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FIVE PILLARS FOR CREATING READERS IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THE  
ENGLISH TEACHERS' ROLE

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FIVE PILLARS FOR CREATING READERS IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THE  
ENGLISH TEACHERS ROLE

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### **Abstract**

This study explores English teachers' beliefs about their role as educators particularly when it comes to creating personal reading lives in their students. In addition, this research will explore how those teachers who do see engendering personal reading lives in students as part of their role as an educator accomplish that goal and instill a love of reading in their pupils. There have been multiple studies at the elementary and middle school level on motivating students to read, but few if any at the highschool level. Even more scarce are studies on teacher attitudes about independent reading and their role as an educator when it comes to helping students love reading. There is plenty of research explaining how to motivate students and incorporate independent reading but very little on whether or not teachers feel that is their role. To determine if teachers' feel that is their role and how teachers fulfill that role if they do want to help students love reading, teachers completed a survey that included a mix of Likert scale, single selection, multiple selection, and free response questions. After the survey participants had the option of continuing with the research. If they opted in, participants were asked to complete two written responses, one on their teaching philosophy and one as a reading autobiography, and then they participated in a 35 minute interview about their independent reading practices and how they helped their students create personal reading lives. This research determined that there are five pillars to a successful independent reading program and engendering reading lives in students.

**Keywords:** Independent Reading, Reading Motivation, Student Personal Reading Lives, Teacher Roles, Secondary Education, English Education

## Chapter One: Introduction

Reading has always been a magical experience for me. The idea of getting swept away into the next story, the next world, or next time period I would encounter in my next read was something that always kept me reaching for another book--and sometimes before I even finished the book I was already reading. I was the student who would always have her nose in a book. Whether it was at recess or when I had a few extra minutes at the end of class after I finished an assignment or on the bus ride home from school or even at lunch or recess, I was always reading. If I was not reading, then I was likely having a conversation with friends about books. My high school friend group could best be described as an unstructured book club because many of us were constantly reading books and giving each other a recommendation or two. Though we never organized any kind of competition, and it was always done in good fun, sometimes it was like we were in rivalry to see who could suggest the next great book or who would read the most books by the end of the year.

Okay, maybe that is a slightly dramatized version of what my life as a reader was like during grade school. I promise I was more social than I just described myself and my social encounters revolved around more than books, but nonetheless I was and still am obsessed with books. Whenever I catch a glimpse of a book or a crammed bookshelf at a hipster coffee shop or a friend's house, I instantly swarm to the towering mass of paper and ink to scan the titles and feel the weight of their knowledge and imagination in my hands. I treasure the experience of knowing what others are reading or have read and if I might want to read it myself.

Some of my very favorite teachers were the teachers that assigned independent reading projects where we could read any book we wanted (though there usually was some limiting

scope regarding what we could read), and then complete a powerpoint or paper on that book. One teacher I specifically remember who did this was my eighth grade English teacher. Every quarter, we had to read a book and complete some kind of project on that book. One quarter we could read any fiction book. Another quarter we could read any non-fiction book. I distinctly remember that the last quarter we had to read a classic and then do some kind of presentation on the book in front of the class. Though it has been a long time since I have been in eighth grade, I still remember some of the joys and struggles I experienced as a reader during that year. That was the year I tried reading a nonfiction book on Laura Ingalls Wilder and found that I did not like non-fiction (though I have since grown to really enjoy the genre). That was also the year that I read my first Jane Austen book ever and began my love affair with her witty style with *Sense and Sensibility*.

My junior English teacher was another teacher who inspired and encouraged a reading life through independent reading and choice by turning our big research paper for the year into an independent reading project where we had to read a book and argue that it would be the next great American novel. No two people were allowed to complete their project on the same book, so, very quickly, some of the obvious choices (*The Hunger Games*, *The Help*, *The Maze Runner*, etc.) were quickly snatched up. Ultimately, I did my project on *Witches and Wizards* by James Patterson, and even though I did not think the book would actually be the next great American novel, the project gave me the space to expand my personal reading life and think about it in ways I normally would not consider. I had never thought that my reading life could have been a part of something so significant as the next Great American novel.

Not only did the choice projects involving books excite me, but buying the summer reading book was always a thrill. Every year, I enrolled in the honors or AP English option that



my school offered, which meant that summer reading was inevitable. However, summer reading was never a deterrent for me to participate in advanced English classes. Such an interest in reading, a willingness to spend part of my summer with my nose in a book and an attraction to a high school course because of the prospect of reading was contrary to the temperament towards reading from my other family members. My family is not a reading family. It is not an activity any of my immediate family members seek out, so trips to the library or bookstore were few and far between and having to buy the summer reading book was always the perfect reason to get one of my parents to take me to the bookstore to not only buy the book, but maybe talk them into getting me a few other books as well. Hence, my attraction to summer reading and classes that offered it had some ulterior motives attached.

In addition, reading homework was always my favorite kind of homework. While other students would sometimes groan at the thought of being assigned reading, it was the greatest delight for me. Usually, it would be the first assignment I would do before completing any math equations or science lab journals or whatever else I had for that night.

### **The Problem**

As a teenager, I had a zealous reading life. It is the magic of reading that, in part, led me to become an English teacher; I wanted to pass on this love for reading or at the very least an appreciation for it to future generations and was determined to do so when I finally became a teacher. Along the way to becoming a teacher, I decided to take a detour on a road less traveled. I earned a bachelor's degree in Public Relations, but my time spent in that program never felt authentic to who I was and the tenacious passion for books, reading, and passing on that passion that lay deep within me. It seemed to have a soul and voice all its own, a voice that would eventually lead me back to teaching like a siren's song. During my junior year of undergrad I

started to explore the possibility in changing paths, and in my final semester of my bachelor's program, I took the plunge and applied to an English Education graduate program. When I started to pursue this path to being an educator, I was eager to do whatever I could do to make independent reading a part of my curriculum and encourage students to love reading. However, when I took my first teaching job for the Spring 2019 semester, I found that this goal was easier said than accomplished.

My first quarter as a teacher was spent treading water so to speak, which left me with little energy or joy to pass along to my students in any form and especially not for reading. Though I still found joy for reading, it became more of an escape from boredom and mundaneness for me, and I rarely considered transferring that into the classroom.

Then, my second quarter of teaching rolled around and I was still in survival mode, but some other teachers had told me about a few independent reading resources so I thought I would try an SSR model I had come across on Teachers Pay Teachers. Though this was a step in the right direction, this model and my implementation of it quickly became more about control and closing the gate between students and their reading lives than giving them the tools to build their own reading life. Many of my pedagogical choices disadvantaged students who were struggling readers or already had a poor personal reading life, and this was something I would only come to realize until after the fact when I had the chance to step back and reflect fully.

The model required students to read 235-250 pages or more to receive an A on the project. Students only received credit for 150 pages if the book had a movie made after it, which I then changed to half credit as some of these books were 400-500 pages. They had to convince me that they read the book. The book had to be fiction. On and on the requirements went, and this model only left my students and myself frustrated with the number of requirements in place.

In the end, some of my students chose not to even do the project because they were satisfied with the grade they would receive without completing the book and having a conversation with me about that book. Some of my students even failed or barely scraped through by the skin of their teeth to pass the class because they chose not to do the project.

At the end of the semester, all I could do was feel like I had failed at one of my biggest goals as a teacher. I had not encouraged my students to read. Or at least I felt that way until one of my students on the last day of school told me, “I am really glad you made us read. I actually really enjoyed it and it makes me excited to read more.”

So, maybe I had not completely failed at my goal but simply found a few methods that did not work for my own teaching philosophy or the students I was teaching. Like any good teacher should do at any stage in their career, I began to question what I should do differently and engage in the reflective and revision process of teaching. As I began to look around at other approaches from teachers within my building and on teacher social media, I began to notice a common trend: independent choice reading was often being pushed to the background of curriculum or excluded completely. It was more of an after-thought or a one-time project so teachers could say they checked that box instead of the whole hearted attempt I wanted to strive for in my curriculum in order to truly build personal reading lives in students.

Even though there is a whole section of standards devoted to independent reading for the state of Oklahoma, I noticed that it was often being interpreted as having students reading silently and on their own in class or as assigned reading from the current novel study for homework. As a result, these practices offered very little choice to the students or limited the chance to form lasting habits in students.

Then, as I was scrolling through Instagram one day, I came across a teacher account on which the teacher was expressing her concern that sustained silent reading times might be taking away from valuable instruction time and her dismay at balancing choice reading with curriculum. This caught me off guard because so much of the articles I had been reading over the last two years for my thesis and for informing my own instruction centered on independent reading and creating readers in my students. Even my education professors touted the importance of independent reading, but for some reason there were teachers in the workforce who did not hold to the same belief. The research gives plenty of information on structuring the classroom to encourage personal reading lives in the student, but it never occurred to me that there would be some teachers who would not want to strive for this goal. After all, English teachers chose this content over math or science or social studies for a reason. Almost all of us have a personal reading life. However, when I thought back to my own high school experience, very few of my teachers required us to do choice reading in any way.

As a result, I began to wonder if high school English teachers saw this as a goal of theirs or if they were overcome with the burden of squeezing so much into the curriculum in so little time. Did they really feel that it was part of their purpose as a teacher to create readers in their students? Did teachers sacrifice this idea of creating readers in our students for the sake of including other types of instruction into their curriculum that seem more important in their own minds or to their administration?

### **The Purpose**

The realization that some teachers may not see sustained silent reading as a worthy use of instructional time came towards the end of my initial research stage. I had spent at least a whole year at this point finding research on what motivates students to read, how the reading lives of

teachers measure up, and what components make for the best independent reading programs. I will delve more into the specifics of this research in the next chapter, but ultimately, even after going back to do more research after this discovery, I found that the research never hinted at the fact that some teachers may not see PRL's as a role or goal for their curriculum or themselves as teachers. One of the articles even questioned if teachers held the same belief as researchers seem to promulgate about the importance of creating readers, but they failed to expound on or explore this topic further (Cambell & Scrivens, 1995).

Most of the research I found focuses on the reading lives of teachers themselves and if teachers who do not read themselves can actually be effective reading teachers (Brooks, 2007). I also found plenty of research on successful methods of motivating students to read (Gambrell, 1996; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). There was also plenty of peer reviewed information on creating a sustained silent reading program or creating lifetime readers in students, but many of it was not based on empirical research. Any that did have that strong backing was supported by educational psychology research that had to do with motivation in education (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan, 1991). I could not find any studies that took the leap to determine if these suggestions for the purpose of sustained silent reading and creating PRL's in their students were actually effective in a way that was generalizable to the American education system because the research population was either too small or it only provided data for one classroom. More research must be done at a broader scale to determine if these methods would be effective in other classrooms. Though there was some research that addressed what motivated students to read within the context of that particular class, there was very little implication or discussion about how that would then impact their lives as readers outside of the school day and beyond that school year. One final trend I noticed was that nearly every piece of research I found focused mostly on

students who were middle school age or younger. Very few research studies involved high school students, their reading lives, or what their teachers valued in their curriculum regarding independent reading.

Though I will discuss all of this research in more detail in the next section, my research will seek to close some of these gaps that appear. This research will address what teachers feel their role is in creating personal reading lives in their students. It will address how they structure their curriculum to fulfill that role or the roles they feel that they hold as a high school English teacher. Finally, it will address attitudes and practices that are prominent among the high school classroom and the teachers and students that interact in those spaces in relation to independent reading and creating reading lives in students.

### **Research Questions**

1. According to high school English teachers, what is their role in developing and encouraging intrinsic motivation for a personal reading life in their students?
2. How do teachers accomplish this role through their curriculum and instruction?

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Motivation in education

As the saying goes, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.” This tends to be the constant uphill battle teachers face in the profession when it comes to engaging their students so that meaningful learning can happen. We can present them with the information or the tools, but motivating them to practice the skills we teach, especially when we are not with them is the ever present challenge. The same principle applies as teachers attempt to create reading lives in their students outside the classroom; in order for students to construct a reading life for themselves outside the four walls of the classroom, they have to be motivated to do so and without supervision or micromanagement of the teacher. Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan (1991) define “ideal school systems” as “ones that succeed in promoting in students a genuine enthusiasm for learning and accomplishment” (325). Likewise, when it comes to creating a personal reading life in students, the same ideals are at play. The point of encouraging a personal reading life in students is to engender a genuine enthusiasm for reading that occurs in and beyond the class. Usually, if a teacher desires to create personal reading lives in his or her students, the goal is for the student to continue reading at home without prompting or grumbling from the student. It is something they desire to do.

Researchers believe this type of enthusiasm all starts by promoting and encouraging a concept called self-determination or autonomy in the students. Self-determination theory is deeply rooted in the understanding that there are psychological needs that we as human beings need to have met, and this understanding promulgates these inherent needs that motivate us to act in a way that is intrinsic or that mimics autotelic behaviors (Deci, et al., 1991; Ryan, Connell, & Grolick, 1992). This theory suggests that the three basic needs of competency, relatedness, and

autonomy must be met before a person is motivated; however, self-determination theory suggests that “opportunities to satisfy the need for autonomy are necessary for people to be self-determined rather than controlled” (Deci, et al., 1991, p. 328). In other words, in order for a student to be motivated to read on their own without prompting, there has to be a degree of “self-initiating” (p. 327). The student must have a choice in their own personal reading life in order for it to become a personal reading life. They have to experience some form of choice for the activity of reading to become motivating for them.

However, it would be remiss to assume that everything we ask students to do is intrinsically motivating (Ryan, et al., 1992, p. 173). The “agenda of education [is] less interesting than other activities in the child’s life” (p. 173). Work, socialization at lunch, social media or playing the latest game will almost always be more interesting to the average high school student than math equations or completing reading homework. As a result, researchers proposed a continuum that suggest student’s behaviors and engagement with tasks can in fact become more intrinsic in nature when students are not intrinsically motivated (Deci, et al. 1991; Ryan et al., 1991; Deci, & Ryan, 2012). There are four categories in this continuum, and these categories are referred to as “regulatory styles.” Each regulatory style is associated with attitudes, beliefs, coping styles and self-related processes.

### *External Regulation*

The first regulatory style and the first step in developing more intrinsic behaviors and attitudes in students is external regulation. Students who are in this phase are being motivated by something outside of themselves, usually some kind of punishment or reward. The student may be doing their homework or studying for a test simply because they do not want to fail or they do



not want to be grounded by their parents. There is very little if any self-determination or autonomy in this regulatory style.

### *Introjected Regulation*

The next regulatory style, introjected regulation, is contingent on the student having internalized messaging from outside themselves about what is right and wrong, what is praiseworthy and what is disgraceful. Deci et al. give the example of a student getting to class on time because they do not want to feel like a bad person (p. 329). The behavior has less to do with choice and more to do with “internal coercion.”

### *Identified Regulation*

The third regulatory style of the spectrum acknowledges that the student has valued, internalized, and identified with the desired behavior. They see the importance of engaging in the valued behavior: learning. At this point, the student will “value the process of learning and to accept responsibility for it” (Ryan, et al., 1992, p. 178). These are the students who want to better understand the material or because “it feels personally important.” These students also demonstrate more of a growth mindset in that when they fail they seek to find a better way for the next time they encounter the same type of task. These students are perceived as more independent and they, in turn, perceive parents and teachers as less controlling.

### *Integrated Regulation*

Finally, when a student fully accepts the regulatory process into their own sense of self and as part of their own individual needs, values, and identities, he or she has reached integrated regulation. Ryan et al. suggest that this happens later in childhood and generally into adolescence as the researchers propose that this continuum is a natural developmental process to which children assimilate. As an example, Deci et al. explain that a high school student that is both a

good student and a good athlete and identifies as such may experience some internal conflict between the two identifiers. They suggest that the regulatory process is not complete until he or she has reconciled these two identities into something that is harmonious and the behavior that follows is an expression of who the individual is.

Furthermore, motivation in education in general becomes more intrinsic when values are internalized and the three basic needs--autonomy, competence, and relatedness--are fulfilled in the student. Researchers have found that doing things like praising students for what they do well, building relationships with students, being actively involved in their education, and providing choice whenever possible can lead to more intrinsically motivated behaviors (Deci et al. 1991). However, these strides to increase self-determined behaviors can also be undermined by controlling behaviors from teachers. These behaviors include rewards or punishments, deadlines, imposed goals, or competitions (p. 335). Though some of these behaviors are not completely avoidable in the education setting--after all, we must have due dates of some kind--minimizing these behaviors as much as possible could yield more intrinsic behaviors in students. However, it is important to keep in mind that some teachers express controlling behaviors toward their students when they themselves are being controlled or perceive that they are. Teachers are more controlling when they are pressured. Deci et al. suggest there are two overarching reasons that teachers act in controlling ways (p. 340).

The first source of pressure and control comes from demands that the school system puts on teachers. Whether it be that the school administration demands that a high percentage of students perform at a certain level or higher on state testing or that a set curriculum has been developed by the department and administration and it must be followed, these are ways that

teachers themselves feel controlled and that may lead to the teachers displaying controlling behaviors in their classrooms.

The second source of pressure comes from “influences, whether real or imagined, from students” (p. 340). When students are acting out or not staying on task after multiple instances of redirection or attempted redirection, controlling behaviors are often the next fall back. Students who are more fidgety or who have issues with paying attention are more likely to elicit controlling behaviors from teachers than when they are paying attention and on task (p. 341).

### **Motivating students to read**

With the discussion of psychological motivation in education and the regulatory styles in mind, the same themes of what motivates students in the general education setting can also be translated into instruction related to independent reading and engendering a desire for reading in students. Lesesne (1991) states that personal reading lives do not naturally exist but must be encouraged, nurtured, and molded. According to her research, about a quarter of middle-school students who were surveyed only read one hour daily and only a fifth of the students surveyed had read a book for pleasure in the last six months. Though this is not conclusive data to suggest that reading is not an intrinsically motivating task or that no one is born with a love of reading, it does address the fact that adolescents, for whatever reasons there may be, are not intrinsically motivated to read at this particular point in their life. Certainly, there are people who may be intrinsically motivated to read, whether it be that they have personalities that make reading a more autotelic activity or that they have positive associations with reading. However, in spite of the intrinsic reasons that may exist for some students when it comes to reading, there are even more students who are not motivated to read. To combat this occurrence, teachers and researchers have sought out answers to fix the problem and motivate students to not only read

but find enjoyment in the activity. Across the board, researchers have found four factors that encourage students to read more and to take pleasure in reading: community, classroom environment, time in class, and choice.

### *Community*

Self-determination theory requires that three basic needs be met and one of those needs is relatedness. Deci et al (1991) defines relatedness as “developing secure and satisfying connections with others in one’s social milieu” (p. 327). In other words, when students are able to connect with others in the classroom or in other areas of life, one of those basic needs are being met. As a result, the aspect of community that comes with having a personal reading life has been one of the reasons cited for increased motivation to read in students. Though there is some data that is conflicting on this factor, both perspectives of this issue are compelling.

Gambrell (1996) found that students would often read a book after someone else had told them about it such as a classmate, teacher, or parent.

The data starts to conflict when students are directly asked if peer interactions about books motivated them to read (McGaha & Igo, 2012). In this instance, administrators at a diverse high school in the southeastern United States implemented a voluntary summer reading program where students were given books that they could read over the summer as a way to mitigate summer learning loss. Though this program proved highly motivating because of the choice and free books that were offered, students self-reported that having conversations with others about books was not a factor that motivated them. However, researchers from this study still believed that peer interactions about books is still a motivating factor in spite of their findings because of the body of research that supports otherwise. Some students find it motivating when teachers or peers offer them a book recommendation or when a teacher or friend talks about a book that

might be interesting to them (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Based on my own experiences in my own reading life, and what I've observed from working with my students so far, if I can give a book recommendation based on what I know about a student or someone gives me a recommendation based on what they know about me, chances are higher that my students will read the book and enjoy it or I will read it myself. The fact that someone thinks of you and sees your life experiences or interests in a book when they read it can be motivating. Also, community allows students to broaden their thinking about what they read (Garan & DeVogd, 2008).

### *Classroom environment*

On top of the overall classroom community that is built on discussing books and sharing the experience of reading with other individuals, the actual physical environment of the classroom adds another layer to the community of the classroom and can encourage an intrinsic motivation for reading, or at the very least mimic intrinsic motivation as the regulation styles suggest (Gambrell, 1996; Sanacore, 2006). Gambrell (1996) found that when they asked elementary age students about the most interesting book they had read, most of the books the children mentioned had come from the classroom library instead of the school or public library or from home. The results of this study suggest that access to books is essential for students to grow in their literacy lives and that where a book-rich environment exists, motivation to read is high. Though Gambrell does not discuss why that is exactly, one hypothesis could be that the presence of a classroom library communicates the value of books and literacy to the students, and therefore they internalize that value and are motivated because they have come to see that value as well just as identified regulation would suggest (Deci, et al., 1991; Ryan, et al., 1992).

