TEACHERS TAKING THE AESTHETIC STANCE

WHILE PRACTICING DISCUSSION OF

YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE
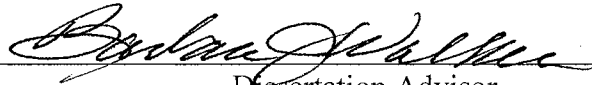
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Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
August, 2002

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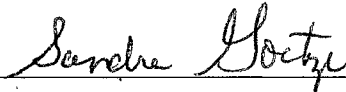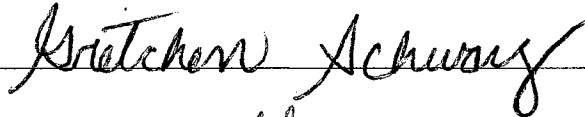
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my committee: Dr. Yellin, Committee Chair; Dr. Walker, Dissertation Chair; and members Dr. Schwarz, Dr. Goetze, and Dr. Burlingame.

Dr. Yellin reintroduced writing into my life. I had abandoned the poems and stories of my youth for the necessary writing of my educational career. Dr. Yellin reminded me to find joy in writing and rewriting. At this time, I am in a monthly writing group, and I take time for and enjoy writing and sharing. I thank Dr. Walker for her wisdom and time in walking me through the process of preparing my dissertation. I also thank Dr. Walker for teaching me how children learn to read. She taught me to look at each child's individual needs and to observe and monitor instruction. This has been a revelation to me and has changed the goals in my life. I want so much to teach others the strategies that she has shared with me in promoting a balanced approach to reading. Thank you to Dr. Schwarz for filling my soul with young adult literature. I'm officially hooked. I earnestly believe that all of us would improve our health by reading a young adult novel every week. As I continue to build my collection and read, read, read, I think of Dr. Schwarz and her energizing book talks and high level of interest in young adult literature. I consider her a mentor and encourager. I thank Dr. Goetze for her intense love of technology, of reading, awareness, and knowledge. She bestowed on me the joy of working. She is my conscience and my friend. I thank Dr. Burlingame for his diagrams and charts. Without his qualitative II course, I would not have known the power of a

chart. I would not have known the complexity of the code. He took away the mystery and taught his students how to analyze the data efficiently. From him, I know that each piece of writing is an improvement over the last one as we gain experience and practice in the art of data analysis and writing, and that this is just part of the process that never ends.

I would like to especially thank the Oklahoma State University Women's Giving Circle for their grant which helped to fund this research.

I wish to acknowledge members of the cohort who gave of their time, energy, and creative talents to join together for this research. I am in their dept. They gave so much of themselves and added excitement and creativity to my life and work.

I also wish to acknowledge my family and extended family who have supported me from the beginning. My father's eyes twinkle when I tell him that I am about to graduate. He is so proud of me. My mother is my biggest fan. According to her, there is nothing I cannot do. She offers me so much to live up to. She is my model.

My parents-in-law have emotionally and financially supported my college endeavor. When I told my father-in-law that I was going to make it, he said, "Of course you are. I never doubted it for a minute."

My husband and children have offered me time, laughter, hot tea, back rubs, and vitamins. They help me in any way I ask, and I love them so dearly.

I have six siblings who have supported me in a myriad of ways. Eleanor MacQueen is my dearest friend next to my husband and mother. I'm so grateful to her and to all my siblings, Tom Doray, Catherine Doray, Vic Doray, Eleanor MacQueen, John Doray, and Bill Doray for their concern, interest, and enthusiasm in my work.

I also wish to acknowledge dear friends, who have helped me, pushed me, listened to me, and accepted my friendship. They are Gina Anderson, Susan Szabo, Stephen Sargent, Miriam Ward, Sibo Mtshali-Dlamini, Mary Swanson, and Karen Cox. Each one is so special, so full of ideas, and so much fun to be with, that I am grateful for the precious time I have with them.

Thank you to God for His many blessings. Thank you to all of you.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Step into my memory. It is the summer of 1976. I'm standing on the Rupel Jones

stage at the University of Oklahoma dressed in a rehearsal corset (that hurts like the

dickens), T-shirt, and old jeans. From the upper left wing, I descend a grand staircase for

the third time to make a sweeping entrance. I am mindful that my costume will include a

ten-inch train, and my steps must be carefully coordinated with lifts and falls in order to

accommodate the trailing lace. My voice is raised against the noise of the pullover saw in

the background and the slapping of a tack hammer on white pine flats. Arms twirling

forward, I "take the stage" from another actor. Eyes move towards me. Yes. This time I

got it right!

"Timing was perfect!" the director yells my way. "Keep it up. Walk and talk.

Walk and talk. Glide down the stairs and ... No! Don't whine. Pout. A pretty pout. This is

a French farce, not a funeral march. Think about subtext here. What do you want from

your husband, Boniface? How do you feel about your husband who pays you no

attention? What's your motivation? Now you've got it."

The coaching continues as we, the college actors, draw from our stores of prior

experiences and emotions and interpret and play out each scene. And each time we play

out the scene, it's different than what it was before. We are practicing Moliere's French

farce, *Hotel Paridiso*. It is summer Repertoire Theater, but most of us have not spent any time in the sun. While other kids our age are catching the rays in the early afternoon heat, we practice and perform, practice and perform. Laughter breaks out over the set when Jeff falls off the last three steps of a steep stairway. He isn't hurt, just surprised at his sudden repositioning. He is a tall and skinny fellow, and the image of his arms and legs sprawling out at unusual angles brings us out of character for a communal moment of chortling and teasing. Our mutual respect for his talents and our recognition that we are all just practicing in a risk free environment provides him with support as he raises himself up like the scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz* and races back to the top of the stairs and to the top of the scene to "take it again."

The script, the actors, and the director make up only a proportion of live theater because when the audience arrives, everything that is interpreted, considered, and planned will continue to evolve. Each performance will be different. The audience and the actors have a symbiotic relationship. As audience members audibly sigh, laugh, move about in their chairs, jostle their programs, and clap, the actors renegotiate the undercurrent of their waves. It is "two roads diverged in a yellow wood" with the script, the author, the director, the actors, and the audience all interpreting and redefining the journey as it is lived and experienced. A good play creates old friends between audience members and characters on stage because audience members find pieces and puzzles of themselves as they connect to their prior experiences and negotiate meaning with actors and other audience members.

This play practice memory of interpretation, negotiation, and reinterpretation is comparable to Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading (1978) in which she names the reader as the central focus between the text and the author:

The reader's attention to the text activates certain elements in his past experience-external reference, internal response-that have become linked with the verbal symbols. Meaning will emerge from a network of relationships among the things symbolized as he senses them. The symbols point to these sensations, images, objects, ideas, relationships, with the particular associations or feeling-tones created by his past experiences with them in actual life or in literature. The selection and organization of responses to some degree hinge on the assumptions, the expectations, or sense of possible structures, that he brings out of the stream of life. Thus built into the raw material of the literary process itself is the particular world of the reader. (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 11)

The reader brings to the text his/her past experiences and interprets the text according to prior experiences, current situations, and social involvement in the classroom. The reader, like the actors and the audience, interprets the text differently each time it is read (like a performance changing each time it is performed) because of the new connections to background knowledge, new existing conditions, new social environments in which the reader is a part, and what is important to the reader at that time. Like actors who begin to interpret the special world of their characters for the roles they are playing, readers are influenced by what they bring to the text and by what peers share and negotiate with them (Rogoff, 1980). Teachers who understand Rosenblatt's model of reading (1978) and the value of taking the aesthetic stance in discussion are more likely

to encourage students to connect with their own prior knowledge during discussion and to value multiple interpretations of text. When readers connect with text through their prior experiences, they bring understandings and personal views that help them to construct personal meaning and interpretation. These connections stimulate the reader and provide strong avenues for learning, debating, and evaluating the material.

