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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Marilyn Ludwig Pickett entitled "Modification of Nancie Atwell's Reading Workshop for Implementation in a Homogeneous Group of Struggling Adolescent Readers." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Teacher Education.

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Modification of Nancie Atwell's Reading Workshop for Implementation in a Homogeneous Group of Struggling Adolescent Readers

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Marilyn Ludwig Pickett
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Dedication

This is dedicated to my seventh and eighth grade students who joined me in forming a community of readers and in sharing the magic of words.

From your parents you learn love and laughter and how to put one foot before the other. But when books are opened you discover you have wings.

– Helen Hayes

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Of course, the subject of this thesis would not have been possible without the inspiring teaching philosophy of Nancie Atwell. Her reading workshop strategies gave me a new vision and excitement for teaching reading.

Finally, I would like to thank my students for reminding me that teachers have much to learn from them – if we just listen.

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the effectiveness of Nancie Atwell's reading workshop in motivating homogeneously grouped, struggling adolescent readers in a public school setting. This naturalistic, personal narrative describes the Atwell workshop and the modifications made to it for implementation with this group of students. Atwell, a noted reading educator, uses specific strategies to teach the heterogeneously grouped students in her private school in Maine. Her students' independent thinking skills and personal connections to text are remarkable.

Since I do not teach in the same environment as Atwell, I modified Atwell's strategies to meet the needs of my students and to teach Tennessee State Standards. I questioned whether this modified workshop approach would engage my students in reading and develop independent thinking skills.

Data collected during normal classroom instruction included: teacher observation; student and parent comments (both written and verbal); students' written responses on literary letters; shared connections during book talks; and demonstrated critical thinking during class discussions. These data proved the success of the modified workshop.

Additionally, recommendations are included to continue and further modify the reading workshop for the next school year. Future data collected will reveal the benefit of students participating in the workshop for two consecutive years.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Teaching Reading

Educators are once again involved in reading wars. However, this battle is more perilous than the conflict between phonics and whole language. The very heart and soul of reading is at risk. From my many years of teaching, it appears that higher and higher stakes testing, with all its consequences, such as value added, and even pay-based scores, is now driving the way we teach. The pressure to teach some fifty-seven reading subskills has taken away both time to read and the magic readers find in a good book. Workbooks, worksheets, following the curriculum as set in school adopted literature textbooks, isolated vocabulary instruction (sometimes in the form of hundreds of Greek and Latin roots), and single novel study (taking as long six weeks to complete) are now the basis for many middle school reading programs.

Students are expected to progress in lockstep, with teachers using pacing guides to teach the same skill at the same time. Instead of the old mantra, “meet them where they are,” administrators are now demanding “rigor for all”. To help accomplish plodding through all the state standards, classroom teachers have been awarded more and more technology. It has become more important for teachers to know how to create flipcharts for a Promethean board, rather than be able to discuss the last book they have read. For those of us who believe in the magic of reading, the end seems near.

Testing

Testing plays a major role in curriculum, and it is not just the big, end of year standards test. Regular “discovery” tests are administered to help identify those students who show nonproficiency in one or more of the reading subskills, so that the deficit can be remediated

before the next "discovery" test. Last year my middle school gave three rounds of discovery testing. Next year these tests will be administered even more frequently. Should we teach students that the main purpose of reading is to "find an answer?" Reading education has reached a point where as long as students do well on standardized tests, no one needs to be concerned if they ever actually read books. As Mark Twain put it, "The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them."

To further complicate this scenario, some schools, like mine, still ability group. Research shows that when students are tracked according to ability levels, the possibilities for collaborative learning are severely reduced, creating an instructional disadvantage. Educators are fully aware that lower ability students need motivating, yet challenging instruction. My students are the lowest in the school, scoring below the 50 percentile on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). Many are identified as special education or ESL (English as a Second Language), live in foster or group homes, are autistic, have ADHD, or leave for a while to attend an alternative school due to behavioral issues. Most are unmotivated, unhappy with school, have low self-esteem, and have not read a good book since Dr. Seuss' Green Eggs and Ham (a commonly mentioned favorite).

Traditional Approach

To follow school expectations, last year I modeled the other language arts teachers' use of literature textbooks, assorted worksheets, vocabulary instruction, and whole class novel study. I chose two popular novels, Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli and Freak the Mighty by Rodman Philbrick. I thought my struggling seventh and eighth graders would be able to read both on independent and instructional levels, while relating to the uniqueness of the protagonists. I hoped whole class novel study would enable me to monitor comprehension while teaching Tennessee

reading standards. However, as the year progressed, I was disappointed to hear student comments like, “I hate this book” or “I don’t want to read this.” A few even stated that a previous teacher had already read this book to their class. The beautifully packaged literature units for these books contained weeks of corresponding activities I hoped would engage the students. Yet, the only independent reading students ever did was when they had completed their class work and I suggested silently reading. Although reading a book of choice was nightly homework, few students bothered. I further discovered that since it was not the usual written work, even parents did not consider reading “real homework”.

The end of the year left me feeling very dissatisfied. I had read that by middle school students already have an image of themselves as readers or nonreaders. They have been labeled, threatened with failure, and assigned to humiliating intervention classes. I realized that changes had to occur or these students would continue to be at risk.

Atwell Workshop Approach

I decided I needed help from leading reading authorities, and especially from teachers who knew what life was like in a classroom. I read books by some of my favorite reading educators like Lucy Calkins, Jeffrey Wilhelm, Richard Allington, and Gay Ivey. Many professional books and articles later, I discovered Nancie Atwell. As I read her book, The Reading Zone (Atwell, 2007b), the possibilities of her workshop approach in teaching struggling readers were exciting. I thought I would be able to implement the basic components: reading a book of choice with time to read at school; intrinsic motivation in a literate environment; reading and sharing poetry; holding individual student conferences; and teaching mini-lessons. However, my teaching conditions differed from Atwell’s in significant ways. Unlike Atwell’s heterogeneous mix, my school system homogenously grouped students by ability. Atwell had eighty-five

minutes four days a week in which to instruct students, while I had only forty-two minutes five days a week. Atwell had parental support from private school parents, whereas I only had a few parents who would even come to conferences. In considering the many differences, I knew I would have to modify the Atwell workshop. Accordingly, this naturalistic, personal narrative examines the modification and implementation of Atwell's reading workshop for homogeneously grouped, struggling adolescent readers in a public school setting.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Introduction

As many dedicated classroom teachers know, the art of teaching is more than a job. Making a difference in the lives of students is the goal. Teachers are led by the "lives of research": students. Questions and methods grow out of specific context. According to Allen and Shockly (1996),

> Teachers don't look for research sites: they live in them. Because each group of students is unique, the research questions may change, opportunities for data collection may be different, and on-going analysis or reflection may change teaching decisions, altering the whole study. (p. 222)

Research is influential to teaching practices, as summed up by Shanahan and Neuman (1997), "when it is creative, tied to important ideas and sensible to practitioners" (p. 209). However, according to Ivey and Broaddus (2001), we still lack extensive research on what constitutes effective teaching in a middle grade classroom that is set up around a curriculum of individualized reading in varied material and with diverse populations.

A respected literacy leader, Nancie Atwell, has developed and tested the reading workshop approach in her own school, The Center for Teaching and Learning, in Edgecombe, Maine. She has successfully implemented her reading framework and shared it with educators around the country through books, journal articles, and workshops.

Although Atwell has authored many books detailing her framework, and other reading educators have written journal articles about it, there are few research studies on practical implementation. Accordingly, the purpose of this literature review is to explore current research

on the basic principles of Atwell's reading workshop. This is the "theory" discussed in the next section. Thereafter, the practical experience of teachers as reported in the literature will be reviewed.

Workshop Approach Theory

Atwell's reading workshop approach is based on years of her personal teaching experience. She believes that putting books into students' hands, in place of teaching isolated skills, changes attitudes about reading. Atwell stresses that just reading creates readers . . . for life.

The major components of the workshop include: reading a book of choice and classroom time to read; intrinsic motivation in a literate environment; reading and sharing poetry; individual conferencing; and mini-lessons. Atwell takes these components and weaves them together to create a classroom where teachers enable students to travel far beyond the written word. Although Atwell describes her experiences, the components have a basis in professional literature.

Class Time to Read a Book of Choice

In assessing the tenets of the reading workshop, the first principle to consider is the importance of daily classroom time to read a book of choice. Of course, as Atwell firmly believes, reading and responding are central to the reading workshop framework. During this daily time, students should read for an extended time period at their own reading levels.

Atwell writes that middle grade readers tend to specialize. They thrive on characters close to their own age with recognizable feelings and realistic problems. She stresses that one of her jobs is to recognize students' inclination as readers and provide them with books that match their

reading ability and interests. At this point, student choice becomes a strong motivator (Powning & Atwell, 1995).

Once children have mastered basic reading skills, the surest road to a richer vocabulary and expanded literacy is wide and sustained reading (Allington, 2006). Alarmingly, many adolescents choose not to read. The lack of opportunities for regular, engaged reading many help account for why most students who are poor readers upon entry into high school remain so until graduation (Cappella & Weinstein, 2001).

Literary authority J.T. Guthrie (2002) sees another benefit to increasing reading stamina. If a teacher will encounter a high stakes test for her classroom in April, her best preparation is to increase motivation of students for extended, learning-focused, independent reading as early as possible in the academic year. Moving students from 10 minutes of independent reading per day to 30 minutes of learning-oriented reading per day will be the strongest test preparation that can be provided. By fostering students to become engaged readers, the teacher enables them to gain competence and self-efficacy (Guthrie, 2002).

When teachers support student autonomy by encouraging expression of opinions, providing choice of learning tasks, and inviting students to participate in decision making, students increase their commitment to classroom activities (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Guthrie (1996) reported that students' long term interest in reading was enhanced when teachers asked students their opinions about what they were reading. He writes that in order to help students become choosers of literacy, teachers must be empowered to choose their own context. The strong influence of self-selection on motivation to read makes a good case for free-choice reading, especially for struggling middle school readers. Still, for ease in dealing with comprehension instruction, promoting literary discussions, and developing content knowledge,

teacher-selected, whole class common texts are sometimes necessary in middle school classrooms. Consequently, a balance between teacher-selected and student-selected reading must be maintained (Ivey, 1999).

Choice is a critical factor in encouraging student motivation to read. Students need freedom to choose what they read at least some of the time, and especially until they are firmly and unshakably hooked on reading. In order for us to achieve our literacy-educator goals, students must fall in love with the "stuff of books" (Allington, 2002). This happens when students discover books they care about, and find themselves in, books that are in harmony with their interests. Educators of middle-schoolers are aware that, especially at this age, students must be treated as individuals. Students are expected to become independent readers. Yet they get limited opportunities to explore their own interests in reading, to read at their own pace, or to make their own decisions about whether or not to read a book (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). If we expect to develop engaged, lifelong readers, middle school language arts teachers need to regroup. Many leading reading educators, including Atwell, argue that student ownership is a major part of the reading workshop.

Ivey and Broaddus (2001) interviewed adolescent readers about choice and free reading time in the classroom. One of her students first comments was, "I like it that we get to choose our own book, it gives you something to think about and it's not boring." Research continues to suggest that there is a powerful link between time spent reading and reading achievement (Cunningham, 1997). Furthermore, those who read by choice report reading more than other students (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Although middle schoolers may not often choose to read in their leisure time, they do value time to read in school. They are more inclined to read when a specific time is set aside to do so (Stewart, Paredis, Ross & Lewis, 1996). Marilyn Reynolds,

professional writer and teacher, states that choice and SSR (silent sustained reading) are needed to develop lifelong readers. She stresses that allowing students to choose what they read will help them better understand themselves and the world around them. Reynolds contends this is the standard by which curriculum and learning activities should be measured (Reynolds, 2004).

