routines and strategies demonstrated during the Academy. However, the strategies that the Scholars learned about, saw artifacts of, and then tried in the SAIL classrooms were the strategies that they successfully transferred to their own classrooms. Although the Scholars expressed a desire to implement more of the strategies they learned, they were not as confident in those routines and felt like they needed to refresh their memories from the written materials they had received during the summer Academy. Because of the time consuming nature of teaching, they "just haven't gotten the notebook back out" (AIP3/10/434).

The Scholars felt as though their active learning experiences had provided them with the practical strategies that accompanied knowledge they had gained previously from other learning experiences. They expressed that the reintroduction of content knowledge and the accompanying pedagogical strategies helped them make the changes they desired. Catherine explained, "Honestly, I knew a lot [of the strategies] from before, but to see it and hear it again, reinforced [my thinking]. It's made a huge difference" (CIP3/7/312). Marian also felt that her past learning had been reinforced.

> I'd seen word work before, I'd seen Text Talk before, but I just hadn't been able to implement it. So after I saw it again at Scholars, I was able to stand up for myself and be like, "well, this is what I'm doing." And then I was able to implement it. (MIP3/20/903)

The Scholars also felt that by learning the strategies again, they were more confident in their abilities as teachers to make instructional decisions that may not coincide with the outside expectations, but may align better with their students' needs.

> A lot of times you get scared when the district comes in…my kids might not have these perfect journals or this particular chart. And if the district doesn't see these things, as a teacher, I'm scared for my job. I think now, I've got validation in things I've always thought and now I have the words and the backing to say it makes sense. So if someone is coming into my room now and I don't have exactly what I'm supposed to have, I feel like I have the confidence to say why I don't and the reason why I don't. I know what's best for my group of students now. (CIP2/3/80)

> I felt like I was so trapped in a box, and so after I went to Scholars, I felt like I was out of the box and I could try new things, and I felt like as a learner, it helped me to have the courage to try new things, because before Scholars, I wouldn't have been brave enough to try this. Because I got to see it in action, I got to see how the hard work pays off, and I knew my kids could do it too. (MIP3/18/828)

The Scholars' increased confidence and validation of their thinking regarding reading instruction were results of the active learning strategies employed during the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. The Scholars' ability to spend significant amounts of time engaged in reading instruction during the SAIL program, coupled with the intensity of the learning activities and conceptual inputs, gave the Scholars more time to consider and digest previous learning that they may have encountered in past professional learning events.

Duration

As described in Chapter 2, *duration* refers to both the number of session hours and the overall time-span of the professional learning experience. Duration is evident in the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy, through the use of a two-week, intensive summer Academy with follow-up throughout the subsequent school year.

The Scholars established strong relationships with the SAIL teachers as a result of the duration of the summer portion of the Academy. When asked what follow-up support they needed to actualize their learning, Marian wrote "I need to continue working with [the teachers at the developmental research school]. I'm excited to continue our relationship and I'm hoping that our classes can Skype and discuss the same book together" (D-PS-M). Due to the extended amount of time spent together, the Scholars continued their collegial relationships into the following school year. Each of the Scholars exchanged many emails with their SAIL teachers and shared instructional ideas or asked for clarification on various strategies that were discussed during the summer. "I emailed [the SAIL teacher] this learning game I made based on the word families and we've done lots of exchanges like that" (MIP3/19/869).

Additionally, the Scholars' excitement about returning to the developmental research school the following fall term was clear. Each of them looked forward to working with the teachers from the developmental research school to problem-solve issues that had already cropped up as they tried out new strategies. For example, "I want to ask [the SAIL teacher] how she manages the fluency warm-ups when there are more than 15 kids" (AIP3/14/617). The Scholars hoped to find another extended amount of time for the teachers from both Knowles Elementary and the developmental research school to discuss instructional strategies and the particulars of how specific strategies are enacted in the classroom: "I'd really like for our team to spend at least a week with [the team at the developmental research school] to figure out how to adapt some things to our population. It'd be nice to have more brains at the table" (MIP3/21/943).

Although duration is evident in the design of the Academy, it is difficult to discern its impact. As evidenced by the instructional changes made in the Scholars' classrooms, the two-week summer experience was sufficient in helping make those changes. However, the Scholars did not indicate that more or less time would have been more or less beneficial. Perhaps the effectiveness and importance of duration is dependent on the quality, design and focus of the content and the activities that comprise the professional learning.

Collective Participation

As described in Chapter 2, *collective participation* refers to groups of teachers from the same school or grade level, embarking and collaborating on their professional learning together. Collective participation is evident in the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy through the requirement that any participating school must send at least four teachers to attend together. This requirement ensures a "critical mass" of teachers within a school to facilitate making changes during the subsequent school year.

Collective participation in the Academy contributed to both the Scholars' knowledge base and their initial implementation during the 2011-2012 school year. The Scholars saw themselves as a collective agent of change for their school and also as accountable for each other in the implementation of the newly learned strategies. Catherine felt, "it was a great idea that we came as a group and we came as a representation from each grade in primary, because we committed to forming a cohort at school where we are going to tackle these issues on each grade level" (CIP2/2/67). Adrienne also felt that, collectively they were better equipped to make changes,

I feel like I'm going back to our school just really motivated to implement so many changes, and try and help change some thought processes and some culture…Some things within our school culture, hopefully, we can…all of us being here together, we can back each other up a lot more. And then say, "It does work. I saw it too" (AIP2/2/51)

The Scholars also indicated that their collective experience at the Academy was different from other professional learning experiences, in that they were encouraged to think together and apply that thinking to their own context.

I know a lot of times when you go to certain things, they mix up the schools, but I thought it was so beneficial that we did most of the discussions and stuff together as our own school. You're able to have these little side-bar conversations like "yeah, yeah, we need to do this" and to get the ideas rolling. It's been one of the most important things to me…to have that intelligent conversation about the changes we want to make with my group from my school. (CIP2/3/105)

By the end of the summer portion of the Academy, the Scholars anticipated supporting each other in their endeavors throughout the school year. They discussed the united front they would be to the rest of the faculty, who they hoped would join them in making changes.