An essential factor in this memory is the play practice itself. It is a lived through experience because each time the cast meets and practices, new connections are made, schemata is redefined (Rummelhart, 1980), and each cast member's evolving interpretations affects the reactions and responses of other cast members. Assumptions regarding the role of practice are pronounced. The first assumption is that practice is essential to the readiness of the performance. Although teachers are not performers on stage, they must be in a state of readiness to observe, assess, and monitor instruction (Walker, 2000, p. 3). Teachers must modify their instruction according to the needs of the students and meet certain target objectives that are defined and planned. In each event, be it teaching or performing, practice is a vital element even for those who are naturally talented in their areas. Often, the naturally talented need someone else to describe to them what they are doing intuitively. The action of practice provides further understanding, reflection, peer assessment and support, discovery, comfort with the strategies and material, and continued development and enlightenment for the participant. Practicing creates a situation where participants live through and experience the special world of the text.

The second assumption of play practice is that the cast has learned to respect each member and respect themselves as vital participants in the process. Practice encourages

support, acceptance, and respect within the community of learners. Both those who are facilitating the practice and those who are practicing negotiate and construct meaning based on prior experiences, peer negotiation (Rogoff, 1990), and the context of the practice.

The same idea of the need for practice is true for football and baseball games, orchestra, symphony, and choir presentations, wedding rituals, military operations, and certainly for Olympic trials. With such a common regard for the need for practice, wouldn't it make sense for teachers to practice taking the aesthetic stance in discussion (Rosenblatt, 1978)? They might become more aware and experienced in this transforming practice, and they might consider offering richer, more meaningful learning environments for their students. The current expectation that the teacher will glean the information from a speaker or workshop, take a quick swipe at "how to" use the strategy, and then actually apply this information in the classroom full of young people the following day is more fantasy than reality. Those who apply strategies derived from workshops end up "practicing discussion" with a live audience ... their students... instead of having the opportunity to practice discussion with peers in supportive settings (like the actors preparing for opening night) over a period of time where risk is minimal, and support is maximized.

Background of the Problem

Several areas need to be discussed for the background of this problem. The areas are: reader response, taking the aesthetic stance, and teacher development.

Reader Response

The reader response model (Rosenblatt, 1978) suggests that readers must "live through" the experience of the text by not seeking specific information, but by shouldering the journey of the experience without specific goals in mind. The reader then throws open the door to multiple interpretations posed by him/her and others, and by ideas from related texts. Like the process of an actor unfolding the layers of the character to be performed, the reader reflects and evaluates the text in relationship to personal experiences, to others, and to the situational context of the reading.

Spiegel (1998) highlights discussion as a form of reader response. Discussion sustains dialogue and provides an arena for reflection, argument, and negotiated meanings. Spiegel points out that over the last ten years, reader response has become an integral part of many elementary, middle school, and high school classrooms because "Children's choice is honored; children spend a great deal of time reading, and less time learning about reading; and their reading is authentic, because it is done for their own purposes, not the teacher's" (p. 1).

Rosenblatt (1978; 1995) describes the stance necessary to live through the experience of the text, i.e., the aesthetic stance. Aesthetic readers experience the words of the text as they become a poetic part of their awareness, their reality. Aesthetic readers experience the words for the journey, the evolution of interpretation, and the dance, not just for the destination. In this way, aesthetic readers live through the experience of reading; construct meaning, affirm and evolve interpretations, and are transformed by the experience.

Efferent reading, on the other hand, involves taking information from the text for some other purpose (e.g., reading the information about the side effects of a certain antibiotic). The reader takes from the information without regard to the rhythm, sound, and patterns of the words. The information exists to solve a problem; therefore, the attention is not focused on the process of transformation, but on the direction or result taken following the reading.

It is important to note, as Rosenblatt explains, that text can be read using either the efferent or aesthetic stance. In fact, the reader may change stances throughout the reading and rereading of the text as he lives the experience of or draws information from the text. For the purposes of this research, however, the focus is on the aesthetic stance, and how teachers who have practiced taking the aesthetic stance in discussion will have a stronger awareness and experience in facilitating discussions using the aesthetic stance.

Taking the Aesthetic Stance

Teachers accustomed to taking the efferent stance have difficulty shifting to the aesthetic stance (Rosenblatt, 1978). According to Pike (2000), teachers have problems allowing their students to respond personally to text instead of reading for information only. Teachers are afraid that their students will not be prepared for state and national examinations if they respond personally to text instead of seeking the "correct" answers determined by teacher questions. Pike posited that teachers were adopting an efferent approach because they didn't believe students could independently and appropriately respond to the literature. His research, influenced by Rosenblatt (1978), suggested that

modern adolescents can respond aesthetically to great works of literature by first using their past experiences to personally connect to words, phrases, or ideas in the text. Then, over time, teachers can supply references that help students build on what they are beginning to interpret and understand.

Pike's research (2000) identifies one of the main reasons that teachers use the efferent over the aesthetic stance in teaching text. They are concerned that students might not "get it" on their own, and due to time constraints and standardized testing, it is easier for teachers to transmit the necessary knowledge than to offer students opportunities to personally respond to the stimulus of the text and discuss multiple interpretations before and during the time that teachers assist with other possible points of view.

Scharer, Peters, and Lehmen (1995) found the need for elementary and middle school teachers to be in conversation with each other regarding the literary practices and strategies that have been used by previous instructors. Researchers also observed that students whose prior experience rested only in worksheet, recitation, and question-answer dialogue were unprepared to talk about text aesthetically. "Students who come from a basalized, recitation type of instruction bring different expectations than students who have had the opportunity to respond to and interpret literature as a community of readers" (p. 30).

The idea that students are unprepared to talk and read aesthetically is an important pedagogical element which explains one of the reasons teachers have a difficult time making the shift from efferent to aesthetic stance. The lived through experiences teachers encountered as children didn't prepare them to take the aesthetic stance as teachers. Teachers who are motivated to use the aesthetic stance are often met with uncertainty

because students may have little or no experience with using the aesthetic stance as readers and speakers. Taking the aesthetic stance is a process that takes time and practice.

The Process of Teacher Development

If teachers are to take the aesthetic stance, they must be given opportunities to learn about Rosenblatt's theory of reading (1978), and practice living through the experience of facilitating discussion taking the aesthetic stance. Teachers often use one or more strategies that support the aesthetic stance, but they need awareness, modeling and practice to implement strategies they are not currently using. One method used to transfer research-based theories into teacher pedagogy is staff development. But a large percentage of teachers are not implementing what they have learned in staff development, and there is usually no follow up to staff development (Redding & Kamm, 1999).

