STORIES OF STANCE:

EXPLORING DIALOGUE IN ELEMENTARY LITERACY CLASSROOMS

by

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(Under the Direction of JANETTE R. HILL)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to explore what happens when teachers facilitate dialogue in standards-based literacy classrooms. This work was grounded in critical theory, which considers issues of power and justice and how they impact individuals as well as groups. Critical educators assume all education is political; accordingly, they work to make visible what are often invisible power structures. Critical educators take an inquiry stance on their own classrooms; in so doing they consider their own power as well as the diversity of their students' positioning in the learning environment (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 2007; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007).

Four teachers participated in a five-month investigation. Participants wrote narratives regarding their use of dialogue during instruction. We met to interrogate their narratives considering teacher power as well as the challenges of facilitating dialogue. I conducted 30 observations to provide context and a point of triangulation for the interpretation of the narratives. The data were analyzed from a critical theoretical stance, using a descriptive oral inquiry process, induction, and narrative analysis.

Findings suggested that teachers' mindful positioning and purposeful moves to encourage dialogue are crucial. As many researchers have suggested, teachers have to decide they want to change traditional recitation patterns in order to embrace more dialogic ones (Barnes & Todd, 1995; John, 2009; Mehan, 1979; Schuh, 2003). They then have to actively support students as they learn new ways and reasons to communicate in class.

Findings also illuminated potential challenges involved in facilitating dialogue in standards-based classes. Most notably, teachers may unwittingly sanction silence rather than dialogue, especially when students are working independently. Teachers who want to sanction dialogue in the classroom may consider techniques such as: welcoming, active listening, inquiring, scaffolding, and/or authentic questioning.

INDEX WORDS: narrative inquiry, narrative, praxis, dialogue, dialogic, inquiry-based learning, critical pedagogy, literacy, literacies

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DEDICATION

For Victoria and Edisel, and the legions of my ancestors heretofore.

In the name of eternal victory and undying love.

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No one knows for sure whether their life will be blessed by fortune or burdened by fate. The elation of triumph is short-lived, but those who understand that every setback, too, is only temporary and who continue to make steady efforts with confidence and conviction, can achieve truly great things. Ultimately, victory comes from never giving in to defeat.

~Daisaku Ikeda

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Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: A CASE FOR DIALOGIC PEDAGOGY

> *Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits.*
>
> *~ Paulo Freire*

Freire (2000) offers a scathing critique of traditional education, or what he coined the "banking" model of education, in his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Although this work was originally published in the United States in 1970, his description applies to many classrooms of today that are enveloped in the culture of standardized testing and accountability (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, & Vasquez, 2008; NCLB, 2002). In 2002, then President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002). As a result of this policy, teachers were charged with increasing the academic achievement of all students, while narrowing the achievement gap between traditionally higher and lower performing students. Founded on the twin platforms of high stakes and high standards, this policy has been implemented at a time when society, and by extension, our classrooms, has become increasingly diverse (United States Census Bureau, 2010). In this chapter, I argue for a pedagogy of dialogue as a viable way to meaningfully engage diverse learners in standards-based classrooms. I begin with a description of the learners and the classrooms of today.

21st Century Learners and 21st Century Classrooms

Nearly 11 million school-aged children speak a language other than English at home, while 31 million of them are on free or reduced lunch (United States Census Bureau, 2010). These children possess a magnificent store of experiences unrelated to what is usually valued in school (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). As a result, they may be viewed as deficient and unprepared to participate in the culture of schooling (Delpit, 1995; Freire, 2000; Gee, 2008; González et al., 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Nieto, 2002). They attend classes where many teachers, pressed for time and stressed to achieve high test scores, may forego teaching meaningful content to drill basic skills, often using traditional or transmission models of teaching (Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, & Perry, 1992; Cuban, 2009; McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, & Vasquez, 2008; Ravitch, 2010).

The NCLB Act mandates that Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) be measured through annual testing in grades three through eight, along with a review of progress toward statewide objectives for all groups of students. Annual results must be disaggregated by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and English proficiency to ensure no group is left behind (NCLB, 2002). But many groups are left behind; despite recent efforts, the achievement gap remains (Dillon, 2009; Rampey, Dion & Donahue, 2009). One is left to wonder why that might be. Considering the continued disparity, it is reasonable to interrogate both the curriculum and the teaching methods employed.

When success is defined as passing a test, expectations become more standardized: students must adhere to a common, testable, set of curriculum standards as well as a common language. Subsequently, some knowledge is valued as more important than others. Nieto (2002) argued that public schooling's emphasis on the canon, or high-status knowledge, ignores the

"backgrounds, experiences, and talents of the majority of students in U.S. schools" (p. 127). Moreover, as McNeil and colleagues explain (2008), high-stakes testing impacts the curriculum. In some cases, teachers feel they have no choice but to drill answers in rote ways. They argued that such tactics lead to a new curriculum – regardless of the original standards – which most mirrors the test. "This narrower, more rigid curriculum affects students and their motivation to complete school" (p. 28). Unfortunately, as curriculum becomes more standardized, it has the potential to become less relevant, and diverse populations are more likely to disengage (Nieto, 2002).

The narrowing of the curriculum comes at a time when access to information has expanded exponentially. Changes in the information and digital landscape demand similar changes in the competencies needed for successful navigation in the world. Likewise, a change in the design of school learning environments is warranted. In traditional classrooms, instruction has historically focused on the reading of print-based texts, almost as an ends onto itself, rather than as a means to further explore and understand the world (Durkin, 1978-1979; Freire & Macedo, 1987); but the 21st century demands much more than this.

Today's learners are sometimes called neomillenials (Dede, Dieterle, Clarke, Ketelhut, & Nelson, 2007) or digital natives (Prensky, 2001) in an effort to accurately define their place in the expanding world of information and communication technologies (ICT). Successful learners in school and in life must be fluent in accessing and evaluating information from a variety of sources, a crucial competency in the Information Age (AASL, 2007). Not only must learners be proficient with technology and navigate multiple information streams, but they must also collaborate successfully to solve ill-structured problems, and evaluate and critique multimedia texts (NCTE, 2008). Texts can encompass print and non-print resources including books, blogs,

pictures, songs, videos and even people, and can be classical as well as popular in nature (International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English, 1996; New London Group, 1996). New and 21st century literacies privilege collaboration and communication across a range of platforms, distributed expertise, the use of diverse resources, and innovation (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; NCTE, 2008).

Today's youth already embrace these new literacies – they read, write and communicate across a variety of texts *outside* of school. Many of them spend their free time in worlds of their own design, literally creating and maintaining "second lives" (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007). They publish typed or video recorded blogs on topics from cosmetics to politics, they write their own fanfiction, and create remixes and mash-ups of multimedia, all in an effort to make sense of and comment on their world (Black, 2005; Stone, 2007). Because of the affordances of ICT, young people are in a continual dialogue with themselves, with their friends, and with the world at large (Jenkins, 2006). But dialogue, the notion of contribution, commentary and exchange, is not necessarily leveraged nor encouraged in traditional classrooms (Cuban, 2009; Durkin, 1978-1979; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Ravitch, 2010).

In many classes today, the focus is often on finding and reciting the right answers rather than exploring divergent questions (Lindfors, 1999; Nystrand, 1997; Wells, 1999; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Moreover, curriculum standards and teaching methods often prepare students for some future time (a test, a job), or reify past moments and long dead scholars, without any meaningful connections to the present (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Students bring a dramatic range of talents and background knowledge to school (Nieto, 2002), yet they are expected to learn specific skills, at a specific pace, and pass tests administered at specific times of the year.

All of this leaves many teachers feeling that there is no time for in-depth discussions and creative teaching and further, leaves little room for questions and conversations about issues that are important to diverse learners (Cuban, 2009; Dewey, 1915/2001; Nieto, 2002; Ravitch, 2010). It is no surprise that some students eventually disengage or drop out altogether (McNeil, et. al., 2008; Nieto, 2002).

Even though it may be challenging, it *is* possible to negotiate the pressures of standards-based classrooms and simultaneously support the complicated life experiences of today's students. Although curriculum standards dictate what students should know, understand and be able to do, they do *not* dictate the methods teachers must employ (Nieto, 2002; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). In the next section, I introduce dialogic pedagogy as an alternative to traditional or banking models of teaching.

Literacy, Inquiry and Dialogic Pedagogy

Traditional models of instruction, based primarily on objectivist principles of learning, treat knowledge as if it were static and predictable, transferable from one person to another, with the expertise embedded in the teacher or the textbook (Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, & Perry, 1992; Dewey, 1938; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 2000; Nystrand, 1997). Such models contrast greatly with constructivist models, which posit that knowledge is actively constructed by learners and is embedded in the context in which learning occurs (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Honebein, Duffy, & Fishman, 1993). Teachers who subscribe to constructivist views of learning strive to create environments in which students are not filled up with knowledge, but rather have the opportunity to build understandings through authentic learning experiences. In the same vein, Christensen (2006) wrote, "I believe in a vision of literacy that equips students to engage in a dialogue with texts and society instead of silently consuming other

people's words" (p. 393). She believed that readers and writers needed to wrestle with ideas rather than regurgitate them. This is part and parcel of the constructivist literacy classroom, and inquiry-based methods of teaching incorporate these ideas.

Inquiry-based techniques, which are grounded in questions or problems investigated by the learners themselves, allow learners to develop knowledge as they search for and grapple with information (Barrows, 1996; Lindfors, 1999; Savery, 2006; Savery & Duffy, 1995). In particular, 21st century literacy practices, which involve navigating multimedia texts and collaboration, can readily be engaged during inquiry, as questions may involve extensive searches across multiple sources. In this way, understandings of literacy and literacy practices are not deposited into students, but constructed by students through their own experiences. In short, literacy and inquiry are easy partners. The questions and ideas we choose to interrogate and the ways we read, write, and communicate meaning as a result of our inquiries, are woven together in the fabric of our classrooms (Fecho, 2004). Learning environments that embrace the investigation and communication of ideas are dialogic (Wells, 1999), and teachers who facilitate such environments enact a dialogic pedagogy.

Dialogic pedagogy is a style of teaching that encourages the construction of understandings (Nystrand, 1997; Wells, 1999). Information is not simply transferred from the expert to the learner, only to be recited by the learner as proof of the receipt of knowledge (Bednar, et al., 1992; Freire, 2000). Instead, knowledge is built through the exchange, elaboration and development of ideas in a learning community. This exchange is itself dialogue, which may be audible or silent. The key point, however, is the purposeful use and framing of dialogue in this way – as a vehicle for the *development* of understandings, not just the *recitation*

of information. When it is used and leveraged in this way, dialogue is a process for the construction of knowledge.

Dialogic pedagogy encourages genuine interaction and negotiation, rather than the assimilation of ideas (Bakhtin, 1986). A pedagogy of dialogue is one that embraces language as a tool for thinking, and for inquiry. Through language, thoughts and ideas once invisible, become visible (Vygotsky, 1986; Wells, 1999). These ideas can then be held up for inspection or revision, and be adopted, adapted, or discarded (Barnes, 1992; Burbules, 1993). Each of the aforementioned acts is a response and each then becomes a new link in the eternal chain of utterances. Moreover, each response invites a *new* response (Bakhtin, 1986); the dialogue, then, is ongoing. When teachers leverage dialogue, they expect students to contribute to and draw from a myriad of voices and thoughts. A dialogic pedagogy embraces a continuous exchange and the subsequent evolution and development of ideas.

Teachers who enact such a pedagogy go against the grain of traditional transmission models. Such work does not occur accidentally, but rather through conscious efforts to structure classroom interactions differently (Burbules, 1993; John, 2009; Schuh, 2003). This makes awareness of practice a vital component of dialogic pedagogy. I describe this in more detail in the next section.

From a Dialogic Pedagogy to a Dialogic Stance

Whether or not a teacher uses dialogue in the traditional sense, as a way to convey information, or as a tool of inquiry, is a function of her *stance*, or the way she approaches teaching. The decisions teachers make in their classrooms are based on a variety of factors – many of them internal (Palincsar, 1998; Resnick, 1989). Such factors include their abilities as

well as their backgrounds and experiences (Honebein, et. al, 1993; Resnick, 1989; Rosenblatt, 1938).

Teachers are human beings, and as such, come to their teaching as individuals with a history, or story (Freire, 2000; Lave & Wegner, 1991; Lindfors, 1999). Freire (2000) referred to this quality as being unfinished, meaning humans are ever evolving, always in a state of becoming. Teachers' evolving beliefs about themselves and their students naturally impact their pedagogical choices (Weiler, 1994). Classrooms are made up of multiple cultures and today's teachers are challenged to work within increasingly complex environments (Rogers, Marshall, & Tyson, 2006). Under such circumstances, clarity of stance is paramount (Bartolomé, 2007; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). As a result, several questions seem worthy of consideration:

- Do teachers view their students as lacking fundamental knowledge, needing to be remediated (Freire, 2000)?
- Do they view diverse literacy practices as meaningful, even if they are not practices usually valued, hence tested, in school (Gee, 2004, 2008)?
- Do they believe they are the sole experts or the only qualified disseminators of knowledge (Bednar, et al., 1992; Burbules, 1993)?
- What language or topics are sanctioned in the classroom (Jones, 2006; Nieto, 2002)?
- When is it acceptable to talk in the classroom, and for what purposes (Curwin, Mendler & Mendler, 2008)?

Teachers sometimes hold unrecognized assumptions and make decisions based on their unquestioned theories of teaching, learning, and life (Bartolomé, 2007; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). However, classrooms are places where theory and

practice transact (Fecho, 2004); neither reigns supreme. Even unrealized assumptions will shape teacher choices. Likewise, the choices teachers make and the subsequent outcomes then shape their theories. Becoming aware of tacit theories, or what Freire (2000) refers to as *conscienctizção*, allows teachers to be more deliberate in their pedagogy. Therefore, teachers who enact dialogic pedagogy may benefit from simultaneous exploration of their theories and their corresponding pedagogical choices – in other words, from taking a dialogic stance on their practice.

Teachers who take a dialogic stance on their classrooms engage in praxis (Freire, 2000), simultaneous reflection and action. Through praxis, teachers dialogue with their practices, as they continually reflect upon and revise them over time. One specific way teachers can interrogate their teaching is through writing and studying their own narratives, a process known as narrative inquiry.

Narrative inquiry encourages teachers to actively name the realities of the classroom and their lives, which then allows issues to emerge for contemplation (Richert, 2002). Writing the stories is a first step, but Ritchie and Wilson (2000) realized that constructing narratives was not enough; written or orally shared narratives must then be contextualized and critiqued. "Knowledge emerges through narrative when it is used strategically and connected in an ongoing dialogic between 'telling' and 'doing,' between narrative, reflection, and praxis" (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 172). It is this recasting, or reconsideration of the stories in context that allows teachers to consider the connections between their lives, their politics, and their pedagogy (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). As they continue to evolve personally, so do their practices; the process of narrative inquiry becomes praxis.

Narrative inquiry enables teachers to tell and study their stories, and in the process, revise their ways of knowing and doing, all while illuminating teacher knowledge for others (Carter, 1993, Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009). It is a dialogue, a recursive exchange with their beliefs and their pedagogical choices. In this way, a pedagogy of dialogue, and a dialogic stance on teaching are correlative practices.

Purpose of the Study

In classrooms, conversations abound, but every classroom conversation is not dialogic in an authentic sense (Barnes, 1992; Hicks, 1996; Nystrand, 1997; Wells, 1999). When there is a propensity toward "getting" and "repeating" the one right answer, conversations may take place, and students may indeed remember and recite answers. But such a process is not a construction of knowledge through dialogue; rather it is a transferral or depositing of information (Burbules, 1993). The purpose of this study was not to disparage all such deposits, but to understand how teachers facilitate learning through dialogue. Teachers seeking to move toward a more dialogic pedagogy must do so while meeting the expectations of NCLB. Further, teachers seeking to enact innovative methods in high stakes environments may derive benefit by learning from the stories of teachers already doing so. This study sought to contribute to the dialogue in this area.

The purpose of this study was to explore what happens when teachers facilitate dialogue in standards-based literacy classrooms. I investigated four questions during this study:

1. What happens when teachers take a dialogic stance on their practice?
2. What happens when teachers facilitate dialogue?
3. What happens when teachers scaffold dialogue?
4. What happens when teachers create a dialogic learning environment?

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, various terms are defined below.

Critical (pedagogy, stance, theory) – To be critical is to critique or question what is assumed to be normal. Such critiques and questions delve into issues of power and oppression in society and societal structures. Those who take a critical stance challenge privileged voices and uncover missing voices in a given text or circumstance (Freire, 2000; Jones, 2006).

Dialogue – To dialogue is to exchange and negotiate ideas, even those that are divergent or cause dissonance. This process can be verbal or nonverbal and can lead to the composition of knowledge and/or the development understandings (Bahktin, 1986; Shor & Freire, 1987).

Dialogic – A learning space or event in which the *construction* of knowledge is facilitated and otherwise encouraged is dialogic. A myriad of voices and ideas are welcomed and used to help all members of the learning community develop more nuanced understandings (Bakhtin, 1986; Wells, 1999).

Facilitate (facilitator, facilitating) – Teachers as facilitators manage a range of activities in a learning environment, including technical, pedagogical, managerial, and social activities (Murphy, et al., 2005). In this study, to facilitate dialogue means to design instruction and create an environment that encourages and supports dialogue.

Inquiry – Inquiry involves developing questions and interrogating ideas on a range of topics. Such a process does not require adherence to a specific set of steps. Inquiry is a natural quest to understand more, or to explore what is unknown (Lindfors, 1999).

Literacy – Literacy includes, but is not limited to reading and writing. In the 21st century and in a global society, technology, power and purpose all shape what counts as literacy. More broadly, literacy is proficiency in locating, interpreting, flexibly using, and critiquing, as well as

producing resources (AASL, 2007; Durrant & Green, 2001; Jones, 2006; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Luke & Freebody, 1999; NCTE, 2008; New London Group, 1996).

Narrative – A narrative is a story, a contextualized retelling of a lived experience. For the purposes of this study, a story can be of any length or topic, and can be oral or written (Bruner, 1985; Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Scaffolding – A responsive process that allows a learner to solve a problem or complete a task that is beyond what he or she could accomplish unaided (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976).

Summary

In this chapter, I described the move toward standardized instruction engendered by a national focus on standards-based teaching and assessment. I argued that a diverse student body would benefit from teaching methods, namely inquiry-based techniques, grounded in constructivist views of learning. A pedagogy of dialogue is one such method; it encourages diverse voices and divergent viewpoints toward the construction of new knowledge. I explained the natural link between implementing a dialogic pedagogy and taking a dialogic stance on teaching practices. Lastly, I presented the purpose and research questions for this study. In Chapter Two I elaborate the theories described in this chapter and summarize the related literature.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it.
~Shor & Freire

In this chapter, I first describe the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, inquiry pedagogy, and dialogic pedagogy, and their intersections. I then review the literature on studying dialogue in the classroom including: the types of discourse often found in classrooms, the use of dialogue as a tool of inquiry, the creation of dialogic learning environments, and the notion of a dialogic stance by teachers who study their facilitation of dialogue. I begin first with a discussion of critical pedagogy.

What is Critical Pedagogy?

Teachers in the information age must balance the demands of accountability while: 1) honoring the lives students live outside of school and 2) preparing them to successfully navigate society. This work does not occur in a vacuum. Teaching and learning transpire within societal structures that privilege some, while oppressing others. "The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a *selective tradition,* someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge" (Apple, 1993, p. 222). Subsequently, education is not a neutral endeavor (Apple, 1993; 2004; Freire, 2000; Freire & Faundez, 1989; Giroux, 2007; Nieto, 2002). Likewise, literacy education and indeed, literacy *practices,* favor some while disadvantaging others (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Shor, 1993). Given this, teachers should strive to help students become critical

consumers and producers of knowledge. This critical awareness is the outcome of critical pedagogy. In the following sections I describe Freire's theory of critical pedagogy, also called a critical approach, or a critical stance.

Freire's Critical Pedagogy: Violence, Power, and Transformation

In his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire mounted a fierce critique of the structure of oppression. In it, he explained that the oppressed and their oppressors are both caught in a cycle of violence (Freire, 2000). His conception of violence finds kinship with Bourdieu and Passeron's description of symbolic violence (2000). Unlike more tangible manifestations of violence, symbolic violence flies under the radar – an unconscious domination of one group over another. Symbolic violence occurs systematically, because of continual misrecognition of power dynamics. Bourdieu and Passeron explained that dominant groups (whether in the family, in education, or in society at large) gain legitimacy, and over time, the actions, and the authority vested within these actions, continue to reproduce that legitimacy. The violence manifests itself as an unjust social order, oppressing some while privileging others. Although pervasive, Freire (2000, 2004) argued this oppressive state is not a fixed destiny.

Power is fluid. It is not stagnant, nor does it exist solely in an apparatus such as a governing body or document (Freire & Faundez, 1989; Foucault, 1980). Power flows through the whole social body, hence, one can never be *outside* of power (Foucault, 1980). The oppressed are in fact part and parcel of an unjust power structure. Because of this, there is no singular answer to the question "Who are the oppressed?" The answer is contextually driven; it depends on the social structure under consideration. Regardless of who is oppressed in a given social dynamic, the goal of a liberating education is not to bring the oppressed *into* the system; the goal is to the *change* the system, making it just for all (Freire, 2000; 2004; Freire & Faundez, 1989).

Freire argued that the status quo, although seemingly normal, is not static or unchangeable, and that given a chance, people can begin to perceive the truth of their surroundings. People are historical beings and they are always in a quest for completion, or continued evolution (Freire, 2000). This quest, which Lindfors addresses in her description of inquiry (1999), is a key aspect of critical pedagogy. Human beings are not empty vessels or tabula rasa (Lave & Wegner, 1991). Their current circumstances were shaped by past actions, and present actions can shape the future. Circumstances, like power, are malleable (Foucault, 1980; Freire, 2000). The ultimate goal of a liberating pedagogy is not to shift power from one dominant group to another, perpetuating the cycle of violence, but rather to humanize everyone. Critical pedagogy, or the pedagogy of the oppressed, makes oppression and its causes the focus of reflection and action. It is not a specific method, but a way of thinking about education (Freire, 2000).

Banking Education, Conscienctizção and Praxis

Critical pedagogy challenges traditional schooling and what Freire deemed the banking model of education. In the banking model, knowledge is deposited into students, who learn to become passive, unreflective learners. This method of teaching denies education as a process of inquiry, just as it denies the ever-evolving quality of humanity (Freire & Faundez, 1989; Freire & Macedo, 1987; McLaren, 2000).

Freire suggested that authentic learning did not occur with transferrals of information, but rather through acts of cognition (Freire, 2000). In other words, students had to actively construct their own understandings. In order to facilitate this, he encouraged problem-posing. During problem-posing, events and circumstances that are considered normal are called into question.

Such acts push learners to awaken to the politically charged nature of normalcy. This awakening is known as *conscienctização* (Freire, 2000).

There are several other issues integral to critical pedagogy, including reading the world and the word, praxis, and dialogue. Each of these pieces is interwoven with the other, and together they create the conditions for social transformation.

Reading the world and the word. Literacy instruction should not be a series of reading lessons, but rather opportunities to soothe "restless searching" (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire and Macedo (1987) urged educators to stay away from repetitious phrases and lists, and instead provoke students to doubt. Learning to critique societal norms necessitated an awareness of one's own life and circumstances. As such, Freire fiercely advocated starting from the lives of learners – moving from the known to the unknown (Freire, 2005; Shor, 2007; Shor & Freire, 1987).

Critical pedagogy pushes a reflective consideration of the self, society at large, and the interaction between the two. It cannot be pre-scripted, or part of a "ready to wear" curriculum (Freire, 2000). It arises organically from what students express, and what society esteems or despises. Freire urged educators to draw from learners' "word universe" – the concepts, images, and experiences of their world. Lessons should be grounded in their own language, anxieties, demands, fears, and dreams. In other words, students should first read the world, and then read the word – a crucial step on the path to *conscienctização* (Freire, 2005; Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Praxis. *Conscienctização* is a necessary, but not sufficient outcome of critical pedagogy. In order to transform an unjust social order, members must do two things: first, they must perceive their circumstances, and second, they must do something about them. It is this combination, reflection and action upon the world to change it, which Freire called praxis. There is no singular way to enact praxis. In a classroom it may take the form of students learning about

unequal funding for schools, and then becoming involved in community politics to inform the public and help elect politicians who better represent their interests (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007).

Freire (2000) argued that words and thoughts without action were empty and mere idle chatter. After all, societal transformation is impossible without action. Similarly, action without reflection was just action for action's sake. Such uncritical action would undermine any serious efforts toward meaningful and sustainable change. Both action and reflection, each informing the other, are key components of a liberating education.

Dialogue. Another crucial aspect of Freirean critical pedagogy is dialogue. To Freire, dialogue was not a gimmick or a mechanized technique but rather an act of creation (Freire, 2000; Freire & Macedo, 1995; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Shor & Freire, 1987). According to Freire and Macedo (1987), dialogue is knowledge itself. I elaborate dialogue in more detail later in this chapter.

Critical pedagogy is a stance, or a way teachers approach their teaching. Related to critical pedagogy is inquiry pedagogy, an approach to teaching that creates opportunities for students to engage in inquiry-based learning. Although there are some areas of overlap in these approaches to teaching, inquiry pedagogy does not concern itself with social or political structures as critical pedagogy does. In the next section I explain inquiry-based learning and inquiry pedagogy.

Inquiry-Based Learning and Inquiry Pedagogy

In traditional classrooms, learning is considered a transaction that takes place when knowledge is transmitted from an expert (the teacher or the textbook) to the student (Bednar, et al., 1992; Dewey, 1938; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 2000; Nystrand, 1997). This

is the banking concept of education – where knowledge is treated as a gift to be bestowed upon learners (Freire, 2000). In such classrooms, texts are treated as autonomous objects, only in need of decoding, rather than interpretation (Freire, 2000; Nystrand, 1997). But, Freire (2005) argued, "comprehension is not deposited, static and imbolized, within the pages of the text, simply waiting to be uncovered by the reader" (p. 55). Understanding required effort, not passivity, on the part of the learner. Aligned with this belief, he urged educators to abandon the idea of depositing knowledge into students in favor of problem-posing education, described earlier (Freire, 2000). Problem-posing education is itself inquiry; it supports the idea that humans are always evolving. Not in the sense that humans are somehow deficient, but rather that they, like plants, continue to seed and bloom and remake themselves over time. With this framing, we can explore inquiry-based learning.

Inquiry-based learning is often associated with science education (NRC, 1996; Center for Inquiry-Based Learning http://www.biology.duke.edu/cibl/). In 1996, the National Research Council called for a move away from traditional instructional methods toward inquiry methods, through which learners could become more self-directed (NRC, 1996; AAAS, 1993). Inquiry can be thought of as a series of steps, a skill, a project, or a stance (Barron, et al., 1988; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Wells, 1999). One who possesses inquiry skills is able to research topics, and collaborate and communicate with others to advance understanding (Barron, et al., 1988). As executed in science classrooms, inquiry includes: generating questions, designing investigations and planning procedures, constructing apparatus and carrying out investigations, analyzing data and drawing conclusions, and presenting findings (Chinn & Brewer, 1993; Chinn & Malhotra, 2002; Edelson, 2001; Krajcik et al., 1998). White and Frederikson (1998) conceived of inquiry as a cycle, simply stated as Question, Predict, Experiment, Model, Apply.

Although inquiry is often connected to science, *scientific* inquiry is focused specifically on the natural world and is considered a subset of *general* inquiry, which involves problem solving, using evidence, employing logical and analogical reasoning, and making decisions (Welch, Klopfer, Aikenhead, & Robinson, 1981). This notion of general inquiry informs my ideas on inquiry-based learning. Drawing from the Inquiry Group of Project Synthesis, Welch and his colleagues (Welch et al., 1981) described an ideal environment for inquiry learning. To begin with, the teacher must value inquiry and encourage students to take an inquiry stance. He or she is a role model for conducting inquiry while allowing students to pose their own questions and take risks. Students are encouraged to dialogue with each other as valued members of the learning community. Furthermore, there is no need to march or rush through resources with the goal of "finishing" them. The goal instead is to explore what each has to offer and what students can construct from them. Of primary concern is the development of understandings, with time allotted for students to take action, reflect on their learning, engage affectively, and assess their findings and understandings.

In practice, an inquiry-based classroom is predicated on the notion that people are always moving toward something, including a deeper understanding of the world around them. To explore knowledge is to explore life itself, and to affirm one's humanity (Barnes & Todd, 1995; Freire, 2000). An inquiry stance is, at its very core, about wondering, asking, and seeking (Lindfors, 1999; Wells, 1999). Reality, and by extension, knowledge, is never fixed or final and deserves exploration, not simply explanation (Bednar, et al., 1992; Chang-Wells & Wells, 1993). Teachers who enact inquiry pedagogy do not regard learned understandings as fixed possessions, but rather as instruments that support the successful navigation of new avenues in life (Dewey, 1938/1997; Wells, 1999).

In an inquiry-based classroom, the required curriculum is an integral part of each lesson, but teachers realize they are teaching children, not just standards (Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Teachers of inquiry ensure that posed problems are grounded in the present needs and abilities of students, and that they provoke learners to seek new knowledge and new ideas (Dewey, 1938/1997). Teachers who enact inquiry pedagogy are constantly reflecting on that which has happened, is happening, and that which has yet to happen, searching for ways to bridge the three existences into a meaningful experience for their students (Dewey, 1938/1997). In traditional classrooms, previously organized, or what Dewey called "predigested" knowledge, is considered worthy of dissemination as truth without connection to the lives of those who would receive it. On the contrary, inquiry demands interaction between the learner and what is to be learned. Simply put, inquiry requires relevance (Barnes & Todd, 1995).

A true inquiry classroom, one in which learners meaningfully investigate a given topic, is a dialogic space. By dialogic, I mean a learning community wherein all members are equally esteemed, and where dialogue is a necessary tool for learning. At first blush, the inclusion of dialogue may appear redundant. After all, traditional dialogue, or some kind of verbal exchange, is a required component of most classrooms as there is an "intimate relationship between language, learning, and schooling," (Hicks, 1996, p. 1). But the purpose and quality of dialogue facilitated determines whether a learning space is a dialogic or monologic one. This is elaborated in the next section.

Monologic, Dialogic and Dialogue as a Tool of Inquiry

Monologic versus dialogic classrooms are the embodiment of the distinction Freire (2000) made between the banking model (monologic) and problem-posing (dialogic) education.

Below, I clarify the differences between the two. I then discuss dialogue, a key component of both critical and inquiry pedagogy.

Monologic Classrooms

In monologic classrooms, the goal of instruction is the transmission and review of information. According to Nystrand (1997) teachers create a monologic space when they carefully script and ask questions, known as *test* questions, to ascertain what students know. Students, in response, often guess or recall information rather than thinking about it (Nystrand, 1997). Such questions have a singular right answer, and divergent responses are not accepted (Barnes, 1992). Students in monologic classrooms do not initiate lines of inquiry. The teachers direct the topics, sometimes quickly jumping from point to point. Such conversation is choppy, akin to completing a worksheet rather than composing an essay (Nystrand, 1997).

Some monologic classrooms incorporate scripted programs such as *Direct Instruction* (National Institute for Direct Instruction, n.d.), which allow no dissent or conversation of any type. Rather, both the teacher and students follow a script with expected responses to specific questions. In fact, students who respond incorrectly are corrected and the whole group starts over in an effort to program "right" answers into the minds of learners. Not all monologic classrooms rely on such non-negotiable scripts, but many teachers do rely heavily on lecture points or discussion topics restricted by the guidance in the margins of teachers' editions. Scripted or not, in monologic classrooms, the teachers talk while students listen. As Barnes (1992) described, "although there is only one adult in the room, she seems to be talking more than all the children together," (p. 11). Even during recitation sessions, wherein students are called upon to answer questions, the students are sometimes used as supporting characters, offering prompts that allow

the teacher to act out the role of expert, performing crucial lines in a play known as the official curriculum (Barnes, 1992; Nystrand, 1997).

Such classes may be well-organized, but the instruction is often lifeless and students may disengage entirely (Nystrand, 1997). Even if they are physically present, they may be mentally truant (Dewey, 1938/1997). In monologic classrooms, students are not learning to inquire – they are learning to accept knowledge as static, fixed, and timeless (Barnes, 1992; Barnes & Todd, 1995; Dewey, 1938/1997; Freire, 2000; Wells, 1999).

Dialogic Classrooms & Dialogic Pedagogy

Wells (1999), in contrast, argued for all education to be "conducted as a dialogue about matters of interest and concern to the participants" (xi). Like Freire (2000), he believed school should not be about transferring information from here to there. Rather, students should have a personal stake, with opportunities to devise their own theories and test them. The point of school, he thought, was knowledge building – or to advance what was known.

Drawing from Bereiter's work, Wells (1999) explained that dialogic instruction requires progressive discourse – not just sharing answers or information – but making active progress toward new understandings. The difference is the distinction between *explaining* the meaning of a *specific* text vs. teaching students how to *interpret* a *family* of texts (Nystrand, 1997).

To achieve this dialogic space requires teachers to "abandon the security of their roles as authoritative repositories and referees of unproblematic knowledge," (Nystrand, 1997, p. 89). Rather they share the floor, and the expertise, with the other members of the learning environment. Freire (2000) advocated for just such an arrangement when he described teachers becoming teacher-students and students becoming student-teachers. But beyond the sharing of power and expertise, in a dialogic classroom, curriculum is enacted through the sharing or

exchange of thoughts, feelings and ideas. In dialogic classrooms, teachers don't simply echo what students have said; rather they take up student contributions and subject them to discussion and elaboration (Burbules, 1993; Nystrand, 1997).