Having us all here together will help us back each other up. You'll have someone on your side saying, "I saw it too. It does work." And I think that's another big thing about having all of us here, is because we did learn so much, it's hard to take it all in. And so one thing I know I need is the other Scholars that were here with me to remind me of the things I've forgotten. When I get back and I get stuck, they can be like "well, remember when we saw this?" I think that will really help. (AIP2/2/61)

The Scholars were required to share their learning from the summer Academy during a faculty meeting at the beginning of the subsequent school year. They discussed how to present their learning in a way that would not isolate those faculty members who did not participate in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy (FN7811). The Scholars discussed the culture of their school and how those who "go above and beyond" are "looked down on" and "asked to shut up so no one has to do more work" (MIP1/11/476).

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The Scholars felt as though together, they would be able to impact some of those who were less inclined to try new strategies.

While the Scholars left the Academy feeling that their collective participation would provide the support to implement changes in their classrooms and their school, unfortunately, they were not able to continue fully supporting each other in the way they had anticipated. The first reason for the lack of continued support was proximity. Prior to the school year, the Scholars' classrooms were all housed within the same building, which led them to have many impromptu conversations and to "bounce ideas" off each other. At the beginning of the school year, the principal rearranged the classrooms within multiple buildings and the Scholars were separated. While they did not see this as a potential barrier, the reality of the school year began, and they had little opportunity for conversations with each other regarding reading instruction. "You don't have a lot of time to run somebody down and have a conversations with them. They used to be right down the hall, now we're all spread out." (CIP3/7/293)

Also, their colleagues who did not attend the Academy had difficulty fully understanding the changes the Scholars were making and were resistant to making changes themselves. Marian was clear that the teachers who did not attend the Scholars Academy were resistant to new strategies.

> I'm not pushing this on anybody else. I asked the other reading teacher if she wanted to try this with me and basically she said, "No, I have my lesson plans written from last year. I don't want to." (MIP3/11/468)

> I don't let anybody fight me [on the way I want to teach now]. The other third grade teacher kept trying to push me to use the [core curriculum] and I'm like "no, I'm sorry, I don't believe that works." And that's the truth. I don't believe it works. (MIP3/19/845)

Collective participation helped the Scholars actualize their learning by supporting each other and reflecting together on what they were learning and how it might translate to their own context. Ensuring that ample time was provided for the Scholars to process their learning together allowed for them to feel secure in how they may try to implement new instructional strategies in the subsequent school year. Part of implementing new strategies related to the Scholars' ability to see coherence between the strategies they wished to implement and the instructional content of the Scholars Academy.

Coherence

As described in Chapter 2, *coherence* refers to the way in which the goals of the professional learning experience align with the goals of the school, district and state, as well as the teachers' own beliefs and prior knowledge. Coherence is evident in the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy through the voluntary enrollment of the participating schools and through the schools' desire to increase teachers' knowledge and skills of reading instruction. Additionally, the required Leadership Days ensure that the leadership of the school is involved and understands the learning the Scholars have embarked on during the summer portion of the Academy.

Coherence is a multi-faceted characteristic of professional learning, and it may have played the biggest role in the evolution of the Scholars' thinking during the Academy and their initial attempts at implementation during the following school year. Initially, the Scholars saw little coherence between what they were learning at the summer portion of the Academy and their own classroom and school context. For them, coherence was a literal construct, and they were unable to see past the differences between their own context, in both student characteristics and curriculum, and the environment in which they were observing and teaching during the Academy.

The Scholars were apprehensive about the coherence between the environment

and student demographic at the developmental research school compared to their own.

They initially felt that they would have little in common with the structures and context in

which they would be observing and learning. Adrienne and Marian had previously

visited the developmental research school and commented, "there's a really diverse

group of kids here. We don't have a diverse group of kids" (AIP1/8/333). Given the

variances in their perceptions between their own context and the developmental

research school, the Scholars felt that their learning might not be as applicable to their

context.

Who their students are and what they need was a central focus for the Scholars

as they started the Academy. At first, it was clear that they felt there was a disconnect

between the students in the SAIL program and the students at their school. During one

morning observation, I asked Adrienne what differences she had noted between her

classroom and the SAIL classroom. She spoke a lot about the sense of community and

collaboration that the kids have in SAIL and said that they really knew the routines and

what was expected of them. This was very different from what she had experienced in

her classroom, where her kids need constant reminders and visuals and even then, they

did not follow the rules (FN62911). As a result, the Scholars, initially focused on the

culture of the SAIL classrooms rather than the reading content.

Additionally, the Scholars were very concerned with the relevance of their

experience during the Academy if the curriculum materials used were different from the

ones they were required to use. As described in detail in Chapter 5, the Scholars

defined their reading instruction prior to the Academy as being driven by the core

reading curriculum mandated by the district. They felt they were required to use that

curriculum and all the parts within it without deviation. As each explained, they were

particularly frustrated with their inability to customize the curriculum to their particular

students' needs and the strict learning schedule set forth by their district. Because of

the rigidity and complex nature of the prescribed reading curriculum, they initially

thought the time spent in the SAIL classrooms might be a waste of time, since they

were unable to change anything about their own materials.

Throughout the summer portion of the Academy, the Scholars conversations were

rich with what they would like to change and if they would be supported in making those

changes. I noted during a conversation between Scholars that Catherine really wanted

to think more and change her approach. She said the two years previously, she

followed her heart and her kids did really well, but she knew she wasn't following the

"county way." The next year, she did what was told of her and she did not experience

the same student response. She felt that she needed to reconcile what's expected of

her with what she knows she needs to do for the kids (FN63011).