> If real change is the goal, continued learning over time, with strong collegial and administrative support is essential. Teachers need to be able to try things and then talk with colleagues and the facilitator of the staff development process about what worked, what did not work, and why. If real changes in teaching practice are to occur, teachers need to learn, apply, reflect, correct and learn, apply, reflect, correct over and over. (Redding & Kamm, 1999, p. 28)

Staff development often tends to rely on entertainment or canned speeches. Teacher development sessions are often designed for multitudes instead of small groups with specific needs and concerns. In pilot interviews with two high school teachers that I

conducted in the spring of 2001, one of the most prominent emerging themes was that teacher development should occur in small group settings.

Teachers are not given opportunities to practice ideas generated in staff development. Jongsma (2000) discussed the need for experiencing the new activity before attempting to utilize the idea in the classroom. Lieberman (1995) talked about the need for active involvement as a means of learning and explains the current view of staff development as "a transferable package of knowledge to be distributed to teachers in bit-sized pieces" (p. 591).

Collaboration supports and strengthens teacher bonds and offers opportunities for teachers to ask advice of each other, to discuss ideas, to get feedback, and to coach each other. In an article examining the literature and research on instructional supervision and the significance of supervision for bolstering professional growth, Wanzare and Lda Costa (2000) established a list of principles regarding staff development which included the needs for teachers to reflect on their learning, to actively engage in cooperative learning experiences, and to share ideas with each other.

Historically, teachers shared a cup of coffee in the lounge and then proceeded to their classrooms where they taught the full day in isolation, and only left the boundaries of their teaching stations for lunch or a run to the bathroom. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) referred to this time as the age of the "autonomous professional." They stated that

The benefits of inservice education seldom became integrated into classroom practice, as individual course-goers returned to schools of unenthusiastic colleagues who had not shared the learning with them. Pedagogy stagnated as

teachers were reluctant or unable to stand out from their colleagues. (Hargreaves & Fullen, p.51)

Even during planning time, teachers either spent time in the lounge talking about students or spouses or isolated themselves in their classrooms to grade papers and plan the events for the following days or weeks.

Palmer (1998) addressed teacher isolation and the need for teachers to be in conversation with each other. He suggested that the advice of experts had marginal usefulness, and the primary source of learning to become better teachers came from a gathering of teachers who wished to explore the mysteries of teaching. From other teachers, Palmer insisted, came support and guidance. He also talked about the value of conversations with other teachers that took place over a period of time. Sarason (1999) also described teacher isolation. He talked about the domain of the classrooms that teachers ruled, but the fact was that they ruled alone. He maintained that there were no professional pedagogical discussions among colleagues, and that staff development workshops were usually one-shot sessions that were of little interest to teachers.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) described the complexity of teaching in the new millennium and the need for all teachers (not just novice or incompetent teachers) to get help. "Teachers are not always the experts, and working effectively with other adults means they will sometimes be the ones who are learning, not teaching (p.56)." They saw the need for mentoring among and between both the newer teachers and the career teachers.

The challenge will be to bring together the cultures of youth and experience. This will involve harnessing the energies that new teachers bring to the system without

marginalizing the perspectives and wisdom of teachers whose knowledge and experience have deep roots in the past. (Hargreaves & Fullan, p. 56)

My cohort involves teachers who have from five to twenty-five years of experience. Their ages range from twenty-nine to almost sixty. It was my intent to bring teachers with a variety of different experiences together to learn the strategies that support the aesthetic stance and to discuss literature so that they would teach each other and learn from each other.

Lieberman and Miller (1990) referred to teacher development as a means of "continuous inquiry into practice" (p. 106). They supported the constructs of teacher development as shared inquiry, peer assistance, and shared problem solving.

The implications of research on cognition and of the developmental approach are nothing short of revolutionary. They direct us to reconceptualize teaching, to see it as being woven of the same cloth as learning. Teaching and learning are interdependent, not separate. (p. 111)

Lieberman and Miller (1990) suggested that teachers who used content-in-context approaches (one of the five elements they deemed necessary in teacher development) needed to replace worksheets, lectures, and seatwork with opportunities for discussion, production, and dialogue in the classroom. Lieberman and Miller's suggestions for teacher development have assisted me in thinking about my own research. In the cohort, teachers both taught each other and learned from each other. Our task was to practice taking the aesthetic stance in facilitating discussion; therefore, discussion was modeled as a valuable strategy for the classroom.

Grimmett (1993) discussed the problem with teacher research in that it focused on existing teaching methods instead of looking at how teaching might be. Grimmett found this approach as limiting, conservative, and circular. The cohort that I established for this research was focused on strategies that teachers could use to facilitate richer, more meaningful discussions in their classrooms. Therefore, I moved beyond the circular process of looking at existing practices and worked toward modeling and encouraging teachers to practice strategies that they may not have utilized in the past. In my cohort, I tried to promote a community of learners who would apprentice themselves to me and to each other (Rogoff, 1990) and who would collaborate with each other toward the common goal of awareness and practice of taking the aesthetic stance in discussion.

A successful model for providing learning communities is the National Writing Project which began in 1974 at the University of California at Berkeley. In this model, teachers spend five summer weeks "sharing best lessons or strategies, participating in writing groups, and receiving peer feedback" (Lieberman & Wood, 2002, pp. 40-41). They begin the workshop on the premise that what teachers already know is valuable, and that the benefit that teachers receive from the workshop will also benefit their students. Ownership of learning is entrusted to the learners. Participants are engaged in peer editing and peer coaching as they receive critical feedback and teach lessons on writing to other participants. Reflection is a salient characteristic in the model. The National Writing Project model is similar to the cohort that I established for this research. I worked with a group of six teachers over the course of ten weeks. In the cohort, teachers practiced taking the aesthetic stance as they discussed elementary and young adult literature. Teachers often worked in pairs to wrestle with ideas before engaging the full

group in discussion. I modeled strategies, but teachers took ownership of the cohort by encouraging each other, applauding differences, and respecting the ideas of others. Although I initially facilitated the cohort, my goal was to gently remove myself as teachers gained practice in taking the aesthetic stance in discussion.

Problem Statement

Reader response depends on the special world of the reader. Students' prior experiences lead them to certain ideas and interpretations that need voice and value and an opportunity to negotiate meaning in the classroom. Discussion is a means of voicing ideas and negotiating meaning in a situated context. The ideas based on responses to prior experiences that other students bring to the discussion support, extend, or conflict with the readers' points of view (Rogoff, 1990; Almasi, 1995). In this way, the readers may evaluate interpretations and look within the text and within themselves for further substantiating evidence to support their claims. Classrooms that reduce reader response or use limited strategies that support the aesthetic stance undermine the construction of meaning for individuals and negotiated meaning for group members. Teachers whose dominant stance is efferent rely on recitation style format that is defined by teacher-driven questioning with little opportunity for divergent thought. On the other hand, teachers whose dominant stance is aesthetic provide time for student talk and encourage multiple interpretations by accepting a variety of responses and encouraging students to connect and respond to prior experiences. Teachers whose stance is aesthetic also encourage intertextuality in which multiple texts are compared and contrasted.