In dialogic classrooms, conversations take place across modalities. In other words, reading, writing and talking are all connected activities – each one building on the other in a continuous learning experience, or dialogue (Nystrand, 1997; Wells, 1999). Teachers and learners produce and consume texts collaboratively, "become angry with one another, learn what to say and do, and how to interpret what others say and do" (Barnes, 1992, p. 14). In a monologic classroom, students are asked to recall and report on what other people think; in a dialogic classroom, students work to develop and examine their own thoughts (Burbules, 1993; Nystrand, 1997).

In short, the dialogic classroom is an inquiry classroom. At the same time, as a space where teachers are inclined to actively share power and invite students to co-construct knowledge, it embodies key aspects of critical pedagogy. Perhaps the most important strand that connects critical pedagogy, inquiry pedagogy, and the dialogic space such approaches engender, is dialogue. In dialogic classrooms, dialogue is a tool of inquiry, and I explain this more fully below.

Understanding Dialogue as Tool of Inquiry

In a dialogic classroom, language is not used solely to communicate or transmit information or directions (the papers are on the shelf; move your book bags out of the way), but also as a tool for learning (Barnes, 1992; Elbow, 2004; Elbow & Sorcinelli, 2005; Nystrand, 1997). Language as a tool of inquiry is not used merely to express or recite, but also to comment or question (Lindfors, 1999; Wells, 1999). Language makes learning visible (or audible) and

allows ideas to be inspected, questioned, revised and reformed (Barnes, 1992, Burbules, 1993; Freire, 2000, Vygotsky, 1986; Wells, 1999). Thinking is mediated through language (Vygotsky, 1986), and a dialogic classroom creates space for this to take place.

Learners often talk or think aloud when trying to figure something out, or reconsider previously held views. Such talking is not generally smooth or organized. This *exploratory talk* is "usually marked by frequent hesitations, rephrasings, false starts and changes of direction" (Barnes, 1992, p. 28); it comes out in zigzags, rather than straight lines. This back and forth process, or the attempt to create meaning, is dialogic. On the contrary, recitation, which elicits a performance, (Nystrand, 1997) is *final draft* talk. Final draft in speech, not unlike a final written draft, is a "completed presentation for a teacher's approval" (Barnes, 1992, p. 108). It is this exploratory talk that is encouraged in dialogic classrooms. This happens aloud, but related processes can occur silently as well. For instance, Elbow (2004; Elbow & Sorcinelli, 2005) encourages teachers to use writing as a tool for thinking, rather than limiting writing to high stakes demonstrations of learning. In short, not all writing in school has to be a final draft. In this regard, the process of composing can be dialogic.

Freire (2005) extends the idea of composition to reading as well. He framed reading as a *composition* between reader and writer. Bringing her own background and understandings to bear on the present text, the reader negotiates or *composes* a new work. Although Freire spoke of print specifically, this process of composition takes place any time one purposefully interacts with a text, print or not. The classroom is a text. A conversation is a text – as is a song, movie or photograph. A text is a resource to be confronted or examined (Hill & Hannafin, 2001). As in the case of exploratory talk, which is an active attempt to make meaning, hence it is dialogue, *composing* understanding is also dialogue.

Dialogue, then, is an exchange of ideas and perspectives, and can occur internally as well as externally. Dialogue may be conducted silently, verbally, in writing, electronically (via email, text or chat), through dance, visual art, and in any number of other ways. Through dialogue, learners think about, shape and reshape their understandings of a topic or issue. In other words, dialogue is not merely a method for assessing understanding, but creating it. In inquiry spaces, language is used not simply to memorize and regurgitate, but actually to make meaning (Lindfors, 1999). The dialogue itself is both a process and a tool for learning.

When dialogue is leveraged in this way, no single participant (teacher included) is thought to exclusively possess understanding of a particular topic (Shor & Freire, 1987). The topic for discussion (or discovery) metaphorically takes center stage as participants "meet around it and through it for mutual inquiry" (p. 14). Equality in contribution is honored, without a reliance on an overarching and singular truth. Students' language and contributions are always valued.

All members of the learning environment can engage in and contribute to the dialogue, hence learning in a number of ways. Dialogue always presupposes a chain of utterances in which each contribution is simultaneously a response and an invitation (Bakhtin, 1986). Even silence is considered a response and is therefore a contribution to the ongoing dialogue. In this regard, true dialogue is never ending. The teacher in the dialogic classroom encourages ever more links to be added to a chain of inquiry by the myriad voices in the classroom.

These linkages can happen across expanses of time (Mercer, 2008). Classroom conversations may seem to only contain the present moment, but exchanges contain the shared history of the participants. Routines and expectations become a part of the conversation of the classroom, even if they are not explicitly acknowledged. Teachers develop lessons with this

shared history in mind. Through language, the teachers and students make sense of past lessons, and also use language to mediate the current learning. Dialogue then, is cumulative; it draws on echoes from the past to inform the present.

Thinking, responding, rethinking and so on, is a recursive process that is enacted through language (Freire, 2000). This process too is dialogue, albeit internal. These thoughts are also utterances, and continue the dialogic chain (Bakhtin, 1986), even if only within the author's mind. The key is that dialogue, whether conducted internally or externally involves "active response and agentive transformation" (Hicks, 1996, p. 136).

Teachers' manuals are replete with methods to garner student participation in creative ways: clock or elbow partners, numbering techniques, and the like. These and other methods are legitimate ways to encourage student response during group work, but they may or may not lead to true dialogue. Discourse is not dialogic simply because people take turns. It is the active negotiation of meaning, the utterances that engender authentic rather than pre-scripted responses, which makes discourse dialogic (Bakhtin, 1986; Burbles, 1993; Nystrand, 1997).

Teachers can create a dialogic climate in part by the types of questions they ask. So rather than *test* questions that have predetermined answers, teachers can ask *authentic* questions to elicit how students feel and think about a given topic (Nystrand, 1997). Students' answers are then incorporated into the continuing chain of inquiry. Such classroom discussions are not neat. Because they are interactive in nature, they are unpredictable. Teacher and students elaborate on one another's contribution and may even disagree. Through dissent, conflict and negotiation, new meanings are constructed (Bakhtin, 1986; Burbles, 1993; Nystrand, 1997). Using dialogue as a tool of inquiry, learners can reconsider and reshape past experiences and develop new understandings (Barnes & Todd, 1995; Burbles, 1993; Freire, 2000; Shor & Freire, 1987).

Studying Dialogue in the Classroom

How do researchers study dialogue and dialogic classrooms? Quantitative measures do not always tell the tale. When studying dialogue and dialogic classrooms, it is the quality of the interaction between the teacher and the student that reigns supreme (Nystrand, 1997). Similarly, Mehan (1979) explained the need for practical, pragmatic understanding of what is going on in classrooms and Hicks (1996) argued for contextual inquiries in order to truly support teaching and learning. No class is completely monologic or dialogic; each class represents a continuum of possibilities – even sometimes throughout a given lesson. Discussion of some sort is almost assured, but the quality of the discourse, the use of dialogue as a tool of inquiry, and the methods teachers use to create dialogic classes, all provide insight regarding the use of dialogue in classrooms. What follows is a summary of studies in each of these areas.

Quality of Classroom Discourse

Mehan (1979) studied "interactional sequences" (p. 36) in one elementary classroom over the course of a school year. Such sequences performed specific functions in specific places in the organization of lessons. There were directive sequences, informative sequences, and elicitation sequences, noted across nine lessons. The elicitation sequences were comprised of three parts: initiation, reply and evaluation (IRE). The IRE elicitation sequence comprised the majority of instructional time, and is regarded as the traditional discourse pattern found in classrooms.

In the majority of the elicitation sequences noted, the *teacher* initiated and evaluated the students' replies. Mehan (1979) described four types of elicitation sequences: choice (in which students can agree or disagree), product (students provide a factual response), process (students share an opinion or interpretation), and metaprocess (students reflect and are challenged to explain how they know something). In considering the use of dialogue in the classroom, teachers

and researchers can benefit from understanding the types of exchanges that take place. Although teacher-led IRE sequences may dominate classroom conversation, as Mehan postulated, it's not enough to know how many. Understanding the quality of interactions in classrooms allows teachers and researchers to work toward improving those interactions.

Barnes and Todd (1995) sought to study the learning that occurred within acts of communication. In so doing, they also described the types of discourse occurring in classrooms. Compared to more traditional communication and recitation patterns, they discussed four broad categories of moves in collaborative, knowledge-building conversations: initiating, eliciting, extending and qualifying. An initiating move is one in which a new perspective is offered or introduced. Eliciting moves sustain conversation in progress. Such moves may involve requests for a speaker to continue speaking, to expand an earlier statement, to offer support for a stated position, or to give additional information. Extending involves elaborating ideas, following, supporting, or embellishing a train of thought. Qualifying moves, related to extending, discerns nuances and determines how a given idea is applicable to the task. These kinds of moves show the complexity of dialogic transactions that can occur, especially when teachers invite them.

Barnes and Todd (1995) explained that because of the social control teachers exhibit in the classroom and the tacit expectation of *final draft* talk (Barnes, 1992) or right answers, teachers who want to encourage discussion as inquiry must specify this to their students. In other words, teachers must alert students that a range of responses will be welcomed as part of the learning process. This does not mean that all answers as accepted as correct, but rather that divergent answers will not be excluded as the group co-constructs new understandings. In order for knowledge-building, or dialogic conversations to occur, teachers must purposefully create space for them.

John's (2009) exploratory study focused on teacher initiation-student response-teacher follow-up (IRF) patterns, and how they might be modified or at least reconceptualized to better support learning. She studied three multi-ethnic, primary classes, in which as many as 25% of the students were learning English as an additional language (EAL). She wanted to understand both the interaction patterns and quality of student response. Across the classes she found three kinds of patterns: teacher-framed talk, pupil-framed talk, and collaborative talk.

During teacher-framed talk, students provided brief answers to specific questions. In this class the teacher treated the text as static truth that the students needed to learn and understand. Pupil-framed talk, witnessed in the second classroom, was more open-ended in nature. The teacher asked open questions that invited divergent, conversational and personal responses. This pattern assumed that the text was not static and that learners had an important contribution as readers. Collaborative talk was the third type. During this interaction pattern, students offered personal responses, but were then guided to elaborate, extend or refine responses with purposeful follow-up moves. All three teachers used the IRF pattern, but differently. This suggests that the use of traditional discourse patterns can still result in more dialogic instruction. Therefore, researchers should consider new ways of discerning the value of the model.

Schuh (2003) did not consider traditional discourse patterns in her work, but she did study the types of conversations teachers allowed in their classrooms. Specifically, knowledge construction links (KCLs) were the focus of her work. Drawing from a constructivist notion of learning, she looked for opportunities for students to use prior learning in new learning experiences. She operationalized background knowledge that students could potentially leverage for learning as KCLs.

Schuh (2003) studied three sixth-grade classrooms from three different schools in a small mid-western city. The classes were selected because they exhibited varying degrees of learner centeredness: one each ranked high, middle and low, based on a battery employed during an initial observation. To the extent possible, she observed all lessons during a single unit in each class (n=39). She also tried to interview one student after each observation (n=26). Lastly, each class (teacher included) participated in one whole group writing activity at the close of the unit, which she also considered in the analysis.

In one class, presentation was valued over content and attempts to link prior knowledge were discouraged – either through correction or ignoring. In the second class, the teacher was warm and welcoming, and always had clear expectations, but convergent discussions all led to sanctioned answers. Learning in this class was not considered constructing, but remembering. The third classroom welcomed opportunities for sharing. The teacher accepted wide ranges of diverse responses that incorporated personal experiences and elaboration of the topic under discussion. Overall, Schuh found that in more teacher-centered, monologic classes, convergent dialogue was valued. In the more learner-centered, dialogic class, KCLs were encouraged through divergent dialogue and purposeful opportunities to use prior knowledge in learning. This suggests that teachers who want to encourage students to make connections from prior knowledge to new learning, must invite and welcome a multiplicity of viewpoints.

McVittie (2004) studied the discourse of seven, eight, and nine-year-old students, investigating the dialogic construction of self that goes on in classroom conversations. She considered her research from a perspective of discourse communities wherein participants feel they have a right to speak and their input could qualitatively impact the conversation. Using this framework she said discourse participants must also agree to the conventions and values of a

given community, which actually authors a new self in the process (Taylor, 1985; 1991). Students, for example, can assume the identity of an active learner, a passive student, or a teacher in a given exchange. She argued that analyzing student discourse patterns while also considering their identities throughout a given conversation provides educators with new ways to consider, and if necessary restructure learning environments, to be more beneficial for learners.

The aforementioned studies all pivoted on discourse analysis and the categorization of teacher and student moves in educational conversations. The investigators sought to understand the *quality* of the verbal exchanges in classrooms, reasoning that doing so could help teachers create more effective opportunities for learning. They found that even so-called traditional discourse patterns held promise for dialogic exchanges, but such exchanges had to be structured and encouraged by teachers. Not only must teachers *invite* diverse responses, but they also have to *apprentice* students into the more dialogic ways of communication. The next few studies sought to understand the circumstances under which dialogue was used as a resource.

Facilitating Dialogue as a Tool of Inquiry

Damico and Rosaen (2009) studied a whole class dialogue with fifth grade students and their first year teacher. They examined verbal discussion as both a pedagogical approach and a curricular goal. Arguing against the reliance on basals and the diminishing use of dialogic pedagogy in classrooms, they posited that teachers and students can collaborate and produce knowledge through sustained dialogue. The investigators sought to frame classroom discussion as a type of pathway – either a clear and direct pathway, from one point to another clearly noted destination, or more of a scenic route, where the journey is equally important to the destination. They were most interested in this second type, called an epistemological pathway, and how knowledge can be co-constructed along that pathway.

In the lesson under investigation, the teacher facilitated a conversation initiated by one student's question: "Do we even know that the definition [of freedom] inside that [dictionary] is real?" (p. 1164). Several students chimed in their questions about freedom, including emotional and physical freedom, and thus began the class discussion. The teacher treated the knowledge as fluid and invited all members of the learning community to participate in the discussion. In this case the dialogue was used as a tool to uncover meaning in the text, and simultaneously to better understand and learn about the other members of the class. The destination was an understanding of freedom, but the pathway was an indirect one, which involved starts, stops and revisions all embraced as critical to the evolution of the shared knowledge. According to Damico and Rosaen (2009) teachers who would like to conduct such discussions, would benefit from inquiring into the nature of knowledge and knowing. As a result, studies such as this, that highlight the creation of knowledge through dialogue, can be valuable.

Rodrigues (2006) studied the importance of context and dialogue in a high school science classroom. She reasoned that the idea of teaching in student-relevant contexts depends, in part, on students understanding what is expected of them. In other words, it's not enough to use creative or familiar examples. In this case, the teacher believed the lesson to be related to student interests and thought this could be used for motivational effect. Students worked in groups to develop a list of familiar fabrics and fibers. The lesson was videotaped, audio recorded and transcribed. The subsequent data were analyzed for turn taking behaviors and other verbal interactions.

Rodrigues realized that beyond merely reciting and writing, the students began to engage each other as resources to negotiate meanings of ambiguous terms. For instance, they asked each other if fiber related to dietary fiber or textiles. In this case, she found that teaching in context

was not enough if it was not done with a teacher and student shared view of purpose, a change in the nature of the dialogue, and a chance to compare science views with personal accounts. In other words, it's not enough to use relevance as motivation, but teachers must also combine what students know and correct misconceptions and/or develop new conceptions in light of established scientific norms.

Mercer and Sams (2006) investigated how teachers guide the development of language as a tool for reasoning. Through conversation, elementary aged students were able to develop mathematical reasoning and problem-solving abilities. The researchers reasoned, much like Rodrigues (2006), that students often don't have a clear sense of the task they are expected to perform, including what makes a discussion a fruitful and productive one. As a result, Mercer and Sams argued that students obviously needed to learn mathematical knowledge, but also needed guidance in the ways of using language to inquire into mathematical concepts. Thinking Together®, an intervention developed to support the cooperative reasoning of children, was implemented to help students recognize language as a collaborative thinking tool, to help them develop the ability to use language for thinking alone and with others. When gathering data, the researchers considered the teacher-to-student interaction as well as the student-to-student conversations. Qualitative and quantitative measures revealed that children who engaged in Thinking Together® improved their math achievement over control groups. They found that the teacher's role in facilitating these productive conversations was key.

Although some teachers leveraged dialogue as a resource in organic ways, other teachers used specific interventions to enhance the ability of students to use dialogue productively. Like the first set of studies, these studies also highlighted the role of the teacher in maintaining a culture of dialogue. Specifically, teachers who believe knowledge *can* be created through

dialogic exchanges purposefully incorporated this belief in the way they structured whole class and small group discussions. These studies revealed that teachers should guide and support students' use of dialogue as a resource, clarify misunderstandings revealed during dialogue, and maximize students' opportunities to learn from each other. The next section summarizes studies that focus on the creation of dialogic spaces.

How to Create Dialogic Classrooms

Möller (2002) volunteered in a teacher's class to help her engage children in authentic dialogues about diversity. These conversations were to be facilitated through in-depth explorations of children's literature. The pair spent several months preparing students for successful experiences and developed a setting in which all participants felt welcomed to discuss and interrogate controversial issues including race, religion and violence. The two argued that students need teachers to teach, model and encourage students to question prejudicial beliefs. Importantly, students also needed support to move away from a reliance on traditional recitation patterns.

Often in small groups, the teacher and researcher invited questions from students, taught them how to access important themes in literature, and pushed them to go beneath superficial understandings through rigorous and sometimes difficult discussions. The teachers also shifted support as needed, sometimes moving to the peripheral of the discussion, other times acting as a peer, and still others, teaching and clarifying or inviting marginalized voices into the conversation.

Möller (2002) and her colleague found that trust was a key ingredient for success. Students had to trust each other and their teacher; on the other hand, the teacher had to trust herself, the children's literature and the students. Reminiscent of Fecho, Collier, Freise &

Wilson's (2010) assertion that dialogic spaces are not safe *from* but safe *to* engage in challenging discussions, Möller found that a safe space was not "always pleasant or free of tension, (p. 476)." She concluded that classrooms were complex and adaptive spaces, and that they didn't have to feature traditional recitation patterns, nor leave students to fend for themselves. Like Barnes and Todd (1995) suggested, teachers can disrupt traditional classroom discourse, but had to do so purposefully. In other words, the teacher's stance is paramount in determining the types of conversations, and subsequent learning, enacted in the classroom.

Sometimes teachers who have a strong affinity for dialogic pedagogy are not able to implement it successfully. This was the focus of Wiltse's (2006) investigation in one culturally and linguistically diverse junior high class in western Canada. A large percentage of students, 45%, were of Cambodian descent, while 30% were Vietnamese or Chinese. Another 15% were First Nations students. The rest were native Canadians. Her research considered a Communities of Practice (COP) perspective that included the social complexities of the learning environment. She observed one teacher's class twice weekly over the course of the school year. She also interviewed 11 self-selected students, two other teachers in the school, as well as the principal.

In an initial interview, the primary teacher participant stated how much she loved teaching through discussions. As a result, the researcher began observations in grand anticipation, hoping to see more dialogue and fewer initiation-reply-evaluation sequences (IRE) typically conducted in classrooms (Mehan, 1979). Wiltse was "baffled" (p. 207) not only by the absence of IRE sequences, but also the absence of any teacher-constructed, whole-class discussion at all. The teacher seemed to be open and welcoming, and generally learner-centered. She had positive connections with her students. Still, there was silence. While silence can be a productive part of a dialogic classroom (Anttila, 2007), it can also be a disruptive aspect.

The teacher admitted later she felt powerless to overcome the cultural norms to which students ascribed, so she purposely avoided dialogue even though she thought it was a good strategy. Her students didn't ask questions when given the opportunity. They didn't speak up when invited to do so. Their conversations, usually socially oriented, were often in their native languages – a practice discouraged at school. The students tended to segregate somewhat by ethnicity, but more so by gender. As a result, even the occasional small-group work proved challenging because students would not discuss things with opposite-sex peers. In the end, Wiltse (2006) was led to conclude that it isn't enough to study the teacher's role in the success or failure of classroom discourse, but also the ways students themselves impact the experiences. Refusal to engage with the teacher or with peers, even when invited to do so, shapes what is possible.

These studies, like the first two sets, show that dialogic classrooms do not manifest accidentally. Teachers must purposefully shift discourse patterns in order to move away from more traditional recitation structures. However, we also learned that teachers are not the only ones with the power to shape classroom discourse. Students can also impact the degree to which classroom instruction becomes dialogic by their willingness and/or ability to engage as requested. Teachers may create space and opportunities for dialogue, but students may insist upon more traditional patterns regardless. Dialogic classrooms must be created through the willing participation of all members of the learning community.

Dialogue is not limited to what occurs in classrooms while teachers are teaching (i.e., dialogic pedagogy). Teachers may go beyond encouraging dialogue within their classes and also adopt a broader dialogic stance on their classroom practices. In other words, teachers can also hold a dialogue with themselves. In this case the dialogue is an ongoing conversation with past

pedagogical choices and their outcomes, along with current thinking. This notion of a dialogic stance on dialogic pedagogy is reflected in the studies below.

Dialogic Stance & Dialogic Pedagogy

As part of a school-university partnership, Adler, Rougle, Kaiser & Caughlan (2003) worked with 70 teachers in 18 middle schools regarding their enactment of dialogic pedagogy. Distinguishing between monologic and dialogic discourse in classrooms, the researchers explained, "Dialogic discourse refers to true interaction among a variety of voices" (p. 313). They aimed to provide intensive and ongoing support to help teachers disrupt traditional discourse patterns in favor of more divergent dialogues.

Teachers participated in a university-led summer institute followed by biweekly group meetings at the school level during the academic year. University researchers also conducted classroom visits and held follow up conversations with individual teachers. The teachers worked with university facilitators to analyze and alter their discourse patterns. Researchers noted the number and the pacing of questions teachers asked in a given time period, showing teachers where they could create space for fewer questions and more elaboration of answers. Through collaboration and modeling, the teachers learned to incorporate more dialogic strategies in their lessons, although it was not an easy process. Through selected cases, the researchers found that teachers had to negotiate inner conflict, or wobble (Fecho, Graham, & Hudson-Ross, 2005), as they moved away from monologic practices toward more dialogic interactions. Their research suggests that changing traditional, monologic practices is a difficult undertaking; although it is possible when there are multiple and continuous foundations of support.

Salcedo (2009) worked alone to study her practices. She was not a general classroom teacher, but rather assisted selected students who were English language learners (ELLs). As

such, her study was not about classroom dialogue, but about student-teacher dialogues; specifically dialogues sustained through writing. She wanted to better support ELLs with their writing while at the same time creating a meaningful opportunity for writing. Using a reflective journal and dialogue journals, she simultaneously studied herself and inquired into her students' lives. "Dialogue journals are written exchanges between teacher and student that take place in a designated notebook on a regular basis" (p. 441).

Students in Salcedo's (2009) study participated in different ways and with varying frequencies. Entries in the reflective and dialogue journals occurred approximately three times a week. Some students asked questions, others told stories, and some practiced their English. She responded to each in kind – with answers, stories of her own, or celebrations of their accomplishments. Their dialogue allowed her to learn not just about how to support their writing, but how to support them as people. Her self-study also created new questions about her teaching practice related to the ways she connects with learners, encourages their writing, and even how the data collection itself impacted the learners' engagement with the task. Moving forward, Salcedo planned to continue the use of dialogue journals, perhaps with changes as warranted, using them to better understand her students as well as her practices as a teacher.

Anttila (2007) a dance teacher, worked with third graders over the course of two years. She, like Salcedo (2009), conducted a self-study of her teaching practices, but she was striving to enact a more dialogic pedagogy during face-to-face class meetings. She characterized dialogue as an embodied act in dance and argued that dialogue takes place *within* each person as well *between* participants. Throughout her time with the students, she worked to identify aspects of interaction that facilitated dialogue. Her pedagogy, at once structured and directive, later came to incorporate more freedom and play to embrace and expand the dialogic potential of the class.

Anttila (2007) noted many things about dialogue including the fact that facilitating dialogue did not always mean a gentle tone of voice, and that silence and internal, nonverbal dialogue were often necessary conduits for external dialogue. She found that there are many qualities that can lead one to understand and facilitate dialogue, but these qualities are not easily organized. There are multiple pathways to increased dialogue and there is no series of conditional steps that will guarantee a desired outcome. She also found that dialogue can be framed as a "network of relationships in which each individual in a group builds multiple dyadic relationships within the group" (p. 54) which then has implications for how the teacher interacts with the students and with each other. Lastly, she found dialogue was not simply about the current moment, but also about purposeful construction of student interactions. In other words, she, like Mercer (2008) believed that facilitating dialogue was as much about what happened *prior to* the dialogue, as the moment itself.

In this last set of studies, teachers simultaneously studied their own practices while striving to enact a pedagogy of dialogue. The findings reiterate the earlier studies and show that moving from monologic to dialogic practices requires effort. Further, dialogue is messy – there are many ways to encourage it and it looks differently from student to student and context to context. Across the studies, the teachers believed knowledge *could* be constructed through dialogue; they purposefully strove to disrupt traditional patterns, even if they weren't always successful in doing so; they encouraged students to use each other as resources, sometimes giving specific guidance or modeling how to do so; they built upon the shared history of their time with students to move dialogue, hence learning, forward; lastly those who studied their own practices of dialogue learned from past choices and reconsidered their practices over time.

By definition, no dialogic classroom can ever be exactly the same as another. Even the same classroom, from day to day is likely to be more or less dialogic depending on teacher purposes, teacher and student contribution, and any number of factors. Freire (1997), an advocate for dialogic methods of instruction, urged educators to adapt methods to suit their needs and circumstances. In this regard, we should not expect a vision of precisely how dialogic classrooms look, nor does my research attempt to describe such.

This study was designed to examine the instructional decisions teachers made as they created and leveraged dialogic opportunities. In this research, I explored the stories teachers told about their practices regarding their use of dialogue as a tool of inquiry. Chapter Three delineates the methodology I used to undertake this work.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore what happens when teachers facilitate dialogue in standards-based literacy classrooms. I investigated four questions during this study:

1. What happens when teachers take a dialogic stance on their practice?
2. What happens when teachers facilitate dialogue?
3. What happens when teachers scaffold dialogue?
4. What happens when teachers create a dialogic learning environment?

Theoretical Stance

This study was grounded in critical theory, which considers issues of power and justice (Kincheloe, 2008). Critical theorists challenge positivist notions of neutrality, which favor the status quo, and instead urge consideration of the complexity and politically charged nature of human interactions. Life is experienced through multiple lenses, including the intersections of race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, religion, and other considerations (Brady, 1994; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2000; McLaren & da Silva, 1993). Each of these impacts the way we see the world and the way we engage with the world, affording us more or less power, depending on context (Brady, 1994; Kincheloe, 2008; Weiler, 1994).

Society, and by extension schools, exists within often unrecognized dynamics of power. Critical theorists maintain that the culture of dominant groups is reified as universal knowledge (Siegel & Fernandez, 2000). Critical educators, then, assume all education is political, regardless of the appearance of neutrality (Freire, 2000; Freire & Faundez, 1989; Giroux, 2007).

Accordingly, they work to make visible those often invisible power structures, and help students learn to recognize and critique them (Cooper & White, 2007; Freire, 2000; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). Critical educators often engage in praxis (Freire, 2000). Praxis is simultaneous reflection and action, where each shapes the other. It is a dialogue, a form of ongoing inquiry, which both informs and is informed by action.

The notion of inquiry sometimes conjures up ideas of a project, or a specific set of steps to conduct scientific research. However, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) theorize about *inquiry as stance* – a position educators can take to interrogate and improve their own practices, produce valuable knowledge for the community of teachers, and blur the boundaries between theory and practice. Engaged in praxis, critical educators take an inquiry or dialogic stance on their own classrooms; in so doing they consider their own power as well as the diversity of their students' positioning in the learning environment. Their reflection then informs their pedagogical choices.

Grounded in this notion of self and social critique, this qualitative study attempted to investigate how teachers facilitated and scaffolded dialogue as a resource as told through their own narratives of practice (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). This study employed narrative inquiry as the primary methodology, which I explain below.

Narrative Inquiry

To understand narrative inquiry, it is first necessary to understand narrative more broadly. Bruner (1985) distinguished between paradigmatic and narrative modes of thought. He explained that paradigmatic thought seeks "context free and universal" explanations, while narrative thought seeks those that are "context sensitive and particular" (p. 97). Narrative research focuses on the narratives, or stories people live and tell. The stories can be long or short, oral or written,

elicited or spontaneously shared (Chase, 2005). Stories are arguments in which we learn to understand humanity through a lived experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Story is a suitable form of expressing understanding arising from action. Since teaching is intentional action, and teachers learn from their practice, stories provide access to teacher knowledge (Carter, 1993).

In constructing stories, authors attempt to convey their intentions, selecting details and using conventions of a given culture (Carter, 1993). Stories capture "the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness" of a given classroom, rather than the more traditional atomistic approaches to studying what goes on in classrooms (Carter, 1993, p. 6). In other words, stories can capture the big picture of the learning environment.

What then, is narrative inquiry? It refers to both the type of experience studied (stories) and the method of study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In one form of narrative inquiry, researchers construct and share narrative or storied understandings of events or circumstances in time. For instance, in their work with teachers at Bay Street School, Clandinin and Connelly (1996) observed individual teachers and their broader school environment. They unearthed the stories of decisions teachers made in their individual classrooms, the cover stories teachers told others about their practices, and the stories or views teachers and administrators had about each other.

In the case of one teacher, Stephanie, Clandinin and Connelly (1996) learned about and interpreted her actions, or her story: "We wrote about Stephanie as living and telling her teacher story with a plot line constructed, in part, around an image of classroom as home" (p. 25). At the same time, they also found the stories other teachers told about Stephanie, making note of the disconnect between the two: "Stephanie's classroom is messy…Stephanie focuses too much on

celebrations," (p. 25). Clandinin and Connelly contextualized Stephanie's story as one of many that made up the collective story of Bay Street School. In this kind of narrative inquiry, the researchers "settle in," absorbing the landscapes and the characters, and construct the narrative to *tell the story* of what they are investigating.

My study mirrored the work of Richert (2002) in which she worked with teachers to conduct a different type of narrative inquiry. While Clandinin and Connelly's (1996) work was to investigate, or inquire into another's storied experience, in Richert's work, the teachers told and inquired into their *own* stories. The participants in her study wrote stories of specific experiences over the course of a school year. The focus of their inquiry was equity pedagogy. "Our goal was to engage our teacher colleagues in professional learning that would lead toward excellent and equitable outcomes for all children" (Richert, 2002, p. 50).

In Richert's (2002) study, two teachers channeled their concerns and frustrations about culture and language into their narratives, and as a result, began to see more clearly the causes of these frustrations. Writing the narratives was one of a three-part process of writing, reading and sharing. Writing the stories gave teachers a chance to focus on their practice outside of the hustle and bustle of the classroom. Reading the stories later gave teachers the opportunity to reconsider assumptions they had made while teaching or while writing about their teaching. The opportunity to look systematically at their practice illuminated the causes of feelings they were previously unable to accurately explain. Lastly, sharing their narratives with other teachers allowed them to dig further into their work and develop richer understandings (Richert, 2002).

In the narrative inquiry reported by Richert (2002), the teachers wrote their own stories of practice then collaboratively shared and reflected upon them; they *inquired* into their own

narratives. This is the type of narrative inquiry I undertook: one in which teachers told and interrogated their own stories of their enactment of a dialogic pedagogy.

Research Site

This study was conducted in a county in the Florida Bay Area. Over 48% of the district's students are from low-income families and 58% are non-White (Florida Department of Education, 2007). Annually, the Florida Department of Education assigns a letter grade to each school district based on student achievement data; the district in which my study was conducted was graded an A district. It is one of the ten largest districts in the nation.

The research took place in Sun City Elementary School (pseudonym). This mid-sized school of about 500 students has a diverse population, with slightly less than 50% of students classified as Black, Hispanic, Asian, or multi-racial. The largest minority group is Hispanic, comprising over 25% of the student population. Twenty-nine percent of the students are on free or reduced lunch, and nearly 10% are English language learners.

Participant Selection

This study examined the pedagogical practices of four teachers. I chose four teacher participants for three reasons. First of all, it was important that the sample be small enough to allow time for building rapport and for immersion in the classrooms. Because of the lengthy and personal nature of this research, it would have been extremely difficult to have a larger number of participants and be able to work with them in meaningful ways.

Secondly, a wealth of knowledge can be gained by exploring practices with four participants. For instance, we could learn if there were comparable challenges and opportunities across classrooms, and if dialogue was facilitated and/or scaffolded in similar or different ways. Being able to look across participants provided a valuable point of triangulation.

Lastly, it was important to acknowledge that participants were free to withdraw at any time. I wanted to help safeguard against an unexpected termination of the study due to lack of participants. Four participants created a context for rich data collection, but also allowed for attrition and the maintenance of a sufficient number of participants to complete the study.

The participants were identified through an affiliate of the National Writing Project (NWP) (see http://www.nwp.org/ for more information). Teachers who have completed the local NWP's summer institute have demonstrated a commitment to inquiring into their own practices, improving their own writing ability as well as their ability to teach writing to others. They are also teacher leaders, supporting other teachers in their efforts to study and improve upon their own practices. The teachers connected to the NWP have a vested interest in the writing process; this was important given the narrative inquiry approach employed.

In a face-to-face meeting with the local NWP facilitator, I described my study and she brainstormed a list of potential participants. At her suggestion, I sent emails to several teachers in different districts. Four teachers at Sun City Elementary enthusiastically replied to my query. I set up a time to meet with them face-to-face to discuss my study in more detail.

During that initial meeting with the teachers, I explained my ideas and fielded their questions. All committed to participate. One of the four teachers, Betty, introduced me to an additional teacher, Paula, who had also participated in the NWP. Paula found my study interesting and I invited her to participate if she chose. She immediately agreed. Prior to the launch of the study, Betty withdrew her participation for personal reasons, leaving me with four teachers: one third-grade, two fourth-grade, and one special education teacher. All four of the participants are White females. I share more about their backgrounds below. All names mentioned are pseudonyms.