Not only does the research suggest that classrooms should be rich with books for the opportunity of increasing literacy motivation, but the books in the classroom library should also

be diverse if educators want to increase motivation for reading. Oftentimes classrooms tend to be the place where students are least likely to find books other than the standard textbook (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001), and these books more often than not contain works by white, male authors who are no longer living. Also, even if there is a classroom library, the texts that are found in the classroom library lean heavily on narrative structures, and they offer little diversity in content or structures, or are outdated and irrelevant to the students (Sancore, 2006; Robinson, 1968). Classroom libraries are full of the standard chapter books but are often lacking in non-fiction, works of poetry, graphic novels, magazines and other genres that students are interested in and eager to explore and can play an integral part in their reading achievement. Though there may be books in the classroom, the materials must be personally interesting to the students and contain content that appeals to them (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001), but genres that are interesting to students go beyond the traditional narrative structures.

However, building a classroom requires an extensive amount of resources and space. My own classroom library consists of books that I read in high school, during my teacher education program, in my leisure time as an adult, and that I bought secondhand from various vendors. Some books were donated by friends and the bookshelves that house the collection were also donated. Because of the amount of resources needed to build a classroom library, having one may not be an option for everyone. Robinson (1968) suggested in cases where classroom libraries are not a possibility, librarians could bring books into the classroom and leave them on display. More recently, Coppens (2018) suggests some options for creating a classroom library like writing a grant for books, asking parents to donate books their child has already read, and scouring yard sales.

*Instruction with built-in reading time*

Research indicates that giving students time in class to read can increase motivation to read (Lesesne 1991; Thompson, Madhuri, & Taylor 2008; Garan & DeVogd 2008). In the ever-changing and technologically inundated world, Lesesne cites that one of the biggest barriers to recreational reading in the lives of today's teens is that books compete with other forms of entertainment like television and video games (Lesesne 1991). In the 30 years since Lesesne wrote the article, social media, after-school jobs, and extracurriculars could also be added into the mix of activities that distract students from reading. Allowing students time in class to read allows for a space where students are relatively free from distractions so they can focus on improving literacy and discovering the joy of reading.

With so many commitments and distractions, students sometimes see reading as too time consuming. In a study of a school where it was mandatory for high school students to read and complete Accelerated Reading (AR) tests for class credit, the students cited a lack of time in school to read as one of the reasons for either not reading at all or completing the tests, not completing the book, or not reading and cheating on the AR tests (Thompson, Madhuri, & Taylor 2008). Because neither their home environment nor school environment allowed for time to read or take the required tests, students were turned off from reading all together and were not motivated to enjoy reading let alone engage with a book.

One of the many instructional strategies that has been conceived to promote independent reading and personal reading lives in students is a tactic called Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). Though it is called by many names, including Drop Everything and Reading (DEAR), the point is that students are given time in class to read a book of their choice. SSR models vary in structure, but it comes down to students having a set time in class to read a book of their choice. Where the models vary are in the degrees and types of accountability built into the model as

determined by the teacher. Some Sustained Silent Reading models offer points or require a project or log of some sort as a way to motivate students or monitor their literacy growth. However, other models are founded on the philosophy that such tactics detract from the intrinsic motivation that should naturally occur. These models (Cambell, & Scrivens, 1995; Garan, & Devoogd, 2008; Lee, 2011) approach accountability in a way that resembles a community centered model. In these SSR programs, teachers may hold conferences with students and talk with them about what they are reading or offer suggestions for their next read.

However, this model and really any model that allows for independent reading that is defined as allowing students to self-select books and read those in class has at times been under fire. When the National Reading Panel's Summary Report from 2001 was published (Armbruster, Lehr & Osborn cited in Lee 2011), they stated that research points to a better use of class time than allowing students to read independently as the study mentioned that choice reading had not been proven or unproven to help student achievement at the time. Instead, they suggested having student choice read at home. This has made the practice of SSR somewhat controversial even though researchers such as Garan and DeVoogd (2008) counter such statements. But in the context of increasing positive student attitudes toward reading, Lee (2011) found that in her own classroom implementing SSR into the curriculum can, in fact, engender positive views and maybe even a love of reading if teachers take the time and patience required to develop the program.

### *Choice*

According to self-determination theory, there are three needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy, and when the need for autonomy is met, students feel self-determined and not controlled (Deci et al., 1991; Deci & Ryan, 2012). When control is absent, motivation is more



likely to be present and therefore greater success for the student. Therefore, when students are free to make choices in their education, they are more likely to feel ownership over their own learning and that ownership leads to increased motivation. Though this phenomenon applies to education in general, it could also be said for when students are given a choice in what they read in the classroom and for independent reading outside of the classroom. When students are provided choice, they are more likely to talk about the books they read, take more responsibility for their own learning, and put more effort into understanding the material and improving their skills (Gambrell, 1996; Sanden, 2012; Sanden, 2014). Also, when researchers asked over 1,700 sixth grade students about what motivated them to read, 42 percent said they were motivated by finding good books to read and being provided a choice in what they could read (Ivey & Broaddus 2001).

Choice can also be a motivating factor for reading outside of the classroom. Since part of developing personal reading lives in students requires them to read beyond the four walls of the classroom, allowing students choice in what they read over the summer or at home can increase reading motivation as well. For example, in a voluntary summer reading program, student participants most often cited the freedom and choice the program offered as elements they enjoyed about the program (McGaha & Igo 2012). Though the students who participated in this program were given extra credit during the school year if they completed a project with the book and they were supplied with copies of all the books they could choose from, these students still said that choice was a motivating factor in their reading. In fact, the more autonomy-focused elements of the program are what students tended to agree with the most.

In addition, teachers who were considered highly successful in their independent reading instruction all shared the belief that student choice was an important factor to independent

reading time (Sanden 2012). These teachers believed that providing students the choice in what they read also provided them the chance for self-discovery and to learn what books they liked and did not like. Offering students choice can allow them to find books that appeal to their interest and go beyond the canon that is often read as part of the traditional curriculum. However, Sanden argues that this does not mean that the teacher is completely absent in the book selection process. Teachers should be present in the process so that they can serve as a model and a guide in directing students to books that are appropriate for their reading level, to push them out of their comfort zone and into more challenging texts, and give suggestions to students as needed.

#### *Causes of reading amotivation*

While community, classroom environment, instruction with built-in reading time, and choice are the most commonly cited reasons for increased motivation in students when it comes to independent reading, there are also factors in an independent reading curriculum that are likely to cause a decrease of intrinsic motivation for reading. Such factors are typically more concerned with engendering compliance than personal reading lives in students.

For example, in the study conducted by Thompson et al. (2008), students grew to resent reading because they felt they were being forced to read because of the Accelerated Reading tests that were being tied to student grades. In fact, students who previously enjoyed reading reported that once the program was implemented, they abandoned reading as a recreational hobby altogether. Though Thompson et al. did not expound on exactly how many students felt this way as a result of the program, they state that an “overwhelming majority said that the way AR was being used at their school was counterproductive” (p. 557).

Another reason the students in that study were unmotivated in their reading habits was the limited selection of books. Students said that the program lacked multicultural book options

and books with higher reading levels. The lack of books with higher reading levels became even more of an issue when students with higher reading abilities were required to earn more AR points because of reading level. With the requirement of having more points to earn and fewer books to help them accomplish that goal, students with higher reading levels ended up becoming unmotivated to read. With this study in mind, there is always the predicament of accountability and what the best practices are for holding students accountable for what they read without decreasing motivation for engaging in reading as a leisure activity.

In addition, students say that some of their worst reading experiences are associated with assigned reading, especially in the context of the whole class novel study (Ivey & Broaddus 2001). While having a whole class novel study could be beneficial for ensuring that all students are using the same mentor text to learn the same skills to keep everyone on the same page, there is also the struggle of engaging all readers or as many as one possibly can without deterring a student's love of reading. However, Ivey and Johnston (2013) combat this struggle with their findings that show educators can have their cake and eat it too when it comes to incorporating self-selected books into the curriculum. They found that students who were part of a classroom where self-selected books were incorporated into the curriculum were not only more engaged readers but also more engaged learners. In other words, allowing students the autonomy with what they were reading also allowed them autonomy in what they were learning and how they were learning the content. As a result, students were more invested in their books and the continue.

### **Teachers as a model**

Thus far in the discussion of the literature, I have talked about ways in which teachers can structure their instruction and classrooms to encourage students to become lifelong readers.

However, teachers can be just as much of an influence as their curriculum. Applegate and Applegate (2004) proposed that the teacher's role in a young reader's life is similar to the Biblical story of when a beggar asked the apostle, Peter, for money, but he had none to give. Similarly, many teachers are going into the workforce with the task of teaching reading, but they lack the love for stories and reading and the practice of reading in their own lives that ideally should be past down to the students (Applegate, & Applegate, 2004). From their study, Applegate and Applegate found that 54.3% of pre-service teachers could be considered unenthusiastic readers while only 25.2% could be considered enthusiastic (p. 558-559). As a result, Applegate and Applegate coined this phenomenon the Peter Effect.

Applegate and Applegate are not alone in this belief (Turner, Applegate, & Applegate 2009). Certainly, our own experiences with reading either from when we as educators were students or from our current reading practices can influence how we "sell" the books we teach students (Rieck 1997; Ballester-Roca & Ibarra-Rius 2015). In addition, many researchers and teachers believe that a teacher's role in the classroom when it comes to creating a love of reading can be anything from a model to a supporter to a sharer (Campbell & Scrivens, 1995). Many educators believe that teachers should be reading while students read in the classroom. If these teachers aren't reading with their students they should be acting as a "sharer" by sharing books with some students while others read or by filling the role of "supporter" by bridging the knowledge gap for students in their vocabulary. Such classrooms where the teacher had adopted these rolls demonstrated high involvement in reading as long as classroom management was established. However, Campbell and Scrivens (1995) still question if teachers share this view when it comes to their roles during sustained silent reading times. While teachers are told that being a role model during SSR times by reading alongside their students is a valuable part of

their instructional day, researchers noted that many do so while also harboring feelings of guilt because of all that there is to be done, such as grading, planning, and developing curriculum (p. 2-3). This topic will be further explored in my study, but on the other hand, Gambrell (1996) notes in her research the importance of being an explicit reading model, especially when it comes to our excitement for reading. In her research, when students were asked about who gets really excited about reading, teachers were one of the groups of people frequently mentioned. As Gambrell suggests, this could be done through modeling during sustained silent reading time by reading along with students, offering recommendations to students as to what they should read next, and communicating the importance of reading.

Though influencing students to read through modeling is admirable, the key problem still remains--the problem of teacher's personal reading lives or lack thereof. Applegate and Applegate (2004) found that about half of pre-service teachers who were surveyed did not enjoy reading because of the emphasis that has been placed on factual aspects of reading like reading comprehension instead of the experience of reading. Other researchers in other parts of the world found that it is not that pre-service teachers do not value reading, but they simply do not have the time (Oguz, Yildiz, & Hayirsever, 2009) or preferred watching TV or spending time with friends or lacked the energy to read (Pehlivan, Serin, & Serin, 2010). Though these are international studies, a logical conclusion could be made that American pre-service teachers face the same obstacles to reading. Once pre-service teachers enter the workforce, they read minimally both professionally and for their own enjoyment and do not value reading very highly in their own lives (Mour 1997; Mueller 1973). In addition, as future teachers go through college, Hawkins (1967) found that the longer preservice teachers spend in college, the less likely they were to read for fun. However, Hale's (2011) research suggests that though this trend is likely, once

teachers are out in the profession, they are more likely to choose to read for their own enjoyment the further along they are in their career. Hale also found in her study of middle school teachers that the higher level of degree a teacher earned the more likely they would be to read to improve their teaching practices, especially in the form of academic journals, or to read to find books their students might enjoy. Teachers who had only earned a bachelor's degree were not as likely to read to improve their practice or to seek out books for their students, however, they still took an interest in reading.

If teachers are tasked with teaching a love of reading but do not have a love and habit for it themselves, how will they engender a love of reading in their students? Likewise, Mikulecky and Ribovich (1977) argue that even though there are those teachers who do have a positive attitude toward reading and may be competent readers, the question still remains unanswered as to whether or not they can pass on that same joy or even teach strategies that improve reading performance in their students.

However, Brooks (2007) sees this as more of a dogma of educators and education researchers than an empirically-based fact. Brooks investigated the validity of such an adage in his research by interviewing four fourth grade teachers who had previously participated in a study about exemplary teachers. In his research, he confronted the belief that insists that in order for students to become enthusiastic and successful readers, they must be taught by people who practice what they preach. His findings revealed that the “interests and responsibilities in the teachers’ lives often guided or dictated the type of readers and writers they were” (189). For example, though teachers may not be reading novels or writing short stories in their free time, they are still writing and reading in a more practical capacity. These practices could look like writing lesson plans, reading a professional development book, writing shopping lists, and

reading directions for how to put something together. Since 2007, the date of that study, social media has become ever more important and present, and could easily be added to the list of types of reading people do on a daily basis, students and teachers alike. Though there were participants who did read or write novels in their free time, Brooks argues that the reading and writing that teachers practice on their own time may not fit the mold of the dogma of extreme enthusiasm.

### **Where attitude and achievement intersect**

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not also consider reading achievement along with reading attitudes. Though the belief of engendering positive reading attitudes is promulgated whether by educators or education researchers in some capacity, it would be considered a faux pas to shirk the importance of achievement in this conversation. In Brooks's (2007) research, he unpacked the adage "Do as I do, not as I say" in regards to teacher attitudes and practices toward reading. While Brooks found that how teachers practice reading and writing in their own lives differs from how they instruct students to practice in the classroom, teachers are still practicing the skills they are teaching in some manner. This is significant because of a domino effect that occurs in education especially when teaching students to love reading.

Essentially, when a teacher practices the skills that they are teaching and have a positive attitude they influence their students. For example, Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) found that "the teacher has a significant influence on the amount of book reading children do out of school" (p. 296). This becomes even more significant when examining student achievement in reading. The same study found that there was a correlation between students who read more books and comprehension percentiles. This suggests that there could be a domino effect when encouraging and teaching students to love reading: the more students enjoy reading, the more they will do it on their own time outside of class, and the more they read outside of class the

better their comprehension levels and reading achievement will be. Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) suggest that this can be accomplished by many means already mentioned previously in this chapter: provide access to interesting and suitable books, use incentives to increase motivation for reading, read alouds, and provide time during school to read (1998, p. 296).

However, Schofield found that teacher attitude may not be as important as some researchers suggest. Though her study found higher teacher attitudes did influence students to have more favorable attitudes toward reading and therefore engendered higher achievement, she also found “pupils of low attitude teachers expressed (as in April) the most favorable attitudes toward reading” (1980, p. 116). She reasoned that teachers with low attitudes toward reading were still able to produce students with positive attitudes toward reading because they did not assign reading in excess or “alienate” students who themselves had lower attitudes toward reading.

### **Gaps in the literature**

Research on personal reading lives in students is minimal in many respects. Most research on independent reading concerns elementary students and their teachers’ practices (Applegate, & Applegate, 2004; Sanden, 2012; Campbell, & Scrivens, 1995). There is only a scattering of research relating to middle and high school instruction on independent reading and most of the research that does exist with secondary education in mind has more of a focus on decreasing learning gaps and little to do with motivation to read for the sake of pleasure.

In addition, all the research regardless of grade level supports the idea that independent, free reading or some activity that encourages building reading lives in young people is something that teachers should be doing. More often than not, the literature regarding independent reading



drives home the message that teachers should be inspiring their students to love reading.

However, it does not address the perspectives about whether or not engendering personal reading lives in students is one of their roles in the eyes of the teachers.

This research will focus on filling those gaps by bringing more perspectives on independent reading instruction at the high school level, on how teachers engender personal reading lives in their students, and on what teachers feel their role is in inspiring those reading lives to come about.

## **Chapter 3: Methods**

### **Setting and Participants**

As a teacher who has just over a year of teaching, I chose to dig deeper into the pedagogy of what other teachers are doing in their classroom when it comes to independent reading and what seems to be working for them in terms of engendering a love for reading in their students. Because I wanted to be able to take some of my findings and eventually apply them to my own classroom, I specifically chose to look at teachers in my own district as they teach to the same demographics and are more likely to teach to the same student needs. This location was chosen out of convenience, practicality, and with the hopes of finding solutions that may work in my classroom when it comes to creating lifelong readers in my own students. However, because of the setting and my association with the chosen district, I acknowledge bias could potentially occur in the process of this research. This will be addressed throughout this paper.

### **Research Context**

The research for my study was conducted in a midwestern, predominantly middle class suburban school district in a metropolitan area. This district consists of three large high schools that serve over 6,800 students in total. Though student demographic information for all high schools collectively does not exist, the total student population across the district shows the following demographics according to the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (2018): 48% Caucasian, 16.6% hispanic, 5.3% black, 5.3% Asian or Pacific Islander, 4.4% Alaskan or American Indian. Across the district, 45.7% of students are on a free or reduced lunch program. All three of the high schools fall below that mark by 2% to 7%.

Again, this setting was chosen out of convenience and also out of a desire to have data that could transfer back to my own classroom as the teachers who participated teach students who are similar to my own based on the demographics.

### **Participants**

The teachers selected to participate in this study were chosen on the basis of their willingness to participate in a survey, provide written responses, and participate in an interview. All data collection tools were optional for participants to take part in even though the survey and written response were required before participants could take part in the interview. They were also chosen because they teach to a demographic similar to my own and because of the convenience of location. Furthermore, participants in the interviews were chosen based on their willingness to be involved and provide contact information in addition to the diversity of their own personal reading lives and their practices in engendering lifelong readers in their students. This method was used to ensure that a broad range of practices were examined and presented in this paper and to inform my own toolbox for teaching and achieving the goal of creating students with personal reading lives. I also tried to select teachers with varying levels of experience to determine and from different high schools in the district aside from my own to minimize bias and provide adequate representation that might also be replicated in districts similar to the one in which I teach.

After all data was collected, I ended up having a total of 10 participants though one survey was marked as incomplete by the software I used. Two others were not completely filled out, and I will explain this further in the Findings section. All respondents were female. The average age of participants was 33.1; however, the youngest participant was 24 and the oldest was 46 years old. Four of the teachers had taught from 1-3 years, two had taught from 4-6 years,

one had taught from 7-10 years, and three had taught for more than ten years. As far as education levels go three had only their bachelor, three had a bachelor's with some work toward their master's, two had obtained their master's degree, and two had a master's degree with work toward a PhD. Of the 10 participants two were alternatively certified. Eight of the participants identified as White, one identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and one identified as Hispanic/Latina.

### **Data Collection**

Mixed-methods data collection was used in this study with the first round of data collection being surveys and followed by written responses. The former method is associated with more quantitative research while the latter is associated with more qualitative methods. More qualitative methods were also used in the interviews that followed the written responses. In the initial methods, the questions focused more on the quantitative aspects of the teachers' personal reading lives with the survey in addition to the qualitative aspects with the written response. However, there were questions in both the survey and written response that focused on classroom beliefs and practices. Furthermore, the subsequent interviews focused more on gathering data on teacher practices in regards to creating lifelong readers in students and the workplace climates that aid this goal.

### **Obtaining Permission**

Before any data was collected, approval for research from the local IRB was obtained. This is the protocol for whenever research involves human participants. After a few rounds of revisions the board approved of my research proposal and determined that it could be exempt from full IRB approval on the basis of this being a minimal risk study (see appendix for the included documents).

## **Recruitment of Participants**

Once I obtained permission from the IRB, I sent out an email informing potential participants about the study with the online consent document attached. This document included a hyperlink to the survey so that the potential participants could learn more about the study and have access to it if they chose to participate. I emailed potential participants six times over the course of two months as a reminder that the study was taking place if they chose to participate. During this time, many surveys from other researchers were sent to teachers at this district and the chosen district experienced a tragic event. As a result, these circumstances may have altered my response rate.

## **Stage One Data Collection**

My first stage of data collection involved sending out my recruitment email with the survey link embedded so that participants could take part at their leisure. This portion of the data collection process was slow going, which is the reason behind the recruitment email being distributed six times. For most of the two months I spent reminding potential participants of the opportunity, many obstacles arose, one of which being the few number of willing participants. After about six weeks of sending out the recruitment email, I still only had two responses though a couple of other people had expressed interest. In addition, the district I was collecting data in faced a tremendous tragedy, which likely severely disrupted the lives of students and teachers. In the end, three people filled out the survey, and though few participants filled out the survey, all who filled out the survey were willing to participate in the full length of the study.

The survey was designed to determine the habits within personal reading lives of the teachers and the extent to which they valued independent reading in their curriculum and their own lives. As a result, there was a mix of Likert scale, multiple selection (Hale 2011; Pehlivan,

Serin, & Serin, 2010), free response, and multiple selection (Applegate, & Applegate, 2004), depending on the type of data the question was intended to collect. While I wanted to gauge the personal reading lives of teachers by finding out what they read (through multiple selection) and how often they read (through single answer selection), I also wanted to determine if and how these personal reading lives of the teachers affected classroom instruction, if at all, which was gathered through free response questions about their curriculum.