The problem is that teachers are not always aware of the strategies they can use to support taking the aesthetic stance during discussion. As students, they were generally careered in the transmission approach where they received and regurgitated information as called upon to do by their instructors. They did not live through the experience of reading and discussing aesthetically; therefore, they need to become aware of the aesthetic stance and the strategies that support taking the aesthetic stance during discussion. Secondly, teachers do not have opportunities to practice facilitating discussion taking the aesthetic stance so they can strengthen their use of the aesthetic stance. Teachers need to live through the experience of aesthetically discussing texts and practice the strategies that support the aesthetic stance. Thirdly, teachers do not have opportunities to collaborate in small groups on issues regarding the facilitation of discussion in their classrooms. This study provided teachers the opportunity to work in a cohort and practice facilitating discussion taking the aesthetic stance. My role was that of participant observer. I facilitated the cohort, at least in the beginning. Nancy Atwell (1998) described how she handed over control when the students were ready because the goal was for independence (p. 20). In the same way, I released facilitation to cohort members as they became familiar and practiced in the aesthetic stance. As initial facilitator, I modeled strategies that supported the aesthetic stance. The strategies included the following: bringing in and responding to prior experiences, asking open-ended questions and accepting multiple interpretations, using prediction and the monitoring of prediction, using small groups, thinking aloud, bringing in related texts, discussing written reflections, and creating a community of trust in which participants felt safe.

Guiding Questions of the Study

Focus Question:

1. What happened when teachers formed a cohort to practice discussion of

   young adult and elementary literature while taking the aesthetic stance?

Ancillary Questions:

1. Were teachers using the aesthetic stance during discussion in their classrooms

   prior to the commencement of the cohort?

2. What was discussion like when teachers were children?

3. What do students today think about discussion?

4. What did teachers gain from the cohort?

5. Was the cohort a viable format for practicing discussion?

Qualitative Design

For a case study, the researcher should focus on an event, process, or

program for which we have no in-depth perspective on this 'case.'

Conducting the case study provides a picture to help inform our practice or

to see unexplored details of the case. Thus, the need for the study, or the

problem leading to it, can be related to the specific focus of the tradition of

choice. (Cresswell, 1998, p.95)

The tradition of inquiry for this research was a qualitative case study. The case

study was bounded by time and place (Cresswell, 1998). In this research, the case study

was bounded from August, 2001 - November, 2001. Five volunteer teachers from a district that supported students with a moderate to high socio-economic level in the Southwest, and one college instructor were the cohort participants. In this qualitative case study, the focus was on the practice of discussion in a cohort. The discussions were theoretically framed in Rosenblatt's Model of Reading (1978) in which multiple interpretations of text are valued. The cohort practiced discussing multiple texts (elementary and young adult literature) over the course of ten weeks. During the time of the cohort, data collection included observations, interviews, and documents. Data analysis took the form of description, emerging themes, development of issues, details about specific issues, and assertions.

Researcher Subjectivity

Peshkin (1997) talked about the necessity of informing his readers about his subjectivity, not as "look at me," but of "look who it is that has come here" (p. 22). With Peshkin's idea of explaining what the researcher brings to the research, I identified several aspects of my own subjectivity.

Middle School Subjectivity

I taught middle school for ten years and high school for four years. I came to this research as an experienced teacher with a desire to impact teachers and students. My philosophy about adolescents was that they needed to be provided with a print-rich,

supportive, and caring environment in which they could debate, discuss, and "try out"

different ideas in the classroom. I believed that adolescents must be challenged,

respected, and encouraged to think analytically. They must be given opportunities to

openly discuss text, learn from the perspectives of others, and given opportunities to lead.

They must have time to reevaluate text, rediscover ideas within texts, and discuss

multiple interpretations of text.

Staff Development Subjectivity

I presented workshops on thematic units, service learning projects, and ideas for

the English classroom. Although I enjoyed every opportunity to present, my frustration

with each workshop was the lack of necessary time to really make a difference, and the

lack of follow up. Most workshops lasted about an hour, and more time was needed to

talk and discuss ideas together, write and discuss reflectively, to receive feedback, and to

build on the ideas that were presented. I wanted the workshops to be opportunities for all

parties to apprentice each other (Rogoff, 1990).

Reading Advocate Subjectivity

I supported Rosenblatt's Model of Reading (1978). Thinking is essential. Teacher

recitation, close ended questions, or a "discussion" where the answers must be the exact

replicas of the teacher's thoughts or answer sheets do not provide thinking; they only

provide regurgitation and rhetorical assignment based on what the teacher wants and expects (Flower and Hayes, 1994).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this qualitative case study is that the analysis of emerging themes from the study was used to understand the nature and value of practicing discussion taking the aesthetic stance in small group collaborative sessions. Analysis provided further exploration into the value of practicing discussion in cohorts as a means of furthering teacher awareness and increasing the practice of taking the aesthetic stance in facilitating discussion in the classroom. But why use the aesthetic stance at all? Rosenblatt suggests that students who have a chance to express their feelings out loud with their peers may find that it is easier to face fears or problems and to "seek the help of others without the embarrassment of explicit self-revelation" (1995, p. 196). Rosenblatt also states that taking the aesthetic stance is the "perfectly valid way of responding to literature—in some ways the most valid, since it means that the work has profound importance to the reader" (1995, p. 196). Ruddell (1994) explained that teachers who take the aesthetic stance are more influential with students than those teachers who take the efferent stance. The significance of this study lies in the need for teachers to take the aesthetic stance during discussion. When the aesthetic stance is taken, students talk to each other, gain understanding from their peers, and build on interpretations that are offered. Students express their inner feelings and learn from others.

Limitations

Participants in this study were six volunteer teachers from the Southwest. One elementary teacher, three middle school teachers, one high school teacher, and one college instructor along with the participant observer made up the cohort. All teachers were white females ranging in age from twenty-nine to almost sixty. Five teachers were from the same district. The small number of teachers who participated as cohort members and the limited number of schools involved was acknowledged as a limitation in this study. This study cannot be generalized to the overall population of teachers and school districts due to the limitations. On the other hand, this research might be transferred intelligently by thoughtful readers who might find similarities in their situations and those that are described in this research. Readers may take or adapt ideas from this research and apply those ideas/adaptations to their personal teaching or administrative situations.

Definition of Terms

Definitions are taken from *The Literacy Dictionary*, edited by Harris and Hodges (1995).

- Aesthetic reading: "In transactional theory, a type of reading in which attention is focused on what is being lived through, the idea and feeling being evoked during the transaction" (Rosenblatt, 1978).

- Efferent reading: A type of reading in which "the attention is focused on abstracting out, analyzing, and structuring what is to be retained after the reading, as, e.g., information, logical argument, or instructions for action" (Rosenblatt, 1991).

- Intertextuality: the construct that "meaning derives from readers' transaction(s) with the text in which [they] apply their knowledge of literary and social convention to that text" (Beach et al., 1994).

- Reader response theory maintains that reader and literary text must transact. This intermingling of reader and text is a creative act. In the words of Rosenblatt (1983), reading is thus a "performing art," the transaction unique and "never to be duplicated." The implication is to emphasize each reader's subjectivity, albeit with verification.