Marie Dionisio, a middle school teacher in New York, says that she stocks her classroom with books especially written for adolescents – books that deal with situations, concerns, and feelings to which her students can identify (Dionisio, 1989). She relies on the relevance of the topics to draw them in and then allows them to choose their own books. Carol Gilles, a middle school language arts teacher from Missouri, believes that if we want to involve students they must have a choice in the curriculum. One of her students aptly explained, "Choosing is important because it's sort-of hard to read something you don't enjoy." (Gilles, 1989, p. 38). Instead of trying to persuade students to read all that has been revered as "great literature," we need to engage students in conversations about the uses they have for a range of texts in their own lives (Lewis, 1998). One major reason for resistance to school reading is that students are forced to read materials that they have no voice in selecting.

Atwell mentions a poster she has had hanging in her office for years, saying it is a soul-awakening quote for the reading educator. Dylan Thomas wrote: "My proper education consisted of the liberty to read whatever I cared to. I read; indiscriminately and all the time with my eyes hanging out..."

So, in conclusion, it appears that students need access to many appealing books and time to read books of their choice. This is the most direct path to reaching high literacy levels.

Intrinsic Motivation in a Literate Environment

A second significant workshop principle is that of motivation carried out in an interactive, collaborative, learning environment. Wilhelm (1997) sees reading less as an ability and more as a highly social, purposeful, and meaning-driven activity. Leading educators understand not only the value of, but the need to, make learning student centered. Conversation and respect among classmates, and between teachers and students build levels of shared interest and motivation.

According to Cunningham and Cunningham (2002), "Engagement is probably the most common term used to describe to talk about the relationship between motivation and learning. One of the most important factors of motivation is self-efficacy." (Cunningham, 2002, p. 89). Teachers know that students who have self-confidence take more initiative in learning.

"In addition to self-efficacy, motivation is affected by learners' beliefs about why they have difficulty. If they believe their problems are a result of not being good at learning their difficulty will undermine their self-confidence. Students must learn their lack of success can simply be caused by the approach they are taking." (Cunningham, 2002, p. 89). As educators are quick to point out, students must be interested in what they are learning to be successful.

Atwell tells us that the more book talks she does, the more books end up in student's hands. Students' writing shows that they are enjoying their selections and are even looking ahead to their next books. Additionally, focusing on a classroom community frames a social constructivist viewpoint (Vygotsky, 1978). Adolescents thrive in active learning situations and work best when they are able to connect their learning to their own lives. Many of today's authorities define adolescent readers in a negative way, using vocabulary like tension, disinterest, and unmotivated. Reading research suggests that these descriptions are mainly attributed to the

mismatch between what students need and the instruction they are likely to receive (Ivey & Broaddus, 2000). Esteemed reading educators state that institutionalized structures and curricula, which are not responsive to students, may foster both negative attitudes and school failure (Allington, 1994).

A new body of research on adolescent readers delineates several common motivators. First, as we have known for years, responsive teachers make the difference for struggling readers. Students must have ownership in their literacy (Atwell, 1998) and educators must help students make literary connections to real-life situations (Wooten, 2000). Additionally, the class environment, including relevant reading choices and teaching methods, encourage motivation of all students regardless of reading ability. Studies show that teachers who read aloud, provide free reading time with a book of choice, and engage students in authentic, meaningful literacy activities, are highly motivational.

Another set of research-based characteristics of high motivation and high performing classrooms was developed by Pressley, Dolezal, Raphael, Mohan, Roehrig and Bogner (2003). They are:

1. Classroom is filled with books at different levels.
2. The teacher introduces new books and displays them in the classroom.
3. The teacher emphasizes effort in doing work.
4. Students are given choices in completion of their work.
5. Teachers engage students in authentic reading and writing.
6. Lessons promote higher-order thinking.
7. The teacher uses large and small groups for instruction.
8. The teacher does expressive read-alouds.

9. Finally, choice in selecting books is very important!

Instead of asking, “what makes a student want to read?”, we now wonder if a better question is “how can we use reading instruction to attend to students’ motivation to learn?” (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001, p. 370). Many researchers have stressed the necessity of social interaction in learning. They contend, “reading and writing cannot be separated from speaking, listening, and interacting, on the one hand, or using language to think about and act on the world, on the other.” (Gee, 2001, p. 714). Atwell’s book talks are a prime example of sharing ideas and engaging peers. Successful environments for struggling middle school readers involve a social interaction among students, and personal interaction between students and teachers. When middle school teachers share books regularly, students become inspired to do the same. Building in opportunities for sharing ideas and discussions about text can be a powerful motivation for engaging readers. Literacy levels are increasing when students ask the teacher to purchase specific titles, beg parents to buy them certain books, and ask for more class time to read (Kelly & Clausen-Grace, 2006).

Intrinsic motivation is powerful. “When children internalize a variety of personal goals for literacy activity, such as involvement, curiosity, social interchange and self-efficacy, they become self-determining.” (Guthrie, 1996, p. 433). Developing a community of lifelong readers involves many components. Teachers should accept mistakes as a path to learning, encourage diverse learning styles, and provide each student with a personal goal. Atwell’s Reader’s Bill of Rights, listed below, encourages intrinsic motivation and builds a literate community (Atwell, 2007a).

1. The right to skip pages.

2. The right not to finish.

3. The right to reread.

4. The right to browse.

5. The right to read anything.

6. The right not to read something.

7. The right to escapism.

8. The right to read anywhere.

9. The right to read out loud.

10. The right to not defend your tastes. (p. 27)

Wilhelm (1997) provides teaching ideas for both engaging students in reading and encouraging reflection of text. Wilhelm challenges the politics of traditional classrooms by assigning students the role of experts. He insists that in order to develop readers, we must encourage and foster the creative attitudes and activities of engaged readers.

Reading and Sharing Poetry

The third component of the reading workshop involves poetry, which engages students on many levels. As literacy teachers, we must remember that we have two goals. The first is to teach our students to read. But the second, more challenging task, is to create an environment that motivates them to read. Teachers of struggling middle school readers are rightly concerned they are unable to meet students' diverse needs. Many teachers are not sure about how to make their students' needs a focus of instruction (Ash, 2008). Poetry is one answer.

Smith (1985) states that adolescents learn and behave like the people they see themselves being. Students want to feel competent and in control of their lives. They are looking for role models in both peers and adults. This is where the power of poetry comes to the forefront. Atwell emphasizes that poetry simply helps people understand their own lives – exactly what

adolescents need. She says, “the lesson poetry teaches kids about good writing, critical reading, and the kind of adults they wish to become and the kind of world they hope to inhabit, extend the best invitation I can image to grow up smart, healthy, and whole.”(Atwell, 2006a, p. 2).

Atwell’s poetry anthology is a collection of life stories (Atwell, 2006b). This literature captures the minds and hearts of not only the adolescents, but the teachers as well. Atwell says that poetry has become the workhorse of the curriculum for it’s brevity and generosity. There is no other genre that can match it in terms of teaching about diction, precise vivid words, importance of first person voice, the value of all parts of speech, the beauty of figurative language, and even the necessity of punctuation and proper grammar. Of course, poetry appeals to students because they can either find or write a poem about any interesting subject from comic book heroes to prejudice. When students write their own poems, they travel even farther into the genre. Atwell (2006a) explains exactly what poetry can do:

> Be about anything.
>
> Surprise us.
>
> Tap our senses-make us see, feel, hear, and taste in our imaginations.
>
> Make us laugh.
>
> Make us think.
>
> Connect us with other people at the most essential level: heart and mind to heart and mind.
>
> Express anger and help make sense of a troubling experience.
>
> Define feelings and craft them as art.
>
> Tell stories that point a theme.
>
> Make us look at everyday life through new eyes.

Make us think about the kind of lives we want to live.

Use people, objects, actions, and places as symbols to show something about a life or an experience.

Help capture stages in a life: who we were; who we're becoming.

Help us remember what matters.

Help us commemorate what matters.

Feed us, slake our thirsts, protect us, take us around the world, and back in time, heal us, and let us take chances, yet remain safe.

Reveal the beauty in everyday existence; open our eyes to the poems that hide around us. (p. 1)

Many teachers believe students are more successful working in a reading workshop. As middle school teachers know, students long for authenticity in their lives. They want to read about what matters to them (Towle, 2000). Cullinan (1989) agrees with countless reading educators that the single most important activity for building reading success is simply reading aloud to children. Unfortunately , students hear very few stories and poems read aloud. There are many benefits of reading aloud to students. "It promotes language development and vocabulary, enriches discussion, increases general knowledge, builds a community atmosphere in the classroom, and encourages listening skills. Oh yes, let's not forget, having a good reader read aloud is just plain enjoyable!" (Wooten, 2000, p. 11).

Atwell begins each workshop with the reading of a poem. After she reads it aloud her kids read it on their own, highlighting personal connections. Then a class discussion follows. Instead of a traditional language arts approach where every student reads and discusses the same novel, her students only common reading is this daily poem. Because the poems are brief, a

shared literary experience is possible without stealing time from the main event – independent reading. Additionally, whole class discussion is important since the more students expressing opinions, the greater the contribution to learning.

In her seminal book, The Reader, The Text, The Poem, Louise Rosenblatt (1997) discussed her transactional theory on aesthetic and efferent reading. The demand that the teaching of literature have some relation to the pupils' immediate human concerns has often been countered by pointing out the negative side of this moralistic approach. Yet, literacy teachers, more than others, have the opportunity to help students develop ideas about human nature, moral attitudes, and human response to people and situations. A literature teacher deals with the experiences of human beings as they make life connections to text. In teaching literature, we are basically helping our student's learn to perform in response to a text. The reader (teacher) performs the poem using herself as the instrument. According to Rosenblatt, the reader "finds" the meanings in the text.

During a published interview, renowned reading authority Donald Graves, stated that he wanted his students to have an emotional connection to literature. He said that "nothing happens without an emotional connection". (Nault & Dunnaway, 1999, p. 31). Graves went on to explain that emotion and passion are much bigger than intellect. When adolescents share their feelings with partners, teams, the teacher, or the classroom community, they become passionate learners (Shanahan & Neuman, 1997). When learners develop a sense of belonging to a group, their sense of self-determination increases (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Because literacy engagement should be a top priority for schools, literacy instructors should consider poetry as an engagement tool.

Knowing your students and the important issues in their lives enables the teacher to develop relevant literacy curriculums. Conversing with students as they cross the classroom

threshold, listening to them as they work on projects, holding homework help sessions after school, attending sports events, and chaperoning dances or clubs, are all ways to know student's lives outside of the classroom. Showing respects for student's decisions, lives, and relationships is key, even if these diverge from what we might wish for them (Alexander & Jetton, 2000). The reading and sharing of poetry is an excellent way to gain this awareness.

Sometimes in our hurry to please everyone, to do everything we have been told to do, we leave out one thing – ourselves. Yet, the truth is that what we bring to children will always be ourselves. In the end, the teaching of reading happens in small intimate moments when we pull a chair alongside a child who is struggling to read (Calkins, 2001). Poetry invites middle schoolers, especially those who struggle with longer texts, to engage in meaningful reading. Unmotivated students who say they "hate to read" will not make necessary connections to develop as engaged knowledge-seekers. Students must believe that what they are learning is personally relevant to their lives. Teachers who plan relevant curriculum invite students to make personal connections to subjects instead of copying lists of definitions, memorizing textbook facts, and completing worksheets. Poetry includes all students in the community of learners.

Individual Conferencing and Mini-Lessons

The final components of Atwell's reading workshop are the use of mini-lessons and individual student conferences.

Atwell discusses the way conferencing and mini-lessons play a major role in the reading workshop framework. She uses mini-presentations to introduce and highlight concepts, techniques, and information that will help writers and readers mature. Atwell understands the benefit of "short and to the point" mini-lessons, especially since she began her career teaching maxi-lessons where she speaks of imparting wisdom to groups of silent students all day long.