### **Stage Two Data Collection**

Once participants completed the survey, they were asked if they wished to continue with the research process and complete two writing tasks: one about their own reading history and PRL and the other about their teaching philosophy. Participants were chosen based upon their willingness to continue with the study as the participant pool from the first stage of data collection was less than desirable. Many factors likely contributed to these results. During the time I was collecting data, many other surveys were being sent out into the district from researchers at the university level in addition to high school students from other districts. Also, during my data collection period, the district I work in and was collecting data in experienced a massive tragedy that resulted in the loss of three students and the trauma experience by many other students and teachers who were witnesses. In addition, towards the end of my data collection, the world as we knew it suddenly changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thankfully, the three participants who volunteered to continue with the study happened to have taught for different lengths of time: one being a first year teacher, one being in her fourth year of teaching, and one having taught for over 10 years. However, the third participant who had taught for over 10 years could not be reached though many attempts had been made to reach her about

completing the writing tasks and conducting the interview. Ultimately, I ended up with two participants who would continue with the rest of the data collection.

Participants had to write 350 to 500 words for each writing task before we would continue with the final stage of the study. The inspiration for this method came from Ballester-Roca and Ibarra-Rius (2015). For the first writing task, participants had to write 350-500 words about themselves as a reader and what made them the reader that they are today. The second writing task was meant to gauge their teaching philosophy and determine to what extent their personal reading life influenced their curriculum.

### **Stage Three Data Collection**

The final stage of data collection included a qualitative interview that consisted of about 16 questions depending on the participant's attitudes toward reading and creating personal reading lives in their students. The interviews were conducted using a focused yet conversational technique (Brooks, 2007). Some questions were not asked as they were not relevant to the individuals practices and opinions about independent reading and their role in creating personal reading lives in students. For example, since all participants were active in engaging practices that attempted to encourage independent reading lives in their students, there was no need to ask them questions like "What are some barriers that keep you from making personal reading life a goal in your curriculum?" These interviews lasted about 35 minutes each and were completed in person though I did have my IRB amended to interview a third participant digitally. However, after many weeks of trying to communicate with a potential third participant and receiving no response, I had to drop this participant due to many failed attempts at contacting her. Furthermore, the same participants who completed the written responses in addition to the survey also completed the interviews.

## Data Analysis

With each data collection stage, my data analysis methods varied based on my purposes behind collecting the specific data at that stage. For the first stage, which involved the survey, I wanted to get a broad understanding of what the reading habits and curriculum philosophies of other teachers in my district looked like. In essence, my goal with this stage was to answer my first research question: do teachers feel that they are responsible for creating personal reading lives in their students? As I was sifting through those responses, I went question by question mapping out the percentages of how English teachers' reading lives played out and how that may have translated to their curriculum. On questions that were more open-ended, I interpreted data for patterns that lead to establishing broad categories that seemed to appear. For example, with one question I asked participants to list their top five instructional goals for their students. I did not give the teachers options to choose from, but instead, teachers listed the five things that were most important to them in their instruction with their students. This provided a myriad of responses that I then analyzed and grouped the responses based on similarity into 10 categories. For example, responses like "reading" or "reading comprehension" or "literacy" were grouped into one category because of the emphasis on student reading abilities. These categories came down to: Literacy/Reading Skills, Writing Skills, Verbal (Auditory) Communication, Research, Vocabulary, Grammar, Critical Thinking, Student Well-being, Argumentative Skills, and Independent Reading.

With the final two stages of research, I did something similar when coding the written responses and interviews. As I was reading over them, I looked for a pattern and themes by comparing the two participants responses and finding the similarities. Then, I looked for what was left after those similarities and determined any significant outliers that might also be



reflected in previously existing literature. These themes would ultimately best help me determine the answer to my second research question: how do teachers design a curriculum that will enable students to develop a personal reading life in their students?

### **Ethical Assurances**

Before any research began, permission was obtained from the University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board (IRB). Since I would only be contacting English teachers within my school district and only at the high school level, my curriculum coordinator advised me that permission from the superintendent was not necessary. From there, she provided me with the names of the department heads at each school in addition to all English teachers at each building so that I could distribute the survey. Ethical assurances regarding the participants included providing each participant informed consent, which appeared at the beginning of each survey. This was to ensure that the rights of the participants to privacy, confidentiality, and transparency were met to protect them from foreseeable harm.

To give consent, I provided an online, unsigned informed consent form at the beginning of the first stage of data collection. Before participants began to participate in the survey, they were informed of their rights and by continuing with the survey they were providing consent. If they indicated at the end of the survey that they wanted to continue with the study and participate in the written responses and interview, they selected if they agreed to be quoted and recorded and they provided their contact information. Before participants continued with the written responses and interview, they were provided another online, unsigned consent form before continuing with the written responses. This also served as consent for the following interview. All data collected was stored on a secure, password protected computer. Names of teachers participating or students' names used during written responses or interviews were not mentioned unless by the

participant, in which case they were replaced with pseudonyms in the transcripts and final versions included in the appendices. As participants who wished to continue had to provide their email so that I could contact them for the final stages, some names were attached to their email address. Surveys were collected and kept on a secure survey program or password protected computer. All paper and online data will be destroyed by either deletion or shredding at the conclusion of the study.

## Chapter Four: Findings

To recap, the purpose of this study was to determine if teachers felt that they played a role in developing personal reading lives in their students or not. In addition, with the teachers that did feel that was one of their roles as a secondary English educator, I also wanted to explore the parts of their curriculum that helped encourage and cultivate that part of their students' reading lives.

This chapter will address the results from the surveys, written responses and interviews conducted in addition to the recurring patterns and themes observed throughout. The findings are organized into three sections: surveys, written responses, and observations. Each of these sections will illuminate possible answers to the following research questions:

1. According to high school English teachers, what is their role in developing and encouraging intrinsic motivation for a personal reading life in their students?
2. How do teachers accomplish this role through their curriculum and instruction?

The first section will begin to answer this question by reviewing the survey and the data teachers provided about their overall curriculum goals, their reading expectations for students, and their own personal reading lives. The second section will expound on the data from section one while also giving a more in-depth look at the personal reading lives in addition to the teaching philosophies of specific teachers who wished to continue with the study solely based on their willingness to participate. This section will explore how and where teacher personal reading lives and teaching philosophies intersection and support each other but also where they differentiate. The third and final section will further explore the interviews and the themes they revealed about engendering personal reading lives in students through teaching practices and curriculum. This section will explore how the intersection between teaching philosophy and the personal reading lives of teachers explored in section two manifests in classroom practices

particularly when it comes to developing independent reading practices or any other related instructional practices that are intended to develop personal reading lives in students. At each stage--survey, written responses, and interviews--I will discuss the central ideas that emerged from each data collection stage.

### **Preliminary Survey**

In the survey, teachers were briefly asked about their curriculum goals, their reading expectations for their students, but mostly about their own personal reading lives using a mix of Likert scales, multiple selection, single answer selection and free response questions.

#### *Survey Data: Demographics*

The first set of questions included the usual demographic-type questions so that I could get a better understanding of my participants and who they were. Participants were first asked about their age and gender. The average age of participants was 33.1, but the teacher ages ranged from 24 to 47 years old. The mode age was 25 while the median was 34. Something to point out about this data is that the average age of the participants is closer to the lowest age of 24 than the highest age of 47. This could speak to a couple of possible reasons. It is no secret that Oklahoma and many other states are experiencing a teacher shortage and that teachers are abandoning the profession earlier and earlier in their career. These results could reflect that, but could possibly demonstrate that independent reading interests may be more of a goal for teachers who are newer to the profession than teachers who are more experienced. This topic will be further discussed particularly when it comes to the written responses and interviews as two of the three teachers who chose to continue with the study are under the age of 25 and consequently are still in the early stages of their career. As for gender, this data set was composed of all female participants; however, I know that as a member of this faculty there are in fact men on English teacher faculty

though they are greatly in the minority. Finally, eight of the participants were White, one participant was Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and one participant was Hispanic/Latina.

The next two questions participants were asked was about their professional qualifications: education level and teaching experience. Of the 10 participants, three (30%) had just bachelor's degrees, three (30%) had a bachelor's with some work toward a master's, two (20%) had earned their master's degree, and two (20%) had their master's and had some work toward a PhD. Interestingly enough, all teachers who agreed to continue with the study either were pursuing or had already obtained degrees beyond a bachelor's degree. Two (20%) of the participants were alternatively certified, and one of the two continued participation in the study with the written responses and interviews.

When it came to teacher experience, four (40%) had been teaching for 3 years or less, two (20%) had been teaching for 4-6 years, one had taught for 7-10 years, and three had taught for 10 or more years. All of the participants that continued with the study had taught for less than 10 years.

As the survey progressed, I continued to ask them more about their experience, specifically about the grade levels they had taught. All participants were currently teaching high school as that was my target participant group. So much research had already been done at the elementary level and some had been conducted at the middle school level, but very little had been done at the high school level. Four (40%) of participants at the time of the study only taught one grade level, three (30%) taught two grade levels, and three (30%) taught three or more grade levels. As multiple teachers taught multiple grade levels, the breakdown of grade levels represented are as follows: two teachers taught freshmen, three taught sophomores, six taught juniors and two of those taught AP juniors, and four taught seniors. One teacher also was

currently teaching college composition. When asked about past grade levels, eight of the ten participants stated that they had taught other grade levels other than the one they were currently teaching, including outside of high school. One participant had taught at the junior high level, while another had taught multiple grade levels from Pre-K all the way through college.

Participant demographics are represented by Figures 1, 2, and 3. This concludes the discussion of demographics.

Fig. 1: Race

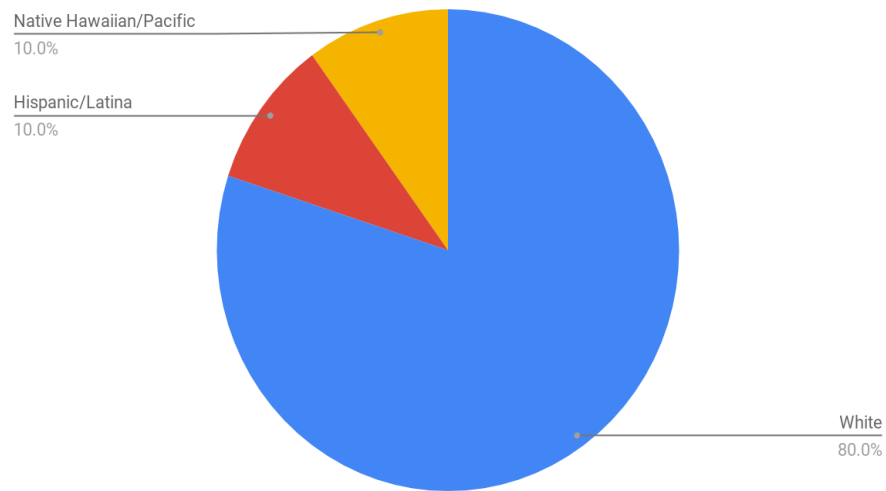


Fig. 2: Teaching Experience

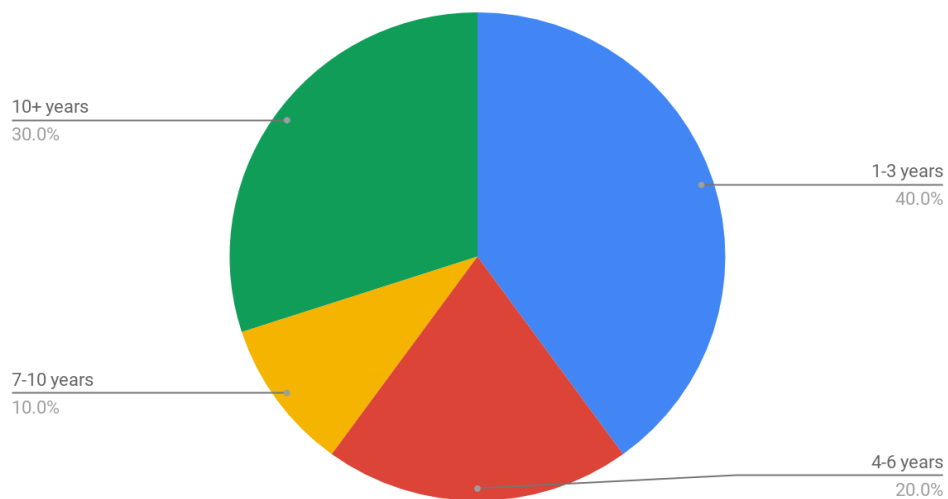
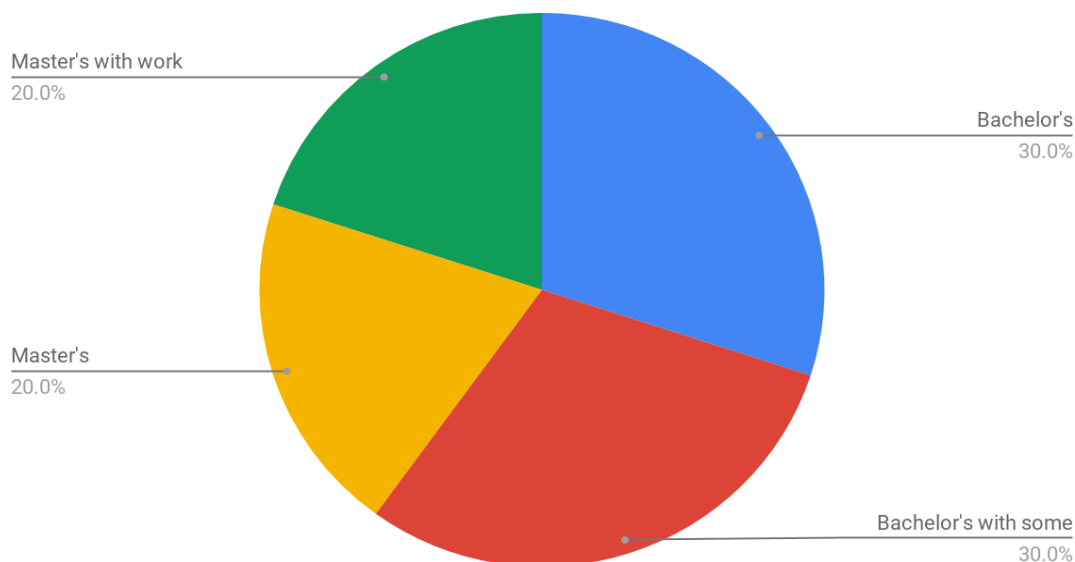


Fig. 3: Education Levels



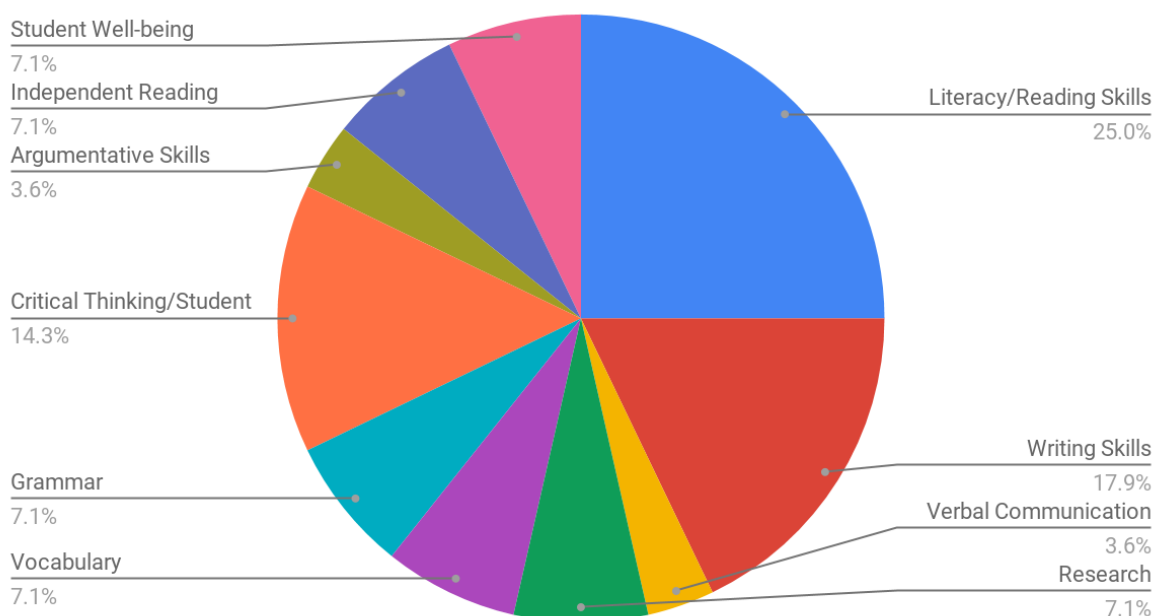
*Survey Data: Teacher Curriculum and inclusion of Independent Reading*

From this point on the survey briefly explored teacher curriculum, teacher expectations for student reading lives, and teacher personal reading lives. The first question of this portion of the survey asked teachers to give the top five instructional goals they had for their students. Of the ten participants I had, only six chose to respond at all and one only gave three instructional goals. Overall, I ended up with 27 data points that I coded for and organized into similar categories which included: Literacy/Reading Skills (25.0%), Writing Skills (17.9%), Verbal Communication Skills (Speaking) (3.6%), Research Skills (7.1%), Vocabulary (7.1%), Grammar (7.1%), Critical Thinking/Student Engagement (34.3%), Argumentative Skills (3.6%), Independent Reading (7.1%), and Student Well-being (7.1%). Not surprisingly most responses corresponded with the eight categories of Oklahoma State Standards. As for the Student Well-Being category, those teachers mentioned that part of their instructional goals was to encourage and incorporate diversity into their curriculum or that they would develop a student-teacher relationship built on trust.

What is especially interesting is that the most recognized goal for teachers was literacy/reading skills. It is important to mention that I am defining literacy as an extension of reading; it is the students' ability to read the world around them and not only comprehend various forms of literature from written novels to more visual media but also their ability to understand the nuances in multiple forms of media as well. I define this as separate to critical thinking but also a precursor to it just as reading comprehension would be. However, considering this was a free response and participants could write whatever they chose, this may not be an accurate reflection of what they intended to mean literacy. Though 25.0% of the data collected reflected a focus on literacy/reading skills, all six teachers who answer this question mentioned a goal that would fall into this category. However, independent reading only accounted for 7.1% of responses meaning that only two teachers mentioned this as one of their top five instructional goals. The two teachers who listed independent reading as a goal represent the two of the three



**Fig. 4: Top 5 Instructional Goals of Teachers**



who continued with the study. They also had either obtained their master's degree or were in the process of earning a second degree, which would correlate with Hale's (2011) findings that the higher up in education one went the more invested a teacher may be in their own personal reading life and the personal reading lives of their students. In the section in which I discuss the interviews, I will further expound on each interview participants' responses to this question and the relevancy of Hale's research to the written response and interview participants.

Though the point of the previous question was to gauge what each teacher values in their instruction in addition to covertly determining if independent reading was a priority, I also wanted to ask them specifically how important independent reading was in their curriculum on a four-point Likert scale that ranged from "Very important" to "Not important at all." Of the respondents who answer this question, three say that it was "very important," four said it was moderately important, and one said it was somewhat important. Two participants chose not to

respond to this question. Unsurprisingly, the three who said independent reading was “very important” were the three who agreed to continue with the study.

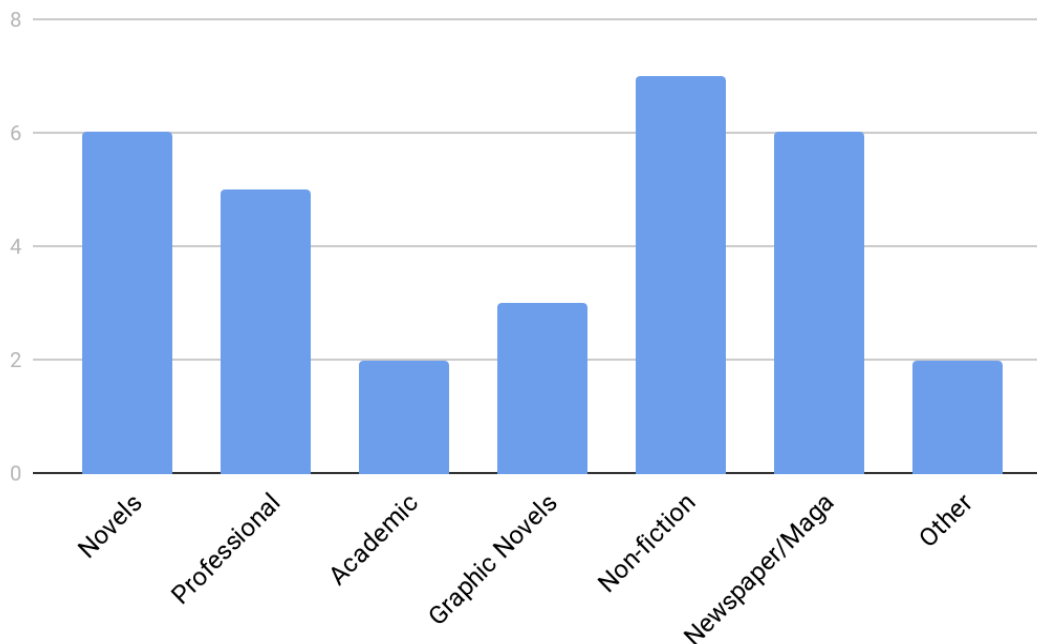
Next, I asked them how much they required their students to read outside of class per week using a single selection question. The possibilities were “I don’t require them to read outside of class,” less than 1 hour, 1 to 1.5 hours, 1.5 to 2 hours, 2 to 2.5 hours, 2.5 to 3 hours, and 3 or more hours. On this question I received eight responses, and five said they did not require their students to read outside of class, two said they required less than an hour, and one said they required about 1.5 to 2 hours of reading outside of class a week. Thinking back to the top five instructional goals of these teachers where all of them that responded said that Reading/Literacy was a top priority in addition to 14.3% data points indicated Critical Thinking/Student Engagement was an instructional goal and 7.1 % of data points indicated that Vocabulary was an instructional goal, it would seem logical to put more emphasis on outside reading and independent reading, activities that have been proven to improve vocabulary and also improve student engagement in learning.