Summary/Overview of the Dissertation

In summary, this research was based on the need to explore what happened when teachers formed a cohort to practice discussion of young adult and elementary literature while taking the aesthetic stance. Were teachers using the aesthetic stance during discussion in their classrooms prior to the commencement of the cohort? What was discussion like when teachers were students? What do students today think about discussion? What did teachers gain from the cohort? Was the cohort a viable format for practicing discussion?

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Exploration of literature in the field informed and validated the need for continuing research in the area of teacher practice taking the aesthetic stance. For this research, the first literature strand included teacher development in which action research or case studies related to literacy were valuable. The second and third literature strands include teachers' practices with literature and student response to instruction.

Teacher Action Research and Case Studies

The Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group (1994) examined two important aspects in defining literacy in the classroom over a three-year period. In this qualitative study, a group of teachers first explored student-centered curriculum approaches and engaged in action research in which two teachers planned and taught a summer school class in which a student-centered curriculum was the top goal.

Teachers explored how students and teachers found a common definition of literacy in the everyday life of the classroom, and secondly, they looked at factors that contributed or constrained the development of the student-centered classroom. This study lent support to the commonly held belief that what teachers see in the classroom is not an

indication of ability, but "a patterned way of acting or communication that students have learned from the opportunities afforded them in this and other classrooms" (Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, p. 148).

The Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse study suggested that teachers who experience new definitions of literacy will be influenced by them and define literacy in new ways for themselves and their students as they see the benefits for both parties. The study describes ways in which literacy was defined in many classrooms and ways in which literacy can be defined using processes explained by Rosenblatt (1978).

A facet of the Santa Barbara Classroom that was similar to this study was that a small group of teachers worked together for several months to prepare for making a pedagogical shift. Teachers worked with colleagues, examined current research, asked questions, and experimented with a variety of ideas over a period of time. As a result, one of the group members was able to make a pedagogical shift in the classroom. The study didn't indicate that they practiced their ideas, but became aware of the ways to redefine literacy in their classrooms. My study went beyond awareness and suggested that practicing taking the aesthetic stance during discussion leads to a deeper awareness of the potential transforming nature of discussion.

In a separate study, Richardson and Anders (1994) examined teacher change and the obstacles that teachers faced as they attempted to implement research-based strategies into their classrooms. This qualitative study involved thirty-nine fourth, fifth, and sixth grade teachers in six schools over the course of two years. Interviews, observations, and school context studies were methods used to collect data for the study. Researchers attempted to identify recommended practices for teaching reading comprehension and the

degree to which teachers were utilizing recommended strategies. They used a reflective

technique called a practical argument in which a teacher reflectively explained to another

person (the other) the reasoning for behaviors (speaking, acting, responding) in the

classroom. They also focused on obstacles that teachers faced in implementing

recommended strategies, and explored whether the school-based staff development model

reduced the obstacles that prevented transfer into the classroom. Lastly, researchers

questioned whether a teacher's participation in staff development caused any noticeable

change in student reading achievement.

Richardson and Anders concluded that some teachers were able to implement

strategies into their classrooms due to the opportunity to dialogue with their peers in a

safe and trusting environment in the staff development. Reflection, they found, was an

essential ingredient for teachers to use in considering and thinking about their own

methods of teaching.

> Reflection is a vital practice in teaching because of the way most teachers
>
> learn to practice their profession. Some learn from parents who were
>
> teachers, others from courses in teacher education, still others from
>
> observing and receiving advice from more experienced teachers... Thus
>
> the beliefs we have about teaching, learning, schools, and students, as well
>
> as all the other critical ingredients of education, are formed and shaped by
>
> the settings in which we work. (p. 27)

Reflection was also a significant element in the cohort study. Each session

included written reflections and discussions of reflection.

Kelly Chandler (1999) presented a case study of the growth of a teacher researcher who was part of a group of teachers focused on reading instruction for struggling readers. Chandler's role as a university-based researcher, like my role, was to facilitate the group. The case study explored the evolution of pedagogical shift that one teacher was able to make over the course of a year as she engaged in small group collaboration and research. Chandler explains that the relationships this teacher had with her colleagues and with the researcher pushed her and the other group members forward and increased their intellectual development. Because of the teacher's work with the collaborative group, her students' abilities to understand the nature of discussion in the classroom increased, and the discussions with peers became more valuable.

Borko, Davinroy, Bliem, and Cumbo (2000) also reported teacher shift in order to activate student learning in their case study research on teacher change. Two teachers were involved in the University of Colorado Assessment Project that helped teachers design assessments compatible to their classroom goals. This was a multi-year teacher development process in which researchers learned that teacher change takes time and effort. One of the teachers being researched indicated that the teacher development had helped her produce thought provoking and challenging problems for her class. These researchers concluded that teachers reported using more activation of background knowledge in order to construct meaning.

Teachers' Practices with Literature

The cohort study was framed in Rosenblatt's Model of Reading (1978). The second literature strand focuses on teachers' practices with literature.

I thought it was important to start with a study regarding recreational reading habits and teachers' knowledge of elementary and young adult literature (Block & Mangieri, 2002) because my study involves the discussion of elementary and young adult literature. In their study, Block and Mangieri replicated a 1981 study with interesting results. They surveyed 549 elementary school teachers during the 1999-2000 school year; 514 teachers completed the survey. The survey questioned teachers on their knowledge of children's books and activities that would promote recreational reading for children. Results indicated that only 36% of the participating teachers could correctly name three children's books that had been published in the preceding five years. That's up from 9% of the respondents in the 1981 study, but still a poor showing for elementary teachers. 17% of the teachers surveyed (1 in 5) were unable to name even one children's book published in the last five years. Secondly, only 20% of teachers surveyed could correctly identify activities that would promote recreational reading in students. This study suggests that one in five elementary teachers do not read elementary literature; therefore are not recommending literature to their students, and 80% of teachers do not know at least three strategies for promoting engaged reading. I felt that this was a significant study because I introduced numerous elementary and young adult books through book talking and discussion in the cohort. Other than my elementary teacher who had read

several of the books, the other five cohort members were unfamiliar with most of the material.

A study of influential and noninfluencial primary teachers was conducted by R. B. Ruddell (1994) in order to establish the relationship between the teaching techniques that provided stronger reader comprehension and motivation and those that didn't. The study focused on what teachers were currently doing in the classroom. Students and other teachers before the onset of the study had previously labeled teachers as influential and noninfluencial. The influential teacher's dominant stance was aesthetic (Rosenblatt) compared to the noninfluential teacher's stance that was predominantly text-based and teacher directed. Ruddell's qualitative study involved four influential and four noninfluential teachers teaching similar lesson plans which involved an opening event, story telling, and discussion. Ruddell concluded that influential teachers, those who used the aesthetic stance described by Rosenblatt (1978), reached successful initiation, discussion, and resolution in almost twice the number of instructional times as did noninfluential teachers. Influential teachers activated student background knowledge and created community in their classrooms by "blending" classroom responses as they encouraged students to construct meaning from the text and discussion. This study is valuable in that it supports Rosenblatt's model of reading and concluded that teachers labeled as influential created richer, more meaningful learning environments.

Several other studies, as you will see, also supported aesthetic stance discussion techniques that were modeled and practiced in the cohort. They included the need to activate background knowledge, the use of prediction as a means of actively involving

student ideas, and how open-ended questioning encouraged and supported multiple interpretations of the literature.