Since there were obvious differences in how the SAIL students were being

instructed compared to their own reading instruction, conversations among SAIL

teachers and Scholars were focused on what they were "allowed" or "not allowed" to do.

Each day of observation, teaching and learning were met with frustration over what the

Scholars perceived their students needed versus what they were required to do.

> It was hard for me, when I was observing, to get the 'how', because I was
> still thinking in my head, 'Ok, I have to use this basal. How am I going to
> make this work? (MIP2/3/102).

> I feel like I'm required to stick to that manual. If I'm not doing it at the same
> time that someone else is doing it, then there's an issue. And when my
> reading coach or instructional leader comes in, if I'm not where the other

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classes [are], then there's an issue as to why I'm not there. And sometimes I don't like that because according to the scope and sequence, I've got 14 days to get through it. But if I'm not hitting it, if I'm not hitting that next story when everyone is hitting it, there's still an issue. '[Catherine], you are… [Catherine], you need to catch up. [Catherine], you need to do this.' And I think that's a big thing for the district with us. I think a lot of things they ask us to do, there's no time. (CIP1/4/144)

As the Scholars continued in the Academy, many of the their conversations were

centered on how they would or would not be supported in integrating the new strategies

they were learning. They felt a lack of coherence between their desire to reach and

engage their students in different ways and what was expected of them by their school

leadership, district leadership and state requirements.

I want to incorporate building the schema for the kids. How do I manipulate my workshop time to incorporate what I'm seeing here? If someone comes in and is looking for something, how do I defend what I'm doing? (FN62811)

I have to move on and I have to do a skill a week, rather than teach in depth. When I look at these [work samples], I know that these kids have really had the time to learn. Our kids get gypped. You get reamed if you don't do it [the way we are told]. (FN62811)

Often, they expressed that the curriculum they were required to use was not what

they considered appropriate for their particular student population. When presented

with alternative ways of adjusting the curriculum, they were apprehensive about whether

or not they could add it into their already tight schedules or if they would be permitted to

remove the less relevant aspects and replace them with a new strategy.

I know our kids don't have it. They haven't seen a hammock. There are no buildings on their side of town. Their dads don't wear shirts with cuffs. My burning question is how do I change the initial read aloud that's supposed to build schema to something my kids can relate to? (FN62811)

I really want to step away from our Monday read aloud. Is that allowed? (asking the Reading Coach) (FN7511)

Sometimes, I would rather take the…I don't know, the gist of what the lesson is supposed to be for the week and apply another story that I think maybe they would [relate to] (CIP1/4/144)

In addition to wondering if they would be permitted to make changes, the Scholars discussed the pressure they felt when attempting a new way of teaching. Although they considered their school leadership to be welcoming to new ideas, they were also concerned that they would be held accountable for less than stellar results, rather than supported for making an effort. Catherine stated,

What I've learned, because I've tried to do something a little different, that when you do something different, by God it better work. Because if it didn't work, then you have to explain why you didn't use the curriculum in the first place. And that's kind of hard because sometimes you try things and it just [doesn't] work. I think we're stifled from trying something outside of the box because if it doesn't work, it's a wrap. (CIP1/4/165)

If it goes over, great! You're a hero! If not, then hope you got a lot of answers. (CIP1/5/191)

Although the school leadership voluntarily enrolled its teachers in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy, the Scholars themselves felt a lack of coherence between what they were learning during the Academy and their own context. The Scholars continually wondered if they would be permitted to make the changes they desired based on their learning during the Academy.

As described in Chapter 4, the Scholars Academy includes two Leadership Days, when the school principal and any other school curriculum leaders are invited to observe in the SAIL classroom alongside their Scholars, and to make an action plan for changes and support for changes in the coming school year. Since the Leadership Day was scheduled with observations first and then debriefing and action planning with the school teams, the Scholars were eager to show their principal, Mrs. Green, their ideas

in action in the classrooms. They felt confident in their reasoning, and together they felt

as though they were a united front presenting their case to Mrs. Green.

After each classroom visit, the Scholars and Mrs. Green debriefed and discussed

what they saw. Mrs. Green was encouraging and enthusiastic about their ideas.

> It felt like a little pat on the back, too, to have our principal come and for us
> to be able to say to her 'These are all the great ideas we came up with and
> these are the things we want to do.' And to have her go, 'Wow! I'm so
> impressed and so proud to have these people.' That was like 'Wow.
> Thanks for the pat on the back, it was good!' (APIP2/6/261)

Once the observation period was over, Mrs. Green and the Scholars discussed the use

of the prescribed curriculum during the school year. The Scholars presented to her their

ideas for how to better reach their student population, also saying that the new methods

would require deviation from the prescribed curriculum. When Mrs. Green indicated

that their ideas were on target with research and that the prescribed curriculum was just

to be used "as a guide," there was visible surprise among the Scholars.

> You had five teachers sitting at this table, a few of whom who have taught
> at our school for years, who didn't know that we didn't have to use the
> basal. Really? Okay. Who knew? And we've asked that question before.
> It's not like…We've had that in meetings and I don't know if maybe my
> principal wasn't hearing what we were trying to say or maybe we didn't say
> it well enough, but to find that out was a relief. So maybe I can go back
> now and tweak some of these lessons to things that I think are more
> authentic for my kids. (CIP2/4/160)

Prior to this revelation, the majority of the Scholars' conversations had been centered

on how to make the changes they wanted within the constraints of their context. With

one sentence, that pressure was lifted. Knowing this at the end of the summer portion

of the Academy gave the Scholars the final boost they needed to feel positive about

making changes in the coming school year.