Participant Profiles

Natalie

Natalie was a 27-year-old fourth grade teacher and was Sun City Elementary's 2009-2010 Teacher of the Year. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, along with an ESOL endorsement. At the time of the study, she was working on her Master's degree in Reading. Natalie became involved with the NWP through the recommendation of another teacher at Sun City Elementary. The 2009-2010 academic year was her fifth year of teaching, although not all of her experience has been in the same grade level; she has also taught Kindergarten and third grade as well. Sun City's fourth grade was somewhat departmentalized; Natalie taught Language Arts to her own students, and co-taught Math and Science with Stacey, another participant in the study.

According to Natalie, it's crucial to her success as a teacher that she knows as much as possible about her students – including their home life, interests and dreams. She explained that she incorporates this information into her teaching. In her own words, "My goal in teaching is to number one make a difference in *at least* one child's life each year, and to grow as a professional each year."

Stacey

Stacey, 32, taught fourth grade, and the 2009-2010 school year was her second year doing so. She taught Language Arts to her own class, and also co-taught Math and Science with Natalie. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education and a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. She is also certified in English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Prior to teaching fourth grade, Stacey taught third grade for three years, and served as a writing specialist for four years. She was Teacher of the Year at another school, and also won an

award for diversity. Stacey said she was encouraged to participate in NWP through a district mentor who promised the experience would change her life. Stacey agreed it certainly has.

Mandy

Mandy was a 62-year-old veteran teacher, with 25 years of experience in grades K-4. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Education. During the study, she taught third grade. Her family was very important to her, and during several observations I noted that she mentioned either her husband of 37 years, or one of her three adult sons.

According to Mandy, Social Studies is one of her favorite topics, and she weaves it into reading lessons and her conversations whenever she can. She said she became involved with NWP through a friend who knew Mandy loved to read and write. Mandy shared that she hopes to get her stories published, and to earn a Master's degree in Florida history.

Paula

Paula, 66, has a Bachelor of Science degree with a double major in Elementary Education and Special Education. She also has a Master's degree in Special Education, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction with a major in Learning Disabilities. She has taught in several states as well as overseas in Germany and Italy, although the bulk of her career has been in Florida. She spent many years working as a private psychologist, tutoring and testing children as young as four through seniors in their 70s. She has also taught at all levels K-12. During the study she taught fourth and fifth grade students with varying exceptionalities.

Paula first heard of NWP through an online short course while overseas. Eventually she relocated and connected with an NWP teacher (Betty), with whom she co-taught in an inclusion setting. Their conversations led Paula to attend the local NWP affiliate's five-week summer

institute. In her own words, Paula says, “I am a life long learner and have always loved education and going to school. I feel like I will never be too old to learn.”

Data Collection

Relevant data for narrative inquiry include field notes, journals, interview transcripts, stories, letters, autobiographies, teaching and learning resources and photos (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). For this study, I collected data through narratives, interviews (referred to as oral inquiries) and observations. The narratives served as the primary source of data, while the oral inquiries and the observations served to inform my analysis of the narratives. I explain the collection and analysis in the sections to follow. A summary of the data collection and analysis schedule appears in Appendix A.

Narratives

Narratives, or stories, were a key component of this study. All participants were asked to write two stories of their teaching practices during the study. These stories were then treated as data and subject to analysis (Drake & Sherin, 2006; Richert, 2002) via an oral inquiry process (Fecho, et al., 2009; Himley, 2000).

Teachers were asked to identify and write about an episode wherein they facilitated dialogue to help one or more students develop new understandings about a topic (see Appendix B: Narrative Protocol). They could choose a successful encounter, one in which the dialogue seemed to have the intended outcome; or an unsuccessful encounter, one that was problematic in some way. The dialogue in question did not have to be a conversation, and could have taken place in any number of ways. They were given a minimum of three weeks to write the narrative prior to submitting it for the oral inquiry meetings. Two of the teachers sent me their first drafts, asking for feedback, wanting to make sure they were on the right track. I was hesitant to direct

them too much, but I realized these were writers who were thinking like writers. This was a draft and they were asking for support.

I reviewed them as requested and was glad I did so. The first to finish had trouble writing an actual narrative; her first attempt resembled a research report. The second to finish wrote an exceptionally long account, full of information that was important in some ways, but didn't speak to the prompt. After a little guidance, they were able to revise and write works much like the protocol described. All four participants submitted one narrative in January and again in May, for a total of eight narratives. We used the same protocol for both sets of narratives.

Interviews – Oral Inquiries

Interviews are efficient ways to understand a participant's perspective (Maxwell, 2005). The oral inquiry sessions were treated as interviews and were semi-structured in nature (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Himley, 2000; Fecho et al., 2010). These sessions primarily included the guided analysis of the teacher narratives and the natural discussion that ensued as a result. These discussions also included tentative plans about future practices.

We allotted a two-hour block to discuss and analyze the narratives. This was ambitious given my previous experience with the process, but I wanted to be respectful of the teachers' schedules. Teachers in this district are regularly granted early release days to work on whatever they need to (professional development, team meetings, lesson planning, parent conferences, etc.). (See Appendix C: School District Calendar). We decided these days would be best as the teachers were already scheduled to be at work and it would not conflict with other activities after school.

During our first meeting, I introduced the teachers to the oral inquiry process. Natalie volunteered to go first. She read her piece aloud while the rest of us read it silently. I provided

the teachers with four questions to consider as they read each narrative. The questions were designed to bring their attention to ideas of power, the use of dialogue in the classroom, and areas of connection to their own experiences. These questions were distributed on a hand out, and they were also projected on a screen through a laptop computer (See Appendix D: Oral Inquiry Protocol).

Once the read aloud was complete, we jotted notes based on the questions. Next, we went around, one at a time, verbally sharing our responses to the questions. Natalie, whose work we analyzed, typed notes as they were projected for all of us to read. We repeated this process for Stacey, who volunteered to go second. During the first meeting we were only able to complete two of the four narratives. We decided all four teachers would write a second narrative later in the school year, and we would analyze Paula and Mandy's narratives at that meeting. We planned to schedule a third round of narratives and oral inquiry, but we were not able to coordinate schedules for an additional meeting.

Observations

Observations provide a window to people's behaviors in context, and are useful for descriptions of settings, activities, and participants (Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). I believed observing the teachers would provide context as well as a point of triangulation for their narratives of practice. I conducted a total of 30 observations, approximately 32 hours, across the four teachers. Observations took place primarily in the teachers' classrooms and lasted the entire lesson (between 45 to 90 minutes). Paula, the special education teacher was the exception, as she often co-taught with another teacher. In some instances I observed her in a general education teacher's room. In other cases, she pulled students into a resource room for individualized support.

During observations I took detailed field notes, a primary tool of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I focused on each teacher's positioning and pedagogy, as well as any resources they or the students used including conversation, silence, writing, movement, technology, and digital resources. I took descriptive notes, and I worked to capture each teacher's verbatim quotes whenever possible.

I conducted an initial observation of each teacher in December. The purpose of this was to begin to understand their teaching styles and determine a mutually convenient observation schedule. After the first observations, I decided to observe Reader's Workshop in Stacey's and Mandy's classes, and Writer's Workshop with Natalie and Paula. Considering teaching style and scheduling, I felt I was able to get the richest data with this arrangement. During Reader's or Writer's Workshop, the class period is divided into time for a focused mini-lesson, guided practice with students, and individual practice (Atwell, 1998). In Writer's Workshop specifically, there is also time allotted for conferencing with students about their writing, as well as time for students to share excerpts from their work to the whole group. When teachers conduct individual conferences, the other students work independently on their writing. Similarly, during Reader's Workshop, time is allotted for small group guided reading sessions (Fountas & Pinnell, 1991) about specific reading strategies. During these sessions the rest of the students read silently, go to the library, or complete reading related assignments.

I only observed the teachers during normal class periods, so I did not observe during standardized tests, field trips, or special activities, which tended to occur at least once a month. It is also important to note, Stacey had an intern during the spring, and she was required to teach full time for several weeks in a row. As a result, I planned my observations during times the intern was not taking responsibility for the class. There were also interruptions in all of the

observation schedules due to personal reasons (e.g., participant illness, family emergencies). Spring Break, including the period leading up to it, was another interruption. The teachers felt the students were too restless and asked me not to come again until after the break. All observations were completed prior to the second oral inquiry session. A summary of the research questions and the types of data collected for each appears in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Questions and Collected Data

Research Questions	Collected Data
What happens when teachers take a dialogic stance on their practice?	○ Narratives ○ Oral Inquiries
What happens when teachers facilitate dialogue?	○ Narratives ○ Oral Inquiries ○ Observations
What happens when teachers scaffold dialogue?	○ Narratives ○ Observations
What happens when teachers create a dialogic learning environment?	○ Narratives ○ Oral Inquiries ○ Observations

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing part of the study. Creswell (2007) represents the data analysis process as a spiral: "One enters with data of text or images (e.g., photographs, videotapes) and exits with an account or a narrative. In between, the researcher touches on several facets of analysis and circles around and around" (p. 150). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest that as you complete this review, ask, "What is it that I do not yet know?" (p. 163). Regular review of the collected data between field visits helped inform subsequent observations. It also helped me consider any salient points for discussion during our oral inquiry meetings.

I employed critical theory (Kincheloe, 2008) as a lens during data analysis. Critical theory considers issues of power and justice (Kincheloe, 2008). Critical theorists contend that even seemingly neutral and objective ideas are political (Freire, 2000). Life is experienced from a variety of positions, and such positioning is contextually driven (Brady, 1994; hooks, 1991; Weiler, 1994). Critical theory as a lens can, and in this study did, bring a variety of teacher practices into stronger relief. Critical theory inspired questions that centered around the teacher's positioning during instructional time; how teachers supported or challenged the status quo during the presentation of lessons; the types of knowledge, languages or student experiences that were privileged or marginalized; student exposure to mainstream and counter-narratives; and the strategies teachers used to engage students in discussion and inquiry.

Narratives

There were two ways I analyzed the narratives. One was the oral inquiry process, which helped elucidate themes across the narratives. I describe that analysis in more detail in a later section. The other way I analyzed the narratives was through a thematic narrative analysis as conceptualized by Riessman (2008). In this type of analysis, the researcher can consider the narrative as a whole or the individual stories and anecdotes often contained within a larger story. For the purposes of this analysis, I considered each story in full.

I read each narrative once, trying to understand the story as a whole. Then I read each narrative a second and third time, mindful of teacher positioning, student positioning and key events. I asked myself three questions about each narrative:

- What are the key events being narrated?
- What dialogues are taking place in this narrative?
- What does this narrative say about teacher's stance?

For each narrative I wrote a three-part analysis driven by those questions. It included a brief summary, a short description of the dialogues, and my interpretation of the teacher's stance, using examples from the narrative. In the next section I describe teacher's stance in more detail, as it was my key unit of analysis for the narratives (Riessman, 2008).

Teacher's stance. It is widely held that "What teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what children learn" (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996, p. 5). Researchers have studied and written on the qualities effective teachers share, and they include: a good background in general education, high quality preparation in content and pedagogy, the ability to communicate well, and strong organizational skills (Nieto, 2006). However, when considering the creation of a classroom in which students are encouraged to use dialogue, other dispositions must be considered. I especially sought to consider aspects of teacher power and positioning relevant to a critical theoretical stance.

It is impossible to create an exhaustive list, but hooks (1994), Nieto (2006), and Freire (2005) contribute much to the discussion. According to hooks, students crave an engaged pedagogy; one which values student expression. This kind of pedagogy can occur in classes where teachers allow themselves to be vulnerable and fully present, while encouraging students to take risks. Nieto describes qualities such as a sense of mission, solidarity with, and empathy for students, courage to challenge the mainstream, improvisation, and a passion for social justice. Lastly, Freire delineates qualities for progressive teachers including: humility, lovingness toward teaching and students, the courage to fight and love, tolerance to learn from and respect differences, the ability to be decisive, security and confidence based on competence, and a joyful outlook on living, or acknowledgment of being human.

Many of these qualities are embodied in how teachers feel about and embrace their teaching, but do not have clear corresponding actions. What, for instance, does courage look like with respect to teaching? Any number of things can comprise courageous action. Freire's (2005) admonition to be loving, and specifically to teach with an "armed love," (p. 74) has no direct counterpart in the world of form. There are many actions that teachers who cultivate these ideas *could* employ.

Freire's (1997) clear guidance was that teachers and researchers should take his ideas and adapt them for our own contexts and purposes. For the purposes of this study I was interested in identifying some of these intangible qualities as actions that can be revealed in teachers' stories about their practice. To this end, I compiled a list of the aforementioned qualities and sorted them by commonalities. I then considered what each cluster of qualities might look like in action. As a result, I created the following indicators of stance: asking authentic questions, embracing human expression, problem posing, exploring teachable moments, revising practice through praxis, and sharing power to guide from the side. Such indicators are not the only, nor even the best way to approach teaching, but they do encourage dialogic participation. Further, they are indicative of a critical theoretical perspective. Each is described below.

Asks authentic questions that encourage divergent answers. Participants in the learning environment are historical beings with a past, present and future. These experiences all differ and are worthy to be uncovered and shared in the course of classroom dialogue. Teachers who practice humility realize they don't know everything and simultaneously realize their students know more than nothing (Freire, 2005). As a result, such teachers are open to welcoming diverse voices. They go beyond simply posing test questions for students to answer rightly or wrongly (Nystrand, 1997).

Expresses herself as human and encourages students to be themselves. Related to the first point, teachers make reference to their lives outside of the classroom and invite students to do the same. A range of topics is sanctioned as worthy of discussion and a range of cultures are embraced and welcomed. Diverse languages are not shunned, but are used as assets for learning. Teachers demand respect among all participants, creating a learning environment that in which it is safe to engage in authentic discussions (Fecho et al., 2010).

Poses questions to help participants rethink assumptions about society, life. While authentic questions allow students to contribute their own thoughts about texts, there are other kinds of questions teachers can pose. Questions that challenge mainstream texts, or that push learners to find silenced or privileged voices, go a step further. Problem-posing starts from the frame that texts (books, conversations, movies, etc.) are not neutral, and helps viewers actively deconstruct what was once considered normal (Freire, 2000; Jones, 2006).

Explores and embraces teachable moments. Teachers rightfully begin units, lessons, or even individual conversations with a plan – some vision for how the learning will unfold and how they will support the process. However, due to any number of factors, student readiness or interest chief among them, teachers may have to release tightly structured plans and go down an unintended path (Dewey, 1938/1997; Nieto, 2006). This could mean changing or discarding today's lesson, allowing tangential conversations to take place, changing the direction or content of a unit, or any number of outcomes. A teacher who embraces teachable moments is a risk taker.

Studies and revises teaching practices over time. Teachers who reflect upon their practices go beyond describing the current state of affairs. They contextualize today's practices, comparing them to yesterday's or tomorrow's content knowledge or pedagogy. In other words, they situate their current practices in a continuum of time; they denote changes from the past, or

plan for change in the future. Of course, not all practices need to be altered or discarded. In that case, a reflective teacher also comments on what is working and suggests plans to continue effective strategies going forward.

Shares power to guide from the side. The teacher who encourages the use of dialogue as a resource does not assume she owns the knowledge and is the sole expert in the learning environment. She creates opportunities for students to assert their own agency and actively take responsibility for their own learning. She may position herself as an observer, listener, or coach. She makes it clear that students are valuable contributors to the classroom.

In summary, I considered the following attributes of teacher's stance authored in the narratives:

- Asks authentic questions that encourage divergent answers
- Expresses herself as human and encourages students to be themselves
- Poses questions to help participants rethink assumptions about society, life
- Explores and embraces teachable moments
- Studies and revises teaching practices over time
- Shares power to guide from the side

I analyzed each narrative individually, but the narratives were also analyzed via a whole group oral inquiry process, described below.

Interviews – Oral Inquiries

The oral inquiries were an important link between data collection and data analysis. For each meeting, the teacher whose narrative was being discussed took notes. After the first meeting, I compiled all the notes from our discussion into a bulleted list. I then coded this data inductively, line by line, for themes. When possible I used *in vivo* codes, or codes that came

directly from the language in the data. In other cases I used other descriptive labels to highlight what the data seemed to say (Charmaz, 2006).

My initial list contained 36 codes. I read through the data several more times, connecting similar ideas when possible and in so doing, eliminated redundant codes and renamed others. My final list contained 10 major themes. Major themes were those that occurred five or more times, and were directly related to teacher's stance or the learning environment. I organized the themes under one of two categories: *teacher as facilitator* or *the dialogic classroom*. I then wrote memos (Charmaz, 2006) to more fully elaborate the themes. Finally, I looked for evidence in the narratives and in my observations to elucidate each theme. See Appendix E for codes and sample memos.

I repeated this process for the second oral inquiry meeting, using the previously identified themes when possible, and developing new themes when necessary. Again there were 10 major themes, fitting into the categories of *teacher as facilitator* or *the dialogic classroom*, although three of the 10 were new. These findings are reported in detail in Chapter Four.

Observations

My field notes included descriptions of lessons demarcated by time – usually in five to ten minute intervals (Appendix F: Sample Field Notes). I conducted a thematic analysis of the observation data (Charmaz, 2006; Ezzy, 2002). I used the themes I developed from the oral inquiries as a guide, and read through the data, coding each chunk of time. I looked for evidence of identified themes, but I was also mindful of new themes that may have been more apt for a given portion of a lesson. I used the themes from the first oral inquiry session to code the first set of observations – those conducted prior to the first meeting. I used the all of the themes from the first and second meetings to code the remaining observations.

Reporting Findings

Validity and Reliability

Good qualitative research is trustworthy. Trustworthiness is related to three notions – internal validity, reliability and external validity (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Mathison, 1988; Merriam, 1995). Trustworthiness does not point to an objective, universal, knowable truth, but rather it is socially constructed, made and remade over time in a particular context (Mishler, 1990). With respect to internal validity, readers may ask: *Are the data credible? Do they align with reality?* One of the ways I ensured validity was to observe multiple times in each teacher's classroom. I also shared some of the findings of my observations with individual teachers, orally and in writing, at various points during the study. Additionally, the teachers wrote narratives that were interpreted, in part, based on my experiences in their classrooms, as well as based on their shared knowledge of each other's practices. These strategies all supported the internal validity of the research.

Questions readers may ask to interrogate the reliability of a study include: *Does this research make sense? Do the conclusions follow from the data?* Triangulation, submersion in research and disclosure of researcher bias are methods that enhance the trustworthiness of a research study, and they were all factored into this design (Mathison, 1988; Patton, 2002; Peshkin, 1988). I was submersed in the research in that I worked with the participants and observed them from December through May, or approximately 5 months. I completed over 30 hours of observations, including multiple observations for each teacher. Conducting several observations of the same participants also served as a point of triangulation. Further, the oral inquiries and the field notes served as points of triangulation to the narratives. Lastly, I disclosed my subjectivities in a statement which appears later in this chapter.

The third facet of trustworthy research is external validity, which addresses how generalizable the results can be to other, similar circumstances. In qualitative research, the reader is challenged to determine how applicable a study is to his/her case or research, but such a determination is facilitated through detailed descriptions. Furthermore, for inquiry-based researchers, it is not appropriate to apply experiment-based criteria to studies, which have very different aims (Mishler, 1990). Providing a very rich, thick description is critical (Creswell, 2007; Mathison, 1988; Patton, 2002). I have attempted to include detailed descriptions of all aspects of the study from the research design to the results. Moreover, the reporting of my data includes the full narratives written by teachers, excerpts from the field notes, and data from the oral inquiry meetings as well.

Limitations of the Design

My research design incorporated several methods of data collection. Even with multiple methods, no design is perfect. During the study, I observed each classroom regularly, but not daily nor throughout entire days. As a result I was not able to capture all of the daily decisions and embedded routines that help illuminate how the participants facilitated and/or scaffolded dialogue as a resource. However, over time, the regular snapshots of practice helped highlight a larger portfolio of decisions teachers make in these areas.

This study required teachers to write stories retelling their own practice. This was risky, as teachers may have reified their biases in the retelling of events. Furthermore, the events they chose to write about may not have been the ones that seemingly shed the most information about my research questions. I addressed the first concern during our inquiry sessions, as the teachers and I analyzed and discussed the narratives. I pushed them to contextualize and interrogate our assumptions. This did not *eliminate* concerns of bias, but it did mediate them in part. The second

concern was minimized with some guidance in the narrative protocol and in my regular communications with the teachers. As a researcher, I was interested in understanding what happens when teachers attempt to facilitate dialogue as a resource. I believe that also included their own interrogation of their teaching practices. I was more interested in studying their instructional decisions and subsequent implications rather than deeming particular episodes more "worthy" of study than others.

I used critical theory to frame this study and to analyze my data. Using critical theory challenged what some may consider best practices and subsequently rendered some choices problematic. Further, there are many ways to define and study dialogue in the classroom. My research focused on its use as a tool of inquiry, emphasizing the dialogic nature of constructivist learning environments. Together, these ideas privilege more dialogic moves over more monologic ones. In short, teaching practices that might otherwise have been considered good or excellent, were called into question. This does not mean that questioned choices were bad ones; rather, it means that they did not fall within the category of dialogue described in this study.

Lastly, this design focused on teachers but not on the students. This study was an exploratory one, focused on the moves teachers make to facilitate dialogue in standards-based classrooms. Effectiveness, student perception and other concerns could have informed the study, but also would have enlarged it. My goal was to keep a narrow scope, limiting the breadth while maximizing the depth. In future iterations of the study, I can be more inclusive of students' voices.

Ethical Considerations

As this research involved human participants, I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct the study. I openly disclosed the purpose of the study, and sought the

informed consent of all participants (see Appendix G: Consent Form). Pseudonyms were employed for each participant, and participants were able to withdraw, at any time, without penalty.

When the participants were digitally audio-recorded, they had the option to request that I refrain from doing so. Digital audio files were and are kept on an external drive, in a locked location to which only I have access. They will not be publicly disseminated. Identifying references were removed from field notes and collected documents. Identifiers are kept separate from the data, in a locked location accessible only by me as the researcher. Any reports written as a result of the data will refer to the participants by pseudonym only.

The nature of narrative research demands other considerations. Negotiation of the research and entry into the field must be handled with care (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The rapport between the researcher and practitioner is key. As the researcher, it was important for me to help promote a feeling of equality between with participants. One way I accomplished this was to explain my work as clearly and as often as possible to participants; doing so not only helped the participants to understand the work, it also helped me see what was both interesting and possible in a given context. Additionally, entering the field with goals was important, but equally important was encouraging the teacher participants to set goals rather than imposing mine onto them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Just as entering the field was done with care, exiting the field was also handled carefully. I avoided an abrupt departure, planning with each teacher a withdrawal date. The majority of our communications transpired via email, even during weeks I did not observe or meet with the teachers (See Appendix H: Sample Communications). At our last meeting I thanked them for

their participation in the study. I have continued to communicate with them individually as needed.

Subjectivity Statement

Qualitative researchers are the instruments for data collection. As a result, subjectivities of the researchers impact how questions are framed, how data are collected and analyzed and how reports are written. Subjectivities "have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). Disclosing the researcher's biases helps readers to better understand limitations of the study.

This study was grounded in critical theory, which had several implications for my work as a novice researcher. First of all, I needed clarity regarding my ideological and political stance (Bartolomé, 2007; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Macedo, 1997). I needed to work to ascertain my beliefs and subjectivities, and also to make them transparent to those with whom I planned to work.

Secondly, I needed to approach my work as an equal partner with my research participants (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). My goal as a critical researcher was not to position myself as a more knowledgeable outsider, but rather as a learner. Rather than doing research *on* teachers, I was a mutual inquirer who learned *with* teachers as they told, investigated, and learned from their own stories (Shor & Freire, 1987). That being said, the goal of critical research is to both understand *and* critique. My role in the partnership included questioning, with a critical eye, the pedagogical choices and classroom events that took place. With this in mind I worked with teachers to both explore *and* challenge their practices.

Thirdly, I needed to consider the emergent nature of my research. Although I may look to educators' narratives and empirical studies as guides of how to approach my work, I realized that my methods were not likely to be exact replicas of other projects, and indeed should not have been. Critical researchers should develop methods grounded in their own contexts and purposes (Freire, 1997, 2000; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Macedo, 1997).

Lastly, as a critical researcher studying learning environments and teacher pedagogy, I was mindful of the complicated positionality of teachers and students as well as myself (Brady, 1994; Weiler, 1994). Neither teachers nor students nor researchers are monoliths (hooks, 1991) and all deal with sometimes competing agendas of self-interests, expectations of parents, and the requirements of administrators. Additionally, we have socially constructed identities that include race, class, gender and other factors, which may influence our work.

I am a middle class Black American woman, and I have been able to read as long as I can remember. I am naturally curious and often questioned things from a young age. However, never was I taught to question or critique in school. Questions were given to students, and answers were found in the text, not the other way around. In terms of the social order, it was invisible to me – much like a fish in the water in which it swims. We never talked about it in school, and we didn't talk about it at my home. I thought things presented as normal, were just that – normal. As a result of these experiences, I grew up, indoctrinated into the status quo, never questioning the structures that privileged or marginalized me in any way.

As a graduate student I was exposed to critical theory and its relatives, critical pedagogy, critical literacy, and critical inquiry. I suddenly felt undereducated, as though everything I had learned was somehow minimized because I had been taught to accept knowledge on its face. I

felt absolutely cheated as a learner, and worse, as an educator, and determined critical theory was to be a core component of any research or teaching agenda I would enact moving forward.

I want all learners to question and transform their realities in ways that suit their interests, and I assume that most teachers who learn about critical theory, particularly critical pedagogy, will want the same things for their students. I assume that many teachers are overwhelmed in the high-stakes environment, and that they are not sure that a pedagogy of dialogue is possible, given time constraints and expectations. I further assume that the educational system, which is imperfect, can only be improved with more teachers learning about and teaching from a critical stance, which includes inquiring into their own practices.

In this chapter I elaborated the methodology I used to examine how four elementary teachers used dialogue as a resource in standards-based literacy classrooms. In Chapter Four I present the results of my study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS: FACTILITATING THE DIALOGIC CLASSROOM

In this chapter I present the primary data – the narratives – as well as themes identified within and across the narratives. The narratives were written and analyzed by the participants twice during the year – once in January and once in early May. Two narratives were shared and analyzed at the first oral inquiry meeting, and two at the second. In total, each teacher shared one narrative and all four teachers participated in the oral inquiry of each. The results are presented in two parts – the findings from the first set of narratives and observations up to and including the January oral inquiry meeting; then the findings from the second set of narratives and observations up to and including the May oral inquiry meeting. Throughout the chapter, I use excerpts from the observations as well as the narratives to explain the themes generated as a result of the oral inquiries. There were also additional themes that arose solely from my observations; these are noted and explained.

The chapter is further organized in the following way: For each participant I first provide my perspective of the classroom as I saw it across multiple visits. These descriptions include quotes that were excerpted from my field notes. I then present the shared narrative in full as written by the teacher. In the cases where something needed to be clarified or elaborated, I did so using [ ] to denote the addition. After each narrative, I present an individual analysis with descriptions of the dialogues within the narrative as well as a description of the teacher's stance as revealed in the narrative. Lastly, I share and illustrate the themes from the data. It is important to note, each of the teachers in this study made choices along a continuum from monologic to

dialogic. Critical theory helped bring their choices into stronger relief. Critiques of teacher moves are not disparagements of their teaching, but rather serve to highlight distinctions between more monologic or more dialogic points of view.

I begin with Natalie and Stacey, the participants who shared narratives at the initial oral inquiry meeting. What follows is a description of their classrooms, their stories in full, and the analysis of each. All names are pseudonyms.

Natalie

My View of Natalie's Classroom

"I love this part – it grabs me and tells me why you are excited." It only takes a few moments in Natalie's classroom to hear many statements like this one. She compliments and praises her fourth graders on their writing, giving them specific reasons to be proud, or clear feedback upon which to revise their work.

Natalie is Sun City Elementary School's 2009-2010 teacher of the year, although she lowers her head, as if embarrassed, if you mention it to her. She's quick to say she is simply blessed to be doing what she loves. She is five years into her career and says this class, although the most motivated so far, is also the chattiest.

Her walls are covered with the evidence of writing lessons past – chart paper filled with hints, lists, and key vocabulary. New charts are added and old ones are taken away based on what is most relevant during a given week. The floors are the honey blond wood that runs throughout the building. Tennis balls on the bottom of chairs minimize both the scuffmarks and the noise when they are moved. Students sit in clusters of four with green supply buckets resting in the center of each group. These buckets are overflowing with writing utensils, scissors, crayons, and the like.

A kidney table is stationed in the back right corner, while the teacher's desk sits in the back left. Like most of the other classes in the building, a table in the front of the room holds a regularly-used ELMO document camera and a projector. Natalie's white MacBook sometimes occupies the table as well, although I rarely saw her incorporate it during lessons. One wall is comprised of windows. The vertical blinds are open during my visits, and sunlight brightens the room. Bookshelves under the windows contain labeled buckets of books; nearby are rounded butterfly chairs and a large carpet for students to use during independent reading.

In Natalie's class, writing time is truly a workshop. Regardless of topic, each mini lesson begins with a read aloud of literature, during which she "reads like a writer" to uncover the day's objective. She usually displays the literature via the ELMO so students can read along with her. After the reading they launch into a conversation. Natalie does not lecture, but instead involves students as much as possible, pushing for diverse ideas and examples based on their personal experiences. Whether students seem stuck or just to make sure everyone is able to contribute, she encourages them to use each other as resources. "Turn and talk to your neighbor for one minute. Talk about what the moment was and how the vivid verbs helped you feel that way."

Once the allotted time elapses, she cues students their time is up, usually by humming the cartoon ditty *Shave and Haircut*; the students offer the final two beats. Holding them accountable for their paired discussions she has everyone share out. "What is the vivid verb you found and what did that do for you as a reader?" She elaborates on student contributions and regularly asks them to unpack their answers. "Crept. That's a good one! Why is that vivid?" Or, "Sneaked. What does that tell us as a reader?"

These kinds of conversations are par for the course. In one series of lessons the students examined and wrote poetry. "Turn and tell your neighbor what kind of plant you'd be...What's

the connection?" she demands. "Tell me why. Not just that you *like* the flower, but what's the *similarity* between your flower and your life?"

After their mini lesson, which also includes modeling of actual writing, the students get 30 to 45 minutes to write independently. During this time Natalie circulates to each group of students. Although she prefers the students to use their time writing or thinking rather than talking, she and the students are relaxed. She sits with each cluster and enjoys a good laugh while discussing their work. When done, she heads to another cluster, only to be flagged down by a student with a serious writing dilemma. She responds to each student as they need support, even if it sometimes involves interrupting one conversation to tend to another.

While students complete independent work she also conducts *Star Interviews*, a district approved protocol designed to improve student writing. During these conversations, Natalie provides individual guidance on a recently submitted piece of student writing. She offers specific points of praise and feedback, asking students to build upon the successes in their work. In one such meeting she gushed, "I loved that you focused on just one moment of the day and how you were eating. You didn't just say this is what you eat, but you showed me what was going on. I loved how you said what your mom told you to do." She continues in this way until she gets to a problematic area. She discusses the weak section and allows the student to begin revisions while sitting beside her to get immediate feedback. The other students are working, prodded by Natalie's occasional withering looks or admonitions to be quiet please.

They end each workshop with a few students sharing the day's writing, and additional encouraging words from Natalie. "I love that you said that! Because, remember we talked about as authors we have that contract with the reader. We're starting to develop a relationship with

our reader. You show yourself through your writing. You're telling them about your personal life." Natalie regularly encourages students to evolve as engaged learners and authors.

Above, I presented my overview of Natalie's classroom, based on several weeks of observations. Below is Natalie's narrative, presented in full.

Natalie's Narrative

Music plays softly in the background as fourth-graders allow their imagination run free on paper. Heads pop up once in a while to gather a deep thought, then quickly back down to get it on paper. I walk around and praise each student as they try so hard to create a masterpiece. This is my cue that it's time to start pulling students to take a closer look at their writing.

Conferencing is so precious because it is the time where the light bulbs go off, which is rewarding for both me and the student. Eyeballs follow me to the back table, hoping their name will be called next. I look into my stack of papers to see the lucky one I put on top the previous day for the next "star interview." Ah…he is so close to proficiency I think to myself. I call Victor and he perks up a bit (the most excitement he shows is a slight smirk and asking if he should bring his portfolio). Impatient ones get a look of disappointment when they don't hear their name called. I know there is a lot to discover under my shy brown-eyed little guy and I know his personality will surface before the year comes to an end.

I smile at him as he studies his plan I lay in front of him. I like to always praise first then build on strengths. I depend on my students to select where he/she believes the writing needs some improvement. "Nice plan," I compliment him. "I like how you wrote your topic at the top with each idea circled to give you direction in your writing. Let's see how this helped you stay focused." I flip the page, center it between the both of us, and have "the author" read me his piece.

He positions himself to the place he can read best and excitedly shares the first sentence, "It was New Years Even morning and I went to eat my favorite cereal, Captain Crunch. After a few minutes, I was back in bed resting for about one to three hours…" This opening of a setting description is followed by a lot of good ideas. However, I am a bit disappointed when he takes me from one idea to the next. He finishes his last word and anxiously looks up, waiting for feedback.

"You have such great ideas! I would love to hear about them all, but the unfortunate thing is you only have 45 minutes to tell me everything I want to know. You're trying a bit too hard. Let's make this easier. I would like for you to go back to your plan." I watched as he carefully turns his writing back to where it all began and redirects his thinking. "Let's look here. You included all your ideas in your story so good job following your plan. What idea jumps out to you the most?"

I watch as he re-reads his plan about his favorite celebration. After about a minute, he points to the moment of playing miniature golf with his Dad. I agree with him that that was one I would love to hear more about. I ask him to make that his topic and write more specifically about that one time. To help guide this thinking, I asked an open-ended question: What about this time makes it your favorite event of the day?