Scharer, Peters, and Lehmen (1995) observed that students whose prior experience rested only in worksheet, recitation, question-answer dialogue were unprepared to talk about text aesthetically. Their research supported the view that teachers, like students, whose educational career rested in recitation style "discussion" were more likely to pedagogically teach in the same manner. Scharer, Peters, and Lehmen surveyed 123 fourth and fifth grade teachers from six school districts across Ohio (rural to urban, varying socio-economic status) to examine how literary materials and teacher pedagogy informed instruction in the higher grades. They concluded that elementary and middle school faculty needed to be in conversation with each other regarding the type of stance elementary teachers had used with their students. Researchers found that when higher grade teachers were made aware of the elementary background of their students, the teachers had a foundation on which to build students' strengths and skills. If students had been taught using only the efferent stance, then it would take time for them to learn to use the aesthetic stance. Teachers needed to be aware of their students' previous instructional methods so they could redefine literacy in positive and constructive ways. In my research, six volunteer teachers discussed elementary and young adult literature. The teachers ranged from a fifth grade teacher to a college instructor. I was excited about the variety of teaching levels because of Scharer, Peters, and Lehmen's (1995) observations regarding the need for teachers of different levels to converse with each other.

Killingsworth Roberts, Jensen, and Hadjiyianni (1997) conducted research on literature study groups with preservice teachers. Their premise was that people need each other to comprehend the bountiful ideas in literature. Their research questions focused on whether group participation would affect meaning making, how shared reading experiences affected teacher views, and whether the modeling of the literature group encouraged teachers to incorporate study groups in their own classrooms. Thirty-eight college students participated in the study. Ten groups of three or four participants read, discussed, and prepared a teaching presentation on a book they chose from a prepared list. Group presentations included how multiple interpretations of text were discussed, questioned, debated, and illustrated. During the weekly small group discussions, the instructor acted as participant rather than evaluator or questioner.

Conclusions from the study of preservice teachers were, for the most part, positive. Sixty-two percent of the students reported that input from other students was an integral and most-liked aspect of the group. Making friends was the second most-liked aspect. Twenty-two percent of the students said that the literature group helped them to know themselves better and to grow as individuals. One of the researchers noted that students who had been grouped together often sat together during the rest of the semester. This information alone supports the need for conversation among peers both in the classroom and in teacher development.

Killingsworth Roberts, Jensen, and Hadjiyianni (1997) also documented obstacles that prevented student construction of meaning. Obstacles included lack of time, difficulty coming to a consensus, fear of speaking, and lack of cooperation. The researchers realized that they needed to reinforce the idea that a consensus was not a

necessity, and that multiple interpretations of text were accepted and encouraged. For students and teachers who have been educated to believe there is only one right answer, the acceptance of multiple interpretations was a difficult concept to understand. In my study, teachers who practiced taking the aesthetic stance grew in their awareness of the acceptance of multiple interpretations.

Student Response to Instruction

Janet Allen's action research (1995) involving adolescents considered at-risk in her Reading and Writing Workshop classes informed the cohort study by her descriptions of how adolescents improved their comprehension through discussion. Her theory was based on Cambournes's (1988) conditions for learning: immersion, demonstration, engagement, approximation, use, response, and feedback (p. 33). Allen explained that student engagement with literature was dependent on text accessibility and the opportunity for students to construct meaning in a risk-free and print rich environment. Allen stated that with each discussion in the classroom, students' confidence and involvement increased. Sometimes, she "forced" students to talk to each other by pairing and grouping them in different combinations. Occasionally, they were free to choose their own partners in order to collaborate on their reading, writing, or language collection notebooks. Allen learned that discussion based on competition did not work, and that simply allowing kids to talk didn't mean they would use words responsibly. She modeled talk that was full of respect and honest praise. Allen became aware of her own discourse and how her words impacted the students. Allen used open-ended questions in her

discussions and offered students time to "build their own content frameworks" (p. 122). She also relied on journal writing that the students completed the day before to remind students of the thoughts they had about the literature.

Allen modeled the think aloud process to help her students understand the thinking process that was going on in her mind as she was constructing meaning from a difficult text. Like the practical argument (Richardson & Anders, 1994), think alouds cause the person to verbally explain the thought processes going on that precipitate action and reaction.

Regarding the benefits of thinking aloud, Loxterman, Beck, and McKeown (1994) studied eighty-eight sixth graders from two suburban public schools near Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. In two conditions of the study, one group of students read the text using the think aloud strategy to actively engage with the text, while another group read the text silently. Upon completion of the activity, students were asked to recall what they had read and respond to open ended questioning. The results indicated that the group of students who read the text while thinking aloud scored higher on recall and open ended questioning than did the students who read the text silently. Loxterman, Beck, and McKeown also highlighted the fact that students who thought aloud while reading also made stronger connections of ideas with the text than the other group. "Being asked to stop and talk about such a text may give students opportunities to reflect and think through information" (p. 364).

Carico (2001), motivated by Rosenblatt's conception of reader response theory (1978, 1983), investigated how the reader response approach affected a small group study (four female adolescents and one adult researcher) of two novels with female heroines.

Her goal was to "find clues as to how to structure literary experiences of vitality and power for the girls (p.510). The girls were encouraged to make personal connections to text and given opportunities to discuss their responses with each other. The research focused on responses to books and reflections of their responses. Carico used a prompt to open each discussion and continued with guiding questions during the response sessions. The following fall, the researcher met again with the students and used transcripts of their responses to stimulate reflection. She found that the conversations stimulated by reflections were significant because the girls talked and listened to each other as they probed one another about the reflections. Carico concluded that the reader response approach created richer meaning for the girls in the study.

Many's research (1994) was based on Rosenblatt's aesthetic stance and the lived through literary experiences that provoked reader thoughts, feelings, and images. The study explored the variations in stance that junior high school students took as they responded to literature. Subjects in Many's research included fifty-one eighth grade students (26 male, 25 female) in two intact classrooms involved in a larger research project (Many, 1989). Subjects were asked to read three realistic short stories (chosen through a pilot study), and respond in writing with the prompt, "Write anything you want about the story you just read." Data were collected from three different episodes over a nine-week period in order to assess the reader primary stance of the response and the level of understanding reached. Cox and Many's (1989) Instrument for Measuring Reader Stance of Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum which was based on Rosenblatt's description (1978, 1985, 1986) of the aesthetic and efferent poles of the reader stance continuum and

Corcoran's description (1987) of the types of mental activities involved in an aesthetic reading were used to measure responses.

Many (1994) concluded that subjects whose primary stance was aesthetic had a significantly higher mean level of understanding than those whose focus was efferent or who had no primary focus. "If teachers intend literature to offer unique experiences through which students can live, find pleasure, and reach understanding about themselves and the world, the aesthetic stance needs to be supported and encouraged" (p. 664). Many (1994) included a list of strategies that would foster aesthetic responses. They included: inviting open responses, giving students more time to respond, encouraging students to dialogue with each other, encouraging students to make personal and intertextual connections to literature, and helping students to recognize and focus on the lived-through experience (p. 665).