Okay, next year I have a lot more tools to pull from and I have a lot more ideas and I'm not just stuck with this curriculum that I have to follow that stinks. (AIP2/6/261)

At first, it was hard to relate to what you guys were doing here. So now that I don't have that little box (the basal), I'm going to…It blows my mind! (MIP2/3/102)

The Scholars left the summer Academy excited and ready to make changes in their reading instruction for the following year. They were supported by their principal in their endeavors and discussed in detail the changes they were hoping to make. They felt they were equipped to make their reading lessons "more authentic" (MIP2/2/73) for their students and to rearrange their comprehension lessons so that they could spend more than "one week on a strategy."

Initially, the Scholars interpreted the characteristic of coherence quite literally. They did not see coherence between their context and what they were observing as a part of the SAIL program or the strategies promoted in the afternoon professional learning sessions. Because of the perceived lack of coherence, the Scholars were apprehensive about how much they would be able to transfer. A critical incident, their principal releasing them from the pressure to adhere strictly to the prescribed curriculum, led them to see that there was indeed coherence between the two contexts. Rather than viewing coherence as taking the exact same student demographics and using the exact same curriculum materials, the Scholars began to view coherence as *congruence* between what their students needed and what was being taught at the Academy.

In summary, it is clear that the research-based characteristics of professional learning inherent in the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy – content focus, conceptual inputs, the role of the facilitator, active learning, duration, collective

participation and coherence – all had an impact on the Scholars' learning and implementation. Next, the mechanisms inherent in the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy are explored and evidence is presented on the impact of the mechanisms on the Scholars' learning and implementation.

Mechanisms of Professional Learning Scholars Attribute to Their Own Learning

According to the research reviewed in Chapter 2, the mechanisms of professional learning that lead to a quality experience are Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Inquiry, and Instructional Coaches. Each of these mechanisms had an impact on the Scholars' knowledge and practice. Exploration of each mechanism will begin with a definition and how that particular mechanism was designed within the Scholars Academy.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

As described in Chapter 2, *PLCs* are defined as "groups of teachers who meet regularly for the purpose of increasing their own learning and that of their students" (Lieberman & Miller, 2008, p. 2). PLCs are inherent in the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy through the teachers' working together to solve student difficulties in the SAIL program and to use that knowledge and practice to work together to solve problems within their own context.

As evidenced in the name of the professional learning experience, the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy positions teachers as Scholars, learners who engage in the hard work of learning and linking that learning to student achievement. It is difficult to tease out the particular impact of a PLC on the Scholars due to the inherent nature of PLCs in the design of the Scholars Academy, although one aspect of a PLC – collective learning – was particularly meaningful to the Scholars.

Collective learning differs from collective participation, although collective participation is an important part of collective learning. Collective learning challenges the traditional paradigm of isolationism that is pervasive in school culture. During the Academy, the Scholars are collaborating, both with the SAIL teacher in an immediate way to solve problems related to student learning in SAIL and also with colleagues from their own school to solve problems within their own context.

Being in a PLC was crucial to the support of the Scholars while they were learning. They referenced its necessity repeatedly.

> It's hard to be a teacher because you live in your little box and…here you get to sit and talk with another teacher about how they're doing things. It's so nice to see how different things are happening and then you can see how you can do it your class (MIP2/4/168).

> During these two weeks, I have been able to create a cohort of teachers who have shared this experience with me and who understand this thinking with me and are open to talking and working out issues along with me over the next school year (D-PS-C).

> Everyone was there for the same cause. We want our kids to read better and it was like the most supportive group ever, like everyone was a little family. It was really great to be able to have meaningful, collegial conversations about how to help our kids. (AIP3/12/555)

Although the Scholars did not necessarily call themselves a PLC, it was clear that the environment designed within the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy utilized the characteristics of a PLC to develop collective responsibility for student success and a shared purpose for student learning.

Inquiry

As described in Chapter 2, *inquiry* is defined as a formal process that engages teachers in asking questions that are rooted in their practice and in working to study those questions carefully and systematically (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Inquiry is

inherent in the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy through the continual focus of the Scholars to develop their own wondering and explore that wondering while at the summer Academy. The Scholars are supported in both aspects, so that they may continue systematic study of that wondering in their own context throughout the following school year.

All three Scholars developed their initial wonderings into inquiry briefs by the end of the summer Academy. Their inquiry briefs outlined their wondering, data collection, timeline and data analysis plans. Adrienne focused her inquiry around her fluency learning. Catherine was committed to studying the impact of phonics instruction on her students. Marian focused on vocabulary instruction through the use of Text Talk. Although it was beyond the scope of this study to follow the Scholars' inquiry into the Spring of the 2011-2012 school year, two of the Scholars continued the inquiries that they began during the summer Academy and systematically studied their practice throughout the subsequent school year. Catherine and Marian contacted me with their excitement about presenting their findings at a showcase of teacher inquiry in their district. Both Scholars attributed their experiences at the Scholars Academy to sparking interest in their inquiry focus.

Instructional Coaches

As described in Chapter 2, *instructional coaches* are defined as colleagues who take a mentoring or professional learning stance to work collaboratively with teachers to incorporate research-based instructional techniques into their instructional repertoire (Knight, 2007). Since instructional coaches are often positioned as leaders within their schools and are responsible for the professional learning of their teachers, the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy requires that coaches attend the full Academy with their

teams of teachers. This ensures that all have the same experiences to build common knowledge and shared leadership.

At Knowles Elementary, the reading coach was not positioned to make curricular decisions. However, she provided an essential support for the teachers' employing new strategies in their teaching. In her interview in the Fall, Marian described the reading coach as "being really supportive" (MIP3/10/456) and Adrienne felt that, if the reading coach had not attended the Academy with them, "she wouldn't understand what we're trying to do. We had to see it together" (AIP3/7/311).

Although the characteristics and mechanisms presented in the literature review in Chapter 2 and connected to the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy in Chapter 3 each had an impact on the learning of the Scholars in this study, some were more significant than others. The features that the Scholars considered to be the most meaningful to their learning are discussed in the following section.