While conferences reach just one reader or writer at a time, the mini-lesson serves many students and purposes. The mini-lesson establishes a common frame of reference for collaborative learning. Mini-lessons bring students together as a community of readers at the start of each workshop. Some mini-lessons are as long as twenty minutes and are interactive.

Atwell admits that previously she placed too much pressure on herself to reach each student, each day through conferences. She now uses mini-lessons taught to the group as a powerful tool for teaching and learning. Interestingly, Atwell's mini-lessons are almost never based on commercial materials or language arts textbooks. In the reading mini-lessons, she teaches what fluent readers actually do. This instruction is based on the latest and best research. Literacy lessons are planned from books written by novelists, reporters, poets, teachers, and critics; not selected textbook committees. Mini-lesson topics fall into four broad categories. Some are procedural: the rules and routines of the reading workshop. Some relate to issues on literary craft: what authors consider when they create literature. Some address conventions of written language, while others focus on the strategies of good readers.

Atwell also believes that mini-lessons and conferencing are interwoven in their reading workshop roles. Ivey and Broaddus (2000) observed in a middle school classroom that teachers share goals during a one-on-one student conference. These sessions are the teacher's chance to provide individual students with coaching on what is being learned. This is also the time for the teacher to discuss book choices and give positive feedback to students. Individual conferencing encourages positive student-teacher relationships. It is the teacher's mission to learn about diverse students as readers and writers and give each one individual support. Ivey and Broaddus (2000) suggest that teachers use the independent reading time not to model reading themselves, but to take on more of an instructional role and to conference with individuals. They suggest this

provides a great opportunity for teachers to conduct informal assessments, listen to students read, engage students in discussions of what they are reading, and even help them find "just right" books.

Atwell (2007b) believes that sometimes what a student needs most is not a rich discussion or a brilliant demonstration, but a one-on-one sincere conversation about how things are going. Atwell feels that daily face-to-face conversations provide a context for the essential dialogue that keeps adolescent readers reading, thinking and " in the zone". Atwell shares that during the reading conferences, she has learned to "nudge students toward novels that give shape to adolescent's feelings and portray their emerging intelligence and understanding". (Atwell, 1998, p. 76). She asks student readers questions like, "what do you think so far?" or "how is it?" This is also a time to check-up on homework reading ("what page are you on today?"). Atwell contends we should teach reading so that student readers feel the enthusiasm of a trusted adult when we communicate to them one-on-one about literature. Then they will understand that the teacher loves books, and that her advice about reading is trustworthy. (Atwell, 2007b).

Dionisio used Atwell's ten minute mini-lesson to discuss particular elements of reading (Dionisio, 1989). For her, the mini-lesson was a brief, highly-focused discussion. She also successfully used this time to model strategies used by good readers. Conversely, Dianne Dodsworth, an elementary and junior high teacher, reports that when she attempted using mini-lessons with her middle school students, they were not able to keep up (Dodsworth, 1994). The conferences planned for five to ten minutes ran long, sometimes spilling over into recess. She finally realized Atwell's framework would have to be modified for her students. She offers thanks to Atwell for the workshop basics, but concludes they must be tailored to the teacher's personal style to be successful.

Calkins (2001) emphasizes the mini-lesson. Her reading workshop usually begins with the class gathering for a short lesson to teach a strategy readers can use not only in the independent reading workshop, but also in their reading lives. She states that mini-lessons provide an opportunity to shape the values of the classroom community. Towle (2000), another middle school teacher, explains that her mini-lessons (called focus lessons) are short, address a specific topic, and are directed at either the whole class or small groups. During this time, she is able to instruct students in procedures, describe literary elements, and teach strategies and skills. Educators understand about younger readers' attention spans and their need to shift among learning tasks within a given time frame. It is also significant that the mini-lesson blends perfectly with the time allotted for one-on-one conferencing.

Workshop in Practice

Although Atwell has found great success using the workshop approach, other reading educators do not believe it addresses all the necessary components of an explicit, systematic reading program, that it is too frustrating or that it simply does not work for students. Stotsky asserts that the central problem educators face in providing effective reading instruction and a sound reading curriculum stems not from an absence of a research base, but from willful indifference to what the research has consistently shown. Stotsky argues that teacher-centered approaches have led to higher student achievement in all areas of the curriculum, including reading (Stotsky, 2005).

On the other hand, many teachers have used or modified Atwell's workshop approach successfully. Since research shows the most important factor in classroom learning is the teacher, both supporters and critics of the reading workshop seem inevitable.

Successes

Classroom teachers face many pressures from outside the classroom, sometimes letting go of the very strategies that develop successful reading. There are those teachers who continue to inspire the joy of reading through the reading workshop approach. One such believer is Sarah Verhoeven, a middle school teacher in Iowa. She realized that sometimes the choice of a practice is not as important as how to implement it more effectively (Verhoeven, 1995). She only knew Atwell from text. However, after reading In the Middle (Atwell, 1987), Verhoeven became what she called a "workshop believer". As the school year progressed, she found it necessary to deviate somewhat from Atwell's plan and incorporate many of her own ideas alongside Atwell's. Verhoeven had gained an understanding of the challenges and benefits of her own specific environment and was able to build a workshop format with which she was comfortable. Verhoeven admonishes each prospective workshop teacher to mold Atwell's framework to meet their students' needs.

Miller (2009) states that Atwell's reading philosophy helped her model her own path to teaching reading. She believes an engaging environment in which to read a book of choice is the basic component to a successful reading program. However, she believes that keeping reading logs is an ineffective practice because recording reading time is not really proof students actually read. Additionally, sending the reading log home to be signed just begs for the log to be fabricated. Logs do not give an accurate accounting of how much students are reading, and maintaining them does not encourage more habitual reading. Miller also suggests that Atwell's book talks took too much valuable class time away from reading. She also mentioned that often several students had the same book to share and everyone had to sit through repeats. Miller

switched to “book commercials”, short testimonials from students about the books they enjoyed. She keeps a list to make sure everyone gives at least one commercial during the grading period.

There is much current research on reading and learning to support the reading workshop philosophy (Orwig, 2001). However, middle school teacher Julie Wentworth from Texas had major concerns (Wentworth, 1990). She just could not see her students in a reading workshop. Wentworth stated that Atwell must just be a better teacher than she. In spite of Wentworth’s skepticism, the students, who had been behavior problems, turned into serious readers and writers as a result of the workshop. Wentworth found an answer to many important questions teachers ask about the workshop format. How many students can one teacher reach? How many different types of students can be reached? How much do students learn in a writing and reading workshop? And finally, of what value is the workshop to those of us who teach student of all ability levels from all racial and social backgrounds? The answer to all these questions is “a whole lot”.

Sarah Brooks, a middle school teacher in Alaska, wrote an article entitled, “Why I Detest Nancie Atwell” (Brooks, 2006). She complained that Atwell “didn’t mention how the workshop worked with thirty-one students instead of thirteen in a public school with Pepsi-stained, Cheetos-splattered, blue-gray carpet” (p. 92). During the course of the school year, Brooks realized that Atwell’s framework was successful despite the differences in the two classrooms.

Dodsworth wrote and article entitled, “Nancie, You Lied! With Special Thanks to Nancie Atwell.” (Dodsworth, 1994). Dodsworth said Atwell gave her very explicit directions about getting started with the workshop. But her class was not able to keep up. It was hard to stay on the daily time schedule. After realizing no other approach could work as well in her classroom, Dodsworth successfully modified Atwell’s framework to the unique needs of her classroom.

Failures

Some teachers find the Atwell workshop framework overwhelming. They have expressed frustration with trying to meet up to one hundred-fifty students in conferences daily, or even weekly, and have concerns that they are not meeting the students' direct instructional needs (Ash, 2008). Others have failed in modifying Atwell's workshop. Like Verhoeven, Lawrence Baines (2004) tried to implement the workshop in his junior high classroom after reading In the Middle (Atwell, 1987). However, he soon learned he was as far from Atwell as his students were from being cooperative, middle-class kids from Maine. So, although Baines was unable to successfully modify the reading workshop, he admitted he discovered that learning involves the whole human being. He also realized what is valued, and what is not, depends on the teacher. In a final note, Baines warns all educators to be realistic. Teachers cannot consistently perform at superhuman levels.

Susan Henneberg, an alternative school teacher in Nevada, candidly discussed her effort to implement best practice (Henneberg, 1996). She mentioned that her copies of books authored by leading reading educators were now dog-eared, especially those of Atwell. Henneberg relates that when she passed out a copy of a poem and asked her students to read it only a few did. To make matters worse, when she began the discussion of the poem she only heard comments like, "This is stupid". Henneberg sadly stated that her students had stopped trying long ago. She dropped her reader workshop and continued looking for an approach to engage her specific group of students.

Summary

There are many principles of the reading workshop that are conducive to successful and lifelong learning. Students voices need to be heard when making educational decisions that

contribute to reading reform. In making these decisions, we should consider the basic themes of the reading workshop framework: (1) class time to read a book of choice; (2) intrinsic motivation in a literate environment; (3) reading and sharing poetry; and (4) mini-lessons and individual conferencing. In the reading workshop there are no tests, book reports, vocabulary worksheets, or computerized questions. There are also no extrinsic rewards for the number of books read. The principal does not dye his hair green or host an ice cream party for those who have read a million words. The rewards are intrinsic. There are book talks, read-alouds, conversations, time, silence, comfort, acceptance, enthusiasm for reading, and lots of books. (Atwell, 2007b).

In conclusion, the components of Atwell's reading workshop have much support in authoritative literature. As reported by reading teachers, successful workshop implementations outnumber failures. Although others have modified the workshop, my research has not revealed an attempted modification for homogenously grouped, struggling adolescent readers in a public school setting. Accordingly, this study will address a gap in the existing literature.

Chapter III: Materials and Methods

Classroom Organization

Over the years, I have collected many Newberry Award winners, popular independent reader chapter books, and Caldecott Award picture books. Obviously, an enticing classroom library is essential for student engagement. Accordingly, I set up my library and organized it by genre. I read many of the latest adolescent (young adult) books so that I would know how to better match students to text. I spent personal money and funds allotted from my principal to acquire as many of the most popular new titles as possible. Books were also selected to interest a wide range of readers – from my "skater" boys to my "weight watching" girls.

At the beginning of the school year, I replaced desks with tables and arranged them in a horseshoe to facilitate the classroom's main purpose…reading. I placed a large rug and beanbags in the center of the horseshoe. Since Atwell stressed the importance of being able to relax to enjoy a good book, I wanted to create a comfortable reading atmosphere. I covered a screen in the back corner with white Christmas lights and hung Japanese lanterns around the edges of the room. For my writers, a row of six computers lined one side. Whiteboards flanked a Promethean board at the front of the room. Bookshelves fit in every possible space around the remaining edges of the room. Plants and replicas of ancient statuary from around the world decorated the top shelves. Students' reading notebooks were arranged under the whiteboards and had to be picked up as they entered and replaced when they left. (Allowing most students to take notebooks from the room only encouraged loss.) Several sets of old literature books containing various short stories and classic poems were stacked in corners awaiting sporadic use. Our tables held colorful bins filled with dictionaries, colored markers, and highlighters.

Teaching Strategies

My role was one of an active participant researcher (Creswell, 2009). I balanced this position by keeping an anecdotal journal. Data were collected by document collection, classroom observation and student/parent conferences. The students in my workshop were the seventh and eighth graders enrolled in my reading classes. Although there was no real support from my Language Arts Department for teaching reading any way other than the traditional one, I transformed my classroom into a workshop. The students' placement in my low phase class meant they had not succeeded with traditional reading approaches. I thought they needed fresh, engaging strategies to keep them from becoming drop-out statistics in a few years. I wanted to make a difference in their reading lives.

I began the year infusing my own enthusiasm for books, showing several of my favorites and giving a book talk on each. (I was surprised when a couple students even asked if they could read one.) We discussed student and teacher expectations. Then I showed them the DVD of Nancie Atwell's students listening to and discussing poetry. They were captivated and said they did not realize that poetry was schoolwork. Each class agreed to try the reading workshop. This "buy in" was critical to student engagement.