Many (1994) also addressed the recitation style format that many teachers rely on to evaluate student comprehension. She asserted that students who had been taught to seek out information for teacher questioning didn't understand how to use the aesthetic stance, as it was their primary goal not to live through the experience of the literature, but to locate answers necessary for parroting back responses to teacher-driven questions.

Almasi's research (1995) explored the sociocognitive conflicts in peer-led and teacher-led discussions of literature in fourth grade students. She described the value of student discussion as a means of students being able to construct and reconstruct thoughtful interpretations of text. Almasi framed her research, in part, on Rosenblatt's transactional view of literature in which reader, text, and context act as critical determinants in the construction of meaning. The literacy act, as Almasi explained, was

grounded on the assumption that reader meaning would evolve and change due to the reader/text connections and reader/reader discussion.

Overall the peer-led context is considered decentralized to the extent that interaction was encouraged between and among students as meaning was constructed. The instructional goals for students within such contexts focused on learning how to (a) interact with others in a manner that fostered meaningful interpretation of literature, (b) become a support structure for one another as they attempted to interpret literature and construct meaning, and (c) set agendas for discussing literature and for interacting with one another in a conversational manner. (p. 319-320)

Almasi suggested that her research had implications for classroom practice that included the use of peer-led discussions that enabled students to explore complex interpretations and focus on their own questions and ideas rather than those asserted by the instructor.

Although the cohort study was designed to include complete student facilitation of discussion, the use of the aesthetic stance in discussion provides opportunities for students to interact in a conversational manner and to support each other as they construct meaning.

A study by Almasi, O'Flahavan, and Arya (2001) explored the differences between effective and less effective peer discussions. They concluded that ineffective peer groups spent more time engaging in procedural talk or meta talk than attempting to sustain the literature conversation. Meta talk interrupted the flow of conversation and weakened the proficiency of discussion. Effective peer discussions, on the other hand,

sustained the conversation. "...the more proficient group displayed conversation that had a recursivity to it. The group consistently made linkages between topics, embedded topics, and used interpretive strategies to make sense of the text over time" (p. 114).

Almasi, O'Flahavan, and Arya (2001) go on to say that teacher involvement impacted the effectiveness of group discussion. In the ineffective peer discussion, the teacher went beyond initial modeling and scaffolding to initiating 39% of the total event sequences and 75% of all group metatalk. The teacher of the more effective peer discussion modeled and scaffolded students early on, but gave way to student led initiation and direction. This teacher's students monitored and regulated their own group because they knew early on that the teacher was not going to do it for them.

Taking the aesthetic stance is the consistent theme running through the review of literature. Whether it is teaching students to read aesthetically, looking at the value of small groups, or showing student gain when teachers scaffold in the beginning and back off to allow students to take the initiative, the studies strongly suggest the value of taking the aesthetic stance. The studies also describe the value of teacher collaboration in the process of awareness and change. But none of the studies report the value of practicing taking the aesthetic stance and how the art of practicing can affect teacher awareness and understanding. I was also unable to locate many studies regarding teachers as readers, but did indicate the study that showed how many of our elementary teachers are unprepared to recommend literature to their students. Most studies explain the importance of students as readers but fail to identify the necessity of teachers as readers.

CHAPTER III

Methodologies

Rationale for a Qualitative Study

The choice for a qualitative case study was based on my interest in coming to know through direct contact and involvement with teachers who were trying to practice discussion in real time in a world of real obstacles and complications. Assumptions were made. Bias was acknowledged and discussed. Interpretation was built on a foundation of multiple sources of data. The qualitative choice made sense. I wanted to see the big picture, in context, with all its messiness, with its complications and subjectivity. My muses were Geertz (1973) with his metaphoric language; Annetta Lareau (1989) whose reflections on her own research built and strengthened her understanding of qualitative research; Peshkin (1997), who journeyed with his readers to come to understanding as a collaborative effort between author and reader and described his subjectivity as autobiographical vignettes that drew the reader closer to him; Glesne (1997) with her suggestive poetry and offerings of experimental "openings;" and Angela Valenzuela (1999), whose direct approach focused on the immediate need for change. These muses brought unique and diverse approaches to the "So what?" question; therefore, I needed them all as guides in the qualitative experience of seeking meaning.

Rationale for a Specific Design

Emerging thought, data collection and analysis reshapes research. What began as an idea about middle school philosophy that encouraged all teachers to be readers and promoted reading in the core curriculum evolved to a teacher cohort that provided opportunities for a small group of teachers to practice discussion and to live through the experience of using the aesthetic stance. The focus question for the research was: What happened when teachers formed a cohort to practice discussion of young adult and elementary literature while taking the aesthetic stance?

Ancillary questions:

1. Were teachers using the aesthetic stance during discussion in their classrooms prior to the commencement of the cohort?

2. What was discussion like when teachers were students?

3. What do students today value about discussion?

4. What did teachers gain from the cohort?

5. Was the cohort a viable format for practicing discussion?

The inquiry of tradition that was selected for this research was a qualitative case study in which I was a participant observer. Cresswell (1998) described the case study as a focus "on an event, process, or program for which we had no in-depth perspective on this 'case'" (p. 95). The process in this case study was the practicing of discussion as a cohort. The case study was a process bounded in time (three months) and place (teachers from four educational environments in a centrally located area). The context of the case, according to Cresswell, not only involved the physical setting, but could include the

historical, social, or economic setting (p. 61). The context for this research was set in

schools where literacy was encouraged, the administrative support of teacher

collaboration appeared strong, and the economic level was moderate to high.

Theoretical Framework

The research was framed in Rosenblatt's Model of Reading (1978) in which

readers play a significant role in constructing meaning by living through the experience

of the text.

Methods Employed

I formed a cohort of seven volunteer teachers. During the first observations, one

teacher withdrew due to family reasons. One of her children was in a sport that played the

same evening of the cohort. She hadn't realized early on that her child's competitions

would conflict with the times that the cohort had agreed upon. I wrote field notes during

and after every cohort session. I tape-recorded all cohort sessions. I observed teachers at

times when they expected to be facilitating discussions in their classrooms both before

the cohort began and following the conclusion of the cohort. Each teacher was observed

at least once before the commencement of the cohort and once following the completion

of the cohort. I interviewed teachers (approx. 45 minutes to 1 hour in length) before and

following the completion of the cohort. The cohort met for ten weeks (approximately one

and one half hours – two hours per session for nine sessions for a total of just over sixteen

hours). In the first meetings, I initially facilitated the practicing of discussions in the cohort. I modeled strategies that supported the aesthetic stance described by Rosenblatt (1978). Gradually, teachers took on the responsibility of facilitating sections of the cohort. By the last two sessions, teachers facilitated all parts of the cohort using the agenda that I provided. During the cohort sessions, teachers wrote and discussed reflections. I collected the written reflections.

Overall Plan

Abstract Summarizing Plan

The cohort was an opportunity for a small group of teachers to practice discussion over a period of ten weeks taking the aesthetic stance in a safe setting with peers. In the cohort, teachers thought about, reflected on, practiced discussion, and lived through the experience of taking the aesthetic stance. The discussion techniques were based on Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading (1978) and were practiced over time in a safe and supportive environment.

Introduction to Plan

Current research suggested that classroom discussions were often a matter of teacher driven questioning rather than opportunities for students to draw on and respond

to prior experiences, develop higher level thinking skills, and construct meaning through personal interpretation and group interaction.