Looking Across the Critical Features Evident to the Scholars' Learning

While it is clear in this chapter that all of the research-based features and mechanisms of professional leaning played a role in the Scholars' learning, three features were more significant than the others: active learning, collective participation, and coherence. As the Scholars reflected on their learning through their interviews, instances of active learning and collective participation were repeatedly shared as crucial to their learning and implementation. In addition to those identified by the Scholars, the feature of coherence was also impactful to the Scholars' learning.

Active learning is a multi-faceted construct. The Scholars indicated that observing in the classroom, discussion related to the observations, discussions related to conceptual inputs, seeing video and live demonstrations of instructional strategies,

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interacting with classroom artifacts and discussing student work samples were all essential to their learning and implementation. Further, they explained that all of these active learning constructs allowed them to strengthen their belief and confidence about their ability to change their instruction.

However, it is interesting to note that instructional strategies that were presented using some of the active learning aspects discussed above, but not all, did not lead to changes in the Scholars' instruction. It is not enough for participants to be actively engaged in their professional learning. They require multiple levels of active learning in order to make the transfer to their own practice.

The Scholars attributed their changes in practice to the pragmatic nature of their experience. They felt strongly that their deep interaction with the materials, students, observations and discussions not only changed their teaching, but changed their confidence. The Scholars discussed that many of the instructional practices that they learned during the summer portion of the Academy were not new to them, but the Academy helped them finally understand how to implement them. This may indicate that it is not enough for teachers to be actively engaged in their learning, but that it takes many active learning features to lead to instructional change. This study indicates that multiple features of active learning came together to help the Scholars change their instruction.

Active learning, as a construct, is much more than the sum of its parts. Even when multiple aspects of active learning were offered, only when specific combinations of features come together did the learning transfer to the classroom. Perhaps it is the

fusion of particular aspects of active learning that contributes to deep learning and change of instructional practice.

Collective participation was another feature of the Teacher Scholars Learning Academy that the Scholars attributed to their learning. The Scholars expressed the depth of their learning increased by the ability to have conversations and shared experiences with each other. They also felt as though they were a collective force of action to make changes at their school.

The Scholars articulated that the time they spent together as a school-based group discussing strategies learned and observing together helped them see how what they were learning in one context aligned with their own context. Repeatedly, they expressed that the design of the discussions, observations, debriefings and other learning activities helped them collectively envision the changes they wanted to make on a school-wide level. Given the complexity of their own context, their collective thinking helped make their anticipated changes seem feasible.

Another important result of collective participation was the Scholars' sense that together they presented a united front, steeped in research, to their administrator. As they read, observed, discussed and learned together they were able to continually reflect on how their learning impacted their context and how they would present this new learning together to influence the changes they saw as necessary in their instruction. Given that, at first, they felt quite constrained by their perceived requirements; their collective participation helped them consider and implement the innovations they desired.

Coherence was clearly a significant feature in the learning and initial transfer of that learning for the Scholars. Although, there was coherence between the goals of the Scholars Academy and the teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs about their students' learning needs, they perceived a strong lack of coherence between the instructional strategies presented and what they were expected to enact in their own context. This initial lack of coherence caused dissonance between what the Scholars wanted to transfer and what they thought they would be permitted to do during the following school year. This type of dissonance is not unusual and it is one of the reasons for the reading coach to attend the entire Academy along with the teachers. Typically, reading coaches have authority to help make the instructional decisions for reading instruction. In this context, however, the reading coach of Knowles Elementary seemingly had a different role than typical reading coaches. Because she was not positioned to help make decisions regarding instructional techniques used, the Scholars were frustrated until the critical incident of their principal releasing them from the perceived requirements. This critical incident marked a significant change in what the Scholars believed they would be able to implement.

While each of the features and mechanisms presented in the literature review in Chapter 2 and connected to the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy in Chapter 3 had an impact on the learning of the Scholars, their voices indicate that some aspects, active learning and collective participation, were more evident to them than others. Data also indicate that the coherence had a substantial role in helping the Scholars make the changes they desired in their reading instruction. Taking into consideration that some features and mechanisms of research-based professional learning are

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invisible to the participants does not make them less important. Future researchers and

professional learning designers must understand the complexity and interaction

between the features and mechanisms and plan for teachers' learning accordingly.

CHAPTER 7
OVERVIEW AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to explore with a sample of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy participants, their perceptions and understandings of their own professional learning and initial impact of the experience on their classroom practice. The study also sought to make sense of the research-based characteristics, processes and mechanisms of professional learning through the lenses of the participants. The final chapter of this dissertation serves to summarize the study and discuss implications of this study for the field of teacher professional learning. This chapter ends with recommendations for future research.

Summary and Overview of the Dissertation

A review of the relevant research (Chapter 2) identified the characteristics and mechanisms that promote effective professional learning. From Desimone's (2009) review of the literature, the characteristics of content focus, active learning, coherence, duration and collective participation were explored and the characteristics of conceptual inputs and the role of the facilitator were added to the research base. The processes and mechanisms of Professional Learning Communities, inquiry and instructional coaches were discussed. Together these features, processes and mechanisms of professional learning provide a current research basis on which opportunities for teachers should be designed.

The Teacher Scholars Reading Academy and its accompanying student reading program, SAIL, were the context in which this study was situated. A detailed description (Chapter 3) allowed for deep understanding of the nuances of the professional learning

opportunity. Each of the research-based features and mechanisms discussed in Chapter 2 was aligned with the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy.

A qualitative orientation was used for this study (Chapter 4), which was designed to be exploratory and descriptive. Interviews, observations and document analysis were the data sources used to systematically study the experiences of the three participants who were purposefully selected to participate. The interviews, observations and document analysis allowed for triangulation of the data resulting in a comprehensive description of the participants' experiences in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy.