#### *Survey Data: Teacher Personal Reading Life*

The next portion of the survey focused on the personal reading lives of teachers such as what they read and how much they read. The first question of this section asked participants to check all the types of reading they engaged in on a daily basis in their own reading lives. The options were novels, professional development, academic journals, graphic novels, non-fiction, newspapers/magazines, or other. If participants marked “other,” they were asked to explain. Participants could mark as many of the options that they felt applied to their personal reading lives. Eight participants responded to this category. Teachers most-read genres in order of most-read were Non-fiction (7), Newspaper/Magazine and Novels were tied with six, Professional

Development (5), Graphic Novels (3), Academic Journals and “Other” were tied with two. The respondents who marked “Other” mentioned that they read blogs, instructional manuals, and websites.

Fig. 5: Most-Read Genres by Teachers in Personal Reading Lives

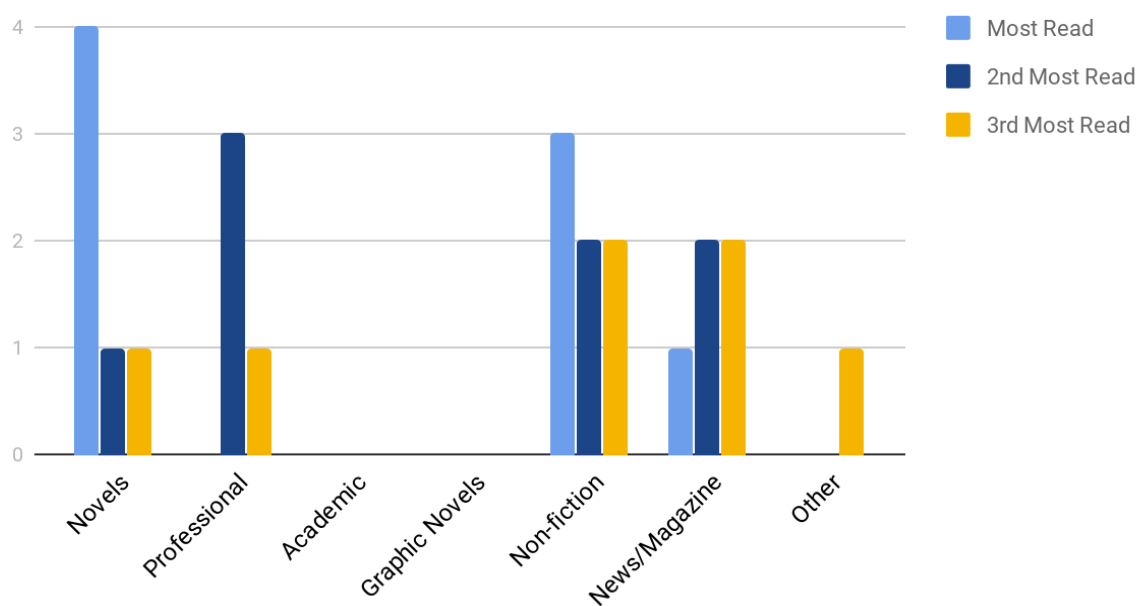


While the novel was one of the most selected genres, I found it interesting that non-fiction was selected by more participants considering English teachers often teach novels more than non-fiction. When I think of English teachers and what they teach, most often I think of teaching a novel or short stories or poems, but I don't think I would ever associate non-fiction with the English teacher because of common stereotypes such as them being literature junkies or fiction fanatics. Because of the on-going and overlapping nature of my data collection and the reality that it would require IRB amendments to my study, I was unable to ask participants why non-fiction may have been more selected than fiction. I was also unable to ask in interviews as

all participants who wished to continue said they also read novels. However, one conclusion could be made that teachers who are tasked with teaching a novel as part of their day job might be seeking a separation between the work reading life and personal reading life.

As far as what the research yields about this topic, Oguz, Yildiz, and Hayirsever (2009) of the pre-service teacher equivalent in Turkey most (78.2%) of participants indicated that they read novels. Research and Biographies came in at a combined 48.4% with Research making up the second most read genre at 28.8 %. This was likely due to the fact that education students are required to read and build their knowledge of current research. Though the teachers in my study did have advanced degrees, their lack of reading research could have to do with the lack of access to academic journals since they would have to pay to have access to them.

Fig. 6: Most Read Genres by Teachers

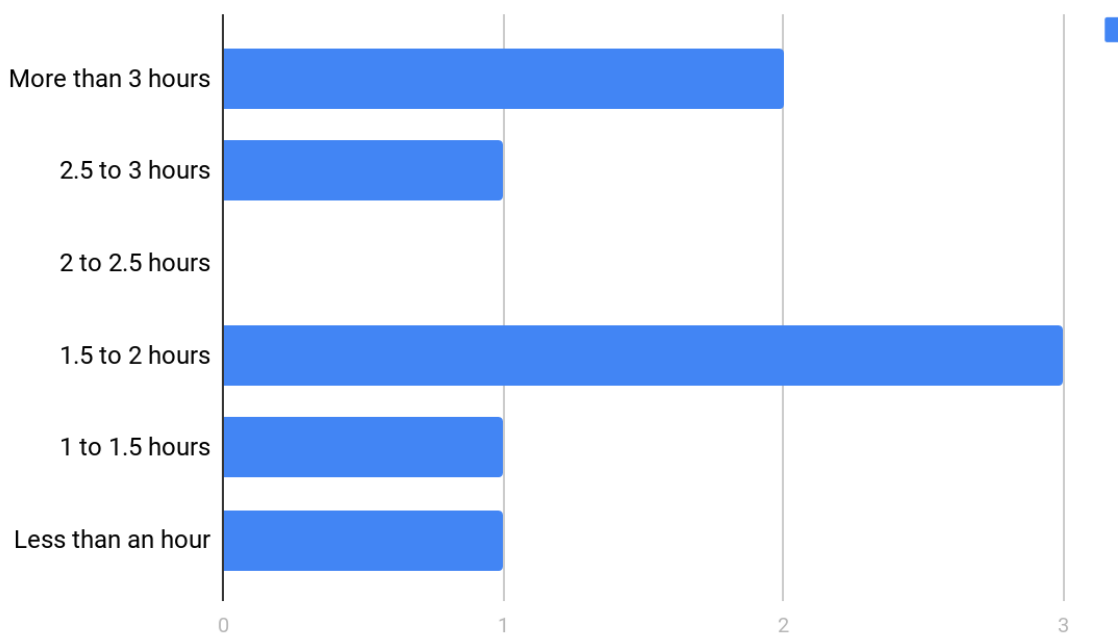


The following three questions after this one asked participants in a single-selection format to indicate what their top 3 genre choices were in their personal reading lives. Of the 8 participants who answered four answered “Novel,” three answer “Non-fiction”, and one

answered “Newspapers/Magazines.” Though novels were still the top choice as a single genre, half of the participants selected non-fiction or genres that most align with non-fiction. The distribution for the second most read genre is as follows: Professional Development (3), Non-fiction (2), Newspaper/Magazine, (2), and Novel (1). The third most read genres were Newspapers/Magazines (2), Non-fiction (2), Other (1), Novels (1), and Professional Development (1). This question only had seven responses as this individual primarily read two genres.

Next, the survey asked participants how much time they spent reading a week. The question specified that this did not include reading that was related to work, which meant that reading the novel or short story they were going to teach did not count. Teachers were given the options of “Less than an hour”, “1-1.5 hours”, “1.5-2 hours”, “2.5 to 3” hours, “More than 3 hours.”

Fig. 7: Hours Spent Reading Each Week



The final question participants were asked was in regards to the type of reading communities they engaged in on a regular basis. This was to assess the social aspect of teacher reading lives through a multiple selection question where they could choose as many options that applied. The response options included: Book Related Social Media (e.g. Goodreads.com), Book Subscription Services (e.g. Book of the Month), I casually talk about what I'm reading with friends and peers, Other, and I don't participate in a reading community. Eight people of the original ten responded to this question. The graph below demonstrates the responses in terms of how many participants selected each response.

Overwhelmingly, these English teachers interact socially with books by talking to friends and colleagues about the books they are reading. The only teacher who did answer this question and did not mark conversations with friends instead answered that they did not participate in a reading community. The next most selected response was interacting via social media. This echoes what the research included in the literature review states about engaging students in reading. Students tend to be more engaged in independent and choice reading when they are given a chance to talk about what they are reading with their peers and the teacher (Garan & DeVogd, 2008; Gambrell, 1996; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Such interactions allow for the excitement or opinions that come with the shared experience. It becomes another avenue for students and teachers to connect and build a community over. It would only be natural for teachers or readers with any profession to also engage in this same behavior in their own personal reading lives, especially if they are voracious readers. Psychologically, individuals who can connect with others within their shared community such as bookish communities are more likely to thrive as readers because it allows the individual a sense of actualization (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). This will continue to be further discussed in the next two

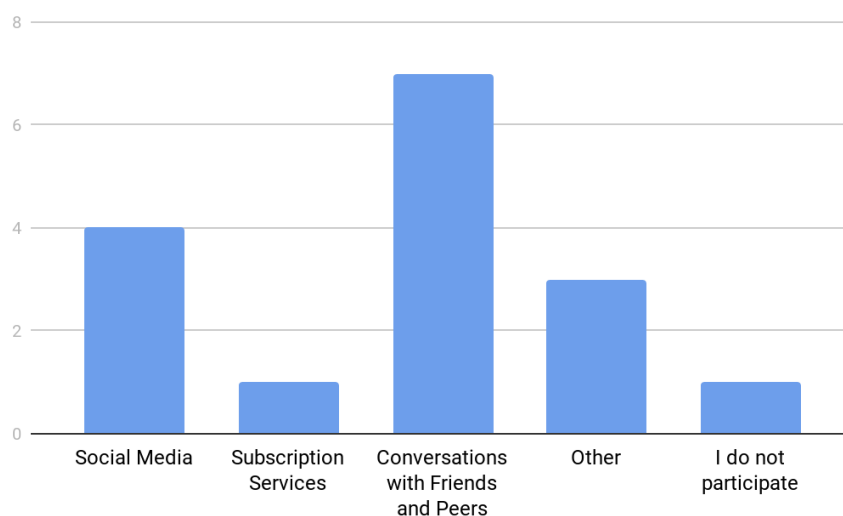
sections of this chapter, which will center on the results from the written responses and interviews.

### Written Responses

At the end of the preliminary survey, participants were asked if they wished to continue with the research through written responses and an interview. If so, they were asked to provide their email so that I could instruct them on how the next stage of data collection would be conducted. Participants who wished to continue were sent an email through the Qualtrics online survey software with a message instructing them how to continue with the written responses. Before participants continued with the written responses, they were again asked about their demographic information. Once they completed that, they could continue with the written responses in which they were supposed to write 350-500 words about their teaching philosophy in addition to a 350- to 500-word reading autobiography explaining their personal journey with reading throughout their life.

At this point in the research, three participants from the survey indicated that they wished to continue and complete the written responses and interview; however, after some communication with one of the participants, reciprocal communication ceased from the participant for unknown reasons. Ultimately, the data throughout the rest of this research reflects

Fig. 8: Social Aspects of Teacher Reading Lives



the results of two participants who will be known as Julia and Darcy. Going forward, each section will discuss each participant's responses to the written portion. Later in the chapter, I will highlight and expound on some themes and patterns that were apparent throughout and how they might illuminate my research questions:

1. Do teachers feel that they play a role in their students' independent reading lives?
2. If so, how do they accomplish that?

*Darcy*

In her fourth year of teaching, Darcy is currently teaching on-level junior though she has taught sophomores in the past. She is currently working on a master's degree in English Education. In her teaching philosophy, Darcy discussed broad ideas on how she approaches teaching in her classroom, which mostly center on teacher-student relationships and real-world application. She mentioned how she values challenging her students by having them "think and engage in ways that are uncomfortable to them." However, these challenging learning opportunities are not for the sake of watching her students struggle but for the sake of encouraging real world application with English Language Arts skills. She focuses on building a curriculum that will not only help students with ELA standards in the classroom but more importantly prepare them for the ELA skills that go beyond the classroom. She stresses the importance of being open with her these rigorous but applicable expectations for students and her belief that every student can grow when the playing field is leveled and students are "provided with the right accommodations for those inequities they experience in their home live, and if they are motivated to grow."

In the second written response, the participants were tasked with writing a reading autobiography of sorts where they talked about their personal lives as readers and the history



behind that personal reading life. The two participants have very different paths that led up to who they are as readers now, but for now, I will highlight Darcy's reading life and history. Darcy grew up the daughter of a librarian so access to books was never a problem. She writes about how her mother provided her every opportunity to get her hands on books and so she would often accompany her mom to Scholastic warehouses and have piles of books in her house. She recounts how reading was always an expectation in her home, which she contributes to how strong of a reader she was and continues to be. She was expected to read an hour a night, but she did not stop there, often reading late into the night and early into the morning. For Darcy, reading was a way of escaping hardships, which she does not expound upon but she explains that she found her escape in fantasy as an adolescent. It is only as an adult that she has sought after realistic fiction and autobiographies in order to help her learn from their experiences and how they coped with hardships. She ends her reading autobiography by explaining that she does not have much time to read outside of class, so she does most of her reading when her students are doing their independent reading, which I will go into more detail in the interview section. However, if given the opportunity, she admits she will end up binge reading a book in one night if she has time to read at home.

### *Julia*

Julia is a first year teacher who is teaching on-level freshmen. After receiving a master's in education, Julia went on to become alternatively certified. While she focused on broad ideologies that she seeks to apply in her classroom, she was more specific in how she practices those philosophies in her classroom and curriculum. Like Darcy, Julia emphasizes an element of openness and equality between teacher and student. She mentions how she is open with her students about her expectations, but she also makes a point of letting her students know that what

she expects of them she also expects from herself. For example, every quarter she requires that her students read a book of their choice and they have to do a book talk with her. Her practices for booktalks will be further discussed in the interview section, but essentially she asks her students questions about the book. However, as she also mentions in her teaching philosophy, she also reads at least one Young Adult book during the quarter and then gives her students a book talk of what she read, allowing them to also grill her at the same level she questions them. For Julia, teaching is a reciprocal process that requires modeling and holding herself to the same expectations as she holds students. She also seeks to build a classroom culture and environment that is instrumental in producing mental, social, and emotional growth in her students that will help them later in life into their careers. Like Darcy, Julia focuses on providing students opportunities to hone in on ELA skills that are relevant, real world skills. She seeks to make that connection between her curriculum apparent to her students in a way that gives them the “tools they need to learn independently” and “fosters life-long learning” especially through reading. Also, she mentions that she seeks to make sure her students not only know how to access the desired information and skills independently but that they are also able to share that information effectively.

When it came to Julia’s reading autobiography, she had a very different experience to reading than Darcy. While Darcy grew up with abundant access to books, household expectations for reading, and a deep desire to escape to books, Julia describes herself as a non-reader earlier in her life. Finding books that engaged her was a struggle as she was not sure which genre she liked, and it wasn’t until grad school that she realized she wasn’t familiar with many of the books English teachers rave about and that she was missing out. She mentions *The Grapes of Wrath, 1984*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* and says, “I realized how gripping and

influential a book truly could be; I wanted to tell everyone I met about Winston and the Thought-Police. I realized books are magical time machines and allow you to gain new, and impossible, experiences.” She says it is because she didn’t have this other-worldly experience with books until she was an adult that she feels she can connect with her students who are largely reluctant readers. As a result, she gives the same speech every quarter to her students to remind them it is okay if you don’t like a book: “All books do not suck; all books are not worth your time.” She also makes a point of taking her students to the library and joining with her students in the reading experience by sitting with them on the floor, and she has learned how to “market” books to her students in a way that will interest them and make them want to read. Since her non-reading years, she has learned with the help of an interest inventory that she enjoys realistic fiction and non-fiction.

### **Teacher Interviews**

After participants completed their written responses, they provided their contact information so we could set up a time to conduct the interview. In the interviews, we discussed their own independent reading practices and other aspects of their curriculum that could contribute to personal reading lives of their students. Darcy and Julia had somewhat different approaches to developing reading lives in their students, but in the end, their practices are grounded in similar philosophies that are backed by the research discussed in the literature review. Both have developed routines in which they incorporate independent reading into their curriculum in a way that works for them and the goals they have in mind. More of these intersections will be further explored in the next section on the discussion of themes.

#### *Interview with Darcy*

The first participant I interviewed was Darcy. Just as a refresher, Darcy is in her fourth year of teaching, and she currently teaches on-level juniors though she has also taught sophomores as well. She is a traditionally certified teacher who is currently working on her master's degree in English Education. In the interview, she expressed that she felt her role as an English teacher first and foremost centered on meeting her students' hierarchy of needs by validating who they are as people and their voices. According to Darcy, so many of their voices have been silenced because they have been told that their opinions are unimportant whether that be by parents or teachers. This same philosophy trickles down into her goals in developing a personal reading life with her students. Darcy believes that like many students her students' relationships with reading, just like their voices, have been stifled by how they have been taught to read through Accelerated Reading or reading logs that required outside reading from students and parent confirmation that students did the reading. When it comes to her goals for her students' personal reading lives, Darcy wants to open the doors to reading that have been slammed in their face.

Darcy's overall plan for developing personal reading lives in her students hinges on two philosophies: give students a platform to practice the four cornerstones of English Language Arts (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and give her students the skills to keep learning long after they have left her classroom. Something she always tries to communicate with her students is that if they can develop the stamina to read and read well, they can learn anything they want to learn. If she can pass on those skills, particularly through independent reading, she feels she is setting her students up to be successful in their careers and as citizens. They won't need her anymore. All in all, she wants her students "to be critical consumers and to be louder producers."

She also “sells” reading to them, especially those motivated by ACT scores, that if they want to score better on that section, they just need to read more.

She says her sole method for developing reading lives for her students is by establishing a daily routine of independent reading into her curriculum. She says making it a daily expectation establishes the activity as something that should be a daily part of their lives. After the students complete a 5-minute bellwork, they are given 10 minutes minimum to read a book of their choice. She says that sometimes that turns into 15 or 20 minutes of independent reading depending on how focused the kids seem, but she sets a timer of 10 minutes and if she notices that they are in the zone, she turns off her timer and just lets them go until a student notices. Ultimately, the goal is that students get about 50 minutes to an hour of reading during class time in a week, and at the end of the week, they complete formative assessments so that Darcy can check in on students’ progress on a variety of skills.

These formative assessments include their reading log, which they complete daily. At the end of their reading time, students write down how much they were able to read in their log in hopes that they will reach the goal they set at the beginning of the week. This weekly reading goal is originally determined at the beginning of the school year with the first time Darcy has her students read for 10 minutes. After they have done their initial 10 minutes of reading, she has them multiply that by 5 and set that as their reading goal for the week. Then, at the end of the week, she and the students can see if they met their goal or if they did not. She then assesses this progress on a 10-point scale of sorts. If students don’t reach their goal, she gives them nine out of 10 points. If they meet their goal, it’s 10 out of 10, and if they far exceed their goal, they receive 11 out of 10 points. She says that this system of accountability, though low stakes, seems to

motivate and urge many of her on-level juniors, who are typically non-readers in the first place, to meet if not exceed their goals by taking their book home and reading outside of class.

Another formative assessment she does that students also complete on Fridays is a series of write-ups. These write-ups consist of three parts. The first part is a summary that is supposed to be a paragraph in length in which the students summarize what they read over the course of the week. While reading this, Darcy can determine a few things: she can assess the quality of their summary skills in a way that is tailored to fit the learning levels of her students, and she can assess if her students are truly reading. In our interview, she explained that if a student reads 150 pages in a week, then their summary is going to be over that number of pages and their summary should reflect that. Therefore, an avid reader who maybe enjoys reading and is more likely to retain what they read, should be able to develop a summary to match the amount of reading they did. On the other hand, a non-reader who maybe only read 40 pages but still met their goal will have to summarize less but may actually be practicing their summary skills in a way that will fit his or her learning level. Darcy's perspective is they may only read 40 pages, "but that may be more than they've ever done before."