Another strategy was to reduce the frustration my students had previously felt about reading. A wide variety of interesting books had to be easy to find. I knew that real readers make choices about what they read, and even how they read. Accordingly, I explained that a student's purpose for reading would affect the style and pace. I encouraged students, when reading for pleasure, to skim, skip ahead, and read ahead, since those are secrets of good readers. I gave permission to abandon an uninteresting book. We began setting up our reading notebooks and

labeling tabs: Poems, Literacy Letters, Book Talks, Someday Pages, Notes and Information, and included a pocket for Reading Logs.

Students took Atwell's September Reading Survey (Appendix A) (previous testing had identified both an independent and instructional reading level) to help me get started matching students to text. I looked over Atwell's list of her students' favorite books (Appendix J) and realized many of them had a maturational or reading level too advanced for my students. On the other hand, Atwell's list helped my students discover amazing teen authors, like Sonya Sones. Sones writes free verse books at a level my girls can comprehend and can relate to personally. (Atwell calls these books "Just Right" books.) They loved One of those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies, What Your Mother Doesn't Know, and Stop Pretending: What Happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy. Atwell also recommended Carl Deuker, who writes on both a reading and interest level for my boys. They discovered Runner, Gym Candy, and On Devil's Court (Atwell, 2007b).

Use of teacher created surveys and rubrics were also a part of my teaching strategies. After the first nine weeks of school, I wanted to revisit personal expectations about the workshop. Students took the self-expectation rubric (Appendix P), and we later discussed their responses during individual conferences. Then, in early spring, the students answered survey questions (Appendix O). The survey's purpose was to refocus on workshop objectives and gain insight into personal accomplishments, attitudes, and opinions. In the reading workshop, building self-efficacy and independent thinking is basic.

Throughout the year I spent hours on the floors of bookstores skimming young adult books for reading level, interest, and age appropriateness. When students saw the new books I purchased on my table, they rushed to have a look. They were thrilled every time they saw a

stack of books appear, and acted like they had won a prize when they found one they liked. This was intrinsic motivation at its best. As the year progressed, word was passed, and students from other phases stopped by my room for a "great" book. It was not long before our school librarian was asking me what books the kids were requesting to read so she could order them for the school library.

Class Schedule

My class time schedule differed from Atwell's. However, I tried to follow her daily routine. I only had my students for forty two minutes daily. I began each class with a poem. Most often the poem was from Atwell's anthology, Naming the World: A Year of Poems and Lessons (Atwell,2006b). Sometimes it came from one of our literature books. These classic favorites included "The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes, "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Langston Hughes, "Annabel Lee" by Edgar Allan Poe, "Shiloh" by Herman Melville, and "O' Captain! My Captain" by Walt Whitman. The poem was followed by a mini-lesson. This lesson taught or reinforced a Tennessee State Standard, provided students with reading information, or explained a reading strategy.

The last twenty minutes of class were spent in the reading zone, reading independently. During the reading zone, I conferenced with individual students. This could be discussing what they were reading, asking about reading at home and/or in study hall, or listening to them read aloud. Atwell's checklist "Some Questions I Ask as I Roam Among Readers" contains wonderful suggestions (Appendix C). Workshop goals were threefold. First, students must read as many books as individually possible, continually and critically. Secondly, students must follow all the expectations and rules of the reading workshop (Appendix D). Thirdly, students must demonstrate quality of thinking on their literacy letters and book talks. In addition, because

of my school's grading policies, students were accountable for grades on formative assessments covering the Tennessee State Standards taught during the mini-lessons or on days we did not read a poem.

Modifications

Because of my students' nonproficient (two or more years below grade level) reading and writing ability, it was necessary to make a few changes in the Atwell workshop. I modified the requirements on Atwell's letter essays (Appendix E), renamed them literacy letters, and even provided a rubric for students to follow. Additionally, I wrote a sample letter on poster boards and hung it on the wall for students to use as a model. Furthermore, Atwell allowed students to choose a favorite book on which to write their letter essays, whereas I expected a literacy letter upon completion of each book. I felt I needed more structure and frequent accountability with my reluctant readers and writers. Additionally, I changed the book talk by creating a student template. I knew that a graphic organizer would help my students organize their thoughts and ideas. Second semester I reformatted both to accommodate the increasing reading and thinking skills my students were developing (Appendices F and G).

My students appeared to enjoy reading Atwell's poetry selections (Atwell, 2006b), along with popular classics. Unfortunately, on some days the demands of teaching extensive state standards forced me to skip reading a poem altogether. On these days, almost certainly someone would ask, "What about the poem?" My students made personal connections to the poetry and grew to realize that Atwell's list of reasons to read poetry was true (Appendix H).

Another modification I made was asking my students to have a parent initial their reading log nightly. I wanted to make certain they were reading at home. Because most of my students'

lacked motivation and responsibility concerning homework, I felt this was necessary. I also thought this would provide another home-school connection.

A final modification was in composing a class anthology. When we began the reading workshop, compiling an anthology was certainly not part of our planned curriculum. My students' self-esteem had so grown by spring, they asked to follow in Atwell's students' poetic footsteps. My students chose to include their favorite classic, Atwell, and their own personal poems in our anthology, Poets' Journey (Attachment A). The reading and sharing poetry had motivated them to become poets.

Chapter IV: Results and Discussion

Personal Reflections

My goal was for students to read and write independently. I also wanted them to experience the feeling of becoming a part of the story and living in the book. I knew that studies show "just reading" improves the ability to read. However, after reviewing Atwell's expectations and requirements, I realized I could not make my unmotivated, homogenous, struggling group of seventh and eighth graders fit into her reading workshop mold. My lesson plans and strategies would need to be modified, but my goals would remain the same.

Poetry

Before reading Atwell's A Poem a Day: a Guide to Naming the World (Atwell, 2006b), I never thought about teaching poetry as a genre in middle school language arts. The workshop experience has convinced me that poetry should be an integral part of language arts curriculum. In our workshop, we began class at least three days a week with a shared poem. After reading the poem aloud, the students highlighted the parts to which they made connections and/or wanted to discuss. There were so many hands it was difficult to limit comments within our time constraints. Student engagement was contagious. I discovered that poetry was much less intimidating than reading a class novel and really encouraged self-expression. While reading poetry, students had an opportunity to identify many examples of literary concepts and devices included in Tennessee State Standards (Appendix R).

Poetry has power to engage the human heart and mind. One day last spring, my teacher assistant whispered, "I think a miracle is happening. The whole class is writing poetry!" Yet, this miracle was larger than just writing poetry because it included both my the students and me.

When I read a poem aloud, I was no longer just a teacher and they were no longer my struggling readers. We were all connected in a more significant way, sharing much more than written words.

Our engagement in poetry inspired the compilation of three separate collections. First, after reading Atwell's poem "Where I'm From" (Atwell, 2006b), we decided to try the same activity (Appendix B). Students interviewed a parent about the parent's life as a teen, and then described the response in a free verse poem. Students realized that their parents had been teens too. Many parents commented how much fun it was, not only to remember their teenage years, but to share those memories with their children. This assignment became a very special time for both students and parents.

Next, students were very interested in the election of Barack Obama. As they considered "where he was from", a biracial boy raised by a single mother, they chose to express themselves through poetry. Accordingly, they wrote inaugural poems and mailed them to the White House. Students were so proud to receive a photo and thank you note from President Obama.

With our new love of poetry and so many students writing poems, we decided to compile our own class anthology. Students chose to include our favorite Atwell poems, the classics we most enjoyed, and their own original poems. I had several copies of this anthology, Poets' Journey, bound for students to read and share with friends and other teachers. We planned a Poets' Night to read our poems aloud and show the anthology to parents. On Poets' Night, in our candlelit library, as I listened to my students read their poems with fluency and emotion, I was amazed. The pride in both students' and parents' faces was evident. After the program, parent's comments, hugs, and smiling faces validated students' accomplishments. Students who had previously labeled themselves as failures, were now succeeding. For example, one of my

students, Mark, had been reading vampire books. His "Fang" poem was a popular favorite. Mark's mother was wearing a huge smile, telling another parent that her son had become such a reader and writer this year. She approached our principal and said, "I don't care what "phase" my son will be placed in next year, as long as he is in the reading workshop."

Finally, as Atwell states, "Poetry connects us with other people at the most essential level: heart and mind to heart and mind" (Atwell, 2006, p. 3). This was evident at a parent conference. Jack's mother was concerned about his general lack of interest in school. As she looked through his reading notebook, she read the poem he had written to President Obama (Appendix K). With tears in her eyes she asked, "You wrote this?" "All on my own, mom," he responded.

The poetry component of Atwell's workshop clearly succeeded in helping create independent readers and writers from those who had previously given up on literacy.

Choice

Struggling readers become discouraged easily and need a motivating environment. In What Really Matters for Struggling Readers, Richard Allington advised giving students choice in what they read. He found that student involvement in their own reading is the most important factor in the development of the reading process (Allington, 2006). Adolescents want to read about life as they know it. They want to read books that let them see connections between school and their own lives. Teachers lose credibility with students when they ignore the cultural trends and issues that interest students. I believe the lack of credibility played a major role in my students' lack of motivation. My skater guys wanted to read books like Smiles to Go by Jerry Spinelli or Skate by Michael Harmon. The sporty guys chose Gym Candy by Carl Deuker or Box Out by John Coy. The girls loved the way they could personally relate to Sonya Sones' and

Sarah Dessen's books. Parents noticed changes. For instance, Tori's mother was picking her up early one day, and decided to stop by the classroom to brag. She said she could not remember the last time Tori read a book at home for pleasure. "This year", she said, "as soon as Tori finishes one book, she is asking to buy another one."

More proof in the power of choice was the high level of student interest as we looked through the Scholastic Book Club forms together. When the order came in, I stacked the books in the front of the classroom for all to see. It was like Christmas morning as students thumbed through the books to claim one as theirs to read first. Choice is basic to a reader.

Time to Read

How better to practice all those reading strategies while building comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary than by reading? Silent reading time in the reading zone (Atwell, 2007b) respects the reader and provides partnerships in learning. My class spent approximately twenty minutes, nearly half of our class time, "just reading" each day. Students looked forward to the time spent in the reading zone. I was amazed at how anxious students were to pull out books and settle into the beanbags. When students completed End of Year Reflections (Appendices L and M), many wrote the workshop could be improved by spending more time in the reading zone. Allington (2006) found that "the amount of reading that students do in and out of school was positively related to reading achievement." (p. 39).

I soon discovered that once students were hooked on a book, they found time to read outside of my class. At a parent conference, Emily's mother told me that she could not believe Emily was reading so much. "As a matter of fact," she said, "I had to take the book away and turn off her light to get her to go to sleep last night."

Some students so loved their chosen books, they continued reading them in other classes. Sometimes this was accepted, while more often it was not. A science teacher came to my room to tell me she was astounded to see my students pull out books when they finished their lab experiments. The math teacher was a bit upset because he found a student with a novel inside the math textbook. And finally, one of our special education teachers told me I would have to talk to Zack because he would not do his math homework in study hall. Every time she turned her back, he continued reading his favorite book.

Individual Conferences

While students were in the reading zone, I held quiet conferences as I bent down or sat next to readers. I asked questions from Atwell's, "Some Questions I Ask As I Roam Among Readers" (Atwell, 2007b). Of course, student responses were as varied and personal as their connections to the text. This was also the time my teaching assistant and I checked reading logs and asked how many pages students had read last night. Sometimes I asked students to sit with me in the doorway and read aloud a few pages of their book. Not only did they enjoy privately reading aloud, it gave me the opportunity to check for fluency. Additionally, since discussion is critical to comprehension, this helped me discover what the student was thinking, and if they were understanding what they were reading.