This turns into a quite a story when he proceeds to tell me he accidentally hit his Dad in the ankle with his golf ball. I applaud him that he now found his new topic, Mini Golf With My Dad. Victor answers "I can write a story on just that? That's easy." I smile because I know Victor just discovered what it means to pick small topics (something I have been teaching all year). Victor picked up his pencil and asked if he could go write about his experience playing

miniature golf. He walked with more pep than I have ever seen back to his seat and immediately got writing. He did it…he got it…all because of the dialogue between us.

My Analysis

In this section, I share the results of my analysis of Natalie's narrative. I begin with a brief summary of her narrative. I then describe the dialogues that are taking place within it. Lastly, I discuss characteristics of teacher's stance revealed in her narrative.

In Natalie's retelling, we see a seemingly successful learning episode. Natalie begins this episode with the goal of helping her student, Victor improve his essay. That's the primary purpose of *Star Interviews*, and this conversation appears normal in that regard. She compliments him on his writing and soon provides specific guidance about a problematic area. The two discuss his work, with Victor offering ways to improve it. Natalie authors a happy ending – she smiles and he exclaims the task before him is easy, belying a confidence in his ability.

Throughout the narrative, many dialogues occur; the most obvious is between Natalie and Victor, a conversation in the present moment. In this conversation, the object under investigation is Victor's work. Natalie pushes Victor to revisit his writing, in effect asking him to conduct a dialogue with his piece. Through his rereading of it he finds a kernel of an idea, miniature golf, about which he can author a new story. Victor shares the story of the moment in question, both dialoging with that past time and place and simultaneously rewriting the story in his verbal retelling; his identity as a son transacting with his identity as a student. In short, this conversation was not just between the teacher and her student, but also between the student and himself, between the student and his paper, and between the student and his future paper.

But fundamentally, what does this story say about the teacher's stance in facilitating dialogue? Early in the story, the teacher introduces herself as one who cares about creating an encouraging environment for her students:

> *Music plays softly in the background as fourth-graders allow their imagination run free on paper. Heads pop up once in a while to gather a deep thought, then quickly back down to get it on paper. I walk around and praise each student as they try so hard to create a masterpiece.*

She opens the narrative with ambiance (music) coupled with words of praise for hard workers. Once she prepares for the conference, she acknowledges her power to choose the "lucky" student, even as the not so lucky ones, disappointed, continue working. She considers the chosen student and now implies her role is that of a *miner* – one who will help the student reveal his true self: *I know there is a lot to discover under my shy brown-eyed little guy and I know his personality will surface before the year comes to an end.* Her goal then, is not to fix or even to change him, but to help him to be and show more of himself.

She begins the *Star Interview* with words of encouragement. Up until this point, she is positioned as the traditional teacher, albeit one who wants a warm environment for learning. She then disrupts the traditional hierarchy and invites the student to help lead the proceedings: *I flip the page, center it between the both of us, and have "the author" read me his piece*. Victor reads as invited, but then reciprocates by seemingly inviting the teacher to give feedback. *He finishes his last word and anxiously looks up, waiting for feedback.* At this time Victor turns to her for guidance and support, in effect, taking ownership for his learning. Rather than moving to dominate the exchange, Natalie maintains her positioning on the side, coaching him to reconsider his work.

In this negotiated space she again looks to him to make decisions: *What idea jumps out to you the most?* This is an authentic question – it does not assume one right answer. The student is free to pick whatever he feels is the best choice from among many. Moreover, those options were authored by him in the first place, further attesting to the authentic nature of the question.

Victor reads and thinks to find the best way to approach his revisions with additional coaching from Natalie: *What about this time makes it your favorite event of the day?* This authentic question leads to its own story, but also to the resolution of the original problem Natalie hoped to solve through the conference – the fact that the student had written about too many ideas:

> *This turns into a quite a story when he proceeds to tell me he accidentally hit his Dad in the ankle with his golf ball. I applaud him that he now found his new topic, Mini Golf With My Dad. Victor answers "I can write a story on just that? That's easy."*

Victor was able to be himself – in this case a son who has fun with his father – and leverage this history into an assignment for school. Within this exchange is a teachable moment. Although Natalie mentions early that Victor needed to limit his ideas, she allowed his answers to her open-ended questions to dictate how she would help him understand this topic. Through their discussion, he told a story that she was able to link to the day's lesson. This wasn't pre-scripted; rather than starting with a mini-lesson on "choosing small topics," she conversed with Victor to help him find one from his own life. *Victor answers "I can write a story on just that? That's easy."* Although he began with a broad problem of too many ideas, he ended seemingly realizing how to choose and write about more focused ideas.

In this story Natalie seemed a facilitator of dialogue. She was a coach, but in order to enact this function, she actively disseminated power to Victor. The two shared power as he took

an active role in his own learning. Natalie gave him opportunities to make important decisions that would shape his paper, based on his own understandings and ideas. She welcomed a discussion of his real life experiences and sanctioned them as appropriate for schoolwork. Natalie as the expert had a goal, but not one right answer in mind; as such there was room for their conversation to truly be dialogic.

Stacey

My View of Stacey's Classroom

Stacey's room is cheerful. In the back right corner, just in front of the teacher's desk, float a bunch of smiley-faced yellow balloons. Prominently displayed posters answer questions such as "How do readers choose books?" and offer helpful advice and mottos including "Merge new information" and "Reading is Thinking." Just to the left of the teacher's desk sits a kidney table, used primarily for guided reading lessons.

Like the other rooms in the school, this one betrays its age. The wooden floors are the same honey blond. Although shiny, they are worn in. It mirrors Natalie's room in many ways: windows comprise an entire wall and the students' desks are arranged in clusters of four with supply buckets in the center. Each group is a team, and their names are listed on the board: Purple Panthers, Squishy Things, Xtreme Pythons, Purple People Eaters, Cinnamon Chili Peppers. They have tally marks depending on how many points they've accumulated for good behavior.

In this room, Stacey is the boss and there is no mistaking it. Her booming voice is confident and she minces no words with her fourth graders. No time is wasted as she transitions from various aspects of the Writer's or Reader's Workshops. Like most workshops, she begins with mini a lesson. Students are pushed to engage right away. "Okay we are talking and writing

today about dialogue – how to use it purposefully in writing. Turn and talk to your shoulder partner and figure out what dialogue is. I wanna hear everybody talking!" Before long she calls them together using the now familiar *Shave and a Haircut* tune. The students automatically hum the response, two bits, and await the next set of directions.

Stacey places *Rules of Dialogue* on the ELMO for all to see and she asks students to share what they know about dialogue. In search of the correct response, she acknowledges it once it's given. Students practice their newly learned skill until Stacey is satisfied they're ready to move on: "Everybody put your pencil down – we're done with that. Everybody put your eyes up here." They are to sit in listening position – eyes on the teacher, bodies still. They have plenty of time to incorporate new skills into their writing as Stacey circulates to support those who need the extra help. Students are expected to work wisely, meaning without talking. Quiet students or groups can earn "dollars," while students who talk may be charged them.

Once a day, a resource teacher enters to support Stacey, who has seven English Language Learners (ELLs) in her room. According to Stacey, the students all speak English pretty well now, but their original languages are Chinese, Haitian Creole, and Spanish. This is not typical of the grade level; most of ELLs are clustered in one room so they are able to get the additional support from the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher.

At the beginning of Reader's Workshop, Stacey often calls students from their desks to gather on the large rectangular carpet on the floor. She then performs a read aloud of a short text or leads a shared reading where all students have a copy of the text in their hands. Either way, lots of discussion is interspersed between the pages: "Turn and talk. Try to make sense of it all – the cow, the explosion, and the sign on the wall." They engage in extended banter about the

characters, their own lives, or questions students pose, although students are not expected to answer each other's questions; the teacher moderates and responds to the various concerns.

After their carpet time, the students are often assigned a reader response activity – a task wherein they must summarize, critique, or draw a response to the reading they have just completed. Stacey explains, modeling if necessary to make sure students understand what she expects: "We've done this before when we pull out the facts of historical fiction. We're going to do that and also make responses as well. Responses are not just wow, that's amazing. Responses need to be specific – like a question that you're having – a why, or a how. Or maybe it's a connection…not just generic like wow!"

The students work independently while she calls small groups for guided reading. They may complete the reader response, take an *Accelerated Reader*® test, go to the library, read silently, or add a comment to the fourth grade wiki started in response to their reading of *Three Cups of Tea*. All of which should be done with voices turned off. During the guided reading, she may ask students to mark interesting or confusing passages with wiki sticks or listen to students whisper-read individually to monitor their progress and provide them extra support as needed.

Although she runs a tight ship, she and the students have a good rapport. One day she announced that the students would complete a reader response after a shared reading and they emitted a collective sigh. After a brief pause she gave an enthusiastic "Yay!" Everyone giggled and got right to work.

Above, I shared my overview of Stacey's classroom. In the next section I present Stacey's narrative in full.

Stacey's Narrative

As part of a social studies unit and "Pennies for Peace" fundraising project, my class just finished reading *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson. The book is a non-fiction novel of his adventures building schools for poor villages in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Halfway through reading the book, we got to the part where Greg is helping build schools in the Middle East at the same time in history when the attacks on America and the World Trade Center occurred. When we got to this part of the book, we had to stop for much discussion in order to help the students build background knowledge on the War on Terror. I was surprised to find out that many of the students did not understand who our troops are fighting or why they are even fighting.

Many of them were under the impression that we were at war directly with Afghanistan or Iraq. "They attacked us! I don't think that Greg Mortenson should help them build schools when we are war with them! Whose side is he on?" one of my students blurted. It was after this comment that I realized that they needed to not only read this book, but also discuss this part of the book in detail in order to truly understand what happened and why.

The next day, we read on to find out that a group called Al Qaeda was responsible for the attacks on America. "Why would someone want to get on a plane that they knew was going to crash?" Shayna asked. All of their heads nodded in agreement. "Yeah, why would they kill themselves to kill us?" another student repeated. I paused, thinking that this was a very big question that required a very big answer.

Wanting to pull it out of them rather than just to give them the answer, I asked, "Well, let's think about what we know….Why is Greg over there in the first place?"

"Because they are very poor and don't have schools," Marcus replied.

The book had also mentioned that a gang of young boys, called the Taliban, were trying to overthrow the Afghan government. I knew that my students could relate more to a gang than a terrorist organization, so I used that for comparison.

"And why do people join gangs?" I prodded.

"Usually, people who join gangs live in poor neighborhoods and drop out of high school and stuff," Mackenzie answered.

"That's right. A lot of people in other countries (such as Afghanistan and Pakistan) do not have a good education. They do not have as many job opportunities as we do. They do not have a lot of money. They don't think the same as we do because their lives are very different. They believe that they have a purpose. These two groups are called terrorist groups. And our country is trying to stop them from future attacks."

"Ohh! So we are at war with Taliban, not the regular people who live in the villages?" Shaun responded.

"Yes, and Al-Qaeda. But we are NOT at war with the regular people who live in Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iraq." I explained.

I decided to leave it at that for now. The next few chapters described average citizens who had to flee their villages because of bombs being dropped too close, and Greg helping citizens get to safety during the first few weeks of the war on terror.

****** (Several days later)

We were gathered on the rug reading chapter 19 in *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson, where Greg was presenting to Congress his mission of spreading literacy in the very same countries where terrorism had cultivated, and we stopped again to discuss in depth the

message. (In the book) one of the U.S. Senators said, “It’s great that you are helping to educate the people of the Middle East, but we are trying to protect an entire nation.”

Frustrated, Greg replied, “Don’t you get it? This war will be won with books, not bombs!” I knew this was a big message in the book and stopped and reread the line for emphasis – one of the many ways I guide students to determine importance of events within a book. Then I asked the students to explain what the statement meant. Obviously, this was metaphoric language – so I gave a few seconds of wait time before soliciting a response. One by one, hands started to rise. I called on Shaun first. “I think it means that if we teach them to read, that’s how we will win the war.”

“You are very right,” I replied. But I wanted them to understand this even more deeply. This very well might have been one of the most important messages Greg had in this book. “But why… how is teaching them to read going to win a war?” I asked.

Hands were still in the air. I heard a few words being whispered…education, literacy, terrorists. I remember thinking what an amazing discussion it was. As a teacher, I live for moments like this. Getting to apply something important from what we read to the real world. Learning not about reading, but about life. Here we were, not just discussing a character in a book, but discussing how to win the war on terror.

Still searching for a deeper response, I call on another student, Kelsey. “Because using bombs isn’t doing anything. It’s just killing innocent people. But if we teach them to read, they will be smarter.” She was very passionate about her response and it stirred something inside me to hear such passion in her voice. I was proud of her. Of them.

“Exactly, Kelsey!” I reply. “Educating them will help them. But we still haven’t fully answered the question. How will educating these people end the war on terrorism?”

I look out at the students, pausing again before calling on someone. I see a few confused looks, along with a few confident hands in the air. Knowing that I have the best chance at a detailed answer with one of my above-level readers, I call on Mackenzie.

"Well, because, if we educate the kids, then eventually they will grow up and go to college, so they won't want to join gangs and bad groups like Al-Qaeda because they have a future. Then if no one joins the groups, then there won't be any terrorists." She stated confidently. "But that would take a long time!" she added.

"Who agrees with Mackenzie?" I ask. All hands go in the air. I smile inside because I am so proud that they understand such a big idea, and because they understand the importance of education. I end the lesson by summarizing the discussion and we stop for the day.

My Analysis

Stacey's story is about an extended conversation – one that took place across several days. During a shared reading of a non-fiction novel, she and her students engage in whole class dialogue that both uncovers what students don't understand, and also serves to help build new understandings. Throughout the conversation, students were able to share opinions and ask questions, even when they may have challenged the "story" being told by the text. Moved by their contributions, the teacher takes time to elaborate on areas providing confusion and dissonance.

At first glance, this appears to be an experience rife with meaningful dialogue. A deeper look reveals this is a teacher who maintains a traditional stance, although she makes space for student input. In this episode, the overarching dialogue is one between Stacey and her students, with the text as the object of inquiry. Stacey leverages her prior history with her students,

exposing the temporal nature of dialogue (Mercer, 2008), and chooses concepts (for instance the idea of gang) to which they can relate.

She allows the students to drive the conversation, embracing a teachable moment due to their lack of understanding:

> *When we got to this part of the book, we had to stop for much discussion in order to help the students build background knowledge on the War on Terror. I was surprised to find out that many of the students did not understand who our troops are fighting or why they are even fighting.*

Her surprise implies the chosen text was rich in terms of learning opportunities, although perhaps it was not chosen based on student input or a prior needs assessment. This is further evidenced as she explained: *It was after this comment that I realized that they needed to not only read this book, but also discuss this part of the book in detail in order to truly understand what happened and why.* In this sentence, the teacher not only reveals students had little role in the choice of text, but she also asserts her position as the expert *and* privileges the author's intent – meaning the students are expected to "get" what the author was trying to give. Certainly Stacey's choices are not bad ones, but they are not the only ones she could have taken. Rosenblatt (1938) posited reading as a transaction between the reader and the text. She argued that the text does not hold all meaning absent a contribution from – and transaction with – the reader. Such a positioning encourages teachers to validate students' varied responses to a given text even while encouraging them to seek other interpretations. This sets the stage for continued discourse, although not necessarily a dialogic encounter.

A student then inquires about perceived cultural differences, asking a question that opens the door for students to possibly rethink assumptions they've already developed:

"Why would someone want to get on a plane that they knew was going to crash?" Shayna asked. All of their heads nodded in agreement. "Yeah, why would they kill themselves to kill us?" another student repeated. I paused, thinking that this was a very big question that required a very big answer.

Stacey sanctions this question as an acceptable one and seems to welcome it as a challenge. She could have done many things at this point, including allowing this singular question to be the topic of deeper inquiry through independent or class research. She chose to limit the discovery to the confines of the current conversation: *Wanting to pull it out of them rather than just to give them the answer, I asked, "Well, let's think about what we know….Why is Greg over there in the first place?"* This question was more of a test question (Nystrand, 1997) than authentic one, with correct answers students were supposed to recall. Thus begins a recitation, although arguably, this recitation was a resource for the teacher, who was planning to help the group construct the correct answer based on what they already knew.

They continue discussing in this manner, coming to some understandings, which the teacher affirms and elaborates. Later in the narrative, the teacher arrives at what she believes to be a pivotal sentence in the text: *I knew this was a big message in the book and stopped and reread the line for emphasis - one of the many ways I guide students to determine importance of events within a book.* Here again she demonstrates her positioning – she and the text are the experts. She and the author know this is a huge message and her students will not understand unless she discloses or deposits it.

The verbal exchanges continue, with students given chances to contribute, but it seems that her goal is to reveal correct answers more so than to construct understandings. *Still searching for a deeper response, I call on another student, Kelsey.* Stacey seems to be looking

for the best answer, trying to find the student who could and would give it. Later in the account we see something similar: *Knowing that I have the best chance at a detailed answer with one of my above-level readers, I call on Mackenzie.* Through careful selection, Stacey shares her position as expert with the students who were most likely to be experts too. This is further affirmed toward the end of the narrative: *"Who agrees with Mackenzie?" I ask. All hands go in the air.* The correct answer has been uncovered, and the teacher is satisfied the students now understand the important ideas in the text.

Another point worth noting in this narrative is the absence of social critique. Unlike Natalie's narrative, this one clearly delved into discussions of culture and the clashes that occur between social groups. The big message Stacey wanted students to understand was that education will end terrorism, although this prospect is a long one. This idea is based on assumptions about the definition and role of literacy in society, and the idea that literacy, in and of itself, is a catalyst for change (Street, 2003; 2005). True or false, this idea is presented as unproblematic. In other words, aside from it being a lengthy proposition, no one questions if there are other problems embedded with the idea of the American savior who goes to help the suffering illiterates. Such in depth social analysis is not always possible or even desirable, but its presence, or in this case absence, is worthy of note.

Making Meaning: Themes from the 1st Meeting

Earlier, I introduced the two teachers who were the subject of the first oral inquiry meeting. I provided an analysis of their narratives, specifically as it related to the types of dialogue they narrated as well as the indicators of their stance throughout. In this next section I describe themes across the narratives, as illuminated by the teachers themselves. Insights were uncovered during the first of two oral inquiry meetings. The data from this meeting were

analyzed and categorized into ten major themes (this process is detailed in Chapter Three). Major themes are defined as recurring ideas that fit into one of two categories: *teacher as facilitator* or *the dialogic classroom*.

Themes that are best categorized as *teacher as facilitator* related specifically to actions or behaviors the teachers employed to scaffold or facilitate dialogue. These ideas included: words have power, teachers are coaches, power plays, mechanisms for dialogue and dialogic stance. Also added to this list was the notion of compelled dialogue – a theme that came through in the observations, although it was not discussed in the narratives, nor during the oral inquiry meeting.

Themes that were related to the *dialogic classroom,* or those that described the type of environment teachers created for dialogue, included: free to be, learning related to life, impassioned exchanges, student agency, and dialogue as a process. An additional theme I noticed in the observation data, but was not written about nor discussed by the teachers was sanctioned silence. Each of these ideas is illuminated below and supported by excerpts from Natalie's and Stacey's narratives, field notes from my observations of their classes, and comments from the first oral inquiry meeting.

Teacher as Facilitator

A facilitator is one who makes things easier (Webster's Dictionary, 1989). One who facilitates dialogue manipulates circumstances in the learning environment so that dialogue can more easily occur (Murphy, et al., 2005). In this section I present themes that describe how teachers in this study facilitated dialogue in their classrooms.

Words have power. Ever mindful of the complexities of learning, teachers who orchestrate dialogue realize that meaningful exchanges do not generally happen by accident. They take calculated steps to create a desired outcome. This relates generally to lesson planning,

but it also means careful word choice. Mindful teachers choose words carefully to minimize hurt feelings or misunderstandings. For instance, a teacher may praise a student before offering constructive criticism in the hopes he may be more receptive. Natalie demonstrated this in her narrative:

> *I smile at him as he studies his plan I lay in front of him. I like to always praise first then build on strengths. I depend on my students to select where he/she believes the writing needs some improvement. "Nice plan" I compliment him. "I like how you wrote your topic at the top with each idea circled to give you direction in your writing. Let's see how this helped you stay focused."*

She conferences with Victor with the intention to improve his writing, but she purposefully begins with words of praise first.

Natalie narrated about this, but I also observed her using this same strategy. In this excerpt from my field notes, she is engaged in a *Star Interview* with a student. *I like your thought shot. You went into nice elaboration here. You told a little story. Maybe right here where you say… she continues to give him guidance and commentary (Natalie Field Notes 1/6/2010).* Again she praises the student before giving him constructive feedback. Teachers who understand words have power tailor remarks for the intended recipient. Rather than broad, cookie cutter announcements, mindful teachers consider what small groups and individuals need to hear and understand at a given moment in order to assure learning.

Teachers are coaches. The teacher who coaches allows students to take responsibility for their own learning – carefully structuring support as needed. The coaching can be done whole group, small group, or individually, but it is always what the students need at that time rather than a predictable script. Teachers who coach do not work to push students to a singular right

answer, but rather scaffold their learning so that they know how to tackle similar tasks in the future. Natalie coaches during this excerpt from my field notes:

> *She begins a Star Interview with a boy with short, cropped hair, large teeth and bright blue eyes. "I want you to first explain to me what you wrote about. I want you to say it to me." She begins filling in the Star Interview paper. Before she gets very far, another boy jogs to the kidney table for help. … His draft is about sports but apparently he is telling, not showing with his language. Natalie guides him: "Give me some action description about the game." He nods in understanding and rushes back to his seat (Natalie, Field Notes, 1/6/2010).*

In this excerpt Natalie is actually working with two students although the *Star Interview* is designed to be one-on-one without interruption. She is coaching both boys, albeit in different ways. With one, she is following a prompt that allows for open-ended discussion. With the other, she is providing just-in-time feedback for a student who has taken ownership for his own learning. In both cases, she is providing the scaffolding they need to become better writers.

Power play. In traditional classrooms, the teacher is the leader, and has the power by default. It is a tacit arrangement that may go unchanged and unchallenged. A power play is a move in which the teacher overtly shares power with her students. All kinds of power shifts may occur in a classroom – those that distribute the teacher's power, those that reestablish the teacher's power, or those that upend the teacher's power. In a dialogic classroom, a power play is the first kind; it is the purposeful sharing of power that makes the classroom more welcoming of diverse voices and viewpoints. A teacher's willful decision to change the typical power dynamic is what allows dialogic transactions to take place, as illustrated in this data from my field notes:

Stacey switches to ELMO and projects a planning sheet. She talks about mix of dialogue and narration – how both are necessary. "We're working today on having a good mix of both." She then asks for students to contribute to the shared writing. One student offers a sentence and the teacher prompts for information about the speaker tag (Stacey, Field Notes, 12/17/2010).

In this portion of Writer's Workshop, Stacey has just taught the students about using dialogue in writing. After a guided practice she modeled the skill in action. She gave several students the opportunity to contribute, while simultaneously inviting them to take responsibility for their own learning, rather than be passive recipients of information. There was not a singular correct answer, but many were welcomed.

It is important to be mindful of "false power plays" in which the teacher *appears* to be sharing power or altering the dynamic, but in fact really is not. A prime example of this is when teachers select one or more students to speak on behalf of the teacher or transmit the official position. Stacey shared an example of this in her narrative:

I see a few confused looks, along with a few confident hands in the air. Knowing that I have the best chance at a detailed answer with one of my above-level readers, I call on Mackenzie.

"Well, because, if we educate the kids, then eventually they will grow up and go to college, so they won't want to join gangs and bad groups like Al-Qaeda because they have a future. Then if no one joins the groups, then there won't be any terrorists." She stated confidently. "But that would take a long time!" she added.

"Who agrees with Mackenzie?" I ask. All hands go in the air.

Stacey seemed to vest her authority in Mackenzie, whom she assumed would have the *right* answer. This may appear to empower students and give students voice, but in fact it gave the teacher another venue for her own voice. When teachers truly create space for dialogue, they agree to be mutual inquirers with their students, and as such invite them to share responsibility for the knowledge constructed in the classroom.

Mechanism for dialogue. Teachers can facilitate dialogue through specific structures. Sometimes it may be a built in component – a pre-planned, regularly occurring aspect of the lesson. For instance, Writer's Workshop, which I observed, includes a conference component, *Star Interviews*, where the teachers are expected to meet individually with students about their writing. Each student might only participate once or twice a month, but there is a designated time in each lesson where the teacher knows conversations will occur. When teachers honor this scheduling, they are enacting a mechanism for dialogue.

Teachers may encourage dialogue through other means as well. Common mechanisms may include special partners (shoulder or elbow partners, face partners, clock partners), or signal words such as "turn and talk." Stacey and Natalie both used *turn and talk* quite often. One example from Stacey's class appears below:

> *They are reading aloud a book called Defiance. Students offer what they remember from the previous readings. "Turn to your shoulder partner and discuss this statement (from the book): Whoever steals my freedom, takes my life." The kids begin talking to each other. After about 30 seconds, Stacey gives the shave and a haircut cue. The students respond as expected (two bits!). She asks, "Who would like to share what you and your partner discussed?" The students begin to share (Stacey, Field Notes, 1/7/2010).*

Although such mechanisms make dialogue routine, and perhaps in some ways, less organic, they are structures that make it easier for teachers to open a space for conversations to occur. How teachers leverage said mechanisms can vary greatly, depending on purpose, population and stance.

Dialogic stance. In the course of working toward more dialogic classrooms, teachers often imagine or wish for things to be different than they are now. No classroom is perfect. And even the classroom approaching perfection has good days and bad days. Teachers who are reflective consider their class as it is and also as it could be. In this case, it's a form of inquiry, to wonder what else is possible, or to hope for circumstances to be somehow altered.

Such wondering is not idle talk or mindless daydreaming, but may be a precursor for actually trying out new things, or experimenting. Some things teachers wonder about are beyond their control; for instance during the first oral inquiry meeting the teachers raised concerns such as "I wonder if students went home and discussed today's topic?" Such a question is something they can find out, but not something can control directly. On the other hand, "I wonder if it would have been more powerful for a student to confer with a peer?" another point of discussion during the first meeting, is something they can try out and examine for themselves. This wondering, inquiry, or reflection on practice, is a form of praxis.

Compelled dialogue. I coded the observation data using the themes developed as a result of the oral inquiry meeting. However in my analysis, I also noticed additional themes, solely in the observation data, that seemed to suggest some tension with the notion of a dialogic pedagogy. Compelled dialogue is one of those themes and it is described below. The other, sanctioned silence, will be discussed later.

The teachers can and did invite or allow many types of conversations to take place. Students had several opportunities to contribute to large or small group conversations as speakers, listeners, or both. However, there were also instances where students were requested to participate in a discussion. I observed this twice in Stacey's class: *Okay we are talking and writing today about dialogue – how to use it purposefully in writing. Turn and talk to your shoulder partner and figure out what dialogue is. I wanna hear everybody talking! (Stacey, Field Notes, 12/17/2009)*. This was the beginning of a mini-lesson for Writer's Workshop, and she sought to engage the class right away in trying to understand dialogue.

Another example occurred during Reader's Workshop. Stacey read and displayed portions of a social studies text, modeling how to tackle non-fiction. After that, it was their turn to read and discuss the next section:

> *See if you make sense of the next two pages. I'm going to come around and listen to everyone and then we'll share. Everyone gets their own [copy of the text]. Don't just work by yourself – I want you talking about it. Get your pencils out and start writing."…"Talk about it. I wanna hear you talking to each other, what do you see?" (Stacey, Field Notes, 1/12/2010).*

In the first excerpt it seems she wanted to engage all of the students in the activity. In the second excerpt she may have wanted, in part, to assess their understanding. In both cases the dialogue seemed somewhat forced; it wasn't invited, but almost mandated. When dialogue is compelled in this way, students are expected to engage each other as resources, whether they want to or not. Moreover, they are expected to do so *verbally*, although there are other ways to encourage dialogue within and between learners. This is a tension teachers must negotiate when attempting to enact a dialogic pedagogy.

Dialogic Environment

The first set of themes related to behaviors teachers enact to make dialogue flow more easily in the classroom. This next set concerns the environment itself. What does it look like? What might the students be doing? These things do not occur without teacher input and direction; although these are categorized as *environment*, teacher behaviors still infuse some of these themes.

Free to be. In a dialogic learning environment, the teacher and learners are free to express themselves, even when doing so may be surprising, uncomfortable, or divergent from an expected or traditional response. The teacher facilitates this "freedom" of expression, by welcoming students to respond in a variety of ways, and discouraging behaviors that might limit or restrict expression (e.g., students laughing at other students, ignoring tangential responses, only affirming "correct" answers, etc.). Students who are *free* take risks and attempt to figure things out, rather than wait to be told the answer. Students are more relaxed and as a result may be silly from time to time, but not to the point of distraction. They may offer personal experiences as a way to further or explain their understanding of a topic. In this excerpt from my field notes, Natalie's students have just finished writing independently and individuals are going up front to share. This sharing is a typical component of Writer's Workshop.

> *Natalie stops the Star Interview and tells the student who asked that she could go first. "I want you guys listening for any kinds of elaboration," Natalie announces. The girl goes up front and reads. She immediately launches into a story about "Me, my mom and my mom's boyfriend." The teacher praises her, "Amazing description. Very good. Lots of craft in there. She was reading like a writer…" Students say what they like and the reader picks the next person to share… A boy is up next. He stutters a bit while he reads*

about Late Christmas Caroling. He sings out loud to model his caroling. When done, Natalie asks him questions about late Christmas caroling. What is it? She asks. Caroling after Christmas we all find out. It's something his family does as a new tradition (Natalie, Field Notes, 1/6/2010).

These students were free to be themselves – they talked about their family life (mom's boyfriend) and family traditions. The boy also did something some might find unconventional; he burst into song as a way to illustrate his story. Both student authors were sanctioned as contributing appropriately to the class discourse. They were not shunned or ridiculed for their choices. Relatedly, when the *teacher* is free to be, she will voice her own opinion, making it clear it is how she thinks, although not the *only* way to think about a given topic. In short, both teacher and students are free to be human, historical beings with valid experiences that facilitate understanding.

Learning related to life. Because dialogic classrooms embrace the historicity of teacher and students, a natural consequence is that lessons are related to the lives of the participants. Teachers put forth effort to get to know their students – their likes and dislikes, the make up of their family, etc. In so doing, they incorporate this knowledge, using deeply understood, favorite or controversial topics as conversation or activity starters, or to help draw reluctant students into an exchange or assignment.

When learning is related to life, students aren't learning simply how to read or write a particular text, but how to *leverage* the ability to read or write or speak as tools to inquire more deeply into the world around them. Learning is related to life, in part, because it's based on their lives, and in part, because it goes back out into their lives. It is a form of praxis – a recursive

process wherein the genesis comes from the lives of students and the fruits of learning bloom in their lives as well. This was illustrated during an observation in Stacey's class.

> *Stacey asks, "Can you think of examples when your freedom can be taken away? Besides slavery." They are given another 30 seconds to discuss this. Some of the students respond: A bird in a cage. A job – my dad works everyday and at night. Cancer – you have to stay inside or go to the hospital. They discuss this a few moments longer.*
>
> *Stacey begins the read aloud. After a few passages she stops and exclaims, "Oh, I think Dion might be right about the cancer and freedom" (Stacey, Field Notes, 1/7/2010).*

The students offered suggestions from their own lives to inform their understanding of literature. When school and real life transact, students are naturally more engaged because they are not simply reading sterile content, but rather what matters to them. This sometimes seems difficult to negotiate in the world of test-driven standards, but the key seems to be really getting to know the students, really getting to know the standards, and figuring out ways to bridge the two. Drawing on students' funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) for the development of relevant lessons is a way to make learning related to real life. This was evidenced in Natalie's narrative:

> *This turns into a quite a story when he proceeds to tell me he accidentally hit his Dad in the ankle with his golf ball. I applaud him that he now found his new topic, Mini Golf With My Dad. Victor answers "I can write a story on just that? That's easy."*

Victor's assignment was based on his personal experiences, and he was able to draw from those experiences to develop his essay more thoroughly. This is not a case of using topics as

bribery, simply to get students hooked into a topic that has no relevancy. Nor is it a case of tricking students and trying to make learning fun or palatable. Not all topics are of equal interest and not all activities are fun. The point is that learning is truly related to what students need to know to participate effectively in daily life.

Impassioned exchanges. Sometimes a teacher may ask a question, or a student may make a point that is purely academic and devoid of emotion or unrelated to the lives of the students. In such cases the question is often an invitation to recite answers or respond by rote. The resultant exchange may be dull or lifeless as Dewey (1938/1997) and others describe (Burbules, 1993; Nystrand, 1997; Ravitch, 2010). However, when the question is grounded in a sincere interest in what participants wonder or feel or think about an issue, the exchange has the potential to become a vibrant, impassioned one. The teachers explained that when students are genuinely curious or opinionated about a topic, the discussion becomes infused with their energy. Such conversations can often lead to tangents if one isn't careful, but they also have the potential to uncover key insights, gaps, strongly held views and the like. Such exchanges, when facilitated expertly, can bring out a wealth of information to be used later, while providing the opportunity for students to construct new or more nuanced understandings together.

Stacey described such an exchange in her narrative:

> *Still searching for a deeper response, I call on another student, Kelsey. "Because using bombs isn't doing anything. It's just killing innocent people. But if we teach them to read, they will be smarter." She was very passionate about her response and it stirred something inside me to hear such passion in her voice. I was proud of her. Of them.*

This was the tail end of a multi-day discussion about terror, war and literacy inspired by the book *Three Cups of Tea*. The students, who started with very little background knowledge about the topic, began to develop strong opinions through the reading and subsequent discussions.

During an impassioned exchange, agreement is not required nor expected. Nor does a debate have to ensue. The key point then, is the passion itself. The passion in an impassioned exchange does not come from the desire to be right or first – it is not competitive at all – but it comes from the desire for fuller expression and/or the need to inquire.