Each of the three participants' stories and evolution of learning throughout the experience and their initial implementation of strategies into their own context were described in detail (Chapter 5). Adrienne, Catherine and Marian each had specific areas of learning that were meaningful to them and each implemented different strategies in their classroom instruction following their participation in the Academy. All three, however, found that changes in their reading comprehension instruction and in their expectations for their students, were critical results of their participation. The critical features and mechanisms described in the literature (Chapter 2) and linked to the design of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy (Chapter 3) contributed to the Scholars' learning (Chapter 6). While each of the features and mechanisms was important to their learning, the Scholars noted that active learning and collective participation were the most significant. These two processes led the Scholars to feel confident in their initial transfer of learned strategies into their own contexts.

As intended, this study illuminated aspects of the research-base of professional learning that may not have been as clear in the past. These participants' stories shed

light on the features and mechanisms of professional learning and what may need to be considered if professional learning is to translate into change in practice and ultimately, student learning.

Implications for the Field of Teacher Professional Learning

This study was grounded in large part by the work of Desimone (2009), who, through a careful and critical review of the empirical literature on teacher professional learning, distilled essential elements for effective teacher professional learning to take place. Based on her work, Desimone (2009) proposed a conceptual framework for studying professional learning (Figure 7-1) that reflects her understanding of the relationships between the essential characteristics she identified in her review of the research and the impact on teacher knowledge and student achievement.
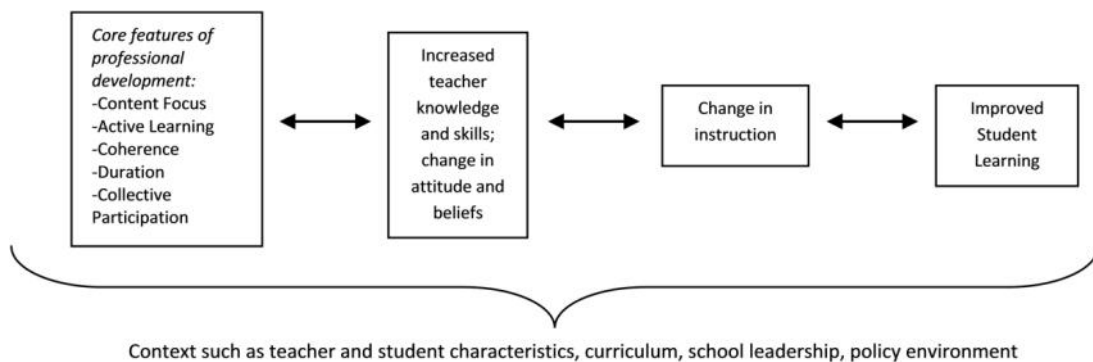
Figure 7-1. Desimone's Conceptual Framework

This study provided insights into the ways Desimone's conceptual framework represented in Figure 7-1 plays out in practice. The Scholars emphasized two features of the research-based professional learning experience as being essential to their learning and classroom implementation: active learning and collective participation. However, it was evident from the data analysis that all features in Desimone's framework led to their learning and implementation, even though this may not have

been explicit to the Scholars themselves. In addition to Desimone's five core features (active learning, collective participation, content focus, coherence and duration), it was evident that two additional core features not included in Desimone's original conceptual framework also contributed to the Scholars' learning: conceptual inputs and role of the facilitator.

While all of the research-based features of professional learning were present in the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy including the five features originally named by Desimone (active learning, collective participation, content focus, coherence and duration), as well as two additional features (conceptual inputs and role of the facilitator), it is important to note that each feature in isolation was not linked to data supporting changes in teacher learning or instruction. Rather, the power of the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy was in the convergence and interaction of the multiple features. Given what was learned in this study, a revised conceptual framework that adds the role of the facilitator and conceptual inputs and that realizes the importance of the interaction between each component would represent more completely the complexity of the professional development endeavor.

In sum, while Desimone's conceptual framework lists the core features of professional learning, the interaction among the core features is not represented in her conceptual framework and the role of the facilitator and conceptual inputs are missing. Desimone's conceptual framework may display a linear progression that is too simplistic to capture the complexity of teacher professional learning. Although it may not have been Desimone's intent for the conceptual framework to be used as a tool for designing professional learning, many practitioners could assume this framework be used as a

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design tool. This could potentially lead professional development designers to assume that what is important in professional development design is merely the presence of each core feature, and to interpret the core features as a "check list" of sorts. According to such a compartmentalized model, if all of the core features were present in some isolated aspect of the professional learning experience, then it would indeed be effective.

Yet, it is clear from the voices of the participants in this study, that it was more than just the mere presence of these features that made a difference to their professional learning and their ability to translate their learning into practice. Rather, it was the interaction and convergence of these features that led to the participants' learning and their initial changes in instruction. In addition, three processes were critical to creating the space for all of the core features to interact and converge with one another – PLCs, inquiry, and instructional coaches. Finally, it must be noted that, even each individual core feature was itself multifaceted. For example, active learning included observations, discussions, planning and practice. It was the interaction of all of these sub-features of active learning that enabled effective professional learning to occur. The multi-faceted nature of each individual core feature is not evident in Desimone's conceptual framework.