I observed that once students became readers, the desire to write followed naturally. During a conference with one of my "skater boys," Matt told me he thought Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney was hysterical. He surprised me by asking, "Do you think I could write Diary of a Skater Dude? I'm pretty good at cartooning."

It was evident that one good book leads to another. Adam, a sporty, football guy, asked me during a conference, "You know, I'm almost done with Crackback. What's that other book

you told me about?" (He was referring to Gym Candy by Carl Deuker.) On his end of the year reflection, Adam wrote he could not believe how many pages he had read during the year.

Importantly, I found that the individual conferences were a special time for the teacher and student to communicate on both academic and personal levels. Moreover, the conference discussions promoted high level thinking skills and a bond of respect between teacher and student. The conferences were an invaluable part of the workshop.

Mini-Lessons

Mini-lessons teach a specific skill or state standard, a reading strategy, or just provide students with information. Atwell divides mini-lessons into three categories: Procedural (things like setting up expectations for the reading workshop), Literal (skills like foreshadowing or point of view), and Strategies (understanding content clues or making predictions) (Atwell, 2007b) (Appendix N). Mini-lessons enable the teacher to focus on necessary skills, provide background information, and allow students to apply what they have learned to their own reading. Mini-lessons should be thoughtful, authentic, appropriate, and engaging (Atwell, 2007b). The short, focused time blends with what educators know about adolescents attention spans and their need to shift among learning tasks during a specific time period.

Another Atwell strategy removes the division between teacher and student. Atwell teaches her mini-lessons while sitting on a footstool with students around her. She compares this seating arrangement to that of a evening dinner table (Atwell, 2007b). I sat on a stool in the front of my class at eye level with students. This made the mini-lesson feel more like a family discussion rather than a teacher controlling her classroom.

Time constraints to cover state standards would sometimes force me to turn the mini-lesson into a much longer instructional period. Otherwise, I adhered to Atwell's mini-lesson protocols, which I found worked very well.

Intrinsic Motivation in a Literate Environment

Building a community of readers is part of a literate environment. Students need freedom to make choices, time to read, and plenty of chances to talk with others about those choices. This is one reason my students enjoyed both presenting and listening to book talks. When adults read freely for pleasure, they do not take a comprehension test or write a book report. However, discussing the book with a friend is quite common. Adolescents are looking for what really matters in life and teachers must help them understand adult reality. This subtle awakening can be an exciting journey into the wonders of reading oblivion. Students in Atwell's classes compare being in the reading zone to a private, internal movie, only better. I routinely found my students lost in a book. Often, the bell rang and I would have to remind readers to go on to their next class. Atwell tells us that in a literate environment, book talks, read alouds, conversations, time to read, silence, and comfort are necessities (Atwell, 2007b). Of course, an inviting classroom library is also a requirement. Plenty of books students like should be available. Reynolds (2004) writes that "the best way to capture the blatantly reluctant reader is to have a huge variety of books on your shelves" (p. 22).

Reading is often a social activity. An example of the "socialness" of reading is the way students often choose a book based on a friend's recommendation. Book talks embrace the interpersonal side of reading. While listening to peers, students decide if the book sounds good. If so, they write the title down on their Someday Page (Atwell, 2007b) for future reading. Occasionally, students argue over who will read the last class copy of a book. Two of my

students did just that over Runner by Carl Deuker. That night I went to the local bookstore and bought another copy so they could read the book at the same time. This doubles the fun by providing for interesting dialogue between the readers.

A positive relationship between teacher and parents contributes to a student's intrinsic motivation. Teachers need parental support to develop healthy attitudes and habits about reading. I had a phone call from a grateful parent who said, "I don't know what you're doing, but Max is actually reading at home." Another parent, dropping her daughter off before school, just had to stop by the classroom. She told me that she had been watching television last night when Sarah shouted, "Mom, turn the TV down, I'm reading." Sarah's mother said she almost fell out of her chair. This home/school connection scaffolds the support students need.

Jake is an example of intrinsic motivation sparked by the wonder of reading. He literally ran into class one morning and screamed, "I couldn't put it down". He was referring to A Dog's Life by Ann Martin. As William Butler Yeats said, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." Jake and many of his classmates were now on fire about reading. Vygotsky wrote, "Children grow into the intellectual life around them" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). Intrinsic motivation increased as we grew into a literate community of friends.

Students: The Lives of Research

The goal of my reading workshop was to take struggling students and help them become independent readers and writers. It is therefore logical to end the results chapter with a discussion of representative students. These students may initially appear to be extreme cases, when in fact, they represent the successful changes that were broadly observed. My initial question was whether Atwell's workshop, designed for a very different group of students, would work with mine. I learned that Atwell's workshop approach engaged even the most challenging students.

One of my ESL (English as a Second Language) girls from India walked up to me before class and exclaimed, "I loved it (Homeless Bird by Gloria Whelan) so much." She told me her next book would be Shabanu by Suzanne Staples. Helping students match reading levels and interests to text is critical. When that perfect match is made, the results are exciting. Individualizing encourages real life connections by allowing students to choose books that help them better understand themselves.

One of my special education students is confined to a wheelchair due to cerebral palsy. She is also legally blind. Heather listens to books on tape, is read to by an assistant, and sometimes tries to read independently if we enlarge the text. At the beginning of the year, her favorite book was The Day My Butt Went Psycho by Andy Griffiths. By the end of the year, her favorites were Gathering Blue by Lois Lowry, Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz- Ryan, Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse, and The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle by Avi. Not only had her maturity in reading choice grown, but she had made important emotional connections to the heroines in her books.

When students surpass their own expectations, self-esteem grows. Candice is another student success story. She told me the first day of class, "I hate to read, and I'm not going to." At the end of the year, she asked if I remembered her earlier comment. She wanted me to know that it was not true anymore. She told me she had just finished another book. "It was amazing," she said, "I can't wait until you read my literacy letter on it." In spite of actually having to write, a skill most of my students had never previously wanted to use, they were very proud of their thinking on literacy letters. They agreed that writing the letters helped them learn more about themselves as readers and as human beings. As I bent to conference with another student, I saw Candice lean over to a friend and whisper, "Hey, have I got a book for you." The book was She

Said Yes by Misty Bernall. Making and sharing connections with others is another benefit of reading (Wooten, 2000).

At an IEP (Individual Educational Plan) meeting, Sophie's mother turned to me and said, "We can't believe the difference in Sophie's reading this year. We are shocked to always see her with a book. Thank you so much." The simple truth was that Sophie had a passion for horses and told me she was saving money to buy her own. I suggested a few titles, such as King of the Wind and Misty of Chicoteague, both by Marguerite Henry, and Riding Freedom by Pam Munoz Ryan. Sophie read these and all the other horse books she could find. Intrinsic motivation for Sophie was easy.

As the year progressed, my classes became more like extended families than a teacher and students. Through sharing in the emotional power of words, connecting with books, and engaging in poetry, we formed a common. As we read a poem like "Dog's Death" from Atwell's poetry anthology, we relived our own memories of a beloved pet. "Footsteps to Follow" reminded us of a time someone let us down. It seemed like we were traveling through life together. Students became so engaged in poetry, that many spontaneously began to write their own. Small neatly folded papers filled with words from their hearts appeared on my desk. Sometimes there were notes attached that read, "Share this with all your classes if you think it is good enough," or "I just had to write this down."

After the final bell rang on the last day of school and students left for the summer, one of my colleagues asked how my year had gone. Without thinking, I responded, "It was my best year ever." As I later reflected on this spontaneous comment, I realized that my students and I had shared the real joy of reading through the emotional power of words. The reading workshop had empowered my students to believe in themselves and live up to high expectations, both mine and

theirs. This was, for most, the first time they had read so many books in one school year, or had enjoyed anything at all about reading (Appendix M).

As I walked back to my empty classroom, I noticed one of my most quiet students standing by the door. Chase blurted out, “I couldn’t leave until I told you how much I’ve learned from you this year.” I was surprised by his unexpected comment. I thanked him, discussed a little bit about high school next year, and he walked away down the hall. Suddenly, he turned back around and yelled, “You know, I really do like to read.”

Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

Personal Findings

Teaching reading is actually very personal. The question each teacher faces of "how to teach reading" depends on what reading means to them. Is reading viewed as an emotional and intellectual journey through a book (aesthetic) or simply as a means to acquire knowledge (efferent). Rosenblatt's transactional theory analyzes just this point. Her concern was that teachers were asking students to "find facts" in instead of "living through" literature (Rosenblatt, 1979).

In my experience, teaching reading is becoming more and more a frenzy to cover standards. So many strings are tied to reading in the classroom, that reading for pleasure is squelched. This is nowhere more evident than with struggling adolescent readers. They cannot read their grade level content area textbooks and feel like failures. These students do not see reading as pleasurable. Understandably, they have no interest in reading anything at all.

It is the responsibility of teachers to create an environment that develops self-efficacy in students and encourages aesthetic reading. Accordingly, in an effort to teach reading skills and promote reading, many schools have turned to computerized programs. Accelerated Reader (AR) and Scholastic's Performance Counts assign point values to books and to the tests students complete after each book. Although these programs claim that students "select their own books", the actual selection list is limited by its point value and whether a test exists for the book. So the objective of reading a book is to earn points and to memorize plot details, not to uncover the magic inside the book. Instead of "being the book" as Wilhelm encourages in <u>You Gotta Be the Book</u> (Wilhelm, 1997), the reader only needs to skim the surface to remember minute details and

be able to add up points. Of course, what average kid would not want to win a limo ride to Chuck E. Cheese's or help the school's total points reach a certain number so the principal will dye his hair green? In my years of teaching, I have witnessed both. It is very disheartening for an avid reader to see reading reward antics, such as these, replace the secret smile and satisfied feeling finishing a great book brings. There should be an intimacy between the reader and the words, a feeling of being removed from reality. Words are indeed powerful, allowing personal connections on an emotional level. B.F. Skinner once said that "life shouldn't teach great books; we should teach a love of reading" (Evans, 1968, p. 73).

Program Changes

During this past school year, I have tried to move my struggling readers to an aesthetic appreciation of books. I modified Atwell's reading workshop approach to meet their unique academic, social, and emotional needs. I have seen incredible changes. Our classroom has become a family of readers. As I reflect on my results, I plan to make additional modifications next year.

First, Miller also discovered the reading logs were difficult to keep up (Miller, 2009). Students would leave the log at home and then be unable to write down the pages read in class. Many of my students never accepted responsibility for taking it back and forth between home and school. It even seemed to become more of a parents' homework assignment. The log really rewarded the students who had support at home and punished those (the majority of my students) who did not. Furthermore, some parents did not see "just reading" as real homework, so they did not feel the necessity of initialing the log. Additionally, students would honestly admit that their parents were so busy they would initial it without questioning if their student had even read at all. So, as Miller suggested, I will try to simply keep a reading list section in their notebooks. It

will include title, author, date finished, and a 1-10 rating or student assessment of the book (Miller, 2009). Since most of my students have a study hall daily, I will create a spreadsheet for the study hall teachers with my students' names. Instead of sleeping, writing notes, etc., they will be expected to read. This forty-two minute block will help provide the extra independent reading time many do not use at home.

Secondly, I will continue to expect a literacy letter upon completion of each book. I learn so much, not only about the students' comprehension, but about the students' personal reactions to the text. I have seen evidence that writing raises the level of reflection. Besides reading what my students have written, I enjoy writing response notes that ask questions about their ideas and interpretations. I was pleased to see that students were developing a critical sense, using literary terms, and analyzing characters in their literacy letters. However, instead of waiting for completion of the book to see those written connections, I will require a weekly response to their book. On Fridays before students leave class, they will write a short entry on the Detail/Event Log (Reynolds, 2004), which I will rename the "Friday Focus". This graphic organizer (Appendix I) will allow me to sooner discover "fake readers", those who may keep abandoning books, students having issues with the book's content, or those who are reading at too slow a pace. For example, by the time Amy reached chapter five in Cut by Patricia McCormick, she decided her mother would not want her to read about a girl who "did that sort of thing". The reading workshop honors students' respect for parents' opinions. I helped Amy find another book. However, if I had seen her written comments earlier, I would have noticed her indecisiveness before she reached chapter five. I hope encouraging more frequently written responses (not comprehension check-up questions) to their books will further improve the quality of their thinking.