The second part of the write up is a reflective paragraph in which they get to discuss what they are enjoying about the book and what they aren't enjoying. In this portion of the write students can express their frustrations and if they are just out right hating a book. This allows Darcy to determine if her students are enjoying their books, if she also should read the book so that her and the student can have the shared experience with the book, or if she needs to recommend a different book to the student. This is when she refers back to an interest inventory, which students complete at the beginning of the school year to determine what they might enjoy reading. When she gets responses from students expressing discontent with a book, she looks

back at the inventory, looks at their interests and recommends a new book based on their interests. This inventory that is conducted early in the school year is also a way for Darcy to determine early on which readers are especially reluctant and will need extra support during independent reading times and while finding books to read.

The third part of the write up is a paragraph in which students apply a concept or skill that they have been learning about in other parts of the class. This could be applying a literary lense they have been learning how to use for analysis. It could be applying their knowledge of archetypes by writing about how the author employs them and which ones he or she employs. Or it could be looking for examples of figurative language that appear and discussing what effect it gives the passage. The point is to apply skills that they are learning in the classroom to what they are reading. This practice allows Darcy to see how well the students are understanding these concepts and applying them in their own reading.

During our interview, she confessed that she didn't have reading goals for them outside of her classroom and that her goals for them focused on what happened within her four walls. She explained that was because her main goal was to reopen doors for students and for them to rediscover that reading could be enjoyable. It seemed like her goal was to give them a space to explore reading in her class, and if their reading life developed outside of her classroom, then that would still be successful. However, she was not going to force those students to enter through the door if they were not ready.

Despite her reading goals being confined to her classroom, she reports that she has been effectively able to gauge the growth of her students' personal reading lives through their discussion. She mentioned that the shift in class conversations about their books is noticeable across the school year. Her students become more excited about books. They comment to her

about how they had never read a book on their own in years if ever and now they have read three in a school year or semester. Though this touches on the other two pillars of English Language Arts (speaking and listening), she confesses that she hopes to develop more instruction around these cornerstones as she has mostly focused on reading and writing this year. One strategy she hopes to adopt is read-alouds, but she explained how she did not feel she knew how to conduct a read aloud effectively for the purposes she had in mind.

Another instructional strategy she mentioned was making her own reading life visible for her students and holding herself to the same expectation she has for her students. What that looks like is her filling out her own reading log in a way that is visible to her students. When they update their reading log, she is updating hers. As a result, Darcy says this sparks conversations from her students about reading speeds and how much they have or have not gotten through that week. They discuss if their reading speeds have improved. She also notes, “I think it’s just, again, making books visible, making it visible that you’re reading, making it visible what new books there are because when you get five new books, just stick them up on the ledge, give them a short book talk, then put them on the shelf because half the time they get stolen from you clutches.” Darcy explains that making her reading visible in addition to books and her reading expectations for them keeps reading in their field of vision because if it’s not visible, then reading will follow the adage of out of sight, out of mind. They won’t talk about their reading. They won’t organically discuss their reading with her or each other.

Consequently, I wondered how her classroom environment played a role in her aim to make reading visible with the hope of improving or engendering the personal reading lives of students. Though there are aspects of the physical classroom environment that Darcy creates that do play a role in encouraging a personal reading life, she says her approach has more to do with



the routine and the psychological environment she sets than the physical environment she creates. When it comes to her classroom set up, she has a classroom library in the front corner of her room. It is located on the same side of the room as the smartboard where a teacher would traditionally deliver lecture style lessons or even just deliver instructions of various activities, so the books are always visible. Within her classroom library, she puts solid colored stickers on the books to mark the books' genres, but if it has a star on one of those stickers, students know that she has read the book and that they can have a conversation about the book with her. When she gets new books, she advertises them on the chalk holder at the front of the class but in turn gives a book talk about each one. Also, in her classroom she has high top tables that students can read at during their in-class reading time.

So, she is sticking to the philosophy of making reading and books visible as part of developing the physical environment, but in reality, she says her strategy for developing a personal reading life in her students goes back to the routine and the psychological environment she creates by building a reading culture into her classroom. She says that by giving 20% of her class time to reading, students recognize that it is important.

However, I would argue that there are parts of the physical environment that feed the psychological environment and help develop the reading culture she seeks to develop. For example, simply by having the new books present and visible encourages the culture of having conversations about books. Signifying which books she has read with a star encourages students to discuss those books with her and maybe choose them. Though she puts more emphasis on the culture and psychological environment to develop personal reading lives in her students, it seems that the physical environment is a valuable aid to her in this endeavor.

Since Darcy is in her fourth year of teaching, she has had a few years to find what does and does not work for her and learn from her students what has not worked for them in the past. Though she does use reading logs, she has found that her students at first despise reading logs because of how they've been used in the past. She mentioned that students carry with them the reading baggage of having to log when they read at home and having to get their parents to sign off that they did read; however, she mitigates this baggage by giving the students time to read in class and allowing them to complete the log in class. No parent signature is required. Because students are in charge of setting their own goal based on their own abilities measured at the beginning of the year, she finds that her students are honest about their logs for the most part and will even take their books home to meet their goal if they get behind.

However, when it comes to strategies from her own experience that haven't worked, she notes that independent reading projects did not work for her and her students. She said she tried it every single year she taught until this year, and what she found is that her readers felt limited because they would read five books in a semester or quarter but when it came time to do the project they could only choose one. On the other hand, the project format encouraged her non-readers to cheat and go online for the information. This is a phenomenon I have also experienced with my students with implementing independent reading projects and is a similar response to what researchers found when they investigated the use of Accelerated Reading in one high school (Thompson, Madhuri, & Taylor, 2008). When framed in a high stakes format like AR tests or projects that are worth a big portion of students' grades, independent reading strategies can become counterproductive to creating independent reading lives. This and other themes will be further discussed in later sections.

*Interview with Julia*

The second participant I interviewed was Julia, a 26-year-old first-year teacher who teaches on-level freshmen in all of her sections. She has earned her master's degree in education but was alternatively certified. Though her philosophies behind her strategies are similar to Darcy's, her execution of these strategies differs.

Her overall goal for her students is for them to communicate effectively and to bring real world relevance to the classroom so students can see how English Language Arts is relevant to what they may choose to do with their futures. When it comes to her role in that goal and her role as an English teacher, she feels she is a facilitator of learning and the learning process and to make students aware of their resources. Ultimately, it comes down to preparing students for the world beyond high school where she won't be there to help them. This includes teaching them how to successfully navigate a search engine or a research database. She says, "I usually begin with, 'If Google ever doesn't exist, what's your plan?'" At this part of our conversation, we were able to discuss our own high school experiences of having access to Google and how we often will forget information we just looked up on Google because we have the ability to easily look it up again. Though Julia didn't explicitly connect this to independent reading, she seemed to imply that her philosophy was similar to Darcy's in that if she can teach them to read and find joy in the reading process, she can set them up for success to read anything and therefore learn anything they might have the desire to learn.

When it comes to incorporating independent reading strategies and routines into her curriculum, Julia and Darcy use different approaches. Though Julia has a routine for her students, her routine is not daily but weekly. Every Friday is her students' independent reading day where they can bring a book of their choice and they are expected to read for about 35 minutes. She expects them to read one book a quarter (every nine weeks) and whenever they

finish their book, they complete a 5-minute book talk with her where the students tell her about the book that they read. She says this is a time for students to get really excited about something and to have a one on one conversation with her. It is a time for them to get some one-on-one attention, which she found has been essential especially in her fourth hour of 31 students.

She does have some specific requirements for the book. For example, it has to be 250 pages minimum though that minimum can be split up between multiple books. Also, they have to give it 30 pages before they abandon it. However, if they choose to abandon the book after 30 pages, they can still get credit for trying that book. All they have to do is complete a book talk with Julia over those first 30 pages. By reading those 30 pages and receiving credit, they can go back to the library for a shorter, 220-page book if they choose. Though they have a certain page requirement, Julia does not have a requirement as to what kind of book her students read as long as they are reading something that is appropriate for them. It could be realistic fiction. It could be nonfiction, it could be a graphic novel. It's all fair game as long as they make the page count, which Julia mentions puts the students at ease when they know that she will literally let them read anything as long as they are enjoying it and it meets the page requirement.

During the book talks, students have five minutes where they tell Julia about the book they read. During this time, she also asks them questions about the book they read, especially if it seems like they didn't read the book or like they are having trouble coming up with what they should say or talk about. It is at this point where Julia can tell if a student has actually been reading their book, and it is one of her methods for holding students accountable for their Friday reading. Though this is more of the summative method for holding them accountable, she also makes a point of chatting with students on those reading Fridays. Sometimes she will read with students on those days, but she also makes a point of having conversations with them about what

they are currently reading. When she notices a student is still reading the same book, she will ask them how the book is going and if anything crazy is happening in the story.

At first glance, this method may seem rigid. Those were my initial thoughts because it was similar to my own first attempt at developing independent reading and reading lives in my students, however, the more Juia explained the community and personal connections she develops with the students over the books, the more I was able to see how far from the truth that was. Throughout our conversation, she seemed to imply that her demeanor with her students whenever she's talking to them about books is one of excitement and joy that they are reading and a natural curiosity for what they are reading. She explains how some of her students may never have experienced someone else's excitement whenever they, the students, are reading. She says that most recently in the third quarter, she has tried to keep a running list of all her students and what they are reading so that she can actually ask them about that book and how it is going or if they've decided to abandon it. It is not only something she discusses with them on Fridays with her mini-conferences in which she tries to talk to about 10 students per class, but it's also something she can discuss with them throughout the week when she sees her students bring their books to class. One example she gave was of a student who Julia knew was reading *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. When she asked that student about the book, the student responded with excitement that she had finished it and was going to move on to the next book in the series. She also develops personal connections over books by reading some of the same books her students are reading such as *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas and *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah, and letting them choose a book that she should read next. Then, she'll read alongside them or at the very least students know that she is reading a book that they have read and recommend and Julia believes that having that relationship with the students over books encourages them to set

their own goals and motivates them to accomplish them. There was one student she told me who was reading *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas during the third quarter because she had seen Julia read it earlier in the school year. She explained that since she was reading that this student and Julia now had something they could talk and connect over.

These personal connections also enabled her to better gauge when her reluctant readers needed some extra support. For example, if she noticed or a student mentioned that they needed to go to the library because they left it at home, she would use that as a means to start a conversation about why they left their book at home and if there wasn't a deeper reason beyond typical student forgetfulness. Sometimes it would lead to them discovering that the student didn't like the book they were reading and actually needed to find a different one.

Though developing a psychological environment built on personal connections with students over the books they were reading seemed to be the most significant approach she took to developing a personal reading life with her students, she also develops a reading culture in her classroom through providing a relaxing physical environment. Though she has not built a classroom library yet because of being a first year teacher and the barrier that brings to providing the books her students want, she has still found ways to build a physical environment that encourages reading. Starting out she would turn the lights off in the room on Fridays and just have lamps and Christmas lights on to create a relaxing ambiance. This allowed the students to not only have a relaxing place to read but also a peaceful space during their day at school. Julia mentioned that Fridays are often not very peaceful days for students at school because they have quizzes or tests in other classes, but on Fridays they know that they will have a peaceful, low-stakes environment in her class where all they will have to do is read. Julia says that students look forward to Fridays because of the relaxing time and space it adds to their day. Students also

have the ability to contribute to this environment. At the end of the previous semester, Julia asked her students what is something that they wanted to see in the classroom and what they didn't like about the atmosphere. This is the point when the Christmas lights were added and more lamps instead of having the fluorescent lights on all the time, which Julia said caused stress for the students and especially bother two of her students. She admits that the effects of the fluorescent lights on her students in turn stressed her out, and so the Friday reading ambiance soon became the atmosphere all day, every day. Until then, her classroom didn't feel like a space she had created. She also started hanging up student work so that they could take ownership of the space. Overall, Julia created a physical space that reflected the students personalities and that would meet their needs to succeed in reading, but that would also help them succeed other days of the week as well.

Something else that both Julia and Darcy do in their classroom where personal reading lives are concerned is they are very open about their own personal reading lives. While Darcy was open with her students about the possibility of her mom being a librarian contributing to her reading life, Julia is equally honest with her students about how she was not a reader growing. She tells them how she only read five books in high school and that she did not enjoy books until later in life. She explains how she isn't well-read when it comes to the most well-known works of literature of all time. The fact that she can empathize with her students when it comes to independent reading allows them to connect over the shared experience but also motivate them to read because they see that somehow their English teacher who once did not enjoy reading now does when she is reading a genre that interests her. Building this shared experience between teacher and student goes even further when Julia takes her students to the school library and also picks out a book herself. She usually takes her students to the library about once a month, and

when she takes them and has them pick out a book, she also picks out a book for herself after all of her students have settled on a book. Even if she already has a book going at home, she will pick out a book when she takes her students and then carry it around with her if she doesn't read while she is with them. By doing this, she makes her reading life visible to her students, and they can see that she has the same expectations for herself as she does for them. It is almost like this communicates a certain type of equality between teacher and student. The expectations are the same, and reading is not to be used as a control tactic, but as something both parties should engage in.

When I asked her about her coworkers' experience toward independent reading, she believes many of her coworkers who don't implement independent reading lack faith that their students will actually read. Some of her English Language Arts colleagues, according to Julia, believe that students would never read if given the freedom to read what they wanted. They would rather provide their students an opportunity to engage in a collaborative experience with a class novel where they are all on the same pace and the accountability is easier to manage, but Julia says it is more worthwhile for her to allow them the freedom to choose a book and possibly find enjoyment out of it as opposed to just throwing another novel into the curriculum. Though she never said and my research does not yield a definitive number of English teachers who refrain from independent reading and why, I believe there are parts of my study that suggest the importance of independent reading and student personal reading lives to teachers, which I will discuss in the next section.

### **Discussion of Themes**

Now that I have discussed the participants' written responses and interviews, it is important to discuss in greater detail the themes and ideas that these data points have revealed.



First, I will reintroduce the research questions and then discuss the themes that have emerged for each of those themes throughout my research and how those themes answer each question.

*Research Question #1: Do English teachers feel that it is their role to develop personal reading lives in their students?*

Through implicit and explicit responses from participants, it seems that the majority of English teachers do not see it as one of their roles to develop personal reading lives in their students; however, some may feel it is a role, but not a primary role. When looking back at my participants and the trouble I had getting teachers to participate (even with the many extraneous circumstances that occurred during my data collection), only 10 people from my target participants agreed to complete the survey. There were a total of 44 participants who received at various times throughout the data collection period my six emails in which I asked for participants. Less than a quarter of my target population agreed to participate, and even some of the ones that participated did not even completely fill out the brief five to 10 minutes survey.

There could have been a number of factors contributing to this response rate including the various tragedies and strains on time that the district experienced during this my data collection period, but there are other parts of my data that lead me to wonder if English teachers truly see it as their role to develop personal reading lives in their students. For example, when I asked participants to list their top five instructional goals, many said reading, reading comprehension, or literacy. Only two participants mentioned independent reading as a goal for their curriculum. While this does not mean that teachers do not care about students' personal reading lives or that they do not to some degree see it as part of their role as an English teacher, it does indicate that a personal reading life is not a primary goal of theirs but one that sits on the backburner when it comes to their curriculum plan. Of the teachers who I interviewed, independent reading was a

structured part of their curriculum, and based on their lesson plans, philosophies, and attitudes toward independent reading, they valued the personal reading lives of their students. With these particular teachers, it seemed that developing personal reading lives in their students was a goal for them and that they did see it as part of their role as a teacher but it was not their primary goal or what they saw as their ultimate role. For both of these teachers, it seemed that independent reading and the personal reading lives of their students functioned more as a means to give them the tools and skills to continue learning long after leaving the classroom. The purpose was more to instill abilities to encourage long-lasting learning than to help students to develop a personal reading life and to find enjoyment in reading. However, that is not to say that the latter was not a goal for either of the two teachers who I interviewed. Julia explicitly said toward the end of our interview that she wants her students to “at least enjoy what they're doing” and find something they enjoy reading. Though more implicitly, Darcy mentioned the moments of success she experienced with reluctant readers who were suddenly talking about books in class. This leads me to believe that though the personal reading lives of their students may not be a primary goal for some English teachers, they still value their students’ reading lives and believe that engendering that love for reading in their high school students is just one of the many hats they wear as a teacher.

*Research Question #2: For teachers who do feel it is their role, how do they attempt to develop personal reading lives in their students?*

When I first set out to develop this study, I wanted to make sure that my research was something I could take back to my classroom and use. It needed to be something that improved my own practice, which led to my second research question: how do teachers attempt to develop personal reading lives in their students? Regardless of whether or not other teachers felt it was

their role as an English teacher to develop a personal reading life in their students, I did and still do feel it is one of my roles, but I was not sure how to do that effectively. After receiving the written responses that I did and analyzing the interviews, I found that my own research echoed the research that had previously been done on motivating students to read, which I outlined in my literature review. I found that some of the same themes appeared but with a few additions and specifications, which I will explain.

From the literature that has informed my study, I found that there were five pillars that would lead to motivating students to read more: (1) Instructional time for reading, (2) Student Choice, (3) Classroom environment, (4) Community, and (5) the Role of the Teacher. The fifth pillar, the Role of the Teacher, was one that received less attention in the research especially when it came to the teacher's perspective on that role, which I discussed in the previous section. However, in this section I will discuss how my research reflected these same pillars and the practical methods my participants used in their classroom in addition to some emerging themes that did not appear in the literature as far as I could see. Each of the following subsections will focus on each pillar and how each teacher implemented that pillar into their curriculum as far as personal reading goes and will build on each other. In a sense, what follows is the hierarchy of the five pillars for developing personal reading lives in students.

**1) Instructional Time for Reading:** For both teachers who I interviewed, giving instructional time to independent reading was a key component for how they prioritized the personal reading lives of their students in their curriculum. While they used different time frames for how they prioritized it, it was still any activity that students engaged in every week and for a substantial amount of instruction time each week. One participant had her students read 10 minutes every day after a 5 minute bellwork for a total of 50 minutes a week. The other had her

students read about 35 minutes on Friday. Both participants emphasized that routine was key, and Darcy specifically stated how that could translate to the student. She mentioned that when the students see that a fifth of class time--almost a whole class period in total is given to independent reading--students see that it is important and start to internalize that importance. This relates back to the regulatory style of self-determination theory called identified regulation where the individual has not necessarily internalized an attitude out of coercion but rather because they have grown to see the importance of the action and the growth and positive outcomes that can come as a result of the activity (Ryan, et al., 1992), which in this case is independent reading.

Both Julia and Darcy either imply or explicitly mention that this built-in reading time allows for the door to a personal reading life to be opened, a door that has either been slammed in their face because of poor independent reading practices or lack of encouragement from those closest and most influential in a student's life. Therefore, making time for independent reading during class time is the most essential step in creating personal reading lives in students. If time is not structured into their day for them, we as educators cannot expect them to attempt to jimmy that door open on their own. In fact, that may be the point at which students have the door slammed in their face like some teachers experienced with Accelerated Reading programs and not giving students, who already have busy schedules outside of school, time to read in class (Thompson, Madhuri, & Taylor 2008). There may be some reluctant readers who do overcome that hurdle on their own, but most will not.

One final note on this pillar is that independent reading is not only structured into class time, but parts of the curriculum are interwoven into students' choice reading. During specified times, students are given prompts and other opportunities to practice other ELA skills in

conjunction with their chosen book. These skills include summarization, reader response, and an application of many other skills like archetypes, literary lenses, and plot elements just to name a few. Such practices could also show students the relevance of the other parts of the ELA curriculum when it is applied to a medium they have chosen and hopefully are learning to enjoy if not already enjoying.

**2) Student Choice and Control:** The next key pillar for developing independent reading and personal reading lives in students is allowing them choice and control in their reading life. In order for students to develop an independent reading life, they have to be given choices and control over many aspects of their reading life. This is backed by the psychology of self-determination theory, which states that in order for someone to be motivated to do something, they must have autonomy within that activity (Deci et al., 1991; Deci & Ryan, 2012), and this same idea has been reflected in previous research on independent reading and motivating students to read (Gambrell, 1996; Sanden, 2012; Sanden, 2014). In this study, both participants mentioned allowing their students to read almost anything they wanted as long as it was a book that was appropriate for them and their reading level. Graphic novels were not banned. They were not restricted to fiction. The philosophy behind both approaches was that students should have control over what they read.