Therefore, perhaps it is not enough to simply identify and follow a checklist of essential characteristics of effective professional learning. Perhaps professional learning designers must also consider how the essential characteristics are linked together, while also making room for additional characteristics or features that may play an important role in teacher learning and student achievement. Figure 7-2 is an initial

attempt to augment Desimone's work by including additional characteristics and portraying the mutual interaction of all features.
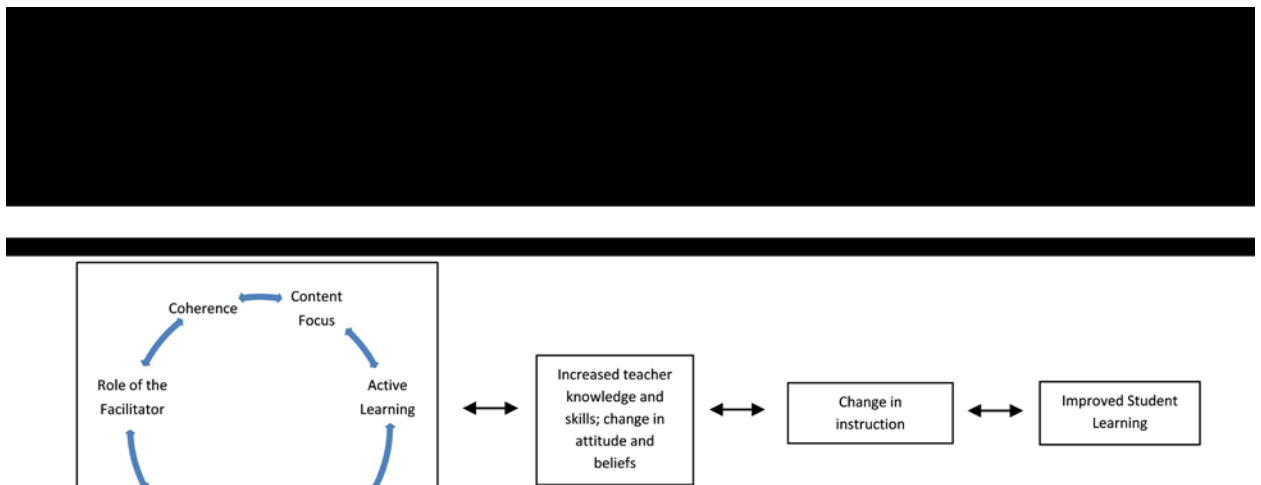

Figure 7-2. Revised Conceptual Framework

Designers of professional learning must consider the interaction of the features of powerful professional learning as they plan opportunities for teachers. It is essential that not only all of the features described in this study are present, but they must also be robust. For example, it was clear from this study that the conceptual inputs used were critical to the participants' learning. However, those conceptual inputs were not fully realized without the active learning aspects of discussions and protocols to bring the conceptual inputs to life. Understanding the critical features deeply and how they converge and interact with each other is crucial for designers of professional learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

At the conclusion of this study, I have numerous recommendations for future work. First, future research might consider studying the longitudinal effects of professional learning opportunities similar to the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy. A limitation of this study was that data collection occurred only during the initial two-week portion of the summer Academy and at the very beginning of the subsequent school year. Future

studies may focus on following participants for five to ten years following the initial

learning opportunity. This may provide deeper insights into the core features, especially

duration. While it is clear that duration plays an important role in teacher professional

learning, the nuances of that particular feature could be further developed.

In addition to the longitudinal effects of professional learning programs on

teachers, studying the effects of professional learning on student achievement is the

ultimate goal. While it is certainly difficult to discern the direct impact of a professional

learning effort on student achievement, this must be the continual quest of researchers.

Second, future research might focus on discovering other potential core features

of professional learning in addition to the ones presented in this study. While this study

presented seven core characteristics, there may be other features or sub-features that

provide insights into the design of meaningful professional learning for teachers. Future

studies may also consider focusing on the multi-faceted nature of the core features

identified in this study, in order to further define specific components of each feature

that lead to powerful professional learning.

Finally, future research might consider the relationship and interaction between the

core features. It is clear that while the core features are multi-faceted, they are also

interrelated. Focused study of the interrelated nature of the features may provide better

insight into which particular combinations of features lead to powerful professional

learning.

In conclusion, the study served to contribute to the professional conversation in

the literature about teacher professional development and the ways essential elements

of PD design play out in practice. We learned from this study that the construct of

professional development is a complex concept, and hence it is difficult to represent this

complexity within a single conceptual framework. Future research will continue to

provide insights into the professional learning of teachers, its great complexity, and

promising practices to enhance the experience.

APPENDIX A
SYLLABUS OF THE 2011 TEACHER SCHOLARS READING ACADEMY

Teacher Scholars Reading Academy 2011			
	8:00-12:15	**1:00-4:00**	**Readings**
Mon. June 27th **(Day 1)** **Assessment**	Introduction Expected Outcomes: What do you want to learn? SAIL Introduction & Overview Group Norms Observe in the Classrooms: *Modified First Classroom Visit Protocol* Debrief Observation: *Chalk Talk, Investigation Into Practice & Discussions*	**Meet & plan with SAIL teacher:** Warm-up/Teambuilding Debrief AM Observation SAIL Teachers/Scholars Role: Clarifications, Expected Outcomes **Assessment** Look at CBM's for SAIL students Daily schedule Curricular Tools Developing your Personal Investigation Into Practice	*What Every Teacher Needs to Know about Comprehension Instruction?* *The Comprehension Matrix* *Clarifying the Difference Between Strategies and Skills*
Tues. June 28th **(Day 2)** **Comprehension**	Teach/Observe Investigation into Practice	Investigation into Practice **Comprehension** Text-based Discussions 3-2-1 Three Levels of Text Protocol What does comprehension mean anyway?	READ: Chapter 14 in *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction*

	8:00-12:15	1:00-4:00	Readings
Wed. June 29th (Day 3) **Comprehension**	Teach/Observe Investigation into Practice	Investigation into Practice **Comprehension** Reciprocal Teaching Refresher Skills vs. Strategies Anchor charts/lessons Action Plan Text Rendering Protocol	READ: *Bumping into Spicy, Tasty Words* K-2: Chapter 8 in *The New Essentials for Teaching Reading in PreK-2* 3: Chapter 4 in *Teaching Reading Beyond the Primary Grades*
Thurs. June 30th (Day 4) **Vocabulary and Word Study**	Teach/Observe Investigation into Practice	Investigation into Practice **Meet & plan with SAIL teacher:** Comprehension Lesson **Vocabulary** Wagon Wheel Protocol Tier 1, 2, 3 words Teaching Target Words - Text Talks **Word Study's Connection to Vocabulary**	K-2: *Word Study Instruction in the K-2 Classroom* 3: *Bringing Word Study to Intermediate Classrooms* *She's My Best Reader, She Just Can't Comprehend* *Reading Fluency Assessment and Instruction: What, Why and How?*