Finally, I have found that as students mature, and move from independent reader into young adult literature, it becomes more difficult to find books that will interest them, but are not beyond their maturational levels. Next year, I plan to work more closely with our school librarian in choosing the "latest and greatest" books for both my classroom and the school library. Although the librarian and I read a lot of young adult literature, we cannot read everything. Possible sources for expert advice (Atwell, 2007b) include the following:

1. ALA (American Library Association) Top Ten Best for Young Adults.
2. ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers.
3. ALA Alex Award Winner.
4. New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age.
5. National Book Award Winner or Finalist.
6. Coretta Scott King Award Winner.
7. Michael Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature.
8. "School Library Journal" Best Books of the Year.
9. "Kirkus Reviews" Editor's Choice.
10. Reference to a starred review in "Kirkus Reviews", "Publishers Weekly", "Booklist", "The Horn Book", or "School Library Journal". (p. 32)

Although a book may appear on a recommended list, potential controversial subject matter requires special handling. My practice is to read the book to initially determine whether it is appropriate for a particular student. I may then send the book home for parental preview. An example of such a book was Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson, which dealt with sexual battery. I have found that students understand, and that parents are grateful, for being included in a more mature book choice. Often, a well-written book can open communication between a parent and

child. As Atwell so aptly describes these adolescents, they really are “in the middle” of everything – emotional, physical, psychological, and intellectual changes (Atwell, 1998).

Conclusion

While this personal narrative was not designed to numerically measure results, I am able to conclude that the workshop succeeded in helping my students become independent readers and critical thinkers. I taught reading to almost all of the eighth graders for two years (as seventh graders in 2007-08 and as eighth graders in 2008-09). This enabled me to compare and contrast their progress with the traditional (2007-08) and workshop (2008-09) approaches. For both school years, variables for student population, teacher, school, and Tennessee State Standards remained essentially the same.

There is no single program or approach that works for all students or all teachers. While the modified Atwell workshop resulted in significant improvement for the great majority of my students, some did not become as engaged in reading as I had hoped. The failures were few, but the successes were far more frequent and profound. Atwell’s workshop demands much of the teacher. It requires a strong commitment to the time expectations involved in classroom teaching, a respect for every student as a whole person, and a passion for reading.

As I teach I continually learn and reflect on my practice. Of course, since each new group of students is unique, specific reading workshop strategies will always depend on their skills, needs, and interests. Since studies show that reading interest and ability decline as students become adolescents, it is important for educators to examine traditional practices and question their effectiveness on learning. This is especially necessary in the case of adolescents who already struggle to read. In these times of teaching to the test, it is a difficult balancing act to accomplish all the educational objectives and yet remember our responsibility to create lifelong

readers. In my opinion, the reading workshop approach greatly impacts student learning, while inspiring a love of reading. Further research will determine if teaching my current seventh graders again next year as eighth graders will show the benefit of two consecutive years in the reading workshop.

In conclusion, there are those in education who believe that providing students with lots of interesting books and giving them time to read seems too low tech, too simple, and too lacking in rigor. Atwell understands that students should travel beyond the classroom and reflect on the world. Her workshop motivates students to better understand themselves and become a part of the human community. As I look back at the amazing year spent in the reading workshop, the label “struggling reader” no longer seems appropriate. My students have become developing readers.

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Appendices

Appendix A: September Reading Survey

Your Name _____

September Reading Survey

1. If you had to guess . . .

How many books would you say you owned? _____

How many books would you say there are in your house? _____

How many books would you say you've read since school let out in June? _____

How many books would you say you read during the last school year, September–June? _____

How many of *those* books did you choose for yourself? _____

2. What are the best three books you've ever read or had read aloud to you?

_____

_____

_____

3. In your ideal book, what would the main character be like?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. What are your favorite genres, or kinds, of books?

_____

_____

5. Who are your favorite authors these days?

_____

_____

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6. What are some of the ways you decide whether or not you'll read a book?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Have you ever liked a book so much that you reread it? _____ If so, can you name it/some of them here? _____

_____

8. What do you think someone has to know or do in order to be a strong, satisfied reader of books? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. What do you think are your three greatest strengths as a reader of books?

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. What would you like to get better at? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Do you know the title of the next book you'd like to read? _____ If so, please tell me. _____

12. In general, how do you feel about reading and yourself as a reader?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B: Cross-Generational Questionnaire

Cross-Generational Questionnaire

Your name _____

The year you were twelve _____

1. What toys did you play with?

2. What sports and games did you play?

3. What else did you do in your spare time? What were your hobbies?

4. What singers or groups did you listen to?

5. What celebrity or public figure did you admire or have a crush on?

6. What candy did you buy?

7. What was your favorite TV show?

8. What was your favorite book or series of books?

9. What was a saying or expression that adults or other kids were using?

10. What did you want to be when you grew up?

[illegible] by Nancie Atwell from *Naming the World: A Year of Poems and Lessons* [illegible]rtsmouth, NH: Heinemann]

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Appendix C: Some Questions I Ask

Some Questions I Ask as I Roam Among Readers

Always:

What page are you on?

Mostly:

What do you think so far?

How is it?

What's happening now?

And also:

Any surprises so far?

How did you feel when you got to the part about _____?

Main character queries:

Who's the main character in this one?

What's the main character like?

What's his problem, or hers?

How's the character development in general? Are you convinced?

Author queries:

Who wrote this one?

What do you think of the writing so far?

Do you know anything about the author?

Any theories about why he or she might have written this?

How is it so far, compared to his or her other books?

Critical queries:

What genre is this one?

How is it so far, compared with other books about _____?

Is it plausible?

How's the pace?

What's the narrative voice? How's that working for you?

What do you think of the dialogue/format/length of chapters/flashbacks/inclusion of poems/diction choices/author's experiments with _____, and so on (depending on the book)?

When it's a page-turner:

What's making this a page-turner for you, vs. a literary novel? What are you noticing? For example, is it formulaic—easy for you to predict?

Process queries:

Why did you decide to read this one?

I can't believe how much you read last night. Tell me about that.

Why did you decide to reread this one?

Where did you find this book?

When there's no zone:

Is this book taking you into the reading zone?

Why do you think it's taking you so long to read this?

Can you skim the parts that drag—the descriptions, for example?

Are you confused because it's hard to understand the language, or because you can't tell what's going on?

Are you considering abandoning this book? Because if you're not hooked by now, that's more than okay. You can always come back to it someday.

Do you want to skim to find out what happens, or even read just the ending, then move on to a better book?

What's on your someday list?

Do you know what other book I think you might like?

Finis:

Now that you've finished it, what will you rate this one?

Is this one worthy of a booktalk? Do you want to schedule a talk for tomorrow?

What are you planning to read next?

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Appendix D: Rules for Reading Workshop

Rules for Reading Workshop

1. You must read a book. Magazines and newspapers don't offer the extended chunks of prose you need to develop fluency. More important, they won't help you discover who you are as a reader of books.
2. Don't read a book you don't like. Don't waste time with a book you don't love, when there are so many great titles out there waiting for you—unless you've decided to finish it so you can criticize it. Do develop your own criteria and system for abandoning an unsatisfying read.
3. If you don't like your book, find another. Check out the books-we-love display. Check your list of someday books. Browse our shelves. Ask me or a friend for a recommendation.
4. It's more than all right to reread a book you love. This is something good readers do.
5. It's okay to skim or skip parts of a book if you get bored or stuck: good readers do this, too.
6. On the forms inside your reading folder, record the title of every book you finish or abandon, its genre and author, the date, and your rating, 1 to 10. Collect data about yourself as a reader, look for patterns, and take satisfaction in your accomplishments over time.
7. Understand that reading is thinking. Try to do nothing that distracts others from the reading zone: don't put your words into their brains as they're trying to escape into the worlds of words created by the authors of books they love. When you confer with me about your reading, use as soft a voice as I use when I talk to you: *whisper*.
8. Take care of our books. Sign out each book you borrow on your cards, then sign it back in *with me*—I'll draw a line through the title and initial the card—when you're ready to return it. Shelve the returned book in its section in our library, alphabetically by the author's name—or, if it's a book you loved, add it to the books-we-love collection.
9. Read the whole time.
10. Read as much as you can.

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Appendix E: Literacy Letter Instructions

10 September

Dear _____,

Your reading journal is a place for you, me, and your friends to consider books, reading, authors, and writing. You'll think about your books in informal essays directed to me and friends, and we'll write back to you about your ideas and observations. Our letter-essays and responses will become a record of the reading, thinking, learning, and teaching we accomplished together.

Each letter-essay should be at least two pages long and written as a personal, critical response to one book—in other words, not a series of paragraphs about a series of books, but a long look at one that intrigues you. You should write a letter-essay to me or a friend in your own journal every three weeks, due on Thursday mornings. We'll correspond in cycles: you'll write two letter-essays to me, then two to a friend of your choosing.

Before you write, look back over your reading record. Which title that you've finished would be most enjoyable to revisit as a fan? What book that you abandoned—or remained hopeful about to the bitter end—would be most enjoyable to revisit in a slam? Once you've decided, return to the book. Skim it, and select at least one passage you think is significant, in terms of how you reacted to the book's theme, problem, character devel-

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opment, or plot arc, or to the author's style. Choose a chunk of text that you think *shows something essential*. In your letter-essay, quote—*copy*—the passage you chose, and write about what you think it shows about the book, the author, or your response to either.

What else might you do in a letter-essay? Tell about your experience as a reader of the book. Describe what you noticed about how the author wrote. Tell what you think the themes might be. Tell what surprised you. Pose your wonderings—your questions about the author, the characters, the structure, the voice, and yourself as a reader. Try the sentence openers [see page 83] I provided to help get you thinking and writing. *Be aware that a good letter-essay is one that teaches you something you didn't realize about your book, or yourself as a reader, before you wrote it.*

Once you've written your letter, hand-deliver your journal to your correspondent. If that's me, please put it in my rocking chair on Thursday morning. When a friend gives you his or her journal, you should answer, in at least paragraph length, by Monday morning. After you've written back, hand-deliver your friend's journal—don't put it in his or her locker or backpack. You may not lose or damage another's reading journal.

Date your letter-essays in the upper right-hand corner, and use a conventional greeting (*Dear _____ ,*) and closing (*Love, Your friend, Sincerely,*). Always cite the name of the author of the book and its title. Indicate the title by capitalizing and underlining it—for example, The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton.

I can't wait for us to begin reading and thinking about literature together in this serious-but-friendly way. I can't wait for your first letter-essays and a year of chances to learn from you, learn with you, and help you learn more about the power and pleasures of books.