Student agency. Attention has been paid to the teacher's role as a facilitator of learning, but students also have an important role in their own learning (Dewey, 1938; Reiser, 2004; Winn, 1993). Teachers assert their power, either by maintaining a traditional power structure, or by actively shifting power to the students in class; but students also have power. There are many ways in which a student can assert power in the learning environment – either to the detriment or furtherance of his learning. For instance, students may behave in a way that challenges the teacher's power – refusing to engage in a learning task or taking over a discussion without being sanctioned to do so.

The aforementioned examples obviously reside on the negative end of the continuum, and none of these appeared in my data; however there are relevant examples on the positive end. Students may decide they need additional attention or support and seek it through their own volition. Rather than waiting to be asked, they may demand help. I witnessed one such example in Stacey's class:

> *The kids rotate steadily to the computer. Tiera was up earlier seemingly offering her expertise at the computers. She gets up now to help a student, Oliver, who requests assistance. She strolls over with a hoodie on her head and leans in. She speaks to Oliver*

briefly, uses the mouse to click something and is done. Mission complete, she walks away but the boy grabs her. He's not done. She remains over there for several minutes, leaning over him, pointing to the screen. They are talking….

"Tiera, you're not supposed to be over there. You've already been on the wiki" (Minutes later Tiera returns, again assuming the consultant role). (Stacey, Field Notes, 1/7/2010).

The students were accessing the class wiki, reading and entering comments about *Three Cups of Tea*. Tiera, who seemed to be the wiki expert during many observations, was willing to help a student who seemed to genuinely want to participate and needed assistance in doing so.

Teachers may view such behavior as subversive, or at least disobedient, but student agency may manifest itself in less controversial ways. For instance, students may develop ideas for pet projects or assignments, and work (with the teacher's permission or help) to bring them into fruition. Sometimes teachers *invite* students to be co-constructors of the learning environment; but for better or for worse, student agency refers to those instances students decide they already are co-constructors, and act accordingly.

Dialogue as a process. Classroom discourse is used to both uncover and clear up misconceptions, or to expose "gaps" in learning. Said gaps can be "filled" later, through more traditional methods, or new learning can be built through constructive methods, including through dialogue.

Dialogue is a form of inquiry. Sometimes it takes place spontaneously – initiated by the student (or teacher) who generally wants to better understand or know something. In this way dialogue can lead to moments of discovery and learning, and can foster metacognitive thinking. When dialogue is a process, it is not used simply to transfer information from one place to

another. For instance, giving directions, making an announcement, reciting answers – all of these can be heralded as examples of "discourse" – but none of these is dialogue as a process. When teachers facilitate dialogue as a process, they intend for new knowledge to be built in the give and take. It is not always neat or predictable. During Reader's Workshop one day, Natalie used dialogue in this way to help students preview a story, *Me and Uncle Romie*:

> *"With your shoulder partner talk about what you think actually happens." I hear the rattle of pages flipping. Some students immediately launch into talking. One table near the front is very quiet as they flip individually (black boy, Latina, white boy and girl). One boy offers an opinion. A girl is quiet at first and then responds. I overhear BBQ and college. One girl is giggling. A boy at another table is giggling. One boy and girl are not flipping at all and haven't moved from the front page. They are just talking. She hits him playfully. Others are flipping, talking, pointing. One girl with a blue knitted cap spends several seconds flipping and talking to herself, out loud (Natalie, Field Notes, 1/11/2010).*

After the students were given some time to engage each other (or themselves), Natalie gained attention and asked students to share their responses with the whole group.

A dialogic give and take can be silent (for instance written work that is used to create, rather than reveal understandings), or it can be voiced and verbal. It can also occur in other ways (dance or visual arts are examples). Still, the key point is that act of dialogue, no matter what form it takes, is used for the purpose of constructing new understandings about a given topic.

Sanctioned silence. In classrooms, it is not unusual for teachers to denote appropriate times for certain activities. These activities can include reading, writing, test taking, lining up, cleaning up, and so on. Unsurprisingly, time is set aside for talking, while other times are set

aside for silence. When silence is sanctioned, being quiet is expected and rewarded. Talking, on the other hand, is silenced or punished. Although this was not discussed during the oral inquiry meeting, nor written about in the narratives, I witnessed several examples of this during the first part of the study. In the following excerpt, Natalie has just completed a mini-lesson for Writer's Workshop. The students are working independently, but not everyone is doing so silently:

> *There is a quiet murmuring as students shift and begin flipping through their paper and deciding what to work on. Teacher appears dissatisfied with the chatting and calls out, "Group four still, I love how they're working so quietly. Some of them don't have a topic yet – but they're using their time to think and that's all a part of writing." (Natalie, Field Notes, 12/16/2009)*

In this excerpt, she compliments the quiet group, implying that the only acceptable dialogue at this time must be internal and voiceless. During another lesson, she again sanctioned silence: *Kids begin working on their own. The room is silent. The teacher comments on the silence and awards the students points for being quiet (Natalie, Field Notes, 1/6/2010).* Stacey too encouraged silence during work time, as evidenced by this excerpt from Writer's Workshop:

> *Today I want you to put purposeful dialogue in your writing. It's your choice – one of these pieces should be completed and turned in for a grade. … If I hear your voice, I'm asking for a dollar. You should be using your time wisely. (Stacey, Field Notes, 12/17/2009)*

The implication here is that talking is not a wise use of time; silence equates to productivity. In a dialogic classroom, teachers must negotiate the balance between classroom management, student agency, and the use of dialogue as a tool of inquiry and a process of learning. In order to maintain decorum in the classroom, teachers may silence students.

Sometimes such moves are warranted, especially when dialogue is not a tool, but a distraction. However, not all unsanctioned discourse is off-task.

In the first half of this chapter, I introduced the first two participants and shared their narratives as presented to the group during the January oral inquiry meeting. I analyzed the narratives individually and also shared the themes of our group's shared inquiry across narratives. The other two participants, Mandy and Paula, wrote narratives in January, but these were not analyzed by the group due to time constraints. These narratives appear in Appendix I. In the next section I present the findings from part two of the study, following the same structure as part one.

Mandy

My View of Mandy's Classroom

Sun City Elementary School is housed in an old building, originally built in 1915. But Mandy's room is one of the few to be found in the newest wing, added in 1999. You actually have to exit the main building and walk up a flight of concrete stairs (or ramp) to access the new space. Unlike the rest of the building, which boasts shiny, albeit worn, honey blond floors, Mandy's class is of the more modern variety – blue tiled floors trimmed with white, with white cinder blocks posing as walls. Her classroom and the one next door seem disconnected from the outside. Once *inside* you realize her classroom and the one next door, are actually connected by a short narrow walkway. The third graders can go back and forth between the classes for errands, or visit the water fountain and use the bathrooms that occupy the same corridor.

When one enters Mandy's room from outside, a kidney table is immediately to your left and this is the front of the room. The teacher's desk is also in the front, in the opposite corner. The 16 or so student desks are mostly arranged in clusters of four. On any given day a few may be spread out in singles. As Mandy explained during one of my earlier visits, she had to separate

some of the girls who had "gotten really nitpicky with each other." She went on to say she was glad the school counselor was coming for a visit later that day to help them work it out.

Mandy is not a shouter and she maintains a serious yet warm demeanor in interactions with the class. She insists upon decorum, while speaking softly, in her distinctively Southern accent. During group work I once heard a student call another, "Stupid!" Mandy interjected, "Excuse me, she is not stupid. She is very smart and she's going to come up with some good ideas."

Mandy follows a regular routine for Reader's Workshop, the first instructional period of the day. As soon as the school's morning announcements are off, she reviews the homework or makes any other announcements. She then reminds students of a previous reading before inviting them all to the carpet for a read aloud. As she explains to her students, this read aloud is not merely for the sake of enjoyment, but serves as the introduction to a directed reading lesson. Afterward, students are held accountable for their learning in some way.

"I would like to have a clipboard for everyone. Use your reading book instead. This is our pretend clipboard. Bring your pencils and your make-believe clipboards and come down to the rug. I have one of my favorite stories to share with you." Once students are settled, she shares her expectations for the lesson, modeling when appropriate. Off task students are quickly redirected: "Let's not be silly," or, "When someone's talking and you're waving your hand like that, it means you aren't listening." On the other hand, students who share or engage in the tasks as directed are complimented: "I'm proud of you for sharing like that." Students running late are welcomed to the activities as quickly as possible. Once, a student entered late still bundled up from the unseasonable cold. "When you get un-winterized there, come on down."

During her reading lessons she often shares her thoughts and wonders, and invites students to do the same. After reading *More than Anything Else*, she mentions Booker T. Washington and wonders if this book is about him. The main character's name, disclosed on the last page, is Booker. "But that was one of my wonders. Books should always leave you with wonders boys and girls, and then it's kind of fun to go and find the answers."

Once Mandy finishes a read aloud, the students often clap. She then begins to debrief. One such conversation went this way: "How is it like *Moon Over Star?* Can somebody give me one way? Let's pretend we're doing a Venn diagram." One student responded, "One had a television and one didn't." Mandy recalls, "I can remember the first television. To you they've always been here, but for people your grandparents' age, they haven't." In this way, she often integrates her age and life experiences into their discussions, while maintaining high expectations for participation and learning.

Mandy's Narrative

Alicia is working and still developing as a writer. Her demand write [required writing on an assigned prompt] scores are above level, and I have a sense that she will build on her strong vocabulary and unique voice to become outstanding. In a recent demand write, Alicia was instructed to write about a favorite place. She wrote about her grandparents' home in Connecticut. It was a very sweet piece, full of details. She had several elaborated descriptions ranging from her grandmother's cooking to the cellar where she and her brother like to play. The end came way too soon though- there was just not a sense of completeness.

Alicia was very anxious to see her score and discuss her writing. One of the first things she said was that she ran out of time and wrapped it up too quickly. I suggested that she revise that part and make the ending much stronger. I also pointed out that she had used apostrophes

several times and in those places she did not need an apostrophe. We went over the reasons to use an apostrophe and Alicia must have previously misunderstood or just "missed" that bit of instruction. She had a real ah ha moment when she arrived at the understanding of what that apostrophe does to a word.

A few days later, I decided that since Alicia seemed to be so delighted in her new found knowledge, that maybe she would learn even more by buddying up with a partner to revise and edit their work as a team. I carefully chose another student, Denise, who I also knew to be creative and fun, but a little on the sloppy side when it came to punctuation and spelling. I thought they would be a good pair (supportive, not critical of one another). And I thought it would give Alicia an opportunity to teach about the proper use of the apostrophe.

I sat the two girls down at my reading table with their latest writing – a draft of a newspaper article naming their mother as Mother of the Year. Both girls got the idea that this was to be written as a reporter (in the third person) but neither had demonstrated this with much gusto.

We first talked about how we offer positive criticism to a peer. That when we remark on someone's writing, we consider their feelings. That we talk about what we like about the piece before we offer any suggestions.

Well, forget the kindness when they read each other's drafts. The first thing that came out of Alicia's mouth, besides a laugh of amusement at something Denise had written to be funny, was that Denise had capital letters inserted everywhere. Denise said that they weren't capitals- were just the way she made her letters, and Alicia's retort was that it made her writing difficult to read. (Something tells me that because Alicia said this, Denise might be more careful. And that really will make her a better communicator.)

I had a hard time staying out of the conversation, and I asked the girls how they thought they could make this piece of writing sound more like a reporter wrote it. Alicia suggested that Denise use "Ms. Wilson's daughter, Denise" instead of just "Denise" in one line. In other words, Alicia pointed out how Denise could be more specific but also removed from the article. Denise popped up with the issue of capital letters that she needed to correct. Then Alicia pointed out a place where Denise could use "those three little dots."

Alicia also asked Denise some questions that needed to be answered like where was the award given to her mother, and how her mother knew what the prizes would be. Denise took these suggestions and seemed enthusiastic about taking her draft home to revise.

The following day, the girls worked together to strengthen Alicia's work. They both agreed that her spelling needed editing and some of her sentences needed revision, but that her original idea was charming. They talked their way through the piece, and the revised version was quite strong.

It was interesting to see how these girls taught each other and learned together. I think they paid more attention to each other, than they would to me. It just seemed that it was more meaningful to them when they commented on each other's work. They were very enthusiastic about working together, so much so, that I'd like to try this with some others. But, like these two, they must be carefully chosen.

My Analysis

In Mandy's narrative, she reflects on her experience with Alicia, one of her above level students. Mandy penned her first narrative about this same student, and both stories are specifically about Alicia as a *writer*. In this episode, Alicia was required to write on an assigned topic, as practice for the statewide writing assessment. Although Alicia is a great writer, her

piece fell short and needed more work. This led to a productive writer's conference, wherein Alicia actively took responsibility for her writing and was also able to clear up a misconception. Based on their dialogue, Mandy indicated it would be a good learning experience to have Alicia conference with another student about her writing, in the hopes that both would benefit in some way. Not without a few bumps, the girls do in fact have successful dialogues and the teacher authors a happy ending for them as writers, and for her as a teacher trying new things.

The overarching dialogue is one Mandy is holding with herself. It's a running analysis on her decision to put the responsibility and power to teach in the hands of two students. Within this larger discussion of practice, many other dialogues take place; the first being one between her and Alicia. The two are active co-inquirers into Alicia's work as evidenced in this excerpt:

> *Alicia was very anxious to see her score and discuss her writing. One of the first things she said was that she ran out of time and wrapped it up too quickly. I suggested that she revise that part and make the ending much stronger.*

Alicia and Mandy had similar assessments of the paper's effectiveness, and Mandy encouraged Alicia to rework it – in essence to hold a dialogue with her writing.

In the next section of the narrative, Mandy initiates a dialogue with both Alicia and Denise, this time about effectively using dialogue for teaching and learning from each other. The girls then hold their own conversation with their individual works as the objects under investigation. This two-part discussion centered first on Denise's, then on Alicia's work, with only a few interjections by the teacher. They were no longer simply students, but students-teachers (Freire, 2000), taking turns learning and leading. By the end, both girls have dialogues with their pieces, and revise them based on their discussions.

Early in this episode Mandy positions herself as a coach, and shortly thereafter, as a risk-taker willing to divest much of her power to learn right alongside her students:

> *The end came way too soon though- there was just not a sense of completeness. Alicia was very anxious to see her score and discuss her writing. One of the first things she said was that she ran out of time and wrapped it up too quickly.*

Although she, as teacher and expert writer, knows what is "wrong" with Alicia's piece, Mandy steps to the side immediately, creating space for Alicia to assert her own voice and agency into the proceedings, and handing Alicia the responsibility of improving the work. Although Alicia is able to articulate a larger problem with her piece, she requires more help regarding her misuse of apostrophes. Mandy as coach helps Alicia construct knowledge of the role of apostrophes in writing:

> *We went over the reasons to use an apostrophe and Alicia must have previously misunderstood or just "missed" that bit of instruction. She had a real ah ha moment when she arrived at the understanding of what that apostrophe does to a word.*

Although Mandy does not reveal the specific nature of the exchange (i.e., direct instruction, open-ended, etc.), she appears to have diagnosed, encouraged, and corrected Alicia as needed and when needed, all facets of coaching (Murphy, et al., 2005). Mandy observes and considers Alicia's response and embraces a teachable moment; she decides to take a risk, a calculated one, and encourage Alicia and Denise to become students-teachers (Freire, 2000):

> *A few days later, I decided that since Alicia seemed to be so delighted in her new found knowledge, that maybe she would learn even more by buddying up with a partner to revise and edit their work as a team. I carefully chose another student, Denise…*

She coaches the carefully chosen pair, preparing them to handle the responsibility of teaching each other: *We first talked about how we offer positive criticism to a peer. That when we remark on someone's writing, we consider their feelings. That we talk about what we like about the piece before we offer any suggestions.* In laying the ground rules, she reminds them to be respectful of each other. Moreover, she scaffolds their use of dialogue as a resource, rather than allowing them to tackle the task without guidance. The girls begin, perhaps not as gently as the teacher would like, but Mandy maintains a distant positioning, a coach watching athletes at play, as the girls interact.

When Mandy feels the conversation isn't as productive as it could be, she calls a time out and redirects with an open-ended question, asserting expertise without usurping the girls of their power: *I had a hard time staying out of the conversation, and I asked the girls how they thought they could make this piece of writing sound more like a reporter wrote it.* She retreats to her position as coach, waiting in the wings for another sign they need help. The girls continue their work. The next day, they continue the same arrangement – Mandy as the coach, watching the sport of learning unfold, guiding as needed.

Mandy concludes her narrative with a reflection on the process – her risk-taking has paid off:

> *It was interesting to see how these girls taught each other and learned together. I think they paid more attention to each other, than they would to me. It just seemed that it was more meaningful to them when they commented on each other's work. They were very enthusiastic about working together, so much so, that I'd like to try this with some others. But, like these two, they must be carefully chosen.*

Mandy's narrative shows how she has experimented with her pedagogy and is even willing to reconsider this strategy in the future; she may again embrace the power of student agency and welcome their active participation as students-teachers (Freire, 2000). As the overarching dialogue was one Mandy held with her own teaching, she was not only a teacher in this story, but also a student. From her narrative it appears she learned from students about their needs and abilities to teach each other; but she also learned from her own practice as risk-taker – that releasing some of the control and doing things differently may have beneficial results.

Paula

My View of Paula's Classrooms

At any given moment, soft-spoken Paula can be found with fourth or fifth graders, either co-teaching in a classroom or working with individual students in a resource room. As a special education teacher, she goes where she is needed, which varies throughout the day.

Paula supports in all academic areas, but she spends many hours a week teaching or helping with Reader's or Writer's Workshop. When she takes the instructional lead, she often uses manipulatives from home, or showcases her original writing to start her mini lessons. I recall a lesson on inferencing: Paula is front and center as the fifth graders watch from their seats which are arranged in a large U. Holding a red tool with a wide handle, a curved neck and a slim tip, she asks students to identify what it could be and what it might be used for. After several guesses, one girl admits she knows what it is, or at least has seen it in use. Her mom uses it with shrimp.

During a different lesson, this time on creative writing, she posts two items on the Elmo. The fourth graders lean in to see the alligator and the cucumber. "I made one," explains Paula, and displays her original poem about the *cucumbigator*, modeled after Jack Prelutsky's

Scranimals. The students, arranged in clusters and ready to collaborate, know it will be their turn to create one next, as is the custom in Writer's Workshop.

Paula, a veteran teacher of over 20 years, shares much about herself and her own life, and invites her students to do the same. During a writer's craft lesson, she talks at length about her experiences decorating trees at Christmas, adorning them with a pickle, as was family custom. She speaks of helping siblings with homework, and her parents' insistence on quality education as she teaches students to write "I am From" poems.

Even with her easy demeanor, she often pushes students to inquire into writing. "You see how they use the words *I'm from* over and over and that keeps it moving forward?" Paula asks. "Poems don't have to rhyme. I wrote a poem like this. I'm going to read my poem to you." She reads it aloud. Immediately after finishing she launches into questions: "How would you compare what I wrote with the other one?" A student compliments her, and she encourages him to dig deeper into the content: "I don't need to get a grade on it. What were some of the things that were included?"

The lessons I observed included a lot of modeling, directions and structure. Many times this structure came in the form of worksheets or templates the students used to scaffold their writing. Paula assures students they are not required to use any of the guides, but if they do, they should not feel constrained by them either. For instance, they can add other categories or ideas that aren't listed, expanding the templates to suit their needs.

When Paula is not up front teaching, she may be circulating with the general education teacher, helping students with their writing. She's a teacher at ease with students and they with her. Boys and girls can be caught giggling while Paula makes faces, listening intently with an occasional smile.

Sometimes she teaches small groups of students, leading a guided reading lesson. Other times she pulls individual students into the resource room or the back of a classroom, and conferences with them on their writing. Following the district's *Star Interview* protocol, she questions students about their choices, expressing approval or displeasure to get the conversation underway: "When I got to here I thought you had finished. Why do you think I thought you finished?" or "I read all of these and a lot of students started the same way. Could you make yours different? Come up with a grabber?"

Although she is often direct with her critiques, she also compliments the students for their work. To one girl she commented, "So you related it to the book you're reading. That's exactly what we talked about! See how that adds to your story? I'm glad you did that! I've seen your writing grow so much this year. Now you're writing two full pages, up from a few sentences." In her interactions with students, Paula strives for clarity and support, working to help them reach their full potential.

Paula's Narrative

Gently closing the door behind me, I stepped quietly into the fifth grade classroom. The bright florescent lights, as usual, were off. Classical Mozart music played softly in the background. I glanced at the whiteboard to read the agenda for the morning. First on the list, independent reading followed by small guided reading groups. The students were scattered all over the room and the teacher sat at her computer with her back toward the students. In a few minutes, she would call out the students' names and they would in turn tell her the name of the book that they were reading and the page number.

I glanced around and saw one student writing at his desk. I drifted over to him and ask what he was writing. In a serious voice, he told me that he was writing a letter to the principal

and requesting permission to collect money for the children in Haiti. As president of the student council, he was on a mission. The classroom teacher turned around and asked me if I would check over his letter to make sure it was ready for him to type on the computer. Since I was in his fourth grade classroom last year, I knew he was a strong writer. He had written a great letter. I could not see how the principal would turn down his request. I was so impressed to see authentic writing happening since writing for a purpose is the best motivation for students.

As I picked my way to the back of the room, I noticed some students were not reading independently but were softly whispering to each other. These students were all good readers so I was not concerned that they were not using enough time at school to read independently. They read a lot when they go home. One of the girls motioned for me to come over to them. She handed me a pink flyer and said this is a secret.

I glanced at it and realized that it was an invitation to a baby shower for their teacher. They were asking each student to share their favorite childhood book as a gift. They asked for donations of money to buy food for the shower. After reading it, I asked the girls if they had permission from the principal to have the shower. They nodded yes that they had written a letter and were told it was a good idea. Wow! More writing for a purpose! The shower would be during their lunch period. The principal loved the book idea! I told them that I would be happy to help out with the shower.

I noticed another group of students talking. As I came closer to them and eavesdropped on their conversation, I realized that they were talking about Haiti. They were all concerned about the children who had lost their schools in the earthquake. They were hoping the principal would let them help out. I also noticed as the conversation spread out to other students that some students were confused about the earthquake. I heard one of the students in my guided reading

group make the comment that he wondered if [our city] would get hit by a earthquake and if our school would get shook to the ground too. I realized by listening to the conversations that some students did not understand what causes earthquakes. There was fear in their voices. I walked over to the bookshelf that holds the Macmillan/McGraw Hill guided reading books. I thumbed through the approaching level and discovered there was a book entitled Earthquakes. I decided since this was the topic of interest that the students were discussing then it would be a good book to use in the guided reading group. It really does not matter what skill or strategy is being taught. You can pick up almost any nonfiction book and find a way to teach the skill and strategy for the week. The important aspect was to have a book that ignited their interest.

When the teacher shouted out, "Primetime," the students responded in unison, "Action." and got up from their seats to go directly to their different reading groups. The group that I led came back to the guided reading table. I handed each of them a new book titled Earthquakes. They were all so interested and excited. The book did not contain any information about the earthquake in Haiti but it did explain what causes earthquakes and gave the history of some of the other earthquakes in the world. One of my students had relatives living in Haiti and was concerned about them. He told the group how his mother was trying to reach them but had not been able to find out if they were dead or alive. The students showed empathy and now felt an even closer connection to Haiti. What if this had happened to my aunt or uncle? We discussed how [our city] would not have an earthquake but our concern was hurricanes. These students asked how earthquakes were different from volcanoes. They knew both came from under the ground. We used a world map to point out the places where there were earthquakes and volcanoes. The question came up again about hurricanes and earthquakes. There was definitely some confusion with hurricanes and tornadoes too. I explained that hurricanes come off of the

water and tornadoes were in the air on land. One student said that tornadoes came from hurricanes. She thought they were always connected. From listening to their conversation and questions, I knew that I had a month's worth of nonfiction books to use in the guided reading group. The next book would definitely be about volcanoes. I would use a Venn diagram to help them compare Earthquakes and volcanoes. One student asked if there were earthquakes, volcanoes or hurricanes in the North and South Pole. He said that he thought he would just go there and live. I made a mental note to myself – we need to learn more about the North and South Pole.

Knowing where their interests lie is helpful in finding the right books to keep them motivated. Why direct them away from their areas of interest to a book that might be boring to them. By listening to their dialogue with each other, I discovered their interests. As we sat at the back table and discussed the information in the books, it seemed like one question led to another and then to another and I realized that we needed to delve into these nonfiction books more. These students were starved for information about the world around them.

As the days flew by, the principal approved Drake's request. Quarters for Haiti started in our school. Two hundred and fifty dollars were collected in this one fifth-grade class. I thought about how one child can make a difference in our world.

Later in the month, the four girls had one of the best baby showers ever for their teacher. They did it all from beautifully decorated homemade cakes, special pink baby girl decorations and nicely wrapped gifts to the food. They had an assortment of fruits, Cuban sandwiches and pizza and pink juice to drink. The students took turns giving their teacher a book that meant something special to him/her as a child. Children who did not have a book wrote the teacher a letter and told her what book was their childhood favorite. Each one had a turn to say something

to their teacher. Needless to say, she was overwhelmed. So where the several parents, the teacher's mom and sister and the principal and assistant principal. The amazing thing to me was that the shower idea was all conceived by the four young girls. It was a shared learning experience to hear different voices exclaim, "Oh, I remember that book too! My mom used to read it to me." The sharing of the books and letters brought back so many wonderful childhood memories for all of us.

My Analysis

Paula opens her story describing Mrs. Carr's fifth grade class. Students are supposed to be reading silently, but many are writing and talking instead. It would be easy for a teacher to label these students as off-task. Rather than do this, Paula listens. She then explains the nature of the writing and talking – the students are making sense of, commenting, and attempting to act on their world. Based on what she has overheard and understood, she adjusts her teaching to accommodate student interests. She narrates her interaction with a small group of students, and describes future plans to continue to modify her teaching based on their ideas. She concludes her narrative expressing that students who were engaged in authentic tasks were able to see the fruits of their labor – even though such labor was not directly related to schoolwork.

Several dialogues are revealed in this piece. To begin with, Paula seems to be engaged in two overarching dialogues. In the first, she is engaged in a nonverbal dialogue with her students, with her planned lessons as the object of investigation. We can assume she enters the room ready to teach her group with previously chosen materials, but based on student contributions to the dialogue, she responds by changing the materials to more readily meet their needs. Not only did she modify that day's lessons, she also planned future lessons as a continued response to the exchange.

The subject of Paula's second overarching dialogue appears to be the role of authenticity and student agency. She seems to reconsider, or at least comment on how these ideas interact and their subsequent effects. Students are able to engage in authentic work for authentic purposes (albeit somewhat subversively), and see the results manifested in their immediate environment – in this case, their classroom as well as the larger school community.

The two dialogues just described undergird the composition, although they certainly are not the only ones that take place. The more obvious dialogues are verbal conversations: the one between Paula and Drake, the student council president; with Paula and the girls planning the baby shower; and lastly with her guided reading group. Within each of these conversations were other dialogues. For instance Drake was also dialoguing with societal circumstances, trying to make sense of and take action to transform the horrors in Haiti. The shower planners were building on a dialogue or relationship with their teacher and considering ways to celebrate a meaningful event in her life. The students in the guided reading group talked with Paula about earthquakes, but were simultaneously engaged in dialogues about Haiti, natural disasters, and fear of the unknown. Their understandings and misunderstandings as citizens of the world transacted with their experience as students in a guided reading group.

Paula began this episode setting the scene, making it clear that although she was a regular visitor to this classroom, it wasn't her own. She immediately begins to observe and inquire into the proceedings rather than interrupt or redirect them: *I glanced around and saw one student writing at his desk. I drifted over to him and asked what he was writing.* Perhaps because of her prior relationship with the students, she was unphased by their lack of adherence to the directions – they were supposed to be reading silently, not writing, not talking: *Since I was in his fourth grade classroom last year, I knew he was a strong writer.* She "picks" her way around the room

to observe and listen in on the conversations – none of which were about academics or homework. Paula allows them to be themselves – to engage in authentic practices and conversations, even if they are not officially sanctioned during this instructional block.

Paula is a student, learning what she can from the many teachers in the room:

> *One of the girls motioned for me to come over to them. She handed me a pink flyer and said this is a secret. I glanced at it and realized that it was an invitation to a baby shower for their teacher. … I noticed another group of students talking. As I came closer to them and eavesdropped on their conversation, I realized that they were talking about Haiti.*

Although a student, she is simultaneously a coach – watching her team play, preparing to give them advice during an opportune moment. Rather than some time in the distant future, she immediately acts. She embraces the teachable moment and redesigns her lesson to harness the immediacy of the situation:

> *I realized by listening to the conversations that some students did not understand what causes earthquakes. There was fear in their voices. I walked over to the bookshelf that holds the Macmillan/McGraw Hill guided reading books. I thumbed through the approaching level and discovered there was a book entitled Earthquakes. I decided since this was the topic of interest that the students were discussing then it would be a good book to use in the guided reading group.*

Her consideration to change not just this lesson, but a series of lessons in the future based completely on overheard student conversation, shows a willingness to be open to risk; in effect, to make the path by walking (Horton & Freire, 1999) with the students. This is not a temporary divergence to explore or clarify a tangent, but a commitment to channel time and energy into

what the students have already expressed as important, rather than what the teacher deems important.

She reiterates this later in the story:

> *From listening to their conversation and questions, I knew that I had a month's worth of nonfiction books to use in the guided reading group….By listening to their dialogue with each other, I discovered their interests. As we sat at the back table and discussed the information in the books, it seemed like one question led to another and then to another and I realized that we needed to delve into these nonfiction books more. These students were starved for information about the world around them.*

She realizes what is relevant in their lives, and structures her teaching to build on that. Moreover, Paula seems to latch onto the importance of listening as a teaching stance. She uses words like "eavesdropped" and "listening" indicating she is being receptive, purposefully striving to understand her students.

She closes the episode highlighting her belief in student agency and authenticity in school:

> *As the days flew by, the principal approved Drake's request. Quarters for Haiti started in our school. Two hundred and fifty dollars were collected in this one fifth-grade class. I thought about how one child can make a difference in our world.*

And later: *The amazing thing to me was that the shower idea was all conceived by the four young girls.* This narrative reveals a teacher who seems to be excited and hopeful about the challenges and opportunities that present themselves when students' voices are welcomed into the classroom, when teachers are willing to take risks and be open, and when students are given a chance to deepen and apply their skills in their interaction with and on the world.

Making Meaning: Themes from the 2nd Meeting

The second oral inquiry meeting was rescheduled twice and happened approximately three months after the first. The teachers wrote their narratives right before the meeting, some of them after discarding potential ideas and considering new ones. Mandy, for instance, thought she would write about a written conversation between her and a student, but ended up writing about Alicia instead. Following the same protocol we did for the first meeting, we analyzed Mandy's and Paula's narratives. Just as in the first meeting, the major themes were recurring ideas that fit into the categories *teacher as facilitator* or *the dialogic classroom*.

Many of the themes related to the *teacher as facilitator* made an encore appearance from the first meeting: teachers are coaches, power plays, and dialogic stance. The power of words did not appear during this analysis at all, and mechanism for dialogue had only a minor mention. Three new concepts emerged from our analysis this time: listening stance, risk and scaffolding. Another new theme emerged from the observation data that was not discussed in the oral inquiry meeting, nor written in the narratives: invited dialogue. The other themes fell into the category of *the dialogic classroom*. With the exception of impassioned exchanges, all the other themes from the first meeting, free to be, learning related to life, student agency, and dialogue as a process, proved relevant to this discussion. As in the first set of observations, sanctioned silence emerged as an important theme, although it was not written about in the narratives, nor discussed during the oral inquiry. An overview of the themes appears below. See Table 3 for a summary of the themes from the study.

Teacher as Facilitator

As was the case with the themes from the first half of the study, this group of themes relates to the actions or behaviors teachers employ as they enact a dialogic pedagogy. This subsection begins with descriptions of the new themes from the second oral inquiry.

Listening stance. This theme developed as an outgrowth of our discussion about teacher power and positioning. It is related to and could be considered a subtheme of power play. As described in the first half of the chapter, during a power play, the teacher makes a conscious decision to challenge the traditional hierarchy of classrooms and share power with the students. Students are invited to be active participants in the shaping of understandings, rather than passive recipients of the teacher's expertise. Listening is related in that the teacher, who normally does the majority of the talking (Barnes, 1992), instead leverages her own silence to learn more about her students. She can listen openly as Mandy did in her narrative, sitting with students while they converse about a topic. On the other hand she could listen more covertly, as Paula did in this excerpt from her narrative, quietly lurking in the background while gathering information:

> *I noticed another group of students talking. As I came closer to them and eavesdropped on their conversation, I realized that they were talking about Haiti. They were all concerned about the children who had lost their schools in the earthquake. They were hoping the principal would let them help out. I also noticed as the conversation spread out to other students that some students were confused about the earthquake*.

Paula viewed this conversation as valuable information that she then incorporated into her teaching. A listening stance positions teachers as learners, inquiring into the interests and needs of their students. It is easy for teachers to redirect seemingly off-task students, or dominate or direct a given conversation for the sake of efficiency. Listening, an active but not necessarily

prominent positioning, can pay dividends in student learning if teachers utilize their findings in relevant lessons.

Risk. Deviating from previously written plans or trying out a new strategy both involve a level of risk. In either case, the teacher has no idea how things will turn out, whether the experiment will be a disaster, a success, or somewhere in between. In dialogic classrooms, risk is a necessary part of the learning environment. The very nature of authentic dialogue involves a give and take that cannot be pre-scripted (Barnes, 1992). Each contribution demands another response, and so on.