	8:00-12:15	1:00-4:00	Readings
Tues. July 5th **(Day 5)** **Fluency, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics**	Teach/Observe Use Peer Observation Protocol Teach Comprehension Lesson (coach and teacher) Investigation into Practice	Investigation into Practice **Meet & plan with SAIL teacher:** Debrief Peer Observation Protocol Debrief Comprehension Lesson Plan Vocabulary Lesson **Fluency** Ping Pong Protocol: Fluency Marking Phrase Boundaries Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	Chapters 3 & 4 in *Teaching With Intention* *Environment, Environment, Environment* *Creating Classroom Cultures That Support and Promote Student Thinking*
Wed. July 6th **(Day 6)** **Engaging Environments and Motivation**	Teach/Observe Investigation into Practice Teach Vocabulary Lesson (coach and teacher)	Investigation into Practice Language & Print-Rich Environment Motivation & Engagement Accountability for Reading Classroom Discussions Plan for Leadership Observations	*Teacher Inquiry Defined*
Thurs. July 7th **(Day 7)** **Leadership Collaboration**	Observations through the SAIL classrooms	Investigation into Practice **Teacher Inquiry** Designing your Inquiry for next school year Sharing our new knowledge action planning	

	8:00-12:15	1:00-4:00	Readings
Fri. July 8th **(Day 8)** **Half -day**	Share our new knowledge Action Planning with Leadership	Have a Great Summer! Best for the 2011-2012 School Year	

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Initial Interview Protocol

- Tell me a little bit about yourself and your teaching background.
- Tell me a little bit about your background teaching reading.
- Describe what professional development experiences you have had related to teaching reading.
  - o Did you find those kinds of professional development useful? Why?
- Describe a typical day of reading instruction in your classroom.
  - o How is it organized?
- What do you perceive to be the most important aspect of teaching reading?
- What do you think is the most challenging part of teaching reading?
  - o What do you do when you encounter those challenges?
- Tell me a little bit about why you wanted to come to The Teacher Scholars Reading Academy?
  - o What are you hoping to leave with?

Interview at Completion of Academy Protocol

- Tell me about your experiences during these last two weeks.
- Of all the experiences that you had, which experiences do you think were critical to your learning? Why?
- What is the one thing you feel like you got the most out of? Why?
- What is the one thing you got the least out of? Why?
- Describe how the Scholars Academy impacted you as a teacher of reading.
- Describe how the Scholars Academy impacted you as a learner.
- How would you describe the Scholars Academy to someone else?
- During your first interview, you described your reading instruction in this way… What changes, if any, do you anticipate in the fall? Why?

Final Interview Protocol

- Tell me a little bit about your approach to reading instruction so far this year.
- Tell me a little about some of the things that are going on in your classroom that are a result of your learning this summer.
- As I observed, I saw these things in your reading instruction… What more can you tell me about those strategies?
- What about student learning? Can you attribute any changes in student learning to your learning this summer?
- Thinking back on your experience this summer, how would you describe your learning?
- Reflecting back on your experiences during the summer, which experiences do you think were critical to your learning? Why?

- Describe how the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy impacted you as a teacher of reading.
- Describe how the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy impacted you as a learner.
- What would you tell other teachers about the Teacher Scholars Reading Academy?
- What kinds of continuing professional learning do you think you need? What do you want to explore further? What would help you?

APPENDIX C
DATA ANALYSIS KEY

Documents
D-PPT-627 – Scholars PowerPoint from Day 1 – 6/27/11
D-H-627 – Document - Handout – 6/27 – Guiding Principals for SAIL Teachers
D-H-627i – Document - Handout – 6/27 – Registration Form for Scholars
D-PL-627 – Document - Parent Letter – 6/27 – SAIL Parent Letter
D-H-630 – Document - Handout – 6/30 – List of Books by Comprehension Strategy
D-A-7511 – Document - Adrienne – 7/5/11
D-A-63011 – Document - Adrienne – 6/30/11
D-PS-A – Document – Personal Synthesis – Adrienne
D-C-62911 – Document – Catherine – 6/29/11
D-C-7511 – Document – Catherine – 7/5/11
D-PS-A – Document – Personal Synthesis - Adrienne
D-PS-C – Document – Personal Synthesis – Catherine
D-PS-M – Document –Personal Synthesis – Marian

Field Notes
FN62911 – Field Notes – 6/29/11
FN63011 – Field Notes – 6/30/11
FN7611 – Field Notes – 7/6/11
FN92011 – Field Notes – 9/20/11
FN92111 – Field Notes 9/21/11

Interviews
AIP1 – Adrienne, Interview Protocol 1 – June 2011
AIP2 – Adrienne, Interview Protocol 2 – July 2011
AIP3 – Adrienne, Interview Protocol 3 – September 2011
CIP1 – Catherine, Interview Protocol 1 – June 2011
CIP2 – Catherine, Interview Protocol 2 – July 2011
CIP3 – Catherine, Interview Protocol 3 – September 2011
MIP1 – Marian, Interview Protocol 1 – June 2011
MIP2 – Marian, Interview Protocol 2 – July 2011
MIP3 – Marian, Interview Protocol 3 – September 2011

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Marisa Ramirez Stukey is a teacher and learner in the field of curriculum and teacher education. Marisa graduated from the University of Florida with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in reading education. She began her teaching career at McRae Elementary School teaching first grade. She then taught first and third grades at P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School before becoming the elementary curriculum coordinator. Her research interests include teacher education, professional learning and curriculum development. Marisa is married and she and her husband, Joseph have one daughter, Ava.