However, that is not where the choice and control ended. For both of these teachers, students had some kind of control over other parts of their reading lives. For example, Darcy allowed her students some control over their weekly reading goal. As long as they were reading in the time given in class, they should have no problem reaching that goal because the initial goal was determined based on how many pages students could get through in a 10 minute reading period. They would then multiply that by five and that would be their reading goal for the next

week; however, if they did not meet that goal they could change it for the next week. Regardless, the student was in control of their goal. It was not an inflexible goal that could not be changed based on the student's needs. Another aspect which students had control over was their reading environment. While Darcy allowed her students to read where they were comfortable in her room including on high top tables, Julia also allowed her students to move around the room and get comfortable. In addition, Julia asked her students at the end of the first semester how they could change the room to make it more inviting, which then led to posting student work, adding lamps and Christmas lights, and other changes to the classroom that started during reading time and then became a daily practice.

**3) Classroom environment:** Much of the previously existing research indicated the importance of a classroom environment that engages reading (Gambrell, 1996; Sanacore, 2006). When students are provided books in class through a classroom library, students often cite those as the most recent books that they've read. The classroom presence of books makes the expectation of reading visible, which adds to the community and culture around reading that will be discussed in the next section. First, however, the teachers who I interviewed created their own classroom environment that encourages reading. Darcy had a thoroughly stocked classroom library with books that were labeled based on genre. Books she read were given stars so students knew they could talk to her about those books. On the other hand, Julia did not have a classroom library due to being an early career teacher, but she did seek to create a reading ambiance that was comfortable and relaxing for her students. The time on Fridays that she gave students to read because it was a peaceful space that was low stress and relaxing in comparison to their other classes. As mentioned in the previous section, students had control over the environment making it a collaborative space. In the end, this pillar goes hand in hand with supporting the next pillar.

**4) Community and Culture:** Classroom environment only supports the community and culture in a classroom. That's not to say that community and culture can only be developed if there is also a physical classroom environment that supports it, but there is something about having physical cues to reading that only helps to prop up the community and culture the teacher builds, especially with how these teachers incorporated the two. Research suggests that connection in and over an activity increases motivation to then do that activity (Deci et al, 1991), and reading is no different (Gambrell, 1996). The teachers in my study developed a community and culture over reading in a number of ways. One was that teachers built a rapport with students over reading, whether that be through check-ins where they asked students about the books they were reading and then would figure out why a book was not working for them or offering suggestions based on the students' interests. These teachers also built rapport by asking students about what they were reading and sharing experiences over that book if the teacher had already read the book. This was especially effective for Darcy who would mark the books she had already read with a star on the spine so students knew she had read it and could have a conversation with her over the book at any time.

In addition, community and culture was built as a result of expectations. Much of these same philosophies stem from the research of Wong and Wong (2018). However, the interesting part of these reading expectations that then developed a culture of reading for both are the implementation of expectation accountability and at whom the expectations are directed.

Accountability is one aspect of independent reading programs and building personal reading lives that is largely debated. While some researchers and teachers believe that there should not be accountability measures in such a program because it stifles a love for reading, many teachers feel and researchers recognize the discomfort of letting go of complete control

and never being certain if students are really reading (Garan, & Devoogd, 2008). This would be especially alarming in the case of supporting reluctant readers who may need more structure through ways such as accountability measures. However, the teachers I interviewed seemed to have found a compromise between the two philosophies in which there is an element of accountability but the measures are low stakes. Such a combination like what Darcy found seemed to urge her students on and encourage them in their reading lives. In her curriculum, she holds students accountable by having them fill out their in-class log and complete write ups. The log is worth 10 points and students only lose one point if they don't meet their weekly goal. If they reach their goal, they get full points, but if they significantly surpass their goal, they get 11 out of 10 points. So, it's like they get extra credit for reading more. In addition, students have to complete three write ups so she can assess if they are actually doing the reading they say they are doing. Each write up is worth five points, but if the summaries, reflections, or skill applications seem minimalistic, they get four out of five points. Ultimately, they are easy points that aren't severely penalizing so students are not deterred from reading by severe penalties like researchers found to be the case when AR tests were made a significant part of the grade (Thompson, Madhuri, & Taylor 2008); however, these measures provide enough incentive to get students going with reading and engage them in the first stage of self-determination theory called External Regulation. This could eventually allow them to progress into more internally motivated levels of the theory (Deci, et al. 1991). So, a relaxed culture is created around choice reading through low-stakes expectations making them more desirable to students.

Lastly, something that the research did not mention but both of my participants did was the importance of equality of expectations between teacher and students. Both mentioned making their own reading lives visible and doing what they expected their students to do. For Darcy, this



looked like reading with her students and filling out a log with them which then sparked conversations about reading speeds. For Julia, this looked like picking out books when she took her students to the school library, occasionally reading with her students when she was not checking in with them on their books, and completing book talks to the same rigor to which she held her students.

**5) Role of the teacher:** The last point of the fourth pillar leads into this final pillar. If anything this pillar is not one that stands up next to the rest of these or is at the peak of the metaphorical pyramid, but the role of the teacher is more of the foundation of the four previous pillars while also a part of them. The role of the teacher in developing a personal reading life in students is in all and through all. Because the teacher is present every step of the way and is constantly facilitating the opportunity for personal reading lives to flourish, it may be the most integral of them all. Research mentions that the teacher's role could be anything from a sharer of books to a model of reading (Gambrell, 1996), roles which both Julia and Darcy both filled in their classroom. However, making their reading lives valuable came down to more than just showing their students "how to read" or how to have a reading life, so to speak. Previous research makes it seem like that is all modeling and making teacher reading lives visible is; it does not hint at the power of being a model for the sake of equality and relatedness between teacher and pupil. Deci et al (1991) talk about how when students experience what is called relatedness, which simply put is developing secure connections with others, a basic psychological need is met. If students can experience that relatedness with a teacher over books, motivation to read and develop a reading life can only increase. Darcy and Julia allow for this relatedness by holding themselves to the same expectations as their students when it comes to their reading lives and being honest about that reading life. Whether this would look like being

open about their early reading life or lack thereof or completing the same kind of accountability measures as their students, when teachers are visible with their own reading life and show that they expect from their students what they would expect and are willing to give from themselves, students will experience this phenomenon called relatedness, which can only increase student motivation.

### **Recommendations**

Based on my research, personal reading lives of students are not a priority among populations of English educators. This may vary depending on location, and this study will need to be replicated on a larger scale to determine the scale of such apathy, but ultimately personal reading lives of students are put on the backburner in order to prioritize other standards that seem more pressing. Though these other standards are important, teachers can also find ways to incorporate choice reading into their curriculum without sacrificing student growth. In fact, incorporating choice reading may actually increase student growth by growing their vocabulary, providing them new experiences through books and thus developing literacy, and improving reading comprehension. However, it could also engender the personal reading lives of students.

As far as recommendations for future research, in order for the data about teacher attitudes toward their role in developing students' personal reading lives to be more conclusive, more research would need to be done and with more participants. I would also suggest using a larger sampling population. This study only focuses on the results of one district. In addition, it would have been interesting to track students' personal reading lives over the course of the academic year to see if either Darcy's or Julia's methods were truly effective.

When it comes to classroom implications, I suggest districts and English education training programs, provide instruction on how to successfully incorporate choice reading into the

curriculum for growth in standards in addition to growth in students personal reading lives. This could be done by using professional development books by Penny Kittle, Kelly Gallagher, and Donalyn Miller in addition to existing academic research to help educators brainstorm and craft lesson plans that align with standards but also allow students to use their choice texts. Not only would this open a door for students to learn to enjoy reading, but also teachers would not feel like they are abandoning the standards. In addition, I suggest that districts and English education training programs work with teachers to develop methods that work for them in their classroom that incorporate these five pillars discussed in the themes: built-in reading time, student choice and control, classroom environment, community and culture, and role of the teacher. Teachers who have already incorporated independent reading into their curriculum and consider students' personal reading lives as an instructional goal should periodically look back at these five pillars and reflect on how well they are incorporating those into their practice. Some guiding questions for each pillar are included in Figure 9.

<b>Fig. 9: Reflective questions for each pillar for developing personal reading lives in students</b>	
1) Built in Reading Time	Is independent reading time considered a sacred reading time? Is it a deeply ingrained routine?
2 ) Student Choice & Control	How much choice do students have over what they read and how much they read? What other aspects of this sacred reading time do students have control or input over?
3) Classroom Environment	What parts of your classroom environment signal that reading is an expectation or that this is a reading space? What could you add or change to make the environment more suitable for reading and meet your students' reading needs?
4) Community & Culture	Is there communication between students and the teacher about books? What kind of opportunities or cues are present

	to encourage discussion and community over the choice books they read?
5) Role of the Teacher	Are you being open about your reading history and your current reading life with your students? Are you expecting yourself to do the same assignments or accountability measure you are expecting of your students?

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In spite of what the research would suggest, independent reading and the personal reading lives of secondary English students is not a priority in many high school ELA classrooms. However, in the classrooms where student wonder and adventure through the many worlds of books is a priority, teachers are looking for innovative ways to engage students in the magic that hides in the ink and paper waiting to be discovered. Whether it is knowingly or unknowingly, their efforts are supported by the 5 pillars discussed in this research that lead to developing personal reading lives in students. Within these pillars, this research has shown the importance of establishing teacher/student equality and openness that is a two way street when it comes to sharing and connecting over personal reading lives and building that in students. Though independent reading is a worthy strategy to incorporate into the curriculum to encourage student achievement, it is integral that the personal enjoyment of reading not be thwarted for the sake of increasing high stakes testing scores if we are to be truly effective in helping our students find pleasure in the pages of Narnia, Hogwarts, and many other beloved tales.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Transcript: Darcy

Interviewer: Candace Hinnergardt

Participant: Darcy

Candace:

Okay. So what is your name?

Darcy:

Danielle Nagel.

Candace:

Okay. And it's spelled D-A-N-I-E-L-L-E.

Darcy:

I-E-L-L-E.

Candace:

Okay. And then E-

Darcy:

And like bagel but with an N.

Candace:

I like it. What grades do you teach?

Darcy:

I teach 11th grade, which is like American literature this year, but I've taught sophomores, so 10th grade before, and I've taught pre AP sophomores as well.

Candace:

Okay. Awesome. In your opinion, what is the goal of a secondary English class?

Darcy:

It's pretty expansive. I think that the main thing is if you think about the four cornerstones of English, which is to read, to write, to speak, and to listen, to learn how to do all four of those



effectively and also to be able to use them together, so like in tandem. So we talk a lot about speaking and writing and how those forms work in tandem a lot and being able to understand what somebody is speaking about or what somebody is writing about in the reading and listening portion. So I think that just being able to do those skills effectively and be able to use them to be successful citizens is the biggest way that I can sum that up. It's kind of hard. So really just teaching the skills to be able to use those four cornerstones effectively to be successful in their career and just as people generally.

Candace:

Okay. Yeah, especially like with this discipline, it's such a broad discipline and overlaps into other content areas.

Darcy:

Because their reading ability affects their science ability and affects, not math as much, because it's a symbol system, but it still impacts the way they think about math. And so their conceptualization relies on us a lot, which is kind of terrifying.

Candace:

For sure. What do you feel is your role/purpose as an English teacher? I know that's a giant question, but what do you feel is your role or purpose as an English teacher?

Darcy:

I think when you think about the hierarchy of needs, that first to kind of accommodate them as people and to make them feel like who they are is valid and that their voices should be heard because sometimes that's a battle in and of itself, is that you've had kids that have been told their opinion isn't valid or it's not important and nobody really wants to hear it. So then when you try to teach them how to speak and to write in a way that's effective, they don't find meaning in it, which is crazy to me. And then obviously to do everything the state asked me to do, but I think more than that is, again, just making sure that they understand that they have a voice and how to use it to get what they want out of life and how to consume information in a way that can understand how they could be manipulated by it or how to take away from it what is valuable for them to find a place. I don't know. That is a really hard question, yeah. Is that-

Candace:

Yeah. Yeah, that's kind of what I was getting at. But there's nothing really that I'm getting at. It's just to see what teachers do feel that their role is and what teachers feel the goal of their class is because I want to see teacher's perspectives because that's a lot of what's not in the research. There's a lot of what is effective or what teachers should be doing. And there's not a whole lot on what teachers kind of think in how they approach their own discipline. So that's something that I wanted to better understand along with-

Darcy:

Just to simplify, to be critical consumers and to be louder producers, if that makes sense. I think that that's the easiest way that I can sum it up, is just to look at what they're taking in more critically and also to try to project more of what they think about the world because, I mean, that's where it's going to go next.

Candace:

For sure. So what are your expectations for your students' personal reading lives?

Darcy:

I mean, gosh, my expectation for their reading lives is that they develop one. So I don't know if this generation is the same as I was, which was that it felt stifled by all the structure that was given, like AR points and things like that. I really thrived in that situation just because my mom was a librarian and I was in an environment that that structure helped. But for the majority of students, they tell you that they hate reading and they hate looking at books and they hate... I don't know. It's just crazy to me because it's like you don't hate books. You just hate the way you've been taught to read books, and you hate the way that it's been structured around you, and you haven't found a book that maybe means something to you yet.

Darcy:

So I think that that's like the biggest thing as a teacher, is just trying to reopen that door that's been shut for them and get them to understand what reading can do for them because, honestly, books can do so much more than I ever could if they would just read them. The research shows that vocabulary and fluency and comprehension and looking for what you can learn about the world, making those connections, all of that that can get from a book. They don't need it for me. So I think that if I can do that as a teacher, that's my goal, is to read-

Speaker 3:

[crosstalk 00:05:48].

Candace:

Oh no. That's not mine. Or I don't need it.

Speaker 3:

It's trash?

Candace:

Yeah, I think so.

Speaker 3:

Oh okay.

Candace:

I don't know.

Darcy:

Thanks.

Speaker 3:

[inaudible 00:05:58].

Candace:

Okay. Thank you. Let's see here. Do you have goals for your students' personal reading lives during the academic calendar? What are they? Any specific attainable goals?

Darcy:

Okay. So at the secondary level we have a harder time tracking Lexile, and so it's not really tracked in that way so much as my students complete two assignments with independent reading every week. And then next year I'm hoping to delve out a little bit more into that. But right now they do logs, which is mostly just having them set goals for their own reading lives. So I have kids that'll set a 50-page goal for the week. Okay, so they're trying to read 50 pages. We read 10 minutes in class every single day. So they know that based on okay, I met my goal last week, so maybe I can up it a little bit. Maybe I can lower it.

Darcy:

So I think just having them kind of structure goals for themselves because a lot of them will take it home, and they will read outside of school just because they want to meet their goal that they set for themselves. So I think that just having them understand that reading is a daily part of their lives is something that I want them to learn through the class. And then also I have them do write-ups. And so that's kind of one way that I measure their reading, is I can see their comprehension because there's three things that I measure. Number one is summary. So they have to summarize what they read. So if they read page one to 20, they're summarizing one through 20 for that week. If they read one to 580, they're summarizing an entire book in short paragraphs. So they're practicing different levels of summary based on how much they've read.

Darcy:

And then the second thing is I just haven't to do a reader response. So that's them kind of just thinking back to what they've read. What did they enjoy? What did they connect to? What were

they really angry about or surprised by? Really anything that they want to write about, usually just about a paragraph. And then the last thing is usually a skill. So talking about archetypes or talking about point of view and how the narration affects the way they read it. And so it's usually just a response to they're identifying the skill within what they read, but then also commenting on it. So I can see a lot through that just because I can see how well they're comprehending what they're reading. I can see how well they connect to the text, and sometimes that helps me choose a new book because they'll be like, "I hate this book, Ms. Nagel. What the heck am I doing?" And I can suggest new books so I can also keep track of that for them.

Darcy:

And then, yeah, the last thing is more skills-based, so how well can they actually connect that to English skills that are reading with our class texts. So what was the question, again? I think I got lost.

Candace:

[crosstalk 00:08:38]. You're fine. It's just what are your expectations for your students' personal reading lives?

Darcy:

Okay, yes, so I do not have expectations for outside.

Candace:

Oh wait. No, it was do you have goals for your students' personal reading lives during the academic calendar? And what are they?

Darcy:

So I don't think that I really have goals for them outside of my class. The big thing is just what I can measure within my class in terms of whether they are reading and being given time to enjoy books because that goes back to, again, my goal for them is just to enjoy and kind of reopen that door for themselves because if I can do that, then it'll hopefully keep it open, if they can just learn how to pick up good books and look for good books.

Candace:

Yeah. I did have a question. So when you say you have them write a paragraph, what are the parameters you give for them I writing paragraphs? Because for some kids, they'll be like oh, five sentences. Some students will be like oh, just like a couple... Everyone has a different definition of what a paragraph is.

Darcy:

So I will say that the reason that I have such... Literally, it's three sentences up on the board that tells them write one paragraph in which you summarize the pages that you read this week. Write one paragraph in which you respond to what you thought about the text from this week. And then the last one is just the skills-based one. And so it depends on the week, but all of them are writing, I mean, healthy paragraphs. It's at least a page and a half write-up for each kid by the time they're done. And usually, again, that's enough of a chance for me to look at what I need to work on with them. I can isolate kids that need more help identifying books because they're just really struggling with finding a book that they can sit down with.

Candace:

But you don't give them guidelines like oh, this is how much I want you to write.

Darcy:

No. I mean, whenever I grade it, sometimes I'll write, "This was a really minimal summary based on how much you said you read." Or "Your response was really minimal. I'm surprised you don't have more to say." And so I may count off a point or two because it's five points per paragraph. So every once in a while I'll just be like no, this is kind of a four out of five point or three out of five point. And that's usually enough to kind of urge them on. But they really like writing about their books. They're kind of mad when they don't get to get... Because it's their chance to process what they've read. And then we usually talk about the write-ups afterwards so they can share out things with each other. So it's never been something since we've made a routine out of it that I've had to fight them on because they really do enjoy just going back and thinking about what they've read.

Candace:

Okay. So next is at the beginning of each school year, what do your students' personal reading lives look like? And how do you see them change over the course of the school year?

Darcy:

So I have my kids do a reading interest inventory at the beginning of the year, which essentially just tells me what genres did they like? What types of movies and comic books and things? Where do they read? How long do they usually read for if they do? Do they read online? Do they read on their phones? Do they have any of the major apps like Audible or Wattpad or all the crazy things that kids read on, Kindle. So just kind of gauging where they are. And I always go back to that. So whenever I read the write-ups and one of them says, "Oh man, I'm really not liking this book," I go back to that reading interest inventory, and that helps me gauge where they were. But I also use that a lot just because the kids that I struggle with the most are the ones that I lock down in the beginning because I understand that they're the ones who have had that door slammed in their face.

Darcy:

And so when you talk about where do they start the year and kind of how do I see them grow, and how do I measure that, it's really based on how much they talk about books in my class. And so I have kids that, they tell me, "I've never read a book before, Ms. Nagel, but somehow I'm through three books in your class because you gave me a series that I love." Maybe it's 10 kids. It's not all of them that suddenly are readers, but it's enough to be like okay, something I'm doing is working. So it's really just how they conversate about books, where they're recommending them to each other, when at the beginning of the year on their reading interests, "I don't read. I don't have a favorite book. I don't like books. I don't like reading." And so you just see the attitude change, and I think that's how you really measure it, is where they were at the beginning and that reading interest inventory versus the conversations they have with your peers about books, which is the craziest thing.

Candace:

Cool. Very cool. Let's see here. What instructional strategies do you use to encourage an independent/personal reading life and your students? We've kind of already talked about. If there's anything that you could think of to add?

Darcy:

I think that just making it visible.

Candace:

And what do you mean by that?

Darcy:

My own reading log is very visible to them, and so whenever they're updating their reading logs, I'm updating mine too. So they can see how many pages I've read in a week, and they ask questions about that. And we talk about reading speeds, and they're like, "Man, Ms. Nagel, I haven't gotten through that much this week." And so we talk about, "Do you think that you've gotten faster," and things like that. And they really do think that their stamina has gotten better. So I think it's just, again, making books visible, making it visible that you're reading, making it visible what new books there are because when you get five new books, just stick them up on the ledge, give them a short book talk, then put them on the shelf because half the time they get stolen from your clutches. So I think just the visibility of it matters because if it's not visible, then they're not thinking or talking about it. If it is visible, it's in their periphery, so they're going to think about it and probably talk about it.

Candace:

But yeah, I think it's funny that you mentioned books being stolen because these mouse books, we start off with I think 38, and I had to get onto them and be like, "Guys, I have 20 [crosstalk

00:14:36]. Yeah, I'm like, "I have 25 copies now, and we should have... And really Tessie and I, we each have a copy, so technically there's 36 available to the students. I'm like there are 11 missing. And so I think I eventually got to where I only had five or six missing because I hounded them that much. But still I'm like okay, cool. Very cool. [crosstalk 00:15:02]. Okay. Next question. What about your classroom environment, physical or psychological, encourages personal reading lives in your students?