Not all teachers have an equal tolerance for risk, and one's willingness to take risk may vary by activity and time of year. Teachers may be willing to take more chances once they know their students better, once they know their content better, or when they feel solid in their pedagogy. This is exactly what the teachers expressed during the second oral inquiry meeting, especially as they noticed the risks described in both Paula's and Mandy's narratives. Mandy explained she was especially willing to try her pairing experiment since she knew her students:

> *A few days later, I decided that since Alicia seemed to be so delighted in her new found knowledge, that maybe she would learn even more by buddying up with a partner to revise and edit their work as a team. I carefully chose another student, Denise, who I also knew to be creative and fun, but a little on the sloppy side when it came to punctuation and spelling. I thought they would be a good pair (supportive, not critical of one another). And I thought it would give Alicia an opportunity to teach about the proper use of the apostrophe.*

The teachers concurred that risks can have great rewards, but they were more open to experimenting later in the year, when they could better control the learning episode as Mandy

did. They explained they were willing to try new things once students had a better sense of routines and an understanding of teacher expectations. As evidenced in Mandy and Paula's narratives, when teachable moments become new units or thought experiments become classroom practice, it is because a teacher decided to take a risk and try something new.

Scaffolding. When teachers scaffold learners, they help them complete a task they would not have been able to accomplish alone. In order to scaffold effectively, teachers must have a strong understanding of student needs and the task to be accomplished, and develop a way to help the student bridge the two. Scaffolding is related to coaching, as coaches provide guidance and assistance as needed. Scaffolding, however, is a specific strategy among many a teacher-as-coach may enact during a learning episode. When scaffolding, teachers set their students up for success by manipulating the circumstances. Natalie did this during one of my observations:

> *I want you to explain to your group why you highlighted that. Why did you highlight this and not the first sentence? Why this and not this?" A girl responds, beginning to explain. The teacher listens silently and nods. She then asks a teammate if he agrees. The teacher points out another student's paper and asks, "You think this is a clear image? Because they don't." The girl responds but the teacher pushes, "What do you think? Explain to them why you highlighted 'wild, wild, cottontail rabbit.' (Natalie, Field Notes, 2/22/2010).*

The students were reading poetry to understand the images poets can create with words. In groups, they had to highlight the words that created images in their minds. Natalie provided clear guidance, scaffolding a more productive group conversation.

With respect to a verbal dialogue, scaffolding may mean selecting appropriate partners, as Mandy did in her narrative; or with a written dialogue, guidelines or templates may be

provided. Leaving students to just "talk" without guidance may be ineffective or even detrimental to the learning episode, as the teachers indicated during the oral inquiry meeting. When teachers scaffold dialogue as a resource, they make sure students understand what effective dialogue should look like and how to create it.

Teachers are coaches. Coaches guide from the side, taking time to observe students and interject or redirect as needed. This theme, one that was discussed earlier, speaks to the behavior of teachers as they allow students to be more active participants in the learning environment. In the excerpt below, Paula coaches a student, James, as she conducts a *Star Interview* to help him revise an essay:

> *She begins in the typical fashion – by reviewing his writing plan. The Star Interview is meant to be collaborative and she invites James to discuss his ideas. He explains how he made choices. He references events that occurred in class and say they provided the ideas for his work. Paula continues the focus on his plan. "Remember when we talked about doing two main topics and putting a circle around it?" James nods.*
>
> *"What would be your two main topics? What would be your main ideas about this?" He didn't plan in enough detail. "You did this, you did that, <pointing> but you didn't circle the middle sections. You might want to keep that circled so it'll be clear when you start writing (Paula, Field Notes, 2/4/2010).*

Paula, as coach, is targeting specific points in a student's writing. She is building on his work to help him make better choices as a learner. Teachers as coaches take up what students offer and encourage them to move toward proficiency in a given area.

Power plays. This is the second theme to recur across the two oral inquiry meetings. When teachers enact a power play, they strive to disrupt the standard teacher/student hierarchy,

and allow students to take more responsibility or have greater voice in the classroom. In this way, it's related to coaching, which also positions the teacher as the guide on the side. The difference is, a power play is *any* move a teacher makes to distribute the power, which may include coaching, but may also include listening or observing, inviting students to contribute to a shared writing, or encouraging students to lead the learning in other ways. A power play does not have to be a big display. A teacher can simply encourage students to think for themselves, rather than relying on the teacher, as Mandy did in the following excerpt:

> *Mandy reveals what she has written on her post-it, which is folded in half on the opposite page. "You don't have to jot down what I do. These notes are for you. You can put anything that strikes your fancy." (Mandy, Field Notes, 2/4/2010)*

In this lesson, Mandy is teaching her students how to take notes while reading. She shows them how to do it, but she is clear that her way is not the only way. Any time a teacher gives students permission to own their learning, rather than simply recite correct answers is a power play.

Dialogic stance. Teachers who take a dialogic stance on their practice, consider and sometimes reconsider their past and present choices. In other words they hold a dialogue with their teaching and respond in some way, sometimes with new or altered practices as a result. Mandy narrated this stance as she described her experiment of letting students engage each other as resources about their writing. She also indicated this stance as she introduced a lesson: *Sometimes when you're reading I get the feeling you don't understand what it's all about. I was thinking of a way you can be more active readers. This activity will help you understand better (Mandy, Field Notes, 2/4/2010)*. Mandy proceeded to teach the students a new strategy to increase their metacognition while reading. Realizing the students needed help in that area, she decided to try something new.

Stacey also took a dialogic stance on her teaching as indicated in a conversation we had prior to an observation:

> *I arrive and get settled. Before the students come in, Stacey approaches to tell me "Your study has really gotten me thinking about dialogue and ways to use it more often." Early in the mornings she tutors students who need writing support. Lately, as they've reviewed prompts, rather than only doing writing, she has shifted to using dialogue – as a resource. As a small group they discuss the ways they could approach certain topics, and tell stories based on the prompts they were given. She said her writers have found it helpful. They've realized that writing is a form of communication, and that if they can share what they are thinking verbally, they can also apply this sharing as thinking through their writing. (Stacey, Field Notes, 2/2/2010)*

In this instance, Stacey's participation in the study served as a catalyst for her to reflect upon and experiment with her teaching. Teachers who take a dialogic stance engage in praxis – simultaneous reflection and action (Freire, 2000). They study their own teaching, and make adjustments as needed.

Invited dialogue. Earlier in this chapter, I made note of what I called compelled dialogue. I used this label to describe what happens when a teacher requested students engage in external, verbal dialogue. In later observations I noticed what seemed to be invitations to dialogue. When a teacher invites a student to dialogue, she encourages them to participate, although they may not do so. Students can remain quiet, perhaps conducting a dialogue silently and individually, rather than out loud or with another person. One short example from Mandy's classroom highlights this behavior: *After [Mandy] turns the page, a few students begin writing. Some still have blank notes. "You can turn and talk to your neighbor right now if you would*

like." Some, but not all do so (Mandy, Field Notes, 2/16/2010). In this excerpt, the students have written responses to a read aloud on post-it notes. The students have just snickered about a line from the book and she gives them a chance to talk about it briefly, if they choose. During my observations, Mandy often used the word invite with her students, and quite often all students, or nearly all, would participate as invited.

Dialogic Classroom

A teacher can facilitate a dialogue in a variety of ways, but meaningful dialogue does not occur through happenstance. Teachers who encourage student voice and agency, ensure learning is relevant to life, and help students engage each other as resources, create a dialogic classroom, or an environment ripe for inquiry. Themes that captured the dialogic nature of the learning environment are described below.

Free to be. As explained in the first half of the chapter, both students and teachers are free to be themselves in a dialogic classroom. This means they can express themselves in what some may consider non-conventional ways (i.e. singing while reading an essay) or have divergent opinions on controversial topics. One way Stacey encouraged her students to be themselves was by allowing them to use whatever language was most comfortable. In this excerpt from my field notes, Stacey is reading aloud *Freedom on the Menu* in tandem with Black History Month. This children's story is about sit-ins at lunch counters during the Civil Rights Movement. Between passages she leads discussion and challenges students to write facts from the book along with questions, connections, or feelings related to the facts: *They continue to read and respond every page or two. She stops and encourages one boy that he can write in English or in Spanish. She asks a bilingual student to help translate for him (Stacey, Field Notes,*

2/2/2010). In this quick moment, she showed the students that they were free to use their native language, if that would help them be more engaged learners.

Mandy often invited her students to be themselves, first by encouraging them to be honest when it might not be popular, and also by sharing stories about her own life and family. In this lengthy excerpt from my field notes, Mandy is talking to the kids prior to reading aloud *An Ant's Day Off:*

> *Mandy introduces the story today and notes that it involves talking characters – ants. Once the students move to the carpet she sets the scene: "Do you think we work you too hard at this elementary school?" No one seems to agree at first, but she encourages them to be honest. A few shy hands go up. She tells the students to, "Talk about a time you needed a day off." One boy immediately shouts out the name of the statewide standardized test.*
>
> ***8:45 a.m.***
>
> *After a minute or two, Mandy asks the kids to share when they needed a day off. One boy says today. Another boy says the statewide test. "I'm afraid of the FCAT." Another boy exclaims, "I'm scared! I'm really scared!" Still another boy says "Forever."*
>
> *"Let's not be silly," scolds Mandy. "Sometimes you wanna come to school and some days you wanna day off. I'm not talking about vacation where you go some place super special."*
>
> *One girl admits she'd like a day off when she doesn't understand something in school. Side conversations abound. One girl tells the scared boy from earlier, "You still have to take it, even if you are scared!"*

"Mondays. Every Monday," says Ezekiel. All the kids get excited and begin talking amongst themselves.

Mandy explains sometimes you just need a day off. She tells a story about her son Adrian who worked so hard in school. He worked competitively for weeks at a time until he finally said he simply couldn't go to school one day. She warned him if he didn't go to school he couldn't go to baseball practice. He was fine with that – he really needed the break. She explained she let him do this on occasion because he really was a consistently hard worker. He needed the day off (Mandy, Field Notes 2/23/2010).

The students seemed a little hesitant to share their true feelings, but Mandy told them it was fine to tell the truth. When it seemed they were not taking the task seriously, she redirected them, but still left the topic open for discussion. She then modeled using an example from her own life. In all these ways, she sanctioned and encouraged personal expression. In one additional excerpt from a later observation, we see Mandy invite students to participate, although they aren't required to do so:

"Does anybody else have anything to share or add? What were you surprised about?" Students mention the dogs and the teenagers wanting to sell the baby and that the researcher was a girl. Someone calls out, "I can't believe they found the real mom."

"Mine are the same as everyone else," says one boy. "That's okay, they're your thoughts," encourages Mandy. He explains, "I was surprised the boys wanted to sell the baby chimp." Mitch refuses to share. (Mandy, Field Notes 5/4/2010)

The students have written responses to a shared reading on post-it notes. Mandy has posted several starter prompts such as "Surprised" "Never Knew" and "Oh No, So Sad." She asked students to share aloud one or two of their responses and add the post-it to the appropriate poster.

In this excerpt one student seems unwilling to share because of his convergence with everyone else. Mandy accepts his participation anyway. Another student, Jaden, is free to keep his responses to himself. In classrooms where participants are free to be, a range of participatory behaviors are acceptable.

Learning related to life. When learning is related to life, teachers leverage what they know about the shared and individual histories of the students into relevant lessons. The lessons have a direct connection to their current lives, or spark students to think about society or current events in new ways. In this example from my field notes, Stacey is reading aloud *Freedom on the Menu*, mentioned earlier. She stops early in the book to invite students to engage with the text:

> *Stacey begins reading. After the first page she stops, "What's the problem already?" Students respond, Black people aren't allowed to sit at the lunch counter. She reminds them to jot down the relevant fact, but to be sure and respond to it. "Have you heard about this? Do you have a connection? Do you have a question? Or a feeling?" Students write. Some are sitting up, a couple stretched out, legs and sneakers splayed out. "Does this shock you? Did you know this?"*
>
> *After a moment, "What did you put down?" she asks. Students respond, "Why aren't they allowed to sit?" and "I wonder what's wrong with them sitting down?" One student makes a connection that this reminds him of assigned lunch tables. The teacher hides her face, seemingly surprised by the comment. (Stacey, Field Notes 2/2/2010)*

Stacey encouraged students, not to simply read and learn the "facts" of the story, but to find points of connection or confusion so they more deeply understand. Teachers who make

learning related to life realize that school can and should be a dialogue with life, and they work to help students engage in this dialogue meaningfully.

Student agency. Student agency was defined earlier as students asserting power in the learning environment. In some cases it may mean that students spearhead projects and work to make their ideas come into fruition, as Paula described in her narrative:

> *As the days flew by, the principal approved Drake's request. Quarters for Haiti started in our school. Two hundred and fifty dollars were collected in this one fifth-grade class. I thought about how one child can make a difference in our world.*
>
> *Later in the month, the four girls had one of the best baby showers ever for their teacher. They did it all from beautifully decorated homemade cakes, special pink baby girl decorations and nicely wrapped gifts to the food. … The amazing thing to me was that the shower idea was all conceived by the four young girls.*

In this excerpt Paula reflects on the power of students to have a voice, and also to take action and see the results in their environment. Student agency is also in evidence when students take responsibility for their learning, and make strides to get assistance or attention when they need it. Such strides may be subversive – students may sneak to get help, or disobey their teacher, as I observed in Stacey's class (see the example of student agency shared earlier). Students can also be open about their needs, practically demanding help when they get stuck as this observation from Natalie's class suggests:

> *Barbara comes over with a print out about her famous person. "What does better suited mean?" "What do you think it means?" Natalie responds right away. Barbara hesitates, "The way someone was brought up? And there's another word – build. That's not my word. What is that?" Natalie again asks the student what she thinks it means.*

Flustered, Barbara sighs and says "Exactly, what's another word for build? That's not my word." She reads aloud from the text, "They failed to serve his passion." It's confusing! Read it!" she insists, talking to Natalie. Natalie reads the paper aloud. "No better suited to his build... They're talking about sports that fit him, but…"

Barbara, seeming to understand now says, "But his parents didn't think it suited him!" She attempts to grab the paper back and walk away but Natalie holds tight. She questions, "Where are you getting parents from? It doesn't say anything about his parents." The student skims quickly and admits parents aren't mentioned (Natalie, Field Notes, 3/24/2010).

In this excerpt, the students are working independently, writing biographies. Natalie is circulating, moving from group to group to see if students need help. Although she is sitting with one group of students, Barbara comes over, out of turn, to get help. When she felt Natalie's assistance wasn't enough, she pushed for more. Students who assert agency have clear intentions and set out to make them happen.

Dialogue as a process. Teachers who use dialogue as a process purposefully use verbal or nonverbal exchanges as a tool for inquiry. In other words, as described earlier, dialogue is not simply used to ask questions or recite answers, but to build new knowledge. The following lengthy excerpt demonstrates how Natalie attempted to use dialogue as a resource during a lesson on poetry.

"Touch your nose if you hear my voice." Teacher gains attention and calls a group to the front. I want you to compare your thinking to Greece's thinking (the teams have names of countries in honor of the Winter Olympics). See if you have the same lines highlighted or circled. Why did you circle the first two lines?" It's not very descriptive a

student explains. "That's exactly what Alicia just told me." Teacher asks if other groups agree or disagree. "I don't agree with them," says Marissa. Marissa thinks it is descriptive because it gives her an image of an animal wildly running around. But another student says wild just means it's a wild animal, but doesn't describe how it's moving. Marissa maintains, "I think it's descriptive, it makes me think it doesn't have an owner, it's just sitting there in the wild." Teacher clarifies, "So you're thinking of two different wilds. Which means it's not very clear."

The group continues sharing their findings. "Why didn't you highlight the 2nd line?" Natalie asks. "Because the 2nd line doesn't describe anything, but in the third line it's clear he's doing something – he's scratching his ear." Teacher asks the whole group, "Did anyone else highlight that as a clear image?" One group agrees. One boy disagrees, "They are both one sentence! If you don't read the 2nd line, you can't get a clear picture. You need both lines." Natalie says, "I agree with you. Who else does?" Only five or six hands go up.

"We don't have time to go through every group and every line." The students sigh in disappointment (Natalie, Field Notes 2/22/2010).

Natalie encouraged the students to disagree when warranted, and to provide evidence of their thinking; although due to time constraints, they never build consensus. Still, in this excerpt, she pushed students to exchange ideas, to think about things from other perspectives, and to build their own understanding. This is using dialogue as a resource for learning.

Sanctioned silence. Sanctioned silence was a recurring theme during my observations throughout the year, although it was not discussed in the oral inquiry meetings. Dialogue as verbal discourse is sometimes welcomed and embraced, but often, only during times the teacher

designates. Many other times, talking is discouraged or punished, and is not viewed as helpful. In other words, talking during certain times is seen as a distraction rather than a process for learning. In the course of one observation, Natalie explained she thought her kids were unusually chatty, and she attempted to silence them as they worked independently:

> *"This is quiet time. I want you to hear the thoughts in your head. Group 5 is working so nicely and quietly. You all get a point." [Several minutes later] … Gene returns to tell Natalie something. She shakes her head in acknowledgement. "Gene is having a hard time concentrating and so am I, hearing all these other voices. This is writing time class. We need to listen to the voices in our heads," she announces to everyone (Natalie, Field Notes, 2/1/2010).*

Teachers have to maintain a productive learning environment, which includes quiet or silence for some students. In this case, Natalie felt that the talking was not related or helpful toward their finishing the assigned task. Teachers must constantly shape and reshape the boundaries between allowing verbal dialogue as a tool of inquiry and preventing discourse from being a distraction. This work is not always clear or easy.

Table 2

Indicators of Teacher's Stance Revealed in the Narratives

	Natalie	Stacey	Mandy	Paula
Asks authentic questions that encourage divergent answers	✓		✓	
Expresses herself as human and encourage students to be themselves	✓	✓	✓	✓
Poses questions to help participants rethink assumptions about society, life				
Explores and embraces teachable moments (takes risks)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Studies and revises teaching practices over time			✓	✓
Shares power to guide from the side	✓		✓	✓

Table 3

Themes from the Data Analysis

	Themes from Part 1	***Themes from Part 2***	***Recurring Themes***
Teacher as Facilitator	• Words have power • Teachers are coaches • Power plays • Mechanisms for dialogue • Dialogic stance • Compelled dialogue	• Listening stance • Risk • Scaffolding • Teachers are coaches • Power plays • Dialogic stance • Invited dialogue	• Teachers are coaches • Power plays • Dialogic stance
Dialogic Environment	• Free to be • Learning related to life • Impassioned exchanges • Student agency • Dialogue as a process • Sanctioned silence	• Free to be • Learning related to life • Student agency • Dialogue as a process • Sanctioned silence	• Free to be • Learning related to life • Student agency • Dialogue as a process • Sanctioned silence

The teachers in my study narrated their own practices regarding dialogue in the classroom. They took a dialogic stance on their dialogic pedagogy. The themes that emerged from their narratives, our discussions, and my observations, suggest strategies teachers can use as they attempt to enact a dialogic pedagogy; but they also reveal the tensions teachers must navigate in their efforts to do so. In Chapter Five, I discuss the implications of my findings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS:

SANCTIONING DIALOGUE IN THE STANDARDS-BASED CLASSROOM

The teacher is the vital component in creating successful learning experiences for students (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). In this regard, the teacher wields a lot of power in how students experience school. This power is multi-layered; on one level, the teacher has the power, or the ability to create effective or ineffective learning experiences; digging deeper, the tacit arrangement in a traditional classroom posits the teacher as the one with the power to make rules, and to count or discount certain behavior, languages or contributions (Apple, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Freire, 2000). She is the minority in the room and has the weight of the majority in mandating behaviors in the classroom (Barnes, 1992). The teacher has the opportunity to wield all of the power, or to distribute it among the participants of the learning environment. Although the teacher is granted this opportunity by the very nature of the traditional arrangement of schools and classrooms (Apple, 2004; Freire, 2000; Tozer, Senese & Violas, 2009), teachers may not be aware of this ability, and hence may unwittingly maintain the status quo of the all powerful, all knowing teacher (Freire, 2000).

Discourse is a given in classrooms, but the use of dialogue as a tool of inquiry is not (Hicks, 1996). Disrupting the status quo and moving toward a dialogic pedagogy requires effort (Burbules, 1993; John, 2009; Schuh, 2003), which begins with awareness – what Freire (2000) refers to as *conscienctizção*. Taking a dialogic stance on practice is one way to begin a reflective process – to unearth the sometimes invisible behaviors that both encourage or discourage the use

of dialogue in constructive ways (Freire, 2000; Gal, 1996; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Schön & Bennett, 1996). This is the work my participants undertook during this investigation. The purpose of this study was to explore what happens when teachers facilitate dialogue in standards-based literacy classrooms. I investigated four questions during this study:

1. What happens when teachers take a dialogic stance on their practice?
2. What happens when teachers facilitate dialogue?
3. What happens when teachers scaffold dialogue?
4. What happens when teachers create a dialogic learning environment?

I used critical theory as a lens through which to view teachers' narratives of practice as well as their actual practice as I observed their teaching. I presented the findings in Chapter Four. This chapter includes a discussion of the findings by question, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

A Dialogic Stance on Dialogue

In this study, four elementary teachers – Natalie, Stacey, Mandy and Paula – agreed to take a dialogic stance on their practice. In so doing, they each wrote a narrative about an episode where one or several students used dialogue to develop new understandings about a topic: Natalie's narrative reflected on a writer's conference between her and one student. Stacey's narrative described a whole group reading lesson and conversation that spanned several days. Mandy's narrative discussed an experiment in which she paired, then prepared, two students to dialogue with each other about their writing. Lastly, Paula's narrative focused on the authentic conversations students have when allowed to do so, and how much can be learned from listening.

The aforementioned were four very different narratives of practice, including the circumstances of the classroom, the level of involvement by the teacher, and the reasons and

ways dialogue took place. I used six indicators of stance to analyze the narratives. Each of these indicators were chosen based on student-centered and critical dispositions (hooks, 1994; Freire, 2000, 2005; Nieto, 2006): (a) asks authentic questions that encourage divergent answers; (b) expresses herself as human and encourages students to be themselves; (c) poses questions to help participants rethink assumptions about society, life; (d) explores and embraces teachable moments; (e) studies and revises teaching practices over time; and (f) shares power to guide from the side.

Asks Authentic Questions that Encourage Divergent Answers

The use of authentic questions was the first of indicator of stance. Stacey's narrative was full of questions, but they were leading questions, moving toward correct answers. As such, she did not use authentic questions in her episode of practice. Paula's narrative was more about students interacting with each other, rather than her own use of dialogue or authentic questions. However in the other two narratives, Natalie and Mandy asked authentic, open-ended questions that encouraged divergent answers. In both of those narratives, the teachers coached students in their writing, and encouraged students to use their own ideas and understandings to improve their essays. From a standpoint of inquiry, teachers who ask authentic questions understand that learning is partially an investigation into self (Barnes & Todd, 1995; Lindfors, 1999; Wells, 1999). Open-ended or authentic questions lead to an exploration of life. Asking such questions, as some of my participants did, engenders a dialogue with the participants' lives and their understanding of the world (Lindfors, 1999).

Expresses Herself as Human and Encourages Students to be Themselves

All four teachers narrated stories in which they expressed themselves as human and encouraged students to be themselves. In Natalie's case, she helped Victor remember and retell a

true story about his own life and sanctioned that as acceptable within the walls of school. Stacey's narrative revealed a teacher who was willing to allow students to express and explore confusion, displeasure, and frustration about social policies they didn't understand. Mandy encouraged Alicia and Denise to be respectful of each other, as they gave each other pointers about works related to their own mothers. Paula allowed students to express a range of ideas and concerns, and then later incorporated those authentic feelings into her teaching.

hooks (1994) argues that students crave an engaged pedagogy – one where teachers are vulnerable and work toward their own growth, while encouraging students to do the same. With such a pedagogy, teachers and students alike engage in the process of development and empowerment, and all members of the learning community are valued as individuals (Freire, 2005; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). All four teachers seemed to approach their teaching in such a way.

Poses Questions to Help Participants Rethink Assumptions About Society, Life

The third indicator was the only one none of the teachers revealed in their narratives. Stacey's approached it, as the students were learning about and discussing complex cultural and social concerns. Within her narrative she described helping students come to understand such issues, but she did not seem to challenge her students to consider norms related to power or privilege. In other words, she did not push her students to take a critical stance (Cooper & White, 2007; Freire, 2000; Jones, 2006; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). Critical researchers explain, as participants in this study, all four teachers were taking a critical stance on their teaching (Aaron, et al., 2006; Fecho, 2004; Jones & Enriquez, 2009). They questioned what was normal in their classrooms and considered their positioning in light of their daily teaching practices. But they did not demand the same of their students.

During my observations, the teachers had some opportunities to encourage students to critically inquire, although not all lessons focused on topics that lent themselves to such interrogation. Prior to the launch of the study, I asked the teachers about their familiarity with the tenets of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000). None of them had heard of it. As a result, it did not surprise me that neither observations nor the narratives revealed such pedagogical choices. But teachers *can* teach their students to take a critical stance – to question what is normal in their surroundings and to consider their positioning in light of resources, media images and their environment. To do so is to enact critical pedagogy (Cooper & White, 2007; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Fecho, 2004; Freire, 2000; Jones, 2006; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007).

In short, the teachers asked themselves questions to problematize their own teaching, but did not ask students questions to help them problematize their understanding of life. This is not unusual (Jones & Enriquez, 2009), although there are researchers who agree that critical inquiry work can be undertaken by young learners (Comber, Thomson, & Wells, 2001; Jones, 2006; Vasquez, 2003).

Explores and Embraces Teachable Moments

Teachers who embrace teachable moments are risk takers. All four teachers wrote narratives involving some measure of risk – conversations were not pre-scripted, and lessons were changed on the fly. In Natalie's narrative, she helped guide Victor toward a solution to his problem of too many ideas, but the final answer, as it were, came from him through the guided exploration of his past experiences. Stacey took an unexpected turn to delve more deeply into a topic her students did not understand. This topic, the war on terror, was one that spanned several

days and garnered skepticism and concern from the students. How they would respond, the fact they were not aware or had little understanding in the first place, was risky.

Mandy's narrative, a story of a pedagogical experiment, was about the risk she took to try a new strategy and further, about the risk of releasing control and allowing students to take more responsibility for learning and for teaching. Paula's story was also one of risk – she risked wasting time by not redirecting students back on task, choosing instead, to listen. Moreover she took a risk by changing her lessons immediately in response to their needs. Rather than continuing with her planned lesson and considering student needs for her *next* lesson, she abandoned those plans and made new ones right away. Classrooms are multifaceted, adaptive environments (Möller, 2002). Teachers who embrace this view realize their design of learning experiences may be messy without a clearly designated path (Gal, 1996). As the participants indicated, when teachers trust themselves and their students, they can take more risks and embrace the potential for dialogue.

Studies and Revises Teaching Practices Over Time

As Riesmann (2008) explained, "Stories function to alter the ways we view mundane everyday events. Stories can indeed accomplish change" (p. 63). Through writing stories, the teachers initiated a dialogue with their teaching practices. Critiquing them continued this process of revision, as they literally re-visioned or reconsidered their choices (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). However, only two of the teachers actually wrote about this overtly in their narratives. The first two narratives, Natalie's and Stacey's, did not reveal a dialogic stance, meaning the teachers did not take a reflective look on their practice within the narrative itself. The prompt did not require them to approach their narratives in this way, so it makes sense they did not.

However, the second two narratives, written several months after the study began, both seemed to be meta-dialogues about teaching and dialogue. By this time, the teachers had told me informally that they had a better understanding of the work we were doing and had new ideas about how to approach their second round of writing. Mandy's experiment and her reflection on it was an overt interrogation of her teaching practices; she decided to try a new tactic and consider its outcome. Paula's reflective comments toward the end of her narrative revealed her wonder at the ability of students to effect change when given the chance, and implied a willingness to be more open to the needs students express. This same stance was revealed in studies by Anttila (2007) and Salcedo (2009). In those studies, as with my participants, the teachers set out to learn more about their students and their pedagogy simultaneously, and began to make adjustments over time based on their new understandings.

Shares Power to Guide From the Side

The last indicator was whether the teacher purposefully shared power and responsibility with the student/s. Three of the four narratives revealed this stance. Throughout Natalie's narrative, she wrote about negotiating power with Victor, who had opportunities to shape and contribute to their discussion. Mandy's pedagogical experiment was one in which she put responsibility into the hands of two third graders and allowed them to learn from each other. Paula wrote about listening and taking action based on what students expressed as important. In all of these narratives, the teachers maintained their expertise but positioned the students as students-teachers (Freire, 2000) with important ideas. This corresponds to Freire's (2005) admonition that teachers have humility because doing so helps one to realize, "No one knows it all; no one is ignorant of everything" (p. 72). Teachers who share power believe no singular

expert possesses all the knowledge surrounding a given topic (Bednar, et al., 1992; Shor & Freire, 1987) and behave in ways that affirm this.

In short all the teachers encouraged students to be themselves, and all the teachers were willing to release *some* control to allow students to help determine the outcome of the learning episode. When teachers take a dialogic stance on their practice, we see diversity in the stories they choose to tell – the ways they enact their pedagogy and the ways they author themselves (Riessman, 2008) in the process. Each of the narratives represented one specific moment in time and are not fair representations of an entire school year, semester, or unit. Still, they reveal the range of what can happen in a classroom from day to day. When teachers take a dialogic stance on their practice of dialogue in the classroom, their pedagogy becomes an object of reflection (Freire, 2000). In this study, such a stance revealed: (a) There is a range of things teachers do to encourage dialogue during instructional time; (b) teachers who challenge the traditional teacher/student hierarchy take risks and also encourage all participants in the learning environment to embrace their humanity; however (c) teachers can allow divergent views while maintaining the traditional structure of classrooms. These points are explored in more detail in the sections to follow, as they correspond to the other questions investigated during this study.

Facilitating Dialogue

Facilitators are responsible for a myriad of activities in a learning environment, including technical, pedagogical, managerial, and social activities (Murphy, et al., 2005). Teachers who facilitate dialogue then, enact a variety of strategies to encourage dialogue (Damico & Rosaen, 2009; Mercer & Sams, 2006; Rodrigues, 2006; Schuh, 2003). Many of the choices they make revolve around their willingness to share power and encourage student involvement (Anttila, 2007; Barnes & Todd, 1995; Schuh, 2003). My data revealed ten themes specifically related to

teachers as facilitators of dialogue: (1) power plays; (2) teachers are coaches; (3) listening stance; (4) risk; (5) scaffolding; (6) words have power; (7) mechanisms for dialogue; (8) dialogic stance; (9) invited dialogue; and (10) compelled dialogue.

These themes represent a range of behaviors and pedagogical choices. They were identified and reported as distinct concepts or practices, but many of them overlap as I will describe. Teachers who facilitate dialogue make it easier for students to leverage, build on, and contribute to the shared knowledge and ideas of others. One of the main ways they do that is by disrupting the traditional teacher/student hierarchy – a move I called a *power play*. Teachers who are willing to share power in essence say to students, your ideas and contributions are valued here; I am not the only one with information worthy of discussion (Bednar, et al., 1992; Burbules, 1993; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). In this regard, they share the stage and invite students to participate as equals in the dialogue.

Within more student-centered environments, teachers do not relegate their roles to mere lecturing or depositing (Bednar, et al., 1992; Freire, 2000; 2005), but rather *teachers are coaches* – diagnosing student needs and supporting them with encouragement and guidance as needed (Guiney, 2001; Jonassen, 1999; Murphy, et al., 2005). Doing so gives students more opportunities to be heard, and importantly, to grapple with ideas (Bednar, et al., 1992; Hicks, 1996; Lindfors, 1999; Chang-Wells & Wells, 1993). When students have more space to use dialogue, their language isn't expected to be final draft talk (Barnes, 1992) – they are expected to think and speak (and write) in unexpected and even scattered ways, constructing new understandings in the process (Nystrand, 1997; Wells, 1999). Teachers who share power and allow students to struggle with new or divergent ideas, learn to use their own silence as a resource. They adopt a *listening stance* and become purposeful inquirers, collecting data on

student needs and leveraging their findings into more ways to support student learning (Anttila, 2007; Salcedo, 2009). Relatedly, teachers as facilitators of dialogue are open to *risk*. They allow classroom conversations to be messy and unpredictable rather than structured recitation (Barnes, 1992; Burbules, 1993; Hicks, 1996). Further, they use student responses to drive instructional decisions.

Supporting students and encouraging them to have more voice in the classroom is not synonymous with giving students free reign. Teachers who want to encourage productive dialogic transactions can *scaffold* them (Mercer & Sams, 2006). As Möller (2002) suggested, there is no need to leave students to fend for themselves in a dialogic environment. Teachers should be active participants as they strive to create and scaffold productive encounters with dialogue.

Teachers who facilitate dialogue acknowledge *words have power*. They realize words of encouragement can help reluctant or unsure students participate – especially if said participation means contributing divergent opinions, or taking responsibility in unfamiliar areas (Barnes & Todd, 1995; John, 2009; Schuh, 2003). Facilitators of dialogue also make time for dialogue – they adhere to lesson plans or workshop structures (Atwell, 1998) that allow time for extended conversations, or they implement management strategies and other *mechanisms* such as turn and talk that encourage student interaction. In all of this, they also adopt a *dialogic stance*. They dialogue with their own practices as they consider past decisions, and reconsider them in light of new information (Aaron, et al., 2006; Anttila, 2007; Fecho, 2004; Mercer, 2008; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000).

In short, the data revealed that the facilitator of dialogue shares power, helps students engage, and thinks about and rethinks her decisions to become more adept at doing both. Taken

together, these ideas imply that teachers who want to facilitate true dialogue must pay careful attention to their students' individual needs and carefully consider their own participation in the learning environment. Moreover, they must schedule *and* take opportunities for students to communicate their thinking – even if their thinking isn't always "right." All of these things begin from the foundational belief that knowledge construction is both possible and desirable (Damico & Rosaen, 2009).

A negative implication of this work is that well-meaning teachers may go beyond supporting students' use of dialogue as a tool of inquiry, and instead request they "talk" more in the classroom. Compelled dialogue, a theme that emerged in my data, is an example of a false power play; the teacher appears to share power by having students contribute, when in actuality she merely reinforces her power by insisting they do so. It is a difficult road to navigate, although not an impossible one, if teachers remember that dialogue need not be verbal at all. This and other concerns are discussed further in a later section.