Love,
Nancie

Appendix F: Literacy Letter Rubrics

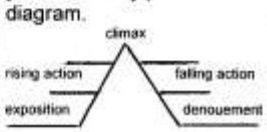
Literacy Letter Rubric

Name _____
Date _____
Book Title _____
Author _____

Assignment	Total Points	Earned Points
Choose a "chunk of text" that you think shows something essential. Express in at least 50 words why you think it's important.	25	
Rate this book on a scale of 1-10. (1 is the lowest, 10 is the highest.) Rating: _____ Explain your reason for giving that rating in 25 words or more.	15	
Analyze one of the main characters in the book (how they are like/unlike you). Give at least three reasons why you chose that character.	25	
Think about your experience as the reader of the book. What surprised you, made you scared, made you happy or sad, etc.? Use 25 or more words to support your ideas.	15	
If you could email the author, how would you suggest changing the book? (or would you keep it exactly the same?) Write your response in 35 words or more.	15	
Did you capitalize the title and underline it? Did you write the author's name?	5	

Name _____
Period _____
Date _____
Book Title _____
Author _____

Literacy Letter Rubric

Assignment	Total Points	Earned Points
Choose a "chunk of text" that you think shows something essential. Explain (in 50 words) why you chose this excerpt.	20	
Rate this book on a scale of 1-10. (1 is the lowest, 10 is the highest.) Rating: _____ Support your rating with at least three reasons.	15	
Analyze one of the main characters in the book. Compare (how you are alike) or contrast (how you are different) this character with yourself. Write at least three similarities or three differences.	20	
Summarize the book on your own story plot diagram. 	25	
Formulate an alternate ending for your book. Be creative! (Use at least 35 words.)	15	
Did you: • captalize the title and underline it? • write the author's name? • use friendly letter form?	5	

Appendix G: Book Talk Rubrics

Name _____
Date _____
Period _____

Book Talk Rubric

Book Title

_____

Author _____

Assignment	Total Points	Earned Points
Begin with showing the book and stating the title and author.	15	
Give a **brief** summary of the book. (Don't give away the ending.)	30	
Select one interesting character. Explain how they are like or different from you.	30	
Tell the class how you rated the book (1-10) and why.	25	

Name _____
Date _____
Period _____

Book Talk Rubric
Book Title

_____

Author _____

Assignment	Total Points	Earned Points
Begin with showing the book and stating the title and author. Remember to speak clearly and loudly.	5	
Give a **brief** summary of the book. (Don't give away the ending.)	15	
Select one interesting character and a problem he/she faced. Explain how this character reacted to or resolved the problem. Would your reaction (thoughts, feelings, actions) have been similar or different? Why?	20	
Tell the class how you rated the book (1-10). Support your rating with at least two reasons. Finally, to whom would you recommend this book?	10	

Appendix H: What Poetry Can Do

What Poetry Can Do

- Be about anything
- Surprise us
- Tap our senses—make us see, feel, hear, and taste in our imaginations
- Make us laugh
- Make us think
- Connect us with other people at the most essential level: heart and mind to heart and mind
- Express anger and help make sense of a troubling experience
- Define feelings and craft them as art
- Tell stories that point a theme
- Make us look at everyday life through new eyes
- Make us think about the kind of lives we want to live
- Use people, objects, actions, and places as symbols to show something about a life or an experience
- Help capture stages in a life: who we were; who we're becoming
- Help us remember what matters
- Help us commemorate what matters
- Feed us, slake our thirsts, protect us, take us around the world and back in time, heal us, and let us take big chances, yet remain safe
- Reveal the beauty in everyday existence; open our eyes to the poems that hide around us

Atwell, N. (2006). *Naming the world: A year of poems and lessons*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Appendix I: Detail/Event Log

The Detail/Event Log

Name of Student _____

Book Title	Date	Pages Read	Detail/Event from Reading	On a 1–10 scale, rate your interest in today's reading
Example: *Love Rules*	5/22/05	98–102	Conan and Lynn are pulled over by sheriffs	9

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Appendix J: Atwell Favorite Books

Appendix L
Favorite Adolescent Literature

Each June my students look back over the books they read during seventh or eighth grade and rate them for a final time, using a scale of 1–10. When I restock the classroom library over the summer, I use their ratings as the basis for my shopping list. The following books received high ratings from at least three students. If I were setting up a classroom paperback library, I'd start with as many of these titles as I could afford or persuade my school to order in lieu of expensive sets of literature anthologies.

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Boatright, Lori. 1982. *Out of Bounds*. New York: Fawcett.
Bonham, Frank. 1971. *Cool Cat*. New York: Dutton.
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Appendix K: Obama Poem

The Words of a Leader
by Jack

I could listen to you all day

Your words touch my heart

Everything you say I truly feel

You have the power to reach the people

So go forward and lead our nation with honor and dignity

And as the years go by I will listen to you with respect and

compassion

As will the entire world.

Appendix L: End of Year Reflections Form

End of Year Reflections on the Reading Workshop

In order to improve this class for other students, please give a thoughtful response.

1. In your opinion, what is the best thing about the Reading Workshop?

_____

_____

_____

2. How do you think the Reading Workshop could be improved?

_____

_____

_____

3. An important thing I've learned about reading is _____

_____

_____

4. If I could recommend *one* book it would be _____

5. Does listening to a peer or a teacher give a Book Talk help you choose your own books? _____
Explain _____

_____

6. Although it takes time and thought, how does writing a Literacy Letter help you make connections to a book? Explain_____

_____

_____

Appendix M: End of Year Reflections

Overall Reflection

This year has been a really fun year. I enjoyed reading very little before this year, but thanks to Mrs. Pickett, I found out that I love to read and write. I have found out I have a talent to write poetry, and that reading can be really fun. I'm a really good reader, but still have trouble writing. I'm a weak speller, and sometimes I forget to reread, but I'm aware of this and pay more attention to my writing. I have learned many different types of writing. I have also met many different kinds of people this year. I have learned many different things about different types of things. You can't judge a person on how they look. Just like you cant judge a book by its cover.

Overall Reflection

This year has been the best school years I've had. Working with Mrs. Pickett has inspired me to read a lot more. She told me reading is fun if you find a good book that you like. I've read tons of books this year, and I plan on to keep reading. My two favorite authors are Sona Sones and Sara Dessen. I have enjoyed reading their books all year. This year as a writer I've learned all kinds of types of writing. I've made some good progress with Mrs.Koons and Ms.Parks. I'm not very good on homophones, but I am going to always double check. As a student pf Maryville middle school I am looking forward to a wonderful 4 years of High school. Middle school has taught me to be more responsible of my work. I am more confident on my writing and reading. I am looking forward to a good educational future.

This year has been lots of fun. I've met new people, made new friends, and learned a lot of new things. As a reader I've found new books that I really like to read. Before I came to MMS I didn't like to read much. Mrs. Pickett got me into Sarah Dessen books. She's the author of my favorite book "Someone Like You". I really enjoy reading now! As a writer I've worked on my commas and spelling. When I'm texting I try to spell words correctly and use correct grammar. I still need to work on a few things but I'm sure I'll be a perfect writer some day. As a student, I try to keep things organized, do homework on time, and listen. I'm not a good person with showing my mom or dad things that need to be signed. I seem to forget. I've made lots of new friends and have worked really hard this year as an 8th grader. I'm heading to high school in a few months and I hope everything I've learned my 2 years here at MMS will help me through high school and my future.

This has been a fast year for me. I hated reading before Mrs. Pickett, helped me with finding good books. I enjoy reading lots of kinds of books; I have read about a dozen this year. I have found I like a lot of kinds of books my favorite author, is Judy Blume. I have been doing well in grammar. I'm not a good in spelling. I have made lots of new friends. I have wonderful teachers and cool classmates. As a student I think I have learned that if I keep trying I can meet my goals. This summer I am not going to stop reading or writing. If I stop I know it will be hard to get back into reading and writing. I'm going to have to work harder the next few years of my life. I will be fine because of the teachers I have had. I will thank you all for helping me get where I am.

Overall Reflection

This year has seemed to go by really fast. I have found out many more ways to write this year. I have learned many new words and ways to use them. I have read more books this year than I ever have before. The books I have read this year have all been different. I think I have read over 1000 pages this year. As a student, I have learned many things this year. I have gotten better at math and I have read a lot of books. This year I have learned many words and different ways how to use them. As a person, I have made many new friends. This year I have met many people that I didn't know. I am looking forward to next year so I can meet new people and make many more friends.

This year has been a wonderful year.I have never read as much as I have never read as much as I have until this year. I have found that there are a lot of books out there in the world.At the beginning of this year I did not like to read or write poems. But know I can not stop writing poems or reading books. I have also learned that there are many different ways to write paragraphs and stories. I use to bad at vocabulary and learning there meanings. But now I can just study them and I know them. An next year I hope I will be good at anything I do in language arts class.

This year has been a awesome year of learning and and growth for me. I have enjoyed reading a lot more than ever in Mrs. Pickett's class this year. I have read over three dozen books this year! I also wrote poems for the first time this year! I really don't like a particular kind of Genre or author I just pick a book and read it. As a writer, I have composed many types of writing. Next year I plan to read a lot more next year.

Appendix N: Mini-Lesson Explanation

2. Mini-Lesson: A mini-lesson is a brief lesson conducted by the teacher. Nancie Atwell (1987) divides mini-lessons into three broad categories.

Procedural
Setting expectations/rules for the workshop
Finding good books that appeal to readers
Discussing literature
Selecting a place to sit during reading time/mini-lesson
Giving a book talk
Being a good listener in a share session
Maintaining appropriate noise level
Asking questions during a sharing session
Setting individual goals and self-evaluation
Getting ready for a conference
Keeping a book log
Taking care of books

Literal / Craft
Differences between fiction and non-fiction books
Parts of books
Characteristics of different genres
Poetry
Books that show emotions
Books written in the first, second, or third person
Author studies
Author's styles
Learning from dedications
How authors reveal characters
How authors use quotations
How the story setting fits the story
Development of characters, plot, theme, mood
How the lead hooks us
How authors use the problem/event/solution pattern
Titles and their meanings
Characters' points of view
Examples of similes and metaphors
Examples of foreshadowing
How authors use dialogue
Predictable and surprise endings
Use of descriptive words and phrases
How illustrations enhance the story
Secrets in books
Voice
Types of conflicts

Mini Lessons

Strategy / Skills

1. **Concepts of print**
2. **Tips for reading aloud**
3. **Figuring out unknown words**
   - using context
   - substituting
   - using picture clues
   - using the sounds of blends, vowels, contractions, etc.
   - Monitoring comprehension (Does this make sense and sound right?)
   - Asking questions while reading
   - Making predictions
4. **Emergent strategies**
   - concept of story
   - concept that print carries meaning
   - Connecting reading material to your own life
   - Using Post-Its to make interesting parts
   - Making sense
   - Mapping a story
   - Retelling story orally
   - Looking for relationships
   - Looking for important ideas
   - Making inferences
   - Drawing conclusions
   - Summarizing story
   - Distinguishing fact from opinion
5. **Emergent readers' skills**
   - directionality
   - concept of "word"

Appendix O: Self-Evaluation Survey

Name: _____

Date: _____

	Yes	No
1. I am reading more books this year than last year. Why? _____	☐	☐
2. I enjoy reading more this year than last year. Why? _____	☐	☐
3. I like expressing my opinions in the Literacy Letter. Explain your answer. _____	☐	☐

4. I believe that sharing books with peers through Book Talks is valuable. Explain your answer. _____

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. I prefer choosing the books I read! Why? _____

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. So far this year I have read _____ (write how many) books. The titles are: _____
_____
_____
_____.

My favorite book so far is: _____
_____.

Appendix P: Self-Expectation Rubric

Self-Expectation Rubric

	Circle the appropriate response
1. Besides during Reading Zone, I read at least 20 minutes a day in Learning Lab or at home.	1 2 3 4 5 never always
2. I read during Reading Zone and try to "Be the Book!"	1 2 3 4 5
3. I read quietly without disturbing peers.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I demonstrate my best thinking and writing on the Literacy Letters.	1 2 3 4 5
5. I prepare for my Book Talks so I know what I'll say to my classmates.	1 2 3 4 5
6. I listen attentively to peers when they give Book Talks, and write down interesting book titles on my Someday Page.	1 2 3 4 5
7. I keep my Reading Log up-to-date and record all book titles, even those I abandoned.	1 2 3 4 5
8. I keep my class notebook organized by sections so my teachers, parents, and I are able to evaluate my progress.	1 2 3 4 5
9. I think about the value of becoming a skilled, critical, habitual reader.	1 2 3 4 5
10. If I don't understand or don't like a book, I abandon it.	1 2 3 4 5
11. I check classroom books out with the class librarian, and return them as soon as I give my Book Talk.	1 2 3 4 5
12. I bring my book to school and take it home daily.	1 2 3 4 5

Appendix Q: Student Literacy Letters

What My Mother Doesn't Know

Dear Mrs. Pickett,

For my "chunk of text" would be "I slink into the cafeteria and scan the multitudes. It only takes me a second to find Robin, sitting alone at a table by the window. He doesn't see me. But Rachel and Grace do. They wave me over. I force a smile and wave back. But I stay where I am. Rachel calls out my name. Robin looks up and sees me. He smiles. But only with his eyes. Is everyone in the entire cafeteria looking at me? Or is it just my imagination? I try to lift my feet but they feel like they've been nailed down to the linoleum. My body's getting ready to fly apart. I want to scream. I want to run away. I want to- No! I don't. I race over to Robin sit down across from him and take hold of his hands. Robin's smiling with more than his eyes now. He's smiling through and through. And I am, too. Because everything's going to be all right. Sometimes I just know things." I pick that for my "chunk" of text because, it shows the ending and it tell girls and boys to not let your friends become between you and a crush. I also, think it is really nice. Like, I could just picture it and little hearts around them. If you love them then go for it. Don't worry what you think your friends will say or think. If they make fun of you, they aren't a true friend. You're the one living your life; let you be the one to make it your way.