Darcy:

Okay, so physically, you've seen my library, but for the sake of this, obviously, my library is kind of imposing. And my kids love to sit in it just because they say it's like being in a bed of books just because there's [inaudible 00:15:33]. So I think that a lot of them, when they walk in and they see the library, that's something that really kind of creates a culture there just because they know that I've got a pretty substantial library and I've read at least half of them. Can't say I've read them all because, good Lord, there's so many. And I think that also my kids look for the star stickers because that tells them that I have read it, and so they like to talk to me about those ones. So there's little things like that. I think that the furniture in some ways helps, having spaces for students to read. So you have your rug. I've got some poofs. I've got my high top tables. And again, my kids like to bring the poofs back in the library and sit back in the library so they can lay down.

Darcy:

And I think, again, highlighting books a lot. So up on my ledge whenever I get new books, I'll just lay them out and, again, give them a few seconds before we start reading. But I don't know if it's necessarily culture that's created by the environment so much as, yeah, what we do with the books, which is again, reading every single day. It is part of our routine. They get ticked off if we don't do it. And so I think that creates the culture more than anything, which is the fact that I am willing to give you 20% of our time every single day because reading is that important. And I want you to love it because I'm willing to give up an hour of our five hours every week just to work on that. And so I think that that's what creates a culture, is showing them it's important by giving the time to it that it deserves. Does that answer your question?

Candace:

Yeah.

Darcy:

Okay. Sorry. I lose track of questions a lot. Little ADHD.

Candace:

Okay, showing it's important by allotting time to it-

Darcy:

Because, I mean, they know what's important based on how much time you give it in class. Like the work too, same thing. If I'm willing to stick to it every single day, that shows you that it's going to end up being something that we need to focus on.

Candace:

Yeah. Okay. What opinions do you have about sustained silent reading times or Drop Everything and Read programs? Which is kind of like what you do in a sense.

Darcy:

Yeah, I think the big thing is a lot of my kids when they got in my class and they heard we had logs, is they freaked out because in middle school and maybe elementary, you have to take the logs home and get them signed by parents and things like that. And you have to read a certain amount of time outside of class. And so I think that that, I get where it's coming from. Again, I'm not a specialist on all of the research and all of that, but I think that that actually deters students because there's a lot of faking it, and you have to have parent buy-in for that to be effective.

Whereas I think that, again, stop everything and read, isn't that just in school where they take classroom time? I think that that's valuable because, again, if you give time to it, think about the events that we have going on for Moore Love this week, we're giving a lot of time to that, and students recognize that that's something that's valuable and important and worth our time.

Darcy:

So if we did that with Drop Everything and Read, that shows them that reading is important because everybody in the building is stopping what they're doing to do it. So I think it just comes back to the amount of time that you give to it in a structured setting, which means that, again, reading logs or things like that can be valuable if it's structured within your home and it's a part of the routine, if that makes sense.

Candace:

Yeah.

Darcy:

But I definitely think every teacher should be doing it in their classroom, first of all because it's one of our state standards.

Candace:

Okay. Let's see here. That does not apply because personal reading lives is a part of one of your goals. The question is if personal reader life is not a goal for you, why? But it doesn't apply. Let's see here. That would not apply. Let's see here. So of all the methods that you've tried, what seem



to be the most effective methods you have found that encourage independent reading lives in your students?

Darcy:

Okay. So I've been doing independent reading every year since I started teaching four years ago. But yeah, I've gone through the strategies quite a bit to try to get where I am now. And so one thing I found that didn't work was independent reading projects, which is weird because, again, that's like okay, it's some of the independent reading, but what I found is that the kids who read five books struggle because they feel like they're limited to one to work on for the project. And then you have the kids who really don't read at that pace, who fake it and go online and find the information to do the project, which means that they're not reading because you're taking time to work on the project. You know what I mean?

Darcy:

So I don't do independent reading projects, and that's kind of unpopular I think because a lot of people do. But it's something that I ended up finding that like it took away from independent reading and the value of it because they felt such pressure to do it well versus I just use weekly and daily grades, and that's the sum of that category, is just bell work and independent reading logs and write-ups. And it's lower stress, which means that they do take it seriously because it's not stressful, and it's not something that kind of traumatizes I'm on it. So I really enjoy that, and I think that that's really effective. I don't know what the research shows on that, but I've noticed the attitude of my kids has changed a lot since I've done that. And that that changed this year. This is the first year that I've haven't done independent reading projects. I've always tried something. It just never really worked out.

Darcy:

And then I think that I didn't do write-ups last year or any years before because I did projects, and so I was thinking and I was like well, what can I have them do that like sums up each week. So it's almost like a mini summary just because they're all reading at different paces and some kids finish a book in one week and some take the entire nine weeks read one just because they're reading it in class, but that may be more than they've ever done before. And the write-ups, like I said, they've latched onto that, and that's been so effective just because they enjoy writing about books because it is so informal, and it's like a mini check-in each week of what are you reading? What do you think about it? Do you like it? What kind of connections do you make between the characters and people in your own life? [inaudible 00:22:15] like them and why? Talking about archetypes or stereotypes and things like that. And that's been really effective I think as a strategy.

Darcy:

And the log took time to kind of parse down to what I wanted it to look like in a way that, again, wasn't high-stress because initially I was like, "We're going to read 20 pages. That's the requirement for this week". But again, I had kids faking it, and so I ended up finding a way that they set the goal, so they get to choose what their page goal is for that week. So for some kids that's 500 pages, and for some it's 10. And that made a huge difference because they're honest.

Candace:

And do you set a minimum goal? Just how many pages do you want to read in a week?

Darcy:

It's usually based on time. So for spending an hour, I have them time themselves for five minutes, and that's where we start. So at the beginning of year, that's how we do it. It's like, "Okay, I'm going to time you for 10 minutes, see how many pages you can read." They stop there, and they multiply that times five to get how much time for the week that they spend.

Candace:

Have them read for 10 minutes and multiply by five?

Darcy:

Whatever that page number. So if they read seven pages in 10 minutes, then they could realistically read 70 pages in a week. That's where we start. But then, obviously, if a kid's like, "Okay, well, Ms. Nagel, I only read 55 pages, even though my goal was 70," then they lower their goal to 50 or 55. And they can raise it and lower it each week. And so the grade is nine 10, and 11 out of 10. So they get a nine out of 10 if they don't meet the goal that they set for themselves, 10 out of 10 if they do, and an 11 out of 10 if they far exceed it. So I have kids who take home their log every week to far exceed their goal.

Candace:

So it's almost like you're giving them a point of extra credit for reading more?

Darcy:

Yeah. And they're honest is, I mean, the best part because, again, they know that they're the ones setting the goals. So, sure, some of them may sell themselves short to make sure they at least get their 10, but they're never exceeding it because they're at least trying to get there. So that's pretty effective to me, just because being honest about what you're reading is half the battle I think.

Candace:

So they get a grade for-

Darcy:

The write-ups.

Candace:

Their write-ups. And then they get a grade for meeting their goal.

Darcy:

Their log.

Candace:

Okay.

Darcy:

Next year I'm going to try discussions. So I've got some models I've been researching and putting together. So right now technically we don't read every day. We read Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and then Friday's the day we do our log and write-up. What I'm going to do next year is do 10 minutes each day, Friday's log, write-up, and then the rest of class is just discussion about their books in small groups. I'm Working really hard to put all that together now. Oh, and then I forgot to tell you. So I didn't read every day either in the last few years. I've gone back and forth. So last year they read only on Fridays. It didn't work because I always sold out Fridays. I'd be like, "Oh man, we're so behind because it's Friday." And I'd be like, "Dang it, we're going to have to get rid of independent reading." So, again, doing it every day shows them it has more value I think. So I've really liked that more too, but it works for different people.

Candace:

Yeah, I've been doing Fridays. I like it because it's kind of a relaxing thing to do at the end of the week. And I sometimes need my quiet time in class, being an introvert.

Darcy:

It's hard-

Candace:

It's so hard.

Darcy:

Because my kids don't get the zone. You know what I mean?

Candace:

Yeah.

Darcy:

Where they're reading and they're stuck in the book, and they can't close it. But it's such a short amount of time that they start to get into that, and then I have to snap them out. But my problem too was-

Candace:

Because you have those kids who don't have the same-

Darcy:

I had the opposite problem. They can't ever settle down. And so that's been kind of an issue too. It's kind of a juggle back and forth.

Candace:

Yeah. And some just don't have the stamina to do almost a full class period, like 40, 45 minutes of reading.

Darcy:

Well, and the thing I found too that works is okay, we do bell work for five minutes. I mean, do 10 minutes minimum of independent reading, I'll just shut off the timer sometimes if I see they're all in the zone. So sometimes my second hour, you could drop a pen, and they would all just keep on going. It doesn't matter what you're doing, they're in it. So I'll just turn off the timer, and I'll watch for them starting to fidget or look around, and that's when I'm like, "Okay, independent readings' done. We're going to stop now." And they've gone as long as 20 minutes without noticing that I didn't stop the timer. So they're like, "Wait, did you forget to set it?" And I was like, "Yeah, 20 minutes have gone by. I guess we're okay to go ahead and move on." So sometimes I'm like I'll give you the extra time.

Brenna:

Ms. [Van 00:26:48] needs you.

Darcy:

Ms. Van needs me?

Brenna:

Yeah.

Darcy:

Okay. Give me a second. I'll walk through the store and go talk to her, okay?

Brenna:

She told you to come see her, loser.

Darcy:

Of course she did. She said that to a student, huh?

Brenna:

Uh-huh (affirmative). [inaudible 00:27:02].

Darcy:

Well, I wouldn't put it past her. Have a good day, [Brenna 00:27:08].

Candace:

Awesome. Awesome responses.

Darcy:

Sorry.

Candace:

Oh no, you're fine. What would the results of an effective strategy to increase personal reading lives in students look like to you, ideally and realistically? I feel like that's a very vague question.

Darcy:

I think that touching the four cornerstones of English within independent reading. So if you think about what I do in my class, reading obviously, they do writing. Discussion is speaking and listening. So that's my goal to work towards, is the most effective, is pulling in the four cornerstones because then they're working on the foundational skills of English with me, but in a way that isn't aggressive in nature. So that's most effective for me, is being able to read, write about what you read in a way that isn't super high stress or formal, and then speak and listen to others about their books, whether it's the same or not because I think that sometimes when we do class novels, we teach them how to do that one way, but we don't ever teach them how to just conversate about good books, which is how we actually in real life talk about books. You know what I mean?

Darcy:

So I think that that's the most effective way for me. I don't know what research shows about that, but that's why that's my goal, is to use discussion-

Candace:

That's actually what the research shows. The more that Students have an increased desire to read whenever they build those relationships around books, whenever they talk about them. But that's one of the things I think as a teacher is probably... And I don't if I'm allowed to say this. Sorry, IRB. But as a teacher... And this is one of the things that the research says... it's hard to kind of take out that element of accountability and that you can't control what they're going to say or if they're going to stay on task or-

Darcy:

I know. That was the hardest part about the log and write-up too because, again, if you talk about the sum of learning, yeah. I can't show anything to my principles really that shows the sum of 10 minutes we spend a day in class for independent reading because they don't see all the moments I do in their write-ups every couple of weeks, that they have a moment of extreme clarity related to the plot or that they made a critical comment on the fact that the author chose a specific narrative style, and they don't understand why because it completely ruined the book, and here's why. So those little things are like dude, this is working. This matters. But if admin asked me, I'd be like, "Fuck if I know." I really couldn't show you the sum. I couldn't show you the accountability of what this looks like because they don't see it. I do. So that is super hard. But it's intimidating.

Candace:

For sure.

Darcy:

But that's my goal next year, is yeah, to branch out to those last two cornerstones of speaking and listening about books more informally in small groups.

Candace:

I gotcha. Let's see here. So two more questions. What attitudes from coworkers do you experience towards independent reading or sustained silent reading? So this might be interesting, considering.

Darcy:

Okay. As your department chair, we obviously have very diverse views. I have people that don't give independent reading the time of day, even though it is a state standard, and they haven't touched it their entire time within this district. And they think that independent reading is their kids reading a class novel silently at their desk. So, I mean, what have I encountered? I've encountered at all, which is that it's not valuable, and we should be working on grammar. And then you have the people who want to do it, but don't know where to get the resources. So, I mean, we talked about classroom libraries a lot, right?

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Darcy:

But using library resources can also be kind of difficult just because of the amount of time it takes to go down there and come back and rechecking things. And so I think that there's the people who think that it's absolute garbage, and there's the people who just don't know how to go about it because number one, they don't know what strategies or resources to utilize and how. And then there's the people who you get it. You're like okay, I've been reading what's out there, and I know that this works, and these are the different things that I've seen. So I think I can tell who cares because they're the people who do have a classroom library. And I'm not saying that people who go to the library don't care, but the people who have classroom libraries are the people who go to the library. You know what I mean?

Candace:

Yeah.

Darcy:

So I can think of the six teachers that have classroom libraries, and they're the only people who go to the library regularly to recheck books. Nobody else does. Does that answer your question?

Candace:

Yeah, yeah. Okay. How do you communicate your goals for your students' personal reading lives? And we've kind of touched on this, but is there anything you want to add or clarify on?

Darcy:

The only thing I tell them is, again, the same thing, which is that books can teach them so much more than I can. And so if they can just learn how to navigate reading in a way that is enjoyable for them, that's the goal. And so I tell them I love reading, and yeah, my upbringing probably has a amount to do with that, but it's given me every opportunity because reading has made everything else so much more comprehensible that I honestly think I could be successful in a lot of other things just because I have the higher level thinking that books allowed me.

Darcy:

So literally just communicating that all the time. And, again, giving time to it, showing them that's the goal, is just enjoying it and talking about what we enjoy and what we don't enjoy because that's also important and communicating what I enjoy and how I learn those things. And even conceptualizing it in the ACT, they love that because they hate the ACT. But I talk to them, I'm like, "You don't like the reading test, just read a ton because that's all you have to do is get

that stamina," like you were saying, because they're like, "That test is so hard just because you have to read so much." And I was like, "You do realize that that's what independent reading is preparing you for. That's why I don't prepare you for the reading test, is because literally it is just about reading speed and comprehension, which you are practicing every single day when you do independent reading." So I think just contextualizing it constantly of why does this matter? What does this give you? And write-ups. My favorite thing is to do little notes. And so whenever they have like a really kick A thought, I make a photocopy of it, and I save them. But then I also make little notes too of, "I'm so proud of you because this is such a great idea. You should hold onto this," just because... I'm not going to say names because this interview actually could be seen by somebody, but I have a kid-

Candace:

Child that will not be named.

Darcy:

I have a kid whose grandfather is published, and he was reading his grandfather's book. And his entire write-up ended up being five pages because he was critically analyzing-

Candace:

Oh, that's hilarious.

Darcy:

All the terrible choices his grandfather made in writing this book. And I was like, "You should give that to your grandpa because he would think that's hilarious that you shredded his book based on all the things that I've taught you about literary analysis in our class." And he was like, "Yeah, grandpa would have me for that." So I don't know. I think I'm just rambling now. Sorry. But, again, just being clear and contextualizing it in the context of their lives and being honest.

Candace:

Okay. Cool. Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything you want to add? Any burning thought that you're like oh, I wish she would ask me about this. I want to talk about this?

Darcy:

Read alouds. I haven't used them correctly yet. I don't know how to use them. But I think that that's a really interesting inclusion in the whole strategies that people use, that I've seen a lot on secondary ELA, that Facebook page that it seems like a billion teachers are on. And that's something I haven't figured out as a strategy either, just because I feel like I'd read it to one class, and that class wants that book, but I don't feel like I have that many books that they... I don't know. I need to figure that out. So maybe that's one piece to add to strategies that I didn't talk about because I don't actually use it.



Candace:

Okay. Well, that's all I have.

## Appendix B

### Interview with Julia

Interviewer: Candace Hinnergardt

Participant: Julia

Candace:

We are recording. Okay. So what is your name?

Julia:

My name is Jessica Nalley.

Candace:

Okay. And what grade or grades do you teach?

Julia:

Freshmen. English one all day.

Candace:

In your opinion, what is the goal of secondary English education or secondary English class? I should say.

Julia:

As a whole, I think it's to help them to communicate more effectively. So with every assignment I try to consider real world relevance and what they will be able, what useful skills they will take away from whatever texts we're reading or interpreting or whatever we're writing in class so that they're able to do real tangible things.

Candace:

Okay. So what are some things that you've done recently that you've tried to use that philosophy?

Julia:

The first part of this semester we've been writing, so we did a persuasive essay and the prompts were different prompts the New York Times had posted. There were different situations a freshman might be in that would make them uncomfortable and how they would persuade either the school board or their parents, they were in different groups. They were sent a random essay or a random topic.

Julia:

So there was student-athletes. Should they be required a 60% or 70% grade average for eligibility? Does moving during high school, is that detrimental to a student's mental health? And another one that was a favorite was should schools have study hall as a course? So I've tried to pick prompts that are relevant while still teaching them how to write a persuasive paper or how to do a research essay.

Candace:

Okay. Very cool. Very cool. What do you feel is your role as an English teacher?

Julia:

I think it's my role to facilitate the process of learning. So I want them to be able to leave this classroom this year knowing that if they need to know how to research something effectively where they can go, what a search engine looks like, I want them to know how a library works. If they ever choose to read on their own or just know what resources are available to them to continue learning.

Julia:

I usually begin with, if Google ever doesn't exist, what's your plan?

Candace:

I like that. Yeah. I mean even us, when we were in school, we still had the internet and it's like, "What would we do if we didn't?"

Julia:

Right and it's a shame too. I find myself like I'll Google something at home or I'll ask Alexa, and then two minutes later I don't remember what she said. Because I know that that information is readily available and I'm not forced to retain any knowledge. I can just ask her again.

Candace:

Yeah. It's like I was talking to my co-teacher the other day about how I don't remember phone numbers and I'm like I know mine. I know my mom's and I probably could tell you my brothers and my grandma's, but that's only because they're either similar to mine or I remember my grandma's because I remember her saying-

Speaker 3:

Study Hall. Can I have somebody from custodial come to the main office please from custodial to the main office from this little place. Thank you.

Candace:

Have that little interruption there on the reporting.

Julia:

It's authentic.

Candace:

There you go. But grandma's I remember because it's similar to, or it's the same year that she met my grandpa and that's why she chose it. Because when they were giving her the options of what she could choose. So those are the only things I remember. I probably remember an old home phone number that my parents used to have and that's it.

Julia:

Right. I remember a restaurant that I worked at when I was 17, which is not going to help me ever.

Candace:

You never know. You might want to call there.

Julia:

If I do want to order a cheeseburger when I'm four and a half hours away, I know the phone number.

Candace:

Okay. So what are your expectations for your students' personal reading lives?

Julia:

So we do book talks, it's quarterly and from the beginning of the year we have one library day. It's been more difficult this semester, but in the first two quarters we had about one a month where students would go to the library. The only expectation was read something as close to, I mean if it's in the public library, if it's in the library here as close to grade level appropriate. But read something that you enjoy. I don't expect them to be reading classic literature if that's not their favorite genre. So read something you enjoy.

Julia:

The minimum page requirement is 250 pages we read in class every Friday. They are required to read 30 pages before they can abandon a book. And that's something that I've really enjoyed kind of employing that role because they want to give up after page five. If it's not immediately

interesting to them where they don't feel like they know what's going on, they abandoned the book.

Candace:

Yeah, It's kind of that instant gratification.

Julia:

But I've really enjoyed just giving them the freedom to read what they want. And I've noticed some of the ones who are not readers and they might choose a graphic novel, a book that's based on a movie, and I'm okay with that as long as I know that they're reading.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). So you said something that made me think of something, but now it's left my brain. Oh, you said that you give them 30 pages or you make them read 30 pages before they abandon it. Do you feel like they're honest about that or how do you hold them accountable?

Julia:

And not that this is a good system or there's a real way to, but I know the ones who have read the 30 pages. So at the end of each book, and if you want to reach the 250-page count by reading a 150-page book and a 100-page book, that's okay as long as you reach the page goal. But a student who truly read 30 pages will want credit for it.

Julia:

So I always know when I ask them they have to come up to my desk on Friday. To abandon a book, they have to do a 30-page book talk. And usually the ones who can't tell me anything about the book, I know that they didn't. And for the most part they've all been like, okay, "I really didn't read it. Let me give it another chance. I kind of wanted to go to the library." I'm like, "Okay, well let's try to read it and see if you get into it because you chose this book for a reason." But I've had others that are just adamant that "I've tried it. I hate it, it's stupid." And sometimes they can tell me why.

Julia:

They're like, "Page 10, the mom was in a car accident in the book and that's traumatic to me. I don't want to be involved in that." And I always, in those situations when they can tell me something about the book that they didn't like, I at least give them the 30-page count toward their book talk. So now they get to go to the library and go for a 220-page book.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay. Do you have goals for your students' personal reading lives during the academic calendar and what are they?

Julia:

Personal goal. What do you mean?

Candace:

It could be personal goals that they have that are more intrinsically motivated within themselves. It could be your goal like you have a 250-page minimum goal. Is the grade requirement, but do you have any goals that you want them to meet or hopefully strive to meet during the academic calendar, whether it be something that you measure in a grade or something that you just measure based on your interactions with them?