Scaffolding Dialogue

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), describe a scaffold as something that enables a novice – in their research, a child – to solve a problem or complete a task that is beyond what he or she could accomplish unassisted. The scaffolding metaphor operationalizes Vygotsky's (1986) zone of proximal development (ZPD), the distance between a learner's actual developmental level and potential developmental level (Palincsar, 1986; Roehler & Cantlon, 1997; Sharma & Hannafin, 2007; Wertsch, 1984). Scaffolding is a responsive, multi-step process that ends when learners are able to not only complete the task at hand, but also similar tasks in the future without assistance (Reiser, 2004). Teachers can scaffold students' use of dialogue if they believe such a move will help students to have more productive learning experiences. My data revealed a few instances of

the teachers doing so. In one such instance, Natalie gave directions to the whole class prior to having students break into small groups to discuss poetry. As she circulated, she saw groups having difficulty. With one group, I observed her describe the task, chunk it into a smaller bit and give specific guidance on next steps. In that way, she was responsive; she met students where they were and gave them the individualized support they needed to be successful (Applebee & Langer, 1983; Reiser, 2004; Roehler & Cantlon, 1997; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wood et al., 1976).

When I observed Paula, she often modeled very specific directions, but she also employed worksheets or templates the students could use to scaffold their writing. Some of the students used the templates just as they were; others ignored them and wrote without the support; still others modified them – using them where they saw fit and adding to them when they thought that was more effective. Scaffolds are not one size fits all (Hogan & Pressley, 1997; Wood et al., 1976). Paula provided the students the level of the support each required, even if it meant no support at all.

Mandy's last narrative was about her experiment of letting students teach each other, and in it she narrated how she scaffolded their experience. She gave the students directions and set expectations for the work they were to accomplish. Then, rather than having them go alone and work without her, she sat nearby, listening and intervening when necessary to make sure they were successful with the task (Palincsar, 1986; 1988; Reiser, 2004; Stone, 1993).

In these examples we see a range of scaffolding dialogue as a tool of inquiry– from scaffolding a small group inquiry into poetry, to templates that help students conduct an internal dialogue prior to writing, to supporting a pair before and during a writing conference. Scaffolding can take many shapes and vary in the amount of time it takes to implement (Hill &

Hannafin, 2001; Hogan & Pressley, 1997; Wood et al., 1976). Because scaffolding is a responsive activity, teachers have to know their students, know the task to be accomplished, and devise ways to lessen the gap between the two (Applebee & Langer, 1983; Bliss, Askew, & Macrae, 1996). It is related to the listening stance teachers can take, as effective scaffolding is not based on assumptions of what students do or don't know, but rather on an understanding or a clear assessment of their knowledge (Applebee & Langer, 1983; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Hogan & Pressley, 1997; Wood et al., 1976). Like other aspects of the dialogic classroom, scaffolding is not something that can be predicted, nor governed by a pre-scripted step-by-step process. The teachers in my study sought to understand what students needed and worked to provide that support.

Structuring the Environment for Dialogue

Teachers do many things to enact a pedagogy of dialogue – notably they share power and strive to be inclusive of the diversity of voices in the learning environment. Similarly they set expectations and create a learning environment in which students feel they can and should contribute. Six themes emerged related to the dialogic environment: (1) free to be; (2) learning related to life; (3) student agency; (4) dialogue as a process; (5) impassioned exchanges; and (6) sanctioned silence. Like the themes indicative of the teacher as facilitator of dialogue, many of these themes work together. And because the teacher is the one who has the responsibility for structuring the environment, many of her pedagogical choices to facilitate dialogue are closely aligned to the choices she makes to organize the environment for dialogue.

The dialogic environment is one where students and the teacher are *free to be* themselves. In more monologic classrooms, when the primary goal is finding the right answer, a multiplicity of voices and personalities may not always be welcomed (Nystrand, 1997). Indeed, in standards-

based classrooms, standardized and/or rote answers may be commonplace (McNeil, et al., 2008; Nieto, 2002; Ravitch, 2010). But in the dialogic classroom, students (and teachers) are acknowledged as historical beings who have diverse and important experiences (Burbules, 1993; Dewey, 1938/1997; Damico & Rosaen, 2009; Lave & Wegner, 1991; Nystrand, 1997; Shor & Freire, 1987; Stewart, 2010). Rather than assuming students are somehow deficient, personal and even non-traditional experiences are accepted and leveraged for assignments and further inquiry (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). Relatedly, assignments and activities have relevance to students. In other words *learning is related to life* in some way (Dewey, 1938/1997; Erlauer, 2003; Fecho, 2004; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). In dialogic classes, the knowledge students already have can be used in school, and the knowledge they gain in school can be used in their lives (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

In such learning environments *student agency* is apparent. The classroom is more learner-centered and students take responsibility for their own learning (Knuth & Cunningham, 1993; Simons, 1993; Winn, 1993). They are not shy – they seek or even demand help when needed as in the case of Barbara who insisted Natalie explain something to her when she didn't understand. Students with agency think up and carry out ideas and are given the space and support to do so. An example of this was delineated in Paula's narrative; Drake began Quarters for Haiti and a group of girls planned a shower for their teacher. Although one could argue neither Quarters for Haiti nor a baby shower were academic pursuits, they were authentic (Reeves & Okey, 1996) ones. They exemplify the notion of a dialogic environment as one related to real life and one that acknowledges the humanity of its participants.

Dialogic classrooms embrace the notion of *dialogue as a process*. Based on constructivist principles, teachers who structure such environments believe that dialogue can be used to build and shape understandings, not only to recite or inform. Damico and Rosaen (2009) suggested that this belief was fundamental to success. Dialogue is a messy pursuit, and knowledge-building conversations are similarly capricious (Barnes, 1992; Burbules, 1993; Nystrand, 1997). When dialogue is truly leveraged as a resource, when divergent opinions and forms of expression are welcomed, there is a possibility of *impassioned exchanges*. Classroom activities wherein ideas are genuinely taken up and explored are full of enthusiasm. Such exchanges are exciting affairs and contrast greatly to the often lifeless recitation observed in more traditional/monologic classes (Burbules, 1993; Dewey, 1938/1997; Nystrand, 1997; Ravitch, 2010). But dialogic environments are not exciting all of the time. Sometimes rather than encouraging dialogue, teachers find it useful to *sanction silence*. Silence can be either helpful or disruptive depending on its use (Anttila, 2007; Wiltse, 2006). The complexities involved in sanctioning silence rather than dialogue are discussed in more detail in the next section.

In summary, my data reveal that a dialogic environment is one in which students and the teachers engage as partners to co-construct meaning. All participants have the opportunity to affirm and explore their lives in meaningful ways. However, there are challenges and circumstances that lead classrooms to be more or less dialogic. These tensions are discussed in more detail below.

Contemplating the Challenges

As noted earlier, facilitating dialogue and structuring a dialogic learning environment are not wholly divorced from each other. There are many overlaps between the two groups of ideas, and much of the discussion thus far has been about how such a pedagogy works, rather than how

it does not. Perhaps the more prescient work comes when we contemplate the challenges involved and the less than ideal choices or circumstances. To this end, there are four themes that together bear further discussion. The first two are related to the facilitator of dialogue: (a) invited dialogue and (b) compelled dialogue; the second two, to the dialogic environment: (c) sanctioned silence and (d) student agency. Taken together, they represent the challenges teachers must consider when implementing a pedagogy of dialogue.

Examples from my data will illustrate the point. The following excerpt is taken from an observation of Stacey's class. During this lesson, the students were on the carpet for a read aloud of the novel *Defiance*. As was typical during my observations, Stacey would stop after a few passages to ask questions of the students and encourage them to respond to the reading:

> *Read aloud continues. There is lots of playful banter between teacher and students. …* ***1:37 p.m.***
>
> *A question comes up and another student answers it. "I thought I was the teacher," she says, silencing the student. She proceeds to answer the concern and wraps up the lesson (Stacey, Field Notes, 1/12/2010).*

Although this is a very short snippet of a lesson, in this moment we see elements of invited dialogue – students were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions on the book so far. Amidst the dialogue, a student has a concern and raises it. Perhaps thinking it reasonable to respond since he believed he knew the answer, a boy asserts his agency and speaks up. It appeared to be an open discussion, but the teacher erected boundaries to show what was acceptable. She responded, affirming her power: "I thought I was the teacher," implying that she was the authority, and the official voice (Freire, 2000). In this moment, Stacey confirmed her positioning in the traditional teacher/student hierarchy. She was the expert, and the one with the power to count or discount contributions (Apple, 2004; Freire, 2000).

In another, longer excerpt, I observed a different kind of silencing in Natalie's class. In this lesson, Natalie is conducting a *Star Interview* with a student, Eddie. These interviews are guided writing conferences designed to improve student writing. *Star Interviews* are normally conducted with one person at a time, however another student, Jacob, needed help and interrupted the conference several times to get it. In this excerpt, Natalie has just given Eddie feedback on his paper and he has started to draft a new section based on her suggestions:

> *He writes something. She reads it and laughs. "Ouch!" She giggles. "Any onomatopoeia?"*
>
> *Jacob comes back over. He's stuck. Eddie leans in. He joins in the conversation and asks, "What game are you talking about?" Suddenly, the two of them then start to talk it through. Eddie offers a suggestion about how to explain the game and a typical move. Natalie interrupts. "I want you to think about what shocks me." Jacob shifts his attention to her now and seems to have suddenly realized something. "Can I think about one thing?" he asks. "That shocks you?" Natalie responds, "Yeah. Sure." "Okay! Let me go do that." He jogs off. Natalie resumes the conference with Eddie (Natalie, Field Notes, 1/6/2010).*

Jacob needed help and he demanded it. Although it wasn't "his turn," he got up, many times, to seek help from the teacher. He asserted his agency and Natalie supported him each time. What's interesting about this excerpt is that Eddie, who was familiar with the game Jacob was attempting to describe, wanted to help. In this on task, on topic conversation, in full view of the teacher, they begin to naturally engage each other as resources. Jacob had a problem and Eddie offered suggestions to help him solve it. Possibly for the sake of time, Natalie stopped Eddie and Jacob from constructing new knowledge by pooling and leveraging their prior

knowledge (Schuh, 2003). She interrupted them, in effect sanctioning silence, and reaffirming her position as the authority on writing (Apple, 2004; Freire, 2000).

These two excerpts from Stacey's and Natalie's class represent what I would call typical transactions in a traditional class. Perhaps for the sake of speed or classroom management, the teacher silences extraneous conversations except for the one she controls (Curwin, Mendler & Mendler, 2008). How can teachers balance the need to minimize verbal dialogue as a distraction, with the desire to encourage dialogue as a tool of inquiry? Further, under what circumstances is it acceptable for students to engage each other as resources? From the excerpts, one could argue that the discourse did not seem to be a distraction at all. In both cases, these were students who seemed interested in responding to a fellow student's request for information or assistance. They seemed able and ready to contribute to the discussion, and yet they were silenced.

These data show teachers who embrace a more monogologic classroom arrangement: the teachers talk while the students listen (Barnes, 1992; Freire, 2000). Traditionally, teachers initiate patterns of classroom discourse, students reply, and teachers then evaluate their response (Mehan, 1979). This standard operating procedure is known as the initiation, reply and evaluation (IRE) sequence and it dominates classroom interactions. Researchers agree that even within these traditional IRE sequences, there can be quite a bit of variance, but to disrupt the typical arrangement and move toward more dialogic experiences, teachers must invite and encourage different types of interactions (Barnes & Todd, 1995; John, 2009; Mehan, 1979; Schuh, 2003).

What about when students are working independently and attempt to use dialogue? In the hustle and bustle of the classroom, teachers have to make quick decisions and maintain order. Teachers sometimes shut down students who they assume to be off task, even when they are not

(Curwin, Mendler & Mendler, 2008). In Stacey's class, she assumed that a visit to the wiki had ceased to be productive because students were "over there too long." But she made that assessment after glancing up while leading a small group reading session. Mandy made a similar assessment when one group of students enthusiastically debated about character traits. She heard them laughing and talking loudly, and she reprimanded them for being off-task (although they were not). I mentioned this observation during our first oral inquiry meeting. In subsequent observations Mandy gave students more opportunities to talk in small groups, and circulated more often to see what indeed they were talking about. This suggests that teachers can check in with students to ensure their dialogue is productive and on task.

As the ones who are ultimately responsible for the learning environment, teachers must manipulate the circumstances such that students have the best opportunities to learn. For some students under certain circumstances, this may mean a quieter work environment during independent work. But what about students who just need time and space to "talk it out?" Talking out loud gives learners a chance to rearrange and reconsider ideas (Barnes, 1992; Burbules, 1993; Wells, 1999), but position this next to Natalie's announcement, "We need to listen to the voices in our heads" or Stacey's warning, "If I hear your voice, I'm asking for a dollar. You should be using your time wisely." Such positioning implies that *all* students need and would benefit from silence, and that talking is only good when the teacher says so. Students are individuals and do not have identical needs, despite the movement toward more standardized instruction in the standards based movement (Cuban, 2009; Freire, 2000; Lave & Wegner, 1991; Lindfors, 1999; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; McNeil, et al., 2008; NCLB, 2002; Palincsar, 1998; Ravitch, 2010; Resnick, 1989; Rosenblatt, 1938).

Although these challenges seem to fall on extreme ends of the continuum (to talk or not to talk), there is a middle way for teachers. Dialogue needn't be verbal to be productive. Just as talking things out gives learners the chance to reconsider their thinking (Barnes, 1992; Burbules, 1993; Wells, 1999), so does writing things out, drawing, or even talking silently. Scaffolding dialogue in a variety of ways (verbal and non-verbal; with others and within self) is a viable option.

Imposed silence is one challenge teachers may need to temper, but imposed dialogue is another. Sometimes teachers push students to use verbal discourse when they don't want or need to, or would prefer to dialogue silently – perhaps through their own writing – rather than aloud. After all, dialogue is about negotiating ideas and considering diverse perspectives. As mentioned above, this can be facilitated through many avenues. Regardless of the teacher's efforts to engage students in particular ways, some students assert their power and make their own decisions. My data revealed that some students refused to engage verbally when *told* to do so, some students chose not to engage when *invited* to do so, and some students engaged anyway, when mandated *not* to. As Wiltse (2006) found in her study, students wield quite a bit of power in the learning environment and simply may refuse to engage as planned. How can teachers partner with students to create ideal learning experiences? Sometimes it may be as simple as asking – inviting rather than imposing – a strategy I observed Mandy employ frequently. Such steps help build an environment of trust, even though it may not always be without tension (Möller, 2002).

In short, teachers who want to move toward more dialogic environments should be aware that all or none scenarios might be unhelpful. In other words, just because students are talking during an assignment, it does not follow that they are off task. Similarly, students who may not wish to partake in verbal discussions may simply find it more productive or more comfortable to

dialogue with complex ideas in other ways. My data offers no simple remedies, but there are some suggestions that teachers may find helpful. These are elaborated in the next section.

Sanctioning Dialogue: Implications for Practice

Two ideas emerge throughout this study: mindful positioning of teachers, and purposeful moves to encourage and support dialogue. As many researchers have suggested, teachers have to decide they want to change traditional recitation patterns to embrace dialogue (Barnes & Todd, 1995; John, 2009; Mehan, 1979; Schuh, 2003). In other words, teachers have to recognize their power and make efforts to position themselves differently. They then have to actively support students as they learn new ways and reasons to communicate in class. This includes welcoming diverse voices, working through the uncertainty of constructivist dialogues, and guiding students toward productive conversations.

Based on my work, I suggest the following framework for teachers who want to move toward sanctioning dialogue. Many of the elements are related to teachers taking a critical stance on their class, considering their power and positioning, marginalized and privileged voices, as well a diversity of thoughts. Within the framework, I do not wish to imply that one element is more important than another. Facilitating dialogue as a tool of inquiry seems to be an organic practice, rather than a step-by-step process, therefore many elements link naturally to each other.

Welcoming

Dialogue is an exchange of ideas and perspectives. The construction of knowledge comes from the negotiation of diverse and divergent ideas rather than the repetition or recitation of them. Teachers and learners are not tabula rasa and bring a variety of factors into the environment including culture, values and background (Freire, 2000; Honebein, et. al, 1993; Lave & Wegner, 1991; Lindfors, 1999; Resnick, 1989; Rosenblatt, 1938). Welcoming the range

of life experiences, ideas, and even languages, as the teachers in my study did, is a concrete step toward facilitating dialogue.

Relatedly, teachers sometimes silence certain topics (e.g. family members in jail, poverty, homelessness), hoping not to embarrass students who lead uncomfortable lives. But as Jones (2006) posits in her work, doing so reifies what students accept as normal while it marginalizes little known, understood, or respected viewpoints. In this way welcoming diverse voices allows students to be themselves and to also have the opportunity to consider and deconstruct new (and old) points of view. This is the very essence of problematizing, or posing questions or problems based on what is traditionally accepted as normal or correct (Freire, 2000). In welcoming diverse voices, teachers must also set ground rules for engagement, as Mandy narrated, and help students understand that the classroom is a place where it is *safe to* engage in potentially challenging conversations (Fecho, et al., 2010).

Active Listening

Just as teachers can welcome more voices into their classrooms, they can also adopt a listening stance and become active listeners as Paula described. Such a stance includes the obvious "pay attention while students talk," but it goes beyond that. Active listeners listen without being judgmental, sometimes nodding, leaning in or engaging in other body language to encourage participation (Cordingley, 2006; Weger, Castle & Emmett, 2010). Furthermore, my participants demonstrated that active listeners help facilitate dialogue when they take up what students suggest and push other members of the learning environment to elaborate or challenge ideas (Barnes & Todd, 1995; Burbules, 1993; Cordingley, 2006; Damico & Rosaen, 2009; Nystrand, 1997; Weger, Castle & Emmett, 2010).

Active listening, or adopting a listening stance, also allows teachers to inquire with and learn from their students. Such a stance reveals humility – teachers realize they don't know everything and that students know a great deal more than nothing (Freire, 2005). When teachers actively listen, they value their silence and step back, opening more opportunities for learners to contribute to the learning environment (Cordingley, 2006; Freire, 2005). They allow students to ask questions of and respond to each other, disrupting the standard initiation, reply and evaluation (IRE) sequences in favor of those that encourage more student involvement (Barnes & Todd, 1995; John, 2009; Mehan, 1979).

Inquiring

Teachers can also turn a "listening ear" inward and inquire into or investigate their own voice and choices in the learning environment. During this study, teachers regularly facilitated dialogue as they led instruction (individual, small group or whole group). But when students were to work individually without teacher involvement, teachers expected silence. Verbal dialogue during these times was assumed off-task and unhelpful. When teachers inquire into their classrooms and teaching practices, they investigate assumptions of off-task behavior rather than rush to judgment.

Teacher inquiry is praxis, or simultaneous reflection and action (Freire, 2000). In paying more attention to their surroundings, teachers can reconsider their choices and the outcomes (Schön & Bennett, 1996). Practice and theory naturally transact (Fecho, 2004), and teachers become more awakened to this as they dialogue with their teaching practices. Such reflection can lead to a focus on *how* things are working, rather than simply *if* they are working. As a result, they may begin to enact meaningful changes – for instance welcoming more diverse voices and views, or perhaps more mindfully supporting students in their own use of dialogue.

Scaffolding

A scaffold is a type of support, a structure that allows someone to accomplish more than he could alone. In learning environments, scaffolds are employed to assist learners toward the completion of a task (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). The scaffold is temporary – only in operation as it is necessary (Greenfield, 1984). It is faded or removed once the learner no longer needs it (Applebee & Langer, 1983). Scaffolds can support learners in any number of learning situations; using dialogue can be one of them.

Teachers understand and encourage the use of resources such as books or videos, and tools such as rulers or search engines. They understand that there are many instances in the learning environment when such tools and resources could be leveraged to explore the answer to a question, organize thoughts or materials, or communicate ideas (Hill & Hannafin, 2001). To this end, teachers teach students the ways and reasons to use tools and resources, providing scaffolding as needed. Bearing this in mind, teachers can likewise scaffold students' use of dialogue, as my participants worked to do. Such support would include specific guidance on the reasons dialogue is a potentially helpful resource, the modes for conducting dialogue (alone, with a partner, in a group, through writing, silently, verbally, through movement, etc.), and times when certain modes are most appropriate. As Rodrigues (2006) and others argued, students don't often have a clear idea of how to engage in productive dialogues (Mercer & Sams, 2006; Möller, 2002). Scaffolding dialogue can help students be more effective in conducting, participating in, and using dialogue, as they ultimately take more responsibility for their own learning.

Authentic Questioning

Teachers who want to welcome more divergent ideas in the classroom can do so through the use of questions. Not just any questions – but authentic, open-ended questions (John, 2009;

Schuh, 2003). As my participants revealed, such questions invite diverse answers from a variety of viewpoints. In monologic, or more traditional classrooms, teachers often rely on transmission models of instruction. In such cases, the knowledge is embedded in the expert and is transmitted or deposited to the student (Bednar, et al., 1992; Freire, 2000; Shor & Freire, 1987).

A dialogic classroom is one that fundamentally concerns itself with going beneath the surface; below superficial knowledge presented as truth; underneath the rote memorization required to pass multiple-choice tests. The tools used to construct rich understandings are questions. The right questions are those that can drive a learner of any age, not just for a few seconds of thought, or one class period, but maybe a week or several weeks if properly nurtured (Fecho, 2004; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Authentic questions are essentially about continuing to evolve as humans (Freire, 2000). Teachers and learners who pose them believe knowledge requires exploration and construction, rather than memorization and regurgitation (Bednar, et al., 1992; Chang-Wells & Wells, 1993; Lindfors, 1999; Wells, 1999). Authentic questions connect classroom learning to real life, and honor the lives of learners in the process.

A Framework

Taken together, these components, welcoming, active listening, inquiring, scaffolding, and authentic questioning, comprise a framework for how teachers can move away from sanctioning silence toward sanctioning dialogue. Because of the organic nature of the components, it is acceptable for teachers to start with one aspect if incorporating all elements simultaneously appears a daunting task. The most important thing is to begin from the fundamental belief that dialogue has the potential to be a valuable learning resource, and to make efforts to facilitate it more often. In summary, these are practical implications for teachers:

1. *Welcome* diverse views and voices, embracing the humanity and life experiences of each individual.
2. *Actively listen* to students and investigate assumptions about their behaviors.
3. *Inquire* into instructional decisions; consider *how* things worked, not just *if* they worked.
4. *Scaffold* students; teach them why, how, and when to use dialogue. This includes the fact that dialogue needn't be external or verbal to be productive or constructive.
5. Ask *authentic questions* that encourage genuine expression, not just recitation.

Implications for Research

Awareness, or what Freire (2000) called *conscienctizção,* is an important aspect of facilitating dialogue. Reflective practitioners can take the purposeful steps to disrupt traditional, monologic classes and move toward more dialogic environments. My narrative protocol asked teachers to choose an episode where they facilitated or observed the use of dialogue. Accordingly, the teachers all chose instances where dialogue was successful, which provided data on how facilitating dialogue works. Future investigations could focus on the silencing of students (either purposefully or unwittingly), or perhaps on unproductive dialogue. In that way, we can better understand the tensions and challenges teachers must negotiate as they work toward sanctioning dialogue.

Other lines of research may focus on the mechanics of facilitating dialogue or of structuring a dialogic learning environment. Studies undertaken with teachers may focus on their adoption of the framework for sanctioning dialogue. Individual aspects of the framework could be examined as teachers work with one component at a time. On the other hand, questions may consider the viability of the framework as a whole, including how best to support teachers as they work to implement the components in their classrooms. These questions are particularly

important framed within the current standards-based movement, as teachers often feel they have no time for creative or responsive methods (Cuban, 2009; McNeil, et al., 2008; Ravitch, 2010).

Research can also focus more directly on classroom management, an important issue for teachers (Curwin, Mendler & Mendler, 2008). Facilitating dialogue requires a revisioning of traditional teacher responsibilities. As teachers negotiate their shifting roles and move to support students as active participants rather than passive recipients, classroom management and student responsibility may be real concerns. Here too, acknowledgement of how teachers make sense of their roles or undertake this work in the era of high-stakes testing can be helpful to many.

A dialogic class embraces the historicity of all participants – including the teacher. In this study, all four teachers were white females; two of them in their late 20s and early 30s, and the other two in their 60s. I did not analyze the data along these lines, but perhaps it may have been instructive to do so. Also not considered in my analysis was the role of pre-service or in-service teacher education, or related factors in their current work. Individual or comparative case studies may provide valuable insight into the connection between teacher background and pedagogical choices.

Potential research questions related to the points described above include:

1. What happens when teachers take a dialogic stance on unproductive classroom dialogue?
2. What happens when teachers adopt a framework for sanctioning dialogue in a standards-based class?
3. What happens when teachers adopt a welcoming stance in order to leverage dialogue?
4. What happens when a teacher challenges her traditional positioning in a standards-based class?

5. What happens when teachers consider the connection between their historicity and their current pedagogy?

Conclusion

Teachers who embrace constructivist principles and enact inquiry pedagogies can look to their practices as a process of design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Designers often deal with messy, complex problems with no singular solution or pathway to completion. They have been compared to rock climbers who travel treacherous paths with uncertainty (Gal, 1996). The climber has to take steps based on the terrain, often altering or scrapping well-crafted plans. Although the end is clear, the pathway to it is not. This is true of designers of inquiry. Teachers who strive to create learning environments that are dialogic and embrace dialogue as a tool of inquiry may sometimes find themselves on unequal footing.

High stakes testing has not closed the achievement gap as hoped (Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009). Schools that continue to narrow curriculum and increase pressure on all stakeholders, do so at the risk of pushing out the very students who would benefit most from the expanded opportunities education may provide (McNeil, et al., 2008). Students lead complicated lives and deserve classrooms that make space for and investigate these complexities, even as mandated standards provide the ultimate destination for their educational journeys. Facilitating dialogue is one solution, although admittedly, not an easy one to implement. But I believe it is worth the challenge.

Embracing dialogue is one method that allows teachers to meet the needs of a diverse population while still navigating the politically charged nature of teaching and learning in standards-based classrooms. Dialogic pedagogy is messy and risky, divergent and relevant, yet uncertain, because it values the individual. Through its rejection of bite-sized bits of discrete

facts doled out in mindless obeisance to standardized scope and sequences, it honors the creativity and curiosity each one of us possess through our explorations of life.

It is my hope that our classrooms will continue to move toward inquiry and dialogic methods, in celebration of the diversity of our students, and the complexities of life's continuum of experiences. I believe it is possible to merge high standards and inquiry, if we begin to shift our focus from depositing an endless store of information into our students, to pushing them to struggle with, connect to and interrogate their processes of experiencing, learning and ultimately becoming more fully human. It is undoubtedly a challenge, but our students deserve nothing less.

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APPENDIX A: SUMMARY & SEQUENCE OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

August	• I filed an IRB application with the UGA Human Subjects Office. • IRB granted approval.
September	• I met with the local Writing Project facilitator regarding potential participants for the study.
November	• Approval was sought from a school district in the Florida Bay Area. • An email was sent to selected elementary teachers in that district to recruit potential participants for the study. • I met face to face with interested teachers to answer questions.
December	• Participants were finalized. I scheduled and performed initial observations and gained informed consent (see Appendix G: Consent Form). • Participants were asked to begin writing their initial narratives for analysis in January (see Appendix B: Narrative Protocol).
January	• I scheduled and performed observations and negotiated regular observation schedules with individual teachers. • Participants completed their initial narratives. • We met to conduct an oral inquiry on the narratives (see Appendix D: Oral Inquiry Protocol). • I began inductive coding and an analysis of the narratives.
February	• Observation data were collected throughout the month, except when interrupted because of standardized testing. • I continued data analysis.
March	• Very few observations were conducted this month due to standardized testing. • Data analysis continued.
April	• Observation data were collected throughout the month, except when interrupted because of Spring Break. • Teachers completed their second narratives. • Data analysis continued.
May	• I conducted the last round of observations. • We met for the second time to subject the narratives to the oral inquiry process. • I coded the new data, including the oral inquiry data and the narratives.
June-September	• I continued data analysis and coding, and began writing the findings and implications chapters.

APPENDIX B: NARRATIVE PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTION

Resources are media, people, places, or ideas that can potentially support learning. A resource can be a magazine, a photo, a location or even a conversation. This study considers the use of *dialogue as a resource* for learning. Dialogue is an exchange of ideas and perspectives, and can occur internally as well as externally. Dialogues may be conducted silently, verbally, in writing, electronically (via email, text or chat), via art, and in any number of other ways.

Through dialogue, learners have the opportunity to think about, shape and reshape their understandings of a topic or issue. In other words, dialogue is not merely a method for assessing understanding, but creating it. When *dialogue is a resource*, no single participant (teacher included) is thought to exclusively possess understanding of a particular topic. Students' language and contributions are always valued.

YOUR TASK

This is a narrative about your teaching. The story is selective; you will focus on a few key scenes, characters, and ideas. There are no right or wrong answers. In looking back over the past few weeks, it may be possible to identify certain episodes in your classroom that struck you as important. *Please identify an episode where one or several students used dialogue to develop new understandings about a topic.*

The dialogue may have occurred in a whole group or small group setting, through a journal or series of writing tasks, or in any number of ways. You may have been a direct participant in the exchange, or perhaps an observer. You may have purposefully facilitated or scaffolded the exchange through various tasks or lessons, or maybe it seemed to unfold naturally. The dialogue may have taken place in a single conversation, or over a period of time. In other words, there are many possibilities to consider. Please select one that stands out to you for some reason.

Please write a story that describes what happened, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling. Be descriptive, but not judgmental. Your final narrative should be no more than 2-4 double-spaced typed pages.

APPENDIX C: SCHOOL DISTRICT CALENDAR

2009-2010 Student Academic School Calendar

Teacher Pre-Planning	August 17-24, 2009
Students' First Day of School	August 25, 2009
Labor Day/Non-Student Day	September 7, 2009
End of First Grading Period	October 29, 2009
Veterans' Day/Non-Student Day	November 11, 2009
Thanksgiving Holidays/Non-Student Days	November 23 - 27, 2009
Winter Holidays/Non-Student Days	December 21, 2009 – January 1, 2010
Students Return to School	January 4, 2010
End of Second Grading Period/1st Semester	January 15, 2010
Martin Luther King Jr. Day/Non-Student Day	January 18, 2010
Teacher Work Day/ Non-Student Day	January 19, 2010
Students' Day at the Fair (West Hillsborough County)	February 5, 2010
Strawberry Festival (East Hillsborough County)	March 8, 2010
End of Third Grading Period	March 26, 2010
Spring Holiday/Non-Student Days	April 12-16, 2010
Students Return to School	April 19, 2010
Conference Day/Non-Student Day	April 30, 2010
Memorial Day/Non-Student Day	May 31, 2010
Last Day of School/End of Fourth Grading Period/2nd Semester	June 10, 2010
Teacher Post-Planning	June 11-14, 2010

Early Release Days:

September 2, 2009	September 16, 2009	October 7, 2009
October 21, 2009	November 4, 2009	December 16, 2009
January 13, 2010	January 27, 2010	February 3, 2010
February 17, 2010	March 31, 2010	April 21, 2010
May 5, 2010	May 19, 2010	June 10, 2010

School Board Approved: 8/18/09

APPENDIX D: ORAL INQUIRY PROTOCOL

Each participant should have a copy of the completed narratives.

Select one participant (Participant A) to begin. Participant A will read aloud his/her narrative, while the group reads along silently. (Note: Participant A may choose not to read aloud, but read silently along with the group). During the reading, participants will take notes on the following questions. After the reading, all participants will share responses to the questions individually:

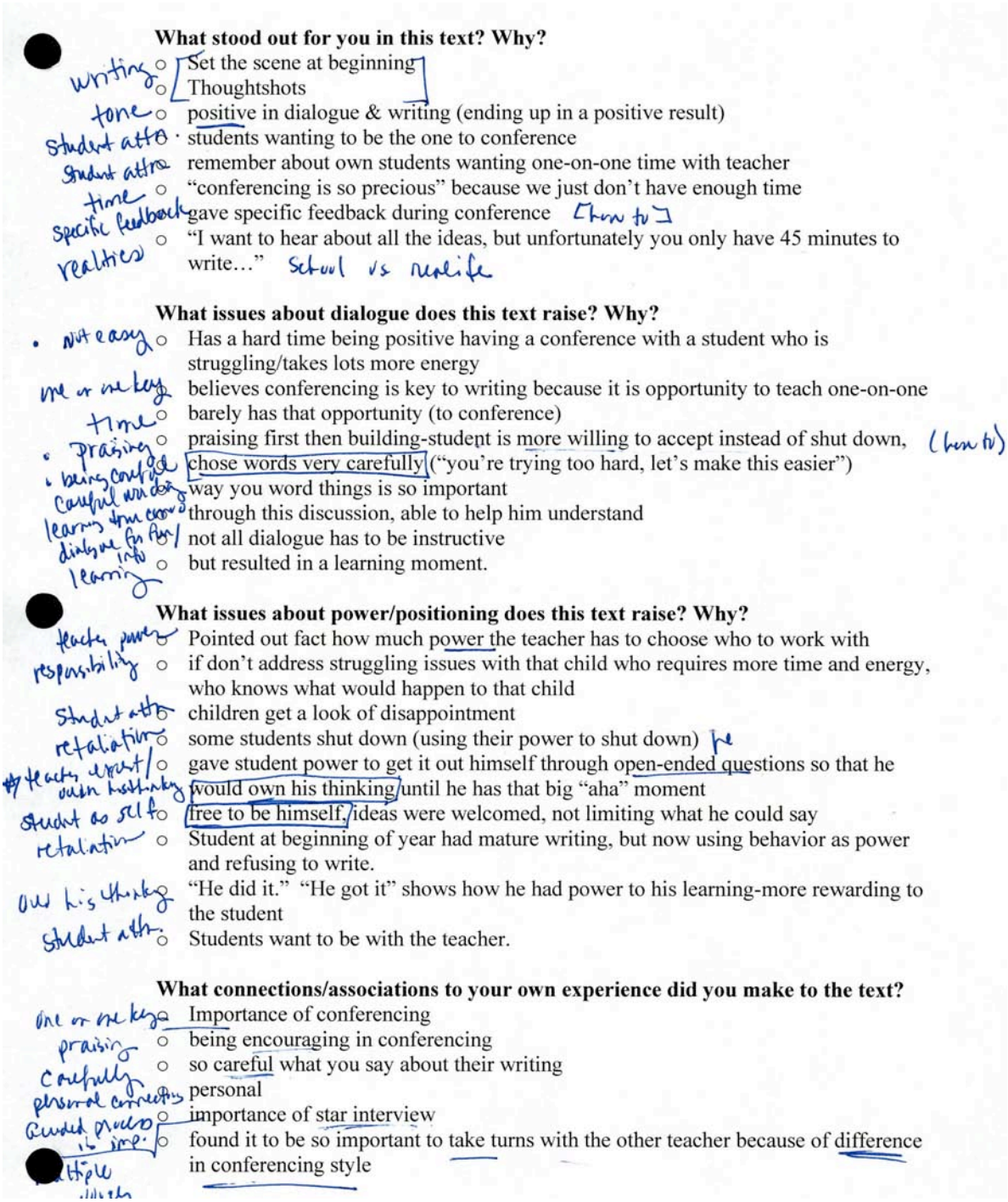
- What stood out for you in this text? Why?
- What issues about dialogue does this text raise? Why?
- What issues about power/positioning does this text raise? Why?
- What connections/associations to your own experience did you make to the text?