I rate this book a 10, because I haven't seen a book like it. It has girl problems, things with boys, and things we all go through. As you know I love relationship books and it had a lot of love in it. Not with just boys, but with like family and friends. There is a part where Sophie, the main character, starts talking to Chaz, a boy she met in a chat room. She starts to really like him and he starts liking her. The thing is while she is talking to Chaz, she has a boyfriend, Dylan. Chaz tells her that they think they are dating. She starts thinking, "Yikes!" A few weeks later after they met, they really get to know a lot about each other. He asked her to hang, she said no. Next time, She asks him what he is doing and he says a "perverted comment." She thinks he is kidding, but he really isn't. She blocks him. I think that tells you not to talk to people online if you don't know them. The only thing this book is really relationships, which can always help. It has a life lesson that we live on.

I am more like Sophie, for the reasons of she has boy problems. She doesn't know what she wants in away. We both live with basically our Mommy. She lives with her dad, but he is always away on business. We both have good friends. We both day dream a lot. We also have things that aren't in common, like she does some weird things, like personal things she would do by herself of with some friends, girl things. She is a confusing girl, but who isn't? It's kind of hard to explain, but we are different and alike in many ways.

I think the book ended well, but it should of have more detail like what her finds thought, other kids, and if they stayed together, or if her and robin even dated. I don't think it should have ended in the cafeteria. Maybe like outside on the way home with the sun shining or in the rain. If it was sunny she could of given him a flower from a garden. She would go up to him and be like, "You're the person I want to be with, I am sorry!" "Forgive me?" He would say, "Yes, Sophie!" Then they would walk way-holding hands and the sun would be shinning right on them. If it was raining, she should have ran up to him Robin and said, "I'm sorry, I love you"! Then end it with a kiss in the pouring rain.

With her friends smiling and the people saying, "awww!" It would be like the movies, like my favorite, The Notebook.

I am going to add something to my literacy letter. I am going to write what made me happy, sad, and mad. First, what made me happy was when she picked Robin and didn't care what others thought. It mad me sad when her and her mother started to get in an argument and Sophie said, "I hate her!" over and over again. What me mad was when Chaz started talking perverted to her, but I was proud of Sophie for saying bye. Another thing when her dad really wasn't with her family a lot it kind of made me mad, depressed, and I felt bad for her. Cause, I know what it is like to not have a father fully in your life. Kind of like your not wanted or loved. In the book she is like my father does love me don't me, and nobody should really have that. I love this book, thanks for reading☺

Dear Mrs. Pickett,

My chunk of text that I think is essential is "*He killed it! My father killed it!* Jonas said to himself, stunned at what he was realizing. He continued to stare at the screen numbly." When his father talked about release, Jonas thought it meant going to another city, another town, but when he found out what release was he was shocked. His best friend Fiona's assignment was Caregiver to the Old, but Jonas had no idea that Caregivers to the Old would be releasing the old people. After Jonas saw the video of the release, he felt upset and angry. The thought of his father doing

that made his father seem like a bad person to him. I bet he wished he could tell Fiona that her job really is killing people.

I rate this book a 10 because it was very, very, very, very deep. It talked about being a Receiver of Memory, of the way of life before everything was the same. Everything is the same because the people before the people that live in the town chose everything to be the same. They've never experienced color, war, pain, snow, rain, rainbows, sunburn, and they've never had the rights to their own decisions. One thing that inspired me is to think of all the good things that I have that they never had, such as color and snow and the warmth of the sun.

Jonas is very eager for the good memories. In the beginning of the book he is eager to become a Twelve. At the

age of 12 he was assigned Receiver of Memory. Jonas is really eager for some things, and I am too. He's very brave and outgoing, and if I were a Receiver of Memory I would feel the exact same way. Jonas never gives up. When he sets his mind to something, he never lets it go until it's finished. Neither do I.

The previous Receiver before Jonas failed and asked for release. That girl was the Giver's daughter. That surprised me. When Jonas's father released one of the baby twins, it made me think that I am so happy that we don't have release today. We get to know our parents. That baby never made it to December, never got to know his family. He never got to know his brother. He was released because they don't allow twins because that would mean too many babies that year. It was horrible. The sameness is

horrible, too, because if everything's the same, then nothing will be different. Different personalities, different interests, different looks need to be expressed because that says who we really are.

If I could email Lois Lowry about The Giver, I would tell her to change the book a little bit. I would have her change the release, because it makes people sad when they read it. I wish the book had more detail about Kira and the sequel Gathering Blue to tie the books together. I would have liked to know what happened to Gabe. The ending didn't tell enough about Gabe.

Mrs. Pickett,

A chunk of text I thought was essential was "I am proud to be a football player, and I am proud to be a stork survivor." I chose this chunk of text because it shows character and it shows enthusiasm. This should be put into everyday life and everyone should show his or her characteristics. Tedy is very inspirational and many people look up to him. He has a hard roll in life, to make sure that he doesn't screw up because many kids will follow his actions.

I rate this book a 10+ because its showing life lessons and there are many things you have to face in life. This book demonstrates respect/ no matter what he respected his family, teammates, and doctors. Courage/ even though he had a stroke doesn't mean he just gives up and anything that happens to him he gets through it and gets back on his feet. There's nothing that could bring him down. He's very inspirational.

I think I am like Tedy because he is always doing something to help someone and I want to be the same. I try to help people as much as possible and I enjoy doing it. Way I am not like Tedy is because he is a stroke survivor. I have never had a stroke and couldn't even imagine the experience. There are other ways I am like him because if someone helps me I have to give him or her something for my appreciation. I'm not the kind of guy that goes around wanting people to feel bad for him. Neither is Tedy. Tedy is an amazing person and very inspirational.

Exposition: Tedy has a stroke and doesn't realize it.

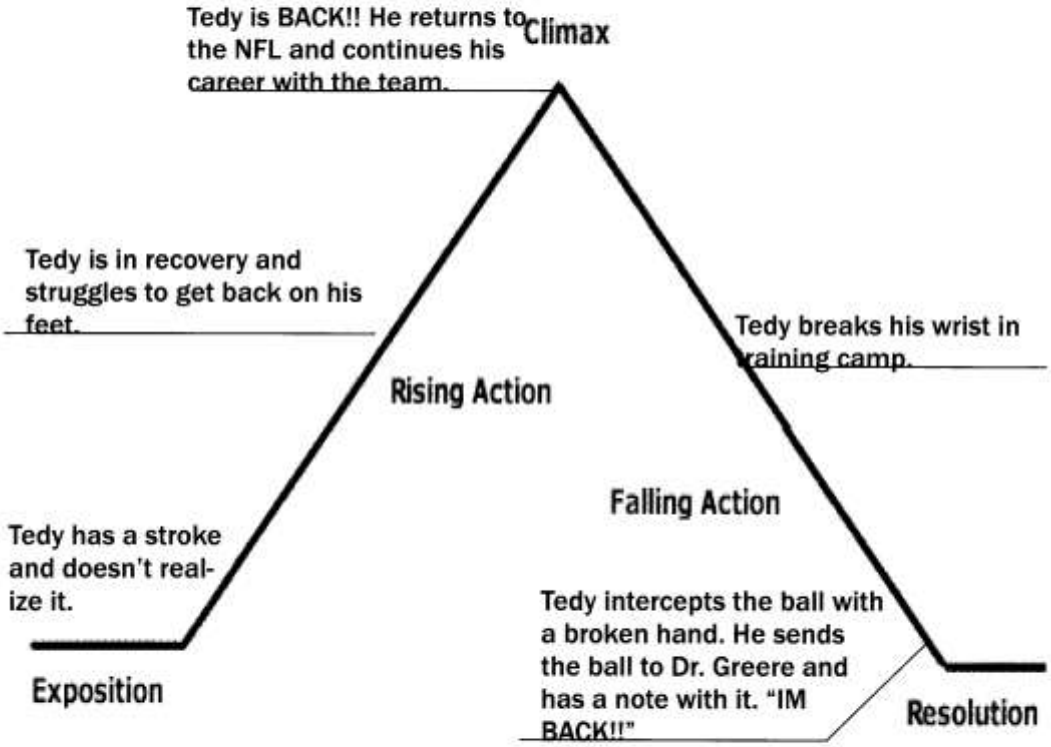
Rising action: Tedy is in recovery and struggles to get back on his feet.

Climax: Tedy is BACK!! He returns to the NFL and continues his career with the team.

Falling action: Tedy breaks his wrist in training camp.

Denouement: Tedy intercepts the ball whit a broken hand. He sends the ball to Dr. Greere and has a note with it. "IM BACK!!"

An alternate part of the story would be I would have Tedy break or fracture his collarbone. I would never want someone to have to go through the pain of a stroke. You have recovery but that is extremely hard. I have torn my ACL and that recovery was hard, but I couldn't even imagine the pain of going through a stroke.


Tedy is BACK!! He returns to the NFL and continues his career with the team.
Climax
Tedy is in recovery and struggles to get back on his feet.
Tedy breaks his wrist in training camp.
Rising Action
Falling Action
Tedy has a stroke and doesn't realize it.
Tedy intercepts the ball with a broken hand. He sends the ball to Dr. Greere and has a note with it. "IM BACK!!"
Exposition
Resolution

Appendix R: Literacy Concepts

Literary Concepts and Devices
Complied from Tennessee State Reading Standards

alliteration	allusion
assonance	consonance
couplet	end rhyme
flashback	footnote
foreshadowing	form
free verse	hyperbole
idioms	internal rhyme
line	metaphor
mood	narrative
onomatopoeia	personification
point of view	puns
repetition	rhyme
rhyme scheme	rhythm
sensory imagery	simile
slant rhyme	stanza
symbolism	theme
tone	visual imagery

Vita

I was born in Oak Park, Illinois, but spent most of my childhood in St. Petersburg, Florida. It was there I graduated Dixie Hollins High School before attending the University of Florida. I married my husband, Robert, after our junior year and graduated in 1972 with a Bachelor of Arts in Education.

I taught elementary school in Florida for several years, until the birth of our first child. Four more children followed. I chose to be a stay-at-home mom and home-schooled different children in various grades.

In 1998, when my youngest child began school, I decided I was ready to resume my career and get back to the classroom. I taught fourth grade in Orlando, Florida, until my husband's job moved us to Annapolis, Maryland. There I taught third grade on an Army base, Fort Meade.

Another job move in 2001 brought our family to Tennessee. Because of my elementary background, I was offered a teaching position in remedial reading at a local middle school. I soon realized how much I enjoyed teaching these struggling, adolescent readers. However, I knew I had much to learn and began taking classes at the University of Tennessee. These classes, and an inspirational professor, led me to enroll in graduate school. My Master of Science in Teacher Education, Reading Concentration, will be conferred in August, 2009.