Julia:

I feel like really it as far as tying it, it ties back to the grade and it's just that five-minute book talk that we have. They look forward to that individual time together. Especially in my 4th hour class, there are 31 students and that five minutes is when they get to be excited about something, and they get to tell me about a book. And I tried something new this quarter that I liked and that's the day that we went to the library to choose books. I wrote down on my clipboard, the book that they had and I tried it.

Julia:

It's difficult and I haven't done a great job of it, but for the most part out of 130 students, I've kept track of what they're reading. And so that's something that we can discuss throughout the week. Wait till Friday, I'm like, "Hey, have you been?" Especially if it's something in a series, I really encourage them to get involved in a series because I know that there's another book that they're going to want to read.

Julia:

So I have a student that's reading Harry Potter and I'm like, "Hey, are you finished with the Chamber of Secrets yet?" And she's really excited to tell me, "I'm done with this one. I'm going onto the next book." And I think just having that personal connection over a book. And then I've been reading a lot of the same young adult novels. So this year, I've let the students choose a few books for me to read and I've been reading alongside them. And I think just having that relationship helps them to set goals for themselves.

Julia:

So, not that it's anything that's on paper or would be really tangible, but just intrinsically they know that I know the book that they're reading. And they know that they should be finished with this one to move on to the next one. And there are a lot that they really do get excited to tell me when they finished a book or that they can recommend a book to me. And there are some that don't, but for a lot I can tell that just that relationship, maybe no one in their life has been excited that they're reading a book before. And every time I'll see them with the same book, I'm like,

"Hey, what's the progress? Anything crazy happen?" And they seem to be really excited to tell me about it.

Candace:

Cool. How often do you have those kinds of conversations with your students?

Julia:

Definitely every Friday.

Candace:

Okay.

Julia:

So we do independent reading every Friday, we do bell work. If there's a loose end we didn't tie up in the week, we'll take care of that. And then the goal is to get about 30-35 minutes of reading in on Fridays and just during that time I'll kind of walk around the room as they're getting settled, I'll let them sit wherever they want in the room. There are a few pillows here and there and I will have my book with me on Fridays. And I just go sit by a different student every Friday and I'm like, "Hey," I'll kind of whisper to them because it's quiet in the room and I'll whisper.

Julia:

I'm like, "Hey, how's it going?" And I can tell if they're excited to tell me a new detail about their book or if they haven't been reading and they're kind of backtracking. But I think just interacting with different students every Friday and having the flexibility to move around and talk to them while they're reading. That's been nice.

Candace:

About how many students do you talk to as you're walking around the room? Because obviously you probably can't get to everyone.

Julia:

Right. Well it depends. It depends on how excited. So last Friday, I had a student in 4th hour that I had to physically tear myself away from. I think she talked to me for almost 15 minutes about her book. She wanted to tell me every detail and she's never been one to share with me before, but she is reading the Hate U Give by Angie Thomas. And that's one that I read first semester. So we have a lot to talk about and she was really excited. That's been difficult for me in those situations because ultimate goal, I would like to talk to at least 10 on a Friday.

Julia:

And for a student to be super excited and want to talk for 15 minutes is great, but then I may only have the opportunity to talk to two or three other students. But my goal, I think if I could talk to 10 that would be great.

Candace:

Okay.

Julia:

And there are students that forget their books and that's another issue that I ran into, and I'm working on building a classroom library. And so the only option that they have on Fridays is Fridays are worth 20 points for reading, it's a participation grade. If they do not bring their book, I mean they're not making progress toward my goal, but they can choose another book off my shelf to read for half credit.

Julia:

And so sometimes that facilitates another conversation of well did you leave your book at home because you don't like it? If so, why not? Let's get you a book that you do like.

Candace:

Okay. Okay. So do you ever read with your students or do you mostly use your independent reading time as a conversation time?

Julia:

I like to use it. You mean like reading aloud to them?

Candace:

More like just reading alongside them. So having your book and you reading while they're reading.

Julia:

I always have it in my hand.

Candace:

Okay.

Julia:

So I want them to, from the moment that they start reading, I have my book and I kind of watch the clock about the first five minutes and the students that congregate in the corners, they want to sit in the floor in the corners of the room where they think I can't see them. So usually I'll like get



in the middle of that group and start reading and after about five minutes and they're on track and they're reading, and then I'll move on to someone else and can continue those conversations.

Julia:

There are some days when everyone is really, really into their book and I might not, I might only disrupt a couple of them or I might wait until the end of class and be like, "Hey, I saw that you're still writing that. Is it good? It may be a yes or no, quick conversation, but it just kind of depends on the dynamic. Especially right now kind of gearing up for spring break, less of them are interested in reading. There's a lot of staring blankly at their books.

Speaker 3:

Hi Frank or anyone listed Xcel. Can someone come up to Ms. Berkman's office please.

Candace:

Frank is busy.

Julia:

He is busy.

Candace:

Okay. At the beginning of each school year, what do your students' personal reading lives look like? How do you see them change over the course of the year? I know this is your first year of teaching, but what did you see at the beginning of this year and how have you seen change?

Julia:

With on-level freshmen, there are not many avid readers. I've had a lot of students, they got really engaged with books. I think that they know that it's a requirement, but also they know that it's a really easy Friday for them as far as expectations. They know that no matter what is going on in other classes, and I know a lot of them, math or a biology class, they have quizzes on Friday. So because Fridays are already stressful for them, knowing that for one hour out of the day, there are Christmas lights and lamps, we're hanging out on the floor and we're just reading books.

Julia:

And I think having that calm environment, it's been nice and it's encouraged them to read because they know that there are other things that are more strenuous, and more structured that we could be doing. So that on a Friday, which a few weeks ago we were working on a research essay and we limited technology, we had to work on it on Friday. And they walked in and immediately were upset that the agenda said that they were not reading. So students that have

never been reading before, they know that it's a relaxing experience for them. I don't know if that answered the question or if I just went off somewhere else.

Candace:

Yeah, yeah. I mean, the question was what did their personal reading lives look like at the beginning and how did they change? So I mean, yeah, yeah. [crosstalk 00:15:32]

Julia:

Yeah, just knowing that it's required is one thing, but knowing that the ball's in their court. They get to make the decision on what they're reading and because they're responsible for that, I think it encourages the ones who aren't readers. They're not forced to read something. We can do sports books. I have books on comedy. We have graphic novels. I'm not opposed to any book and I think they appreciate that.

Candace:

Okay, good. What instructional strategies do you use to encourage an independent personal reading life in your students?

Julia:

Structural strategies.

Candace:

So in a way, you've kind of already talked about this with your reading on Fridays, but if there's anything else you may want to add.

Julia:

Well at the beginning of the year, we were doing kind of the foundations of before we chose a book, we watched some short stories and very short Pixar films. And we were looking at what the plot diagram looks like, what requirements do we have out of books? And most young adult novels that we expect this sort of conflict, do we want a happy ending resolution at the end? What does a cliffhanger look like? How do you feel when a story to start in the middle of things? So we kind of laid a foundation for that.

Julia:

And then the first semester, we would do Friday free writes in place of bell work to where I would pick an element that we were covering with figurative language and I would say, "Okay, well have you seen any similes or have there been any metaphors? What type of figurative language?" Just incorporating the things that we're doing in class. What has been present in your book? Who's the protagonist? Write two to three sentences, tell me who that is in your book and that tells me two things.

Julia:

One, they know what protagonists means and two, they've actually started reading. It's been more difficult to do that this semester though with working more heavily on writing. It's been so writing heavy that we've done a lot more conversational things with books instead of instructional.

Candace:

Okay. I mean obviously that would help you in your curriculum and teaching them not just book related like independent reading learning things, but also things related to things that people more traditionally associate with the English classroom. But do you feel like that has maybe made it more practical for students or do you feel like that's helped them develop as readers in a way and developed a personal reading life?

Julia:

I think so.

Candace:

Okay.

Julia:

Yeah, I think that having some choice over the text, we can do whole class novels and we could discuss different reading strategies. We could discuss different literary parts of literary analysis. What is this text saying? What are the themes? How do we analyze this? But I think that everyone having their own independent text has promoted that in a way that I hope extends beyond the classroom. So how do you take your own thing and apply it to what we expect of you?

Julia:

So looking at the standards, if I expect you to clarify or to state an opinion and then provide supporting evidence, can you see that the author's doing that in a book of your own choosing? I think that's important.

Candace:

Okay. So nine, you've kind of already talked about this with the the Christmas lights and the lamps and all that. But what about your classroom environment, physical or psychological encouraged as personal reading life in your students?

Julia:

I think having a personalized classroom. Coming in as a first year teacher, there was a lot of furniture, there were a lot of old books that were uninteresting to young adults. We had a lot of historical books on the shelves, a lot of the same novel. So we had 15 copies of whatever class novel was used in the past, it's no longer what we're reading. And I think seeing things that we weren't using, I don't know if it was so much for the students, but I know it was harmful to me. Just feeling like I didn't have a space that I had created. And once I had done that, once we hung up things that the students were doing in the classroom, I felt like they were able to take ownership of it too.

Julia:

And I asked them before Christmas break, what are some things, what would you like to see in the classroom? What do you not like about this room other than the ugly paint color on the wall? What changeable things? Yeah, and we did change some things. We added different lighting. I have two students throughout the day that the fluorescent lights really bother and I feel like it was a stressful environment for them. And I think me knowing that I had students that were uncomfortable, it made it more stressful for me. So changing the lighting has promoted reading for sure.

Julia:

At first, we did lamps only on Friday and then they wanted to keep them all the time. So now I think walk in and they have this expectation of nothing in here today is going to be super stressful to me. I feel comfortable with the environment. I've had students more so in the last few weeks gearing up for spring break because they know their book talks are due the week after spring break. They've been asking to come in before school every day because as they say, "It is a chill environment for reading."

Julia:

So I've consistently had a few kids that come in in the morning and just want to read in here. We're not talking, having a conversation, but they just want to be in here reading and that means a lot to me.

Candace:

Okay. 10, what opinions do you have about staying silent reading times or drop everything and read programs?

Julia:

What does is a drop everything? What does that mean?

Candace:

It's basically sustained silent reading. It's kind of like what you do, but there have been different approaches to it over the years that you may or may not be familiar with. So I just wanted to see what your opinions are, if you have any about other methods that have been used out there for these-

Julia:

As far as like how long and the way the program's structured?

Candace:

Yeah, I mean it just kind of wherever you want to take it.

Julia:

Well, I've talked to other teachers who do, and I've researched also just different school districts, different States, teachers who do say sustained silent reading every day for 10 minutes, and incorporate that into their daily routine. I don't feel like I could do that successfully. I like the Friday, we know what we're going to do Friday. We have that expectation and we can read for a longer amount of time. Because I feel like if they can really, once they get into the book, and I feel like with on-level freshmen it takes five minutes regardless of if there's a calming piano track in the background or we know that there's a pep assembly later.

Julia:

Regardless of what's going on, I feel like it always takes five minutes to get them settled and actually reading. And once they're reading, they're gripped, and I don't want to take that from them. So I don't know. I don't know if it's that I've never really tried it. I don't feel like I could. I'd be interested to see how it would work with my students, but I like the more long-term read on Fridays.

Candace:

Okay. So we're going to skip 11 because it's kind of for teachers who may not have personal reading lives as a goal for their students. But what are some barriers that keep you from making personal reading life a goal? Wait, that's kind of associated with the first one, with number 11. That's pretty [inaudible 00:23:41]. Yeah, I think so. What seemed be the most effective methods you have found that encourage an independent reading life and describe the effectiveness that you see in your students?

Julia:

Showing that I'm willing to read because at the beginning of the year I shared with my students, I was never a reader. I think in total, I read maybe five books in high school, not a reader, did not enjoy reading. Never found the books that I enjoyed and telling them and just relating to them, I haven't read, I'm not well-read as far as the great works of literature. Things that obviously the

assigned readings in college are read, but it wasn't just reading for pleasure was never something that I really did.

Julia:

And I feel like relating to them and just being honest. I've never been a reader. I know how it feels to not be engaged in a book, but now as an adult I'll have learned what genres of books I like, what type of story is going to be gripping to me or what types of characters I want to relate to, and sharing that with them. I could tell that some of the students were like, "Yeah, that's me. I don't like books. I've never liked a book, never found a book I liked." And sharing that with them and then them seeing me select books at the library with them.

Julia:

So I make sure that of course I address all of their needs when we go to the library. But when all my students have a book, we read in the library the day that we choose books and I also pick out a book that day, even if I may be reading something at home. But just for them to see that I'm willing to do the thing that I expect of them, I feel like that earns a lot of credibility with the almost adults that freshmen think that they are.

Candace:

Yeah. Cool. So in your opinion, what would the results of an effective strategy to increase a personal reading life look like to you like ideally and realistically?

Julia:

One more time.

Candace:

So what would the results of an effective strategy to increase a personal reading life look like to you ideally? So essentially what would be your ideal expectations to increase your students' personal reading lives and what would be the realistic thing that you would want to happen?

Julia:

As far an end goal for trying to encourage.

Candace:

Yeah.

Julia:

Well, it's difficult. I've had a couple of students that they're still struggling to read the very first book that they picked out at the beginning of the semester or the beginning of the year even.

They're are not readers. They claim that they enjoyed the book, but they're not taking any time to read at home. Slow readers who only read in the classroom. My goal was to have every student read at least three books. I mean, that's realistic.

Julia:

In a perfect world, I would love for them to hit a 1000 pages. I want them to have at least four books for the school year. Realistically, I feel like for most students, three is manageable. I have not decided for the 4th quarter, I don't want to do book talks. I want to do something different or maybe even just encourage reading without the threat of a book talk. Maybe it's some sort of creative project that we can do. I'm still brainstorming on that, but I want them to at least enjoy what they're doing. I feel like that's realistic. I don't know how quantifiable it is.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative), okay. [inaudible 00:27:10] from coworkers, do you experience towards independent reading or sustained silent reading? Whether it be negative, positive and mix of both? Yeah.

Julia:

Definitely a mix of both. I know several other teachers do incorporate some version of independent reading, but there are also a few who do not. And typically I've found that the teachers who don't want to entertain that idea have little faith that the students will actually read the books. And I know that in that five-minute period, I do a book talk usually in the first minute I know did they actually read the book? If they're excited to talk to me, I have to cut them off at the end of five minutes. I'm like, "Okay, we have to move on now."

Julia:

But the students who don't want to offer me a summary, when we begin a book talk, I always say, "Okay, well just hey, what's the gist of this book?" It's very informal. "Tell me what this is about." No spoilers if you're going to encourage me to read it. And the ones who are excited to give me a summary I know read the book. The ones who were like, "Oh, it's about a boy who gets on a train." Something simple that he could've got off the back of the book. Then I flip through the book and I asked questions. "Oh, I see that Jacob is a character in this book. Tell me a little about Jacob. What'd you think about him?"

Julia:

And usually it's pretty immediate. I can tell the ones who read the book and the ones who did not. Also telling you all of that.

Candace:

Oh, coworkers opinions.

Julia:

Oh. But yeah, the just the coworkers feel like, I'm thinking of one in particular who said also teaching on-level freshmen, they would never read the books. And her philosophy is that if she chooses a class novel, they can engage in a collective experience. We're all or I guess collaborative more than collective, but we're all enjoying the same book together. We're on the same pace. They're accountable. We have assigned reading every night and then we're going to produce something at the end of that.

Julia:

And while I totally see the use of that and I think there was certain text, it's worthwhile and it's valuable. I feel like incorporating their choice of reading, it allows them freedom to choose and to enjoy something. And I think that's more worthwhile than throwing another novel into this curriculum.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative), okay. How do you communicate your goals for your students' personal reading lives?

Julia:

Well, I pass out a rubric. This is the scale. If you read a 250-page book that is a 100, the only extra credit opportunity that I offer my class all year is they can earn 10 points of extra credit if they read an extra 100 pages. So that's one positive thing that encourages the ones who do want to read or the ones who just want to do something extra for their grade. That encourages them to choose a little bit bigger of a book or maybe to grab a second book when they're done with the first one.

Julia:

Having that opportunity for them and communicating that upfront, that also has posted on Canvas. A link is sent home to that for parents and there's a copy of it posted on my bulletin board, so they know what's expected of them. They know when their book talks are due. They know the kind of conversation, we model a conversation and I'll let them ask me questions like I brought a book the very first time I introduced this. I brought a book that I had read and I set a timer and for five minutes they got to raise their hand, they can ask me anything they wanted about the book.

Julia:

I told them anything is free game. They wanted to know what was my favorite part? What did I think of the ending? Was it worth reading? They asked me to rate my book on a scale of one to 10, which I then incorporated into my own book talks and now I have them do that. But I think



modeling what I expect and just being authentic and the fact that I show them this is how reading will be beneficial to you.

Julia:

This is what the research says about independent reading. I want you to be a better reader by the end of the year, but I want you to enjoy reading more than anything. And being very clear about why we're doing that, I think makes sense to them.

Candace:

Okay, very cool. Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything that you want to say that maybe I didn't ask you about this, that you're like, "Oh, I really wish I would've talked. I wish she would ask me about this or talk to me about that?"

Julia:

I don't think so. I think my greatest challenge is having access to the books I want them to read. When I make a recommendation on a book, I started the year I was going to pair independent reading with first chapter Friday, and I did that for two weeks. It might not be the actual first chapter, but something that's really engaging about a book. And then I found that the library only had two copies, and I now have a 100 students who really want to read this book, or may not have access to go to the public library.

Julia:

So I think that moving forward into next year, I'll have a greater variety of books that I offer and maybe do a book tasting or some other way to get them engaged in more than one book that they have access to.

Candace:

Yeah. Okay. Very cool.

## Appendix C

### IRB Approval



**Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects**  
**Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01**

**Date:** July 16, 2019

**IRB#:** 10915

**Principal Investigator:** Candace Paige Hinnergardt

**Approval Date:** 07/15/2019

**Exempt Category:** 2 & 3

**Study Title:** High School Students' Personal Reading Lives and the Role of the English Teacher

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or [irb@ou.edu](mailto:irb@ou.edu).

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ioana A. Cionea'.

Ioana Cionea, Ph.D.  
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board

## Appendix D

### Survey Questions

**Age?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender?** Female    Male    Other

**Race/Ethnicity?** American Indian/Alaskan Native    Asian    Black    Hispanic/Latino  
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander    White

**Highest level of education received?**

Bachelor's  
Bachelor's with some work toward master's  
Master's  
Master's with some work toward a PhD  
PhD

**I'm alternatively certified.**

Yes  
No

**I have been teaching for...** 1-3 years    4-6 years    7-10 years    10+ years

**During the 2019-2020 year, I will teach...**

Freshmen	Pre-AP Freshmen	Other: _____
Sophomores	Pre-AP Sophomores	
Juniors	AP Juniors	
Seniors	AP Seniors	

**In the past, I have taught...**

Freshmen	Pre-AP Freshmen	Other: _____
Sophomores	Pre-AP Sophomores	
Juniors	AP Juniors	
Seniors	AP Seniors	

**Rank the top 5 instructional goals you focus on during the school year in your personal curriculum from most important to least important.**

**Where does independent reading fall for you in terms of importance in your curriculum?**

Very important important	Mostly important Of little importance	Moderately important Not important at all	Somewhat
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**What types of reading do you do your personal life? (Mark all that apply)**

Academic Journals	Professional Development Books
Novels	Non-fiction (Memoirs, Biographies, etc.)
Graphic Novels	Newspaper/Magazine (online or print)
Other: _____	

**Which genre do you read the most?**

Academic Journals	Professional Development Books
Novels	Non-fiction (Memoirs, Biographies, etc.)
Graphic Novels	Newspaper/Magazine (online or print)
Other: _____	

**Which is your 2nd most read genre?**

Academic Journals	Professional Development Books
Novels	Non-fiction (Memoirs, Biographies, etc.)
Graphic Novels	Newspaper/Magazine (online or print)
Other: _____	

**Which is your 3rd most read genre?**

Academic Journals	Professional Development Books
Novels	Non-fiction (Memoirs, Biographies, etc.)
Graphic Novels	Newspaper/Magazine (online or print)
Other: _____	

**On average, how much time do you spend reading each week that is not specifically for your class curriculum (please do not include texts you teach in this count)?**

Less than 1 hour  
 1 to 1.5 hours  
 1.5 to 2 hours  
 2 to 2.5 hours  
 2.5 to 3 hours  
 More than 3 hours

**On average, how much time do you require your students to read outside of class each week?**

I don't require my students to read outside of class.

Less than 1 hour

1 to 1.5 hours

1.5 to 2 hours

2 to 2.5 hours

2.5 to 3 hours

More than 3 hours

**Which of these reading communities do you participate in? Mark all that apply.**

Book clubs

Book related social media (e.g. Goodreads.com)

Book subscription services (e.g. Book of the Month)

I casually talk about what I'm reading with friends and peers.

I do not participate in a reading community.

**If you are willing to participate in two short writing tasks and an interview, please provide the email address through which you would like to be contacted. Your email is NOT required, and is entirely optional.**