When all participants are ready, Participant A will take notes as each participant orally shares his/her thoughts on the first question. Participant A will only be able to take notes as others share their responses to the questions above. This process continues through all four questions. Participants are welcomed to make note of key themes throughout this process. Once all questions have been addressed, Participant A clarifies and summarizes all responses.

The next participant (Participant B), will follow suit, beginning with the reading of his/her narrative. This continues until all narratives have been subject to the oral inquiry process.

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE CODES AND SAMPLE MEMOS

Sample Initial Codes – Oral Inquiry Meeting # 1



What stood out for you in this text? Why?

- Set the scene at beginning
- Thoughtshots
- positive in dialogue & writing (ending up in a positive result)
- students wanting to be the one to conference
- remember about own students wanting one-on-one time with teacher
- "conferencing is so precious" because we just don't have enough time
- gave specific feedback during conference
- "I want to hear about all the ideas, but unfortunately you only have 45 minutes to write…"

What issues about dialogue does this text raise? Why?

- Has a hard time being positive having a conference with a student who is struggling/takes lots more energy
- believes conferencing is key to writing because it is opportunity to teach one-on-one
- barely has that opportunity (to conference)
- praising first then building-student is more willing to accept instead of shut down,
- chose words very carefully ("you're trying too hard, let's make this easier")
- way you word things is so important
- through this discussion, able to help him understand
- not all dialogue has to be instructive
- but resulted in a learning moment.

What issues about power/positioning does this text raise? Why?

- Pointed out fact how much power the teacher has to choose who to work with
- if don't address struggling issues with that child who requires more time and energy, who knows what would happen to that child
- children get a look of disappointment
- some students shut down (using their power to shut down)
- gave student power to get it out himself through open-ended questions so that he would own his thinking until he has that big "aha" moment
- free to be himself, ideas were welcomed, not limiting what he could say
- Student at beginning of year had mature writing, but now using behavior as power and refusing to write.
- "He did it." "He got it" shows how he had power to his learning-more rewarding to the student
- Students want to be with the teacher.

What connections/associations to your own experience did you make to the text?

- Importance of conferencing
- being encouraging in conferencing
- so careful what you say about their writing
- personal
- importance of star interview
- found it to be so important to take turns with the other teacher because of difference in conferencing style

Sample Final Codes – Oral Inquiry Meeting # 1

	Codes	Data
Teacher as Facilitator	Words Have Power	○ praising first then building-student is more willing to accept instead of shut down
	Words Have Power	○ chose words carefully "you're trying too hard, let's make this easier"
	Words Have Power	○ Has a hard time being positive having a conference with a student who is struggling/takes lots more energy
	Words Have Power	○ way you word things is so important; careful
	Words Have Power	○ being encouraging in conferencing
	Words Have Power	○ Gave specific feedback during conference
	Words Have Power	○ positive in dialogue & writing (ending up in a positive result)
	Teachers are Coaches	○ Liked how teacher questioned the students' questions
	Teachers are Coaches	○ Got the kids thinking through questioning
	Teachers are Coaches	○ knowing students and guiding discussion based on that
	Teachers are Coaches	○ so good teachers will guide the students to give the answer rather than the teacher giving it
	Teachers are Coaches	○ asking open-ended conversations, teacher is the facilitator, guiding students to learn on their own
	Teachers are Coaches	○ gave student power through open-ended questions so that he would own his thinking until big "aha" moment
	Power Play	○ article about students as tutors – its more motivating for the learner to receive from a fellow student/peer
	Power Play	○ teacher had power but gave it to students who (knowingly had a correct response) answers the questions
	Power Play	○ Power the teacher has to choose who to work with
	Power Play	○ gave student power through open-ended questions so that he would own his thinking until big "aha" moment
	Power Play	○ if don't address struggling issues with child who requires more time and energy, who knows what would happen to that child
	Power Play	○ "He did it." "He got it" shows how he had power to his learning-more rewarding to the student
	Power Play	○ articles we recently read- responses are more powerful coming from students so good teachers will guide the students to give the answer rather than the teacher giving it
	Power Play	○ important to take turns with the other teacher bc of difference in conferencing style
	Mechanism for dialogue	○ "conferencing is so precious" b/c we just don't have enough time; barely has that opportunity (to conference) <time>
	Mechanism for dialogue	○ importance of Star Interview
	Mechanism for dialogue	○ writer's workshop has conferencing built in
	Mechanism for dialogue	○ conferencing is an opportunity to teach one-on-one

Sample Memo

Theme	Free to Be
Definition	In a dialogic learning environment, the teacher and learners are free to express themselves, even when doing so may be surprising, uncomfortable, or divergent from an expected or traditional response.
Characteristics	The teacher facilitates this "freedom" of expression, by welcoming students to respond in a variety of ways, and discouraging behaviors that might limit or restrict expression (such as students laughing at other students, ignoring tangential responses, affirming "correct" answers, etc.). Students who are free take risks and attempt to figure things out, rather than wait to be told the answer. Students are more relaxed and as a result may be silly from time to time, but not to the point of distraction. They may offer personal experiences as a way to further or explain their understanding of a topic. When the *teacher* is free to be, she will voice her own opinion, making it clear it is how she thinks (but not necessarily the only way to think about a given topic). In short, both teacher and students are free to be human – historical beings with valid experiences that facilitate understanding.
Illustration	Around the room I hear a student say, "Stupid!" Mandy hears it too and interjects in her slow drawl, "Excuse me, she is not stupid. She is very smart and she's going to come up with some good ideas." Mandy 12/17 She immediately launches into a story about "Me, my mom and my mom's boyfriend." The teacher praises her, "Amazing description. Very good. Lots of craft in there. She was reading like a writer…" Students say what they like and the reader picks the next person to share… A boy is up next. He stutters a bit while he reads about Late Christmas Caroling. He sings out loud to model his caroling. Natalie 1/6
Negative case	This does not mean disrespect is tolerated, or that conversations veer far off topic just to encourage diversity in voices. It does mean that many ideas are welcomed and can be contributed.

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE FIELD NOTES

Participant & Location: Natalie, Classroom
Date of Observation: February 15, 2010
Time Began Observation: 12:35 p.m. ET
Time Ended Observation: 1:37 p.m. ET.

Some of the kids have shifted again although the desks are still clustered in the same way. Today the kids all have "nature objects" on their desks including leaves, rocks, sticks and the like. The big statewide writing exam was last week. The teacher has expressed the desire to let students have more fun with their writing. They began poetry last week.

12:38 p.m.

I take my normal seat at the kidney table in the back of the room. Natalie has text projected from her MacBook onto the whiteboard. "I want you to turn to talk to your neighbor – what is this boy seeing? What does he see with his heart?"

The children begin talking vigorously in some groups but a little quieter in others. After a minute or so the teacher regains attention, "Eyes on me please. What did you guys talk about?" The students begin to summarize their discussions. She praises the first one, "I love her example. Did you hear it back there? (No). Say it louder so everyone can hear it." She repeats herself and the teacher elaborates: "This boy takes the time to look at things. Remember the video clip we watched last week?"

"He was inspired," someone offers. Natalie agrees, "He was inspired to write a poem about the picture. What was the one thing in the picture that caught his eye?"

"Ice cream," a boy responds. "Good Jason! He saw a lot more to that picture because he stopped and studied it and saw more. You can create poetry about a pair of scissors." Natalie

continues to read the passage. A student gets up to sharpen a pencil while she's reading. She shakes her head no and the student sits down.

She begins to ask questions again. Using the poem she asks, "How can we write with no good words? What do they mean?" The girl from earlier gets up to apply hand sanitizer. Her hand is smudged with pencil marks and she uses the sanitizer to try and wipe them off. The students spend a few minutes grappling with the topic.

"Last week we talked about awakening our heart. Why do we eat food? Remember the poem that we read? Poetry is like bread – what is that word that we used last week? Poetry feeds our soul, and bread feeds our hunger. Poetry feeds our emotions and our soul. He tries to put on paper what they see what his heart."

12:47 p.m.

"Turn to your neighbor, what do you think this all means?" One minute passes and she calls them together with shave and a haircut. They begin to share whole group. One student says of the author, "He's looking with his heart, so he is not looking at it as a stick, but as a beautiful thing." Teacher clarifies that all poetry doesn't have to be framed as beautiful. It can be poetry whether its beautiful or not – we all have different hearts so we all see things from a different perspective. She then asks students to explain what she means by different perspective. Boy offers, "Different point of view." She links it to schema and background knowledge and explains, "That's where poetry happens, when we see things from different perspectives. Take the piece of nature that you chose and draw it from a different perspective." She holds up an 11X17 tan sheet of paper folded in half like a folder. "Don't trace it. See it from your heart and not your eyes. On one side draw it and on the other side draw it from a different perspective.

This is a sketch. It does not have to be perfect! Whatever you get done in the next 10 to 15 minutes is what we're going to look at for the next step."

12:52 p.m.

Students begin to work with a little murmuring here and there. The teacher circulates, peering over students' shoulders, providing commentary here and there.

12:56 p.m.

"Boys and girls you're not just doing the outline, you're doing the details, the bumps the curves – the surface *and* the outline."

1:03 p.m.

Teacher gives a two-minute warning. She continues circulating. The murmuring is a little louder now. One student is taking his objects (two rocks) and rubbing them together. One minute later, she gives a one-minute warning. A boy sharpens a pencil. Teacher turns on music.

1:05 p.m.

"Okay, it looks like we all have two different angles. Next step! All eyes up here. I want you to think about 4 things." She projects it. "Describe what it looks like. Compare it to something else. Describe what it feels like. Do you have any questions? Describe it from the heart. Think about your life experiences. What does the word compare mean?" Students respond. "You can compare it to your neighbor's object. Doesn't have to be in order. Write around your objects." A boy asks if labeling it counts. "Yes, you can do whatever you want to describe it. Be as specific and detailed as possible."

1:10 p.m.

One boy expresses concern about his leaves to the teacher (indistinct). She announces to the class, "Both of his leaves broke so I told him that one of his characteristics is fragile or

breakable." Some talking commences, but the classroom remains generally quiet. She continues to circulate and offer comments as needed. She explains that the questions they've written will be answered by a neighbor once their time is up. One boy is confused, "What are we doing?" She responds, "I'll tell you in a minute. You've got one more minute before we do that."

1:15 p.m.

"Trade your objects and papers with your shoulder partners. They're going to think about your work. So try to think outside the box." She shares a student's drawing and description of her leaf as a Christmas tree. The students switch and begin talking – the volume is increasing in the class. A few still aren't talking, but some are.

1:20 p.m.

The teacher is at one cluster and the students are enjoying a good laugh. They are giggling mightily. One student pretends to smash her forehead down on her desk. The teacher giggles softly and walks away. She turns on the Elmo and picks a student to bring her work up.

"1-2-3 eyes on me!" "1-2 eyes on you!" the students respond. "I need all eyes on Melissa. Be a good audience. A word catches Natalie's attention: scruffy. "What does scruffy mean to you?" The student answers and continues sharing her work. Later on the student says, "…it looks like a space ship about to take off." "Good! Why, because it's shaped like this (moves her hands toward a point)?" Student agrees, yes.

Fragile is another word the student used. The class discusses fragile. Students toss out examples of things they think are fragile: a baby kitten, mom's iPhone, my brother who falls down and exaggerates.

1:26 p.m.

"As you're listening to us add details, I want you to think about your work." Student calls another student to go next (girl calls girl). "Is there anything else in your life that you've been surprised it turned out one way you thought would be a different way?" Silence. Jaylen mentions a football analogy.

A third student goes up. Another girl. She shares that some of the leaves seem as though they are not fully grown but the plant is dying (the leaves are drying out). The teacher asks more about this. "I don't want you to just look at the objects, but really think about the objects. Think of yourself as a plant. What would you look like? Think about what has happened in your life…What kind of plant would you be? See what kind of poetry exists in life?"

1:33 p.m.

"Turn and tell your neighbor what kind of plant you'd be." Less than one minute later, she asks for responses. Tulips, daisy are the first few. She pushes, "What's the connection? Tell me why. Not just that you like the flower, but what's the similarity between you and your life?" (Note: This seems to be the whole point of the lesson. How can we recast this whole lesson around this one big idea of poetry as metaphor?).

1:35 p.m.

"We're going to stop right there. I do not want you to lose these. We're actually going to write some poetry, thinking about how these objects remind us of our lives. I will read you an example. Slide them on the inside of your writer's binder." Groups are allowed to go to the bathroom as they prepare for specials. End.

APPENDIX G: CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "Scaffolding Inquiry in a Standards-Based Classroom" conducted by Nicole D. Collier from the Department of Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology at the University of Georgia (542-4110) under the direction of Dr. Janette R. Hill, Department of Lifelong Education, Administration & Policy, University of Georgia (542-4035). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at anytime without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this study is to investigate what happens when teachers adopt an inquiry-based approach to a standards-based curriculum. The study is expected to last approximately five months. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

1) Write three narratives about aspects of my teaching (2 hours for each)
2) Meet three times in a small research group to analyze narratives (1 1/2-2 hours per meeting; will be audio recorded)
3) Be observed while teaching literacy-based lessons
4) Provide copies of my lesson plans, assignments and teaching materials throughout the study

The benefits for me are that I will have the opportunity to inquire into my own professional practice and possibly improve my teaching. The researcher also hopes to learn more about incorporating inquiry and dialogue with standards-based curriculum.

No social, legal, economic or physical discomfort, stress or harm are anticipated as a result of this study. However, any type of discussions/interviews can cause some discomfort. To minimize this discomfort, I understand the researcher will carefully explain the types of questions she will ask. The researcher will digitally audio record the interviews, but I will have the option to request the recording device be turned off. Lastly, I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission. Digital recordings will be transcribed and identifying references will be removed. Identifying references will also be removed from fieldnotes and documents collected. Identifiers will be kept separate from the data, in a locked location accessible only by the researcher. Any reports written as a result of the data will refer to me by pseudonym only. Digital files will be kept on an external drive, in a locked location that only the researcher has access to. They will not be publicly disseminated. Digital files will be securely kept for five years for future research, and then destroyed.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Nicole D. Collier	_____	December 15, 2009
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Telephone: 404-234-1162 Email: ndc@uga.edu

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX H: SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS

Subject: **Is tomorrow okay?**

From: **Nicole D. Collier** <nicoledcollier@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Feb 22, 2010 at 4:04 PM

Hi [redacted],

Is it okay for me come observe tomorrow? Or is Thursday (or another time) better?
Also, when you get a moment, will you respond to these? Sometime this week if you have time:

- Pseudonym:
- Age:
- Ethnicity:
- Educational background/certifications:
- Teaching experience (number of years, grade levels):
- Current teaching assignment:
- Briefly, how did you get involved with TBAWP?:
- Any other information you'd like to share (i.e. teacher beliefs, family information, professional learning goals, etc.):

Date: Mon, Feb 22, 2010 at 4:28 PM
To: "Nicole D. Collier" <nicoledcollier@gmail.com>

I'm sorry. I really meant to finish that for you this week end. My daughter had her baby on Friday night and I didn't come back to [redacted] until 10 last night. Did not have a computer with me in the hospital. I might have to go back over to Orlando tomorrow. I am going to call her when I go home and see how she is doing and if she got discharged from the hospital. She was exhausted all week end and not recovering very fast. Baby is fine and cute as can be. Her husband is off for two weeks to help out. I will let you know. If I am here, tomorrow will be the best time. I will let Ms. [redacted] know.

From: **Nicole D. Collier** <nicoledcollier@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Feb 22, 2010 at 4:37 PM

Oh I forgot about the grandbaby!!! I'm so glad baby is fine and cute! :-)
Let's not worry about tomorrow. We can just wait until next week or the week after the test. It's fine!!

Date: Mon, Feb 22, 2010 at 4:59 PM
To: "Nicole D. Collier" <nicoledcollier@gmail.com>

If I am here, [redacted] and I do a lesson with FCAT practice reading test that I find very interesting. On the long written responses we let the students share and they grade each other on the number of points that they think each piece earned. There is a lot of dialogue between the students. It has been so positive and helpful. Students are listening and talking to each other this way. We are doing a poetry lesson on Thursday but I know that is not your day and I might not be here. I am going day by day to see if my daughter will need me. She was suppose to go home today. She was still very weak yesterday. She had a c-section at the last second after going thru intensive labor.

APPENDIX I: THE UNTOLD STORIES

All four participants wrote two narratives each – one in January and one in May. Due to time constraints, not all narratives were shared and analyzed during the oral inquiry meetings. Below, I present the unshared narratives in full. I begin with Mandy's and Paula's narratives, as these were written in January, followed by Natalie's and Stacey's narratives, written in May.

Mandy's Narrative

Alicia's a twin. A cute, little bespectacled red head as unlike her brother, who is in the class next door, as she can be. While Frederick is very anxious that his work be perfect, and is meticulous in his presentation, Alicia shrugs off her assignments and dashes through her work. She seems to be a born reader, and particularly enjoys non-fiction. During read-aloud time, she always pulls in close to me, and comes up with comments and questions that I am often unable to adequately explain. Both Alicia and Frederick are identified as "gifted" and took the number one and two spot in overall reading skills on their SAT tests from second grade.

Shortly after Alicia received her first quarter report card, she approached me about raising her grades. Alicia had made the honor roll with all As and a B in writing and in math. She specifically asked what she needed to do to get an A in writing. I happened to have a piece of her writing handy, and I made a date to sit down and conference with her about it. That afternoon we met and although I tried first to point out the creativity and the strong vocabulary skills she exhibited, I also had to let her know that her work appeared sloppy, and did not have a complete feel to it. Like she had slapped it down, and was ready to take off before she had done any revision or editing. She nodded and appeared to be taking in my criticism. Almost immediately I

noticed a bit more effort in the appearance of Alicia's work, but I still wasn't getting what I thought she was really capable of.

Then one afternoon the class was reading an article in Scholastic News about Tsunamis. Living in Florida, the students were fascinated and a little concerned that a huge wave might rise up and wreck disaster on their neighborhood. I noticed how interested Alicia seemed in the article, and as I was reading with the class, I noticed a small advertisement for a writing contest. The assignment was to write a story that would put you in the middle of a tsunami. There was the list of prizes, but best of all there would be recognition in the magazine for five winners. I thought about how competitive Alicia is out on the playground, and I thought this just might be the magic potion to get her to refine her writing.

As soon as we finished the article, I pointed out the contest to the class. We discussed how exciting it would be to have your name in print in a national magazine. That seemed to speak to Alicia. The next day, I found a wonderful piece of writing laying smack in the middle of my desk. I read it immediately and made certain Alicia realized how tickled I was to find it. I told her we'd have to sit down and go over it that afternoon. When I called Alicia up to conference with her about it, she couldn't wait to take her seat. She said, "I was wondering when we would get to this."

It's a great story, with lots of voice. The only thing I had to help her with was the verb tense. She started out, "If I were…" and before she knew it she was writing as if she was in the present telling what was happening. She told me that she just got so wrapped up in what was going on around her in her mind that she felt like she was in the story and that it was happening then. We chuckled over this, and I helped her find the verbs she needed to change to put the whole piece into one tense. I asked her about a couple of other parts, and she explained why she

had written it as she had. One of those was when she talked about grabbing on to a board that was floating by versus a hold of a board.

I can tell that Alicia really enjoyed writing this piece. She should have it ready to mail by Friday, two weeks ahead of the due date. Whether this one gets a prize or not, I have a feeling that Alicia is going to be a winner because of it. She has now experienced writing that is meaningful to her, and she

Paula's Narrative

"Conversation! I love conversation! "Jeremiah, one of my fourth grade students, recently said to me. He calls it conversation and I call it dialogue. It is the same. I have been tutoring 4th grade students in writing before regular school starts. They are my students along with the regular fourth grade teacher that I co-teach with every day.

The 6 students were working on a topic about a special gift that they have received. Each student had a different response for this topic. I was amazed that they were all living things that were their special gift. Some chose a puppy, a bird, a cat and then Jeremiah told me that his special gift was his family. He said he has loved them since the day he was born.

Part of the writing is making a plan before writing. It is called the BMME plan [Beginning, First Middle, Second Middle, Ending – a strategy that helps students outline essays prior to writing]. The students once they knew what they wanted to write about had no problem in writing up their plans. We tell them to spend only ten minutes or less on the plan. Jeremiah dictates to me. He has a difficult time writing especially writing small. He has no wrists. His arms come down straight from his elbows.

This day he tried writing his own plan. We started with a blank sheet of paper and he divided it into sections and put the letters for each part. He said he wanted one the "M" parts to

be about his mother and grandmother and the other "M" part to be about his dad. After the plan was all written down, we started the dictation. He would tell me a sentence and then check to make sure I copied it just exactly as he told me. "Erase that, add this word or I really said since the day I was born."

After telling me two or more sentences, he would tell me something specific about his family and say don't write that down. I like talking to you but that is not part of the story. I just want to talk. He would ask me questions about my family. He wanted to know what I wanted for Christmas and what I was buying for my children. Then he would get back to his dictation to me. Sometimes he would go quickly and not give me time to write it all down. I would ask him to repeat it again and he would say you know what I mean or you know how it is.

He could really see the difference between his mom and dad and it made sense to have them in two different paragraphs. When he got to his dad's part, I could tell that he really likes his dad but wonders why he doesn't seem him much anymore. His parents are divorced. He said it is better because he does not have to listen to all the yelling anymore. He called his paternal grandmother his mom's ex mother-in-law. When I asked him why he did not call her grandmother, he responded that his mom calls her "ex mother-in-law" so he does too.

He does have a completely different relationship with the two parents. With his mom, he watches wrestling on TV because his mom likes it. I asked him if he liked it and he said no but he watches it because he knows his mom likes it and he wants to please her. He plays a lot of video games but his mom does not play them with him.

He let me know that he shares things that his mom likes to do but he does not share what he likes to do with his mom. He spends a lot of time with his maternal grandmother. She seems to be the one who buys him his video games and toys.

He told me his dad trained to be a cop but he does not think he is a cop. His dad has moved to Tennessee. I mentioned to him that maybe he does not see his dad so much anymore is because he lives in a different state. He was not sure. I don't think he really understands how far away Tennessee is from Florida. He has not gone there for a visit.

He likes the soup that his dad makes for him. He mentioned several times about his dad cooking for him. "I love my dad's soup and macaroni and cheese." With his mom, he talks about eating out at fast food places. His mom works in a dental office and he has gone there with her when he has had days off of school. He was worried about being off for winter vacation and where he would be staying while his mom worked. He mentioned that maybe he would go to daycare again. I asked why he would not stay with his grandmother. He said that something had happened between his mom and grandmother but did not want to talk about it. He was sure his grandmother would not want to keep him over the vacation. He was quite anxious.

He mentioned in his dictation that he loved his family very much and he knows that they all love him too. He was named after his dad. His dad gave him his name. He said his mom is okay with it even though she is now divorced from his dad.

Later in that day, I was in math class with the same students. Math tests were being passed back to the students so they could see their grade. Jeremiah had an "A." He was totally overwhelmed. He thinks it is his first "A" ever in math. He could not wait to tell his mom and grandmother and his language arts teacher. He called me to come over to his desk. He told me that he felt a change about himself and did not quite know how to explain it. He felt different. He was so happy about the "A" in math.

Later in language arts class, after he had told his regular language arts teacher about his "A" test score in math, he motioned for me to come over to his desk again. He said he felt so

different. I am changing he said. He loves the transformers so I told him he has transformed. No one could really see the transformation since he had changed inside. I was sure that others would start seeing the change in him. He said for the New Year that he wanted to make friends and have more kids to like him. He had a determination to make this happen. He was recognizing that studying and working hard could be a positive thing. He could not wait to tell his mom and grandmother about his first "A" grade in math.

I was surprised that something as simple as dictation and allowing him to speak off the record about his family would be so special to him. Also getting his first "A" grade ever in math, made his day. He was beginning to feel proud of himself. I felt like the short amount of time in dialogue with him that day gave me a clearer understanding about him. I was beginning to see him in a new light. He made my day!

Natalie's Narrative

Faces light up with excitement as I pass back the Sun City write scores. I hear students who can't hold back shout out "I got a 5!" "I got a 6!" I smile as I'm reminded how this is my favorite time of year-when we *all* get to reap what we've sewn throughout the year. Writing is a lot like planting a seed, and today really does feel like spring in my classroom. Is it a coincidence we see the effects of "watering" their writing skills during springtime?

As I look around to admire the beautiful flowers they have blossomed into, I decide it's time for them to be the teacher. I tell my students "instead of me giving you a star writing interview to reflect upon your writing, you're going to pick a partner to star interview each other." (Star interviews are what I do with my students to guide them in reflecting upon their writing). They stood up to find someone they have never worked with (which was my instruction) with smiles on their faces. Walking around and observing students act as teachers

warms my heart. The authors getting interviewed read their writing aloud to the interviewer feeling proud and confident. With the writing placed between them, the interviewer followed along while listening in. Even more touching was listening in on how effectively they were conducting the STAR writing interview to each other. I stopped to listen in on an interview being given by one of my struggling students (Victor) who has worked so hard all year:

Victor: "What did you write about and how did you plan?"

Marcus: "I wrote about this place because it was not real. I used a BMME plan."

Victor then took a couple minutes to check in the "teacher observation" boxes. He glanced back at the writing to determine the appropriate boxes to check. I don't know if he learned this habit of referring back to the writing from watching me, but regardless it was the cutest thing to watch! I agreed with his thinking that the author did focus on the topic, but needed work on developing his plan. He immediately made the inference that the author did not plan in 5 minutes or less because of the lack of words on the plan. Yay…I thought to myself!

Back to the interview:

Victor: "Where do you think you elaborated your ideas?"

Marcus: "In the first and second middle where I talk about how big the ship is, and go into detail about the gun and people."

Victor: "Yes! I was thinking the same thing! But what kind of guns were they?"

Marcus: "M16, desert eagle, revolver, RP6, cannon."

Victor: "Shouldn't you tell me that in your writing?"

I couldn't help but jump and tell him what a perfect open-ended question to write on the back. The interviewer smiled and said "oh yea, I remember this. Now I need to put a star in the

writing of where to add this." Ah! I couldn't believe it! These are the moments where I REALLY LOVE my job!

"Yes, Victor…you're right! I'm so proud of you!" I couldn't hold back applauding his efforts. It gets even better! Victor read the next thing on the interview and got his highlighter to highlight the parts Marcus elaborated his ideas. I was so proud of him. He picked the same places I would have to highlight elaboration; however, was unable to locate the extensions (which shows me this could be a teaching point when they were finished with the interview). Victor then went on to ask a couple more questions (he wrote them on the back as they popped into his mind):

"What artillery did the monster have?"

"Is a 50 cal machine gun real?"

As he was writing out these questions, I thought to myself, I'm glad they paired up because they are able to understand each other. Honestly, Victor was writing better questions than what I could have asked because I did not know any of this equipment or even half of the information Marcus wrote for that matter. In fact, it got me thinking that most of my boys today in the classroom talk and write a lot about video games and that language is pretty much foreign to me. Therefore, I'm unable to get them to go into greater detail because I don't know the language like Victor does. I wonder if I should have tried this throughout the year…getting my boys to pair up for the questioning part. I'm going to try it at the beginning of next year and see where it goes.

Victor went back into the writing, put a star in the places he wanted Marcus to add his answers and gave the paper back to Marcus. Marcus then remembered to put a star at the end of the writing to write his answers. Oh, this is so much fun to observe, I thought to myself!

Stacey's Narrative

I am always inspired by a new piece of literature and eager to share it with my students. On this particular day, I arrived at school eager to share my newly-purchased, crisp hardback, Prayer for the 21st Century, with my students. The book is technically one long poem written in a prayer-like format, wishing the future of humankind peace and prosperity. I planned to analyze the poem with my students and was excited to challenge their higher order thinking skills. I

I began the lesson by reading the entire book to them aloud, without emphasizing any particular line or phrase. I also had the poem written on chart paper in large handwriting so they could refer to each line throughout the reading block. After reading through the poem, I modeled what I was going to ask them to do: take a few lines of the poem and discuss what you think they mean with a partner, and then write a response to the poem in their reader response journals. After modeling and discussing the first line of the poem, I sent them off with assigned partners to begin.

After a few minutes, I approached Kella and Mario, who were talking through their understanding of a certain line from the poem. Kella reread it aloud: "May the mountains always stand to remind us of our youth." The two looked at me, waiting for my interjection, but I controlled the urge to voice my opinion. Their eyes met each others', each knowing that a discussion was expected. "I think it means that mountains are really big…and we are really little." Mario exclaimed. He looked at me for approval, but my lack of expression suggested further discussion. This was typical Mario- his constant rushing to finish assignments told me that he had no appreciation for the journey of thought it takes to get to a deeper level of understanding. He put in little effort into his academics and, in return, received a mediocre education- always skimming the surface. Kella, on the other hand, always had something to

prove- she strived for excellence at all times. She knew I expected more. “Well, mountains are really old…we are very young. So maybe it means for us to appreciate that it takes mountains a long time to grow.”

I sighed to myself. I was disappointed in both responses. I began to doubt my plan for the activity. Maybe these students were just not capable of comprehending such a metaphoric text. It wasn’t going how I had expected. In planning the lesson, I envisioned the class dispersed around the room in pairs of twos, philosophizing the future and the why the authors dreams may or may play out in the future. After a few seconds of staring down at his pencil, Mario spoke up again. “You see, mountains are old, and we are young, so he’s trying to say that we should always feel young.” I smiled. This was much closer to an acceptable interpretation of the line. But I wanted to probe a bit more to see if they could extend their thinking beyond the mere antonym of mountain: old, people: young.

“Why do you think the author uses the words ‘us’ and ‘our’? What if we were really old?” I asked, raising my brows. Both students looked up and away.

“Because… even if you are old, you’re still young compared to a mountain! We’ll never be as old as a mountain!” Kella answered. I nodded in approval and added, “How old are mountains?” partly searching for my own answer to that question. Mario answers with yet another question: “Have mountains always been here, on earth?” Now we were getting somewhere, I thought. When students can slow down, make meaning, and ask questions in response to a text, then the text has served its purpose. Kella opened her mouth and looked up, searching for the answer in her mind. “Mountains are formed by the Earth when it moves. The same way an earthquake happens. It has to do with the plates or something.” Mario nodded.

I scanned the room, assessing how the other discussions were progressing. I heard a lot of good talk that sounded like it was on task. Then I noticed a pair of boys who seemed to be sitting in silence. I listened before I approached them. "What are we supposed to do?" Robert asked his partner Ashton, who shrugged (typical response for Ashton). I walked over and joined them on the floor.

"What did you'll think of the poem?" I asked. "Well, it was easy. He wants the world to be peaceful… like no war, no fighting." I could tell they had read the poem, but needed some guidance in order to find a deeper meaning. This is very common with students when reading poetry. I have found that most students want to read through poetry the same as they do for prose. Thus, they don't spend the time needed with the text to fully comprehend the author's message.

"What was your favorite part of the poem?" I probed.

"I liked the part about guns." Ashton replied, looking back up at the poem scribed on chart paper in the front of the room. He read the line. "May swords always stay in their holders, may bullets always stay in the gun." I nodded slowly, hoping that one of them would offer further thought. They remained still and quiet, so I knew any further analysis of this line was up to me.

"What do you think the author meant by that?" I raised my eyebrows and looked at the boys.

"No war." Robert said abruptly (Robert is a Chinese student learning English and answers often with choppy statements). "If the bullets stay in the guns, then there will be no war," he added confidently.

"Will there?" I asked, hoping to get some extended conversation out of them.

"Yeah, I mean, if no one has guns then there can't be any killing." Ashton replied. "If everyone just got rid of their guns, then no one would have guns. And no one would need guns."

"But don't some people still need guns? To be safe?" Robert asked. I could tell he was thinking hard. "Don't the police and the military need guns to protect us?"

"No they don't. If no one had guns, then there would be no murder. And there would be no reason for anyone to have guns. It would be safer." Ashton responded.

Yes! This was exactly what I had hoped to get from the lesson- students talking to each other on a deeper, more philosophical level; using the poem not as the end, but the beginning. I purposefully chose this poem in hopes that students could use each line as a springboard into a real conversation- one that you would not expect to find on the playground. I was proud of the boys for entering into a mature conversation about the needs for weapons in the world and I was satisfied that the poem had got them started thinking about such an important topic. The boys continued talking as I quietly stood and walked to another pair of students.