Current research also indicated that teachers who took the aesthetic stance created richer, more meaningful learning environments.

Outline of Plan

Following are the cohort session agendas that can help readers view the changing and developing format of the cohort. The reader should also note similarities in the sessions that helped to produce consistency and a safe and supporting environment.

Session #1, August 27, 2001, Get Acquainted!

Snacks. Welcome.

Distribution of books.

Get acquainted exercise: Discussion of all the get acquainted techniques that people have endured during their professional careers.

Book talk by facilitator: *The View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996), *A Long Way From Chicago* (Peck, 1998), *Julie of the Wolves* (George, 1972), and *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998).

Distribution and discussion of participant forms, parent consent forms, and oral assent forms.

Questions, concerns, comments.

Quick Write: As an elementary, jr. high, or high school student, how did discussion play into your classroom? What was your expected behavior during discussion? How did you personally prepare for discussion? What did the teacher do doing discussion? What did you do?

Discussion of Quick Write.

For next week: Monday, Sept. 6, 2001. Read the first few chapters of *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998). Feel free to read the whole book. Every story is worth it. Read other books ahead of schedule if you can.

Session # 2, September 3, 2001 Agenda: *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998)

Snacks. Welcome

Pass out think and discuss aloud articles and information.

Book Talk by participant observer: *Woodsong* (Paulsen, 1990), *The Voyage of the Frog* (Paulsen, 1989), and *Harris and Me* (Paulsen, 1993).

Discussion of *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998)

Written on dry eraser board: Techniques to use during discussion that support the transactional model of reading: support of related books, bringing in prior experiences, retelling, prediction, monitoring of prediction, open-ended questions, lengthened response time, conversational environment, acceptance of responses and multiple interpretations, the sharing of ideas (negotiated meaning), humor, guided responses, and respect.

Writing: What strategies, techniques do you use in your classroom? What happened in the discussion we just had?

Discussion: Analysis of discussion on *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998).

Session #3, Sept. 17, 2001, *A Long Way From Chicago* (Peck. 1998)

Discussion: What happened in your classrooms (regarding 9-11)? How did you

approach the tragedies of our country and the world? How did your kids talk about it?

Reflective Writing: Please write a page for me about what you want the readers of

this dissertation to know about you that I can share. Please include at the top age area,

number of years teaching, highest degree attained, and teaching areas.

Pass out think aloud articles. Facilitator models thinking aloud strategy by thinking

aloud how to write a poem on autumn (as if it had been assigned by a teacher). With a

partner, do a think/write aloud poem, time line, or a collection of notes on *A Long

Way From Chicago* (Peck, 1998). One person thinks aloud and writes, and the other

person listens. Then switch.

Using the think/write alouds to stimulate ideas, discuss *A Long Way From Chicago*

(Peck, 1998).

Please write: What happened in our discussions? What worked? What didn't work?

Why?

Session #4, Sept 24, 2001, *Julie of the Wolves* (George. 1972)

Welcome. Snacks.

Return writing, observation logs, interview transcripts.

Information on dry eraser board: Supporting the aesthetic stance during discussion:

oral reading, retelling, rereading, lengthened response time, accepting multiple

interpretations, how and why questions, activating background knowledge (prior experiences), think/write alouds, open ended questioning, use of prediction and monitoring of prediction, book talks, modeling of strategies, mutual respect, community of trust, comfortable, relaxed environment.

Book talk by participant observer: *Julie* (George, 1994), *Julie's Wolf Pack* (George, 1997).

Writing: Prepare a book talk on one of the books we are using for this cohort. You may work alone or with a partner (when working with a partner, each must prepare a book; you just help each other.)

Teacher presentation of book talks.

Discussion: *Julie of the Wolves* (George, 1972). Use strategies that support the aesthetic stance.

Writing: Of what practical value is practicing discussion with a small group of teachers in a cohort?

What worked about this discussion? How could we improve it?

Session #5, Oct. 1st, 2001, *The Dark Side of Nowhere* (Shusterman, 1997).

Welcome, Snacks.

Return writing, observation write-ups for member checking and feedback, interview transcripts, and articles about think alouds.

Information to be prewritten on the board: Supporting the aesthetic stance during discussion: lengthened response time, accepting multiple interpretations, bringing in and responding to prior experiences, think/write alouds, open ended questioning, use

of prediction and monitoring of prediction, book talks, modeling of strategies, mutual respect, community of trust, comfortable, relaxed environment, small groups, a print rich environment.

Book talk presented by Ellen: *Small Steps* (Kehret, 1996).

Writing by three cohort members: Please write a book talk on one of the books we have read. You may work alone or with a partner.

Writing by three other cohort members: Please write responses to the following questions: From your stream of life, what do you bring to our discussion of *The Dark Side of Nowhere* (Shusterman, 1997)? How does your particular world build into the raw material of this book? What personal view do you have which helped you construct meaning from this book?

Sharing of book talks. Sharing of responses related to *The Dark Side of Nowhere* (Shusterman, 1997).

Discussion: Does writing prior to discussion help the discussion?

Discussion: *The Dark Side of Nowhere* (Shusterman, 1997).

Doodle sheet.

Writing: Have other cohort members' interpretations of text affected your own · interpretations? This can apply to any book we have discussed or feel free to mention several examples from different books. If other interpretations haven't changed your views, why not?

Session #6, Oct. 8th, 2001, *The View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996).

Welcome. Snacks.

Return all papers.

Cohort members: Throw words and phrases on the board that relate to *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996).

Divide into three groups:

Group 1: Build a diagram that helps us understand the relationships in the book. Please use the board.

Group 2: Prepare to retell events that occurred in the book and why you are highlighting those events.

Group 3: Prepare strategies to facilitate discussion of this book. How would your strategies change depending on grade level?

Group presentations.

Group 3 will facilitate discussion of the book.

Reflective writing: What do you read? Please give specific examples. How often? Who do you talk to about what you read? Why that person or persons? Do you read aesthetically (live through the experience of the text)? What strategies do you use to construct meaning from the text?

Talk about reflective writings.

Session #7, Oct. 15th, 2001, *Small Steps* (Kehret, 1996)

Welcome. Snacks.

Return all reflective writings.

Divide into groups:

Group 1: from your own experiences, background knowledge, and information in the book, become our experts on Polio.

Group 2: On the board, diagram relationships in the book and interpret those relationships for us.

Group 3: Discuss and provide strategies to provoke a thoughtful and constructive discussion of the book.

Presentations: Group 1, Group 2

Group 3 will continue the discussion of the book using the strategies they have designed.

Reflective writing:

Compare and contrast characters in *Small Steps* (Kehret, 1996) to characters in other books we have read in the cohort. For example: Is Peg (*Small Steps*) like Julie (*Julie of the Wolves*)? How are their struggles similar/different? Is Alice (Small Steps) emotionally needy like the characters in *The View From Saturday*? Who could you compare Grandma Dowdel or Joey Dowdel in *A Long Way From Chicago* (Peck, 1998) to and why? What about Jason Miller in *The Dark Side of Nowhere* (Shusterman, 1997)?

Discussion of reflective writing.

Session #8, Oct. 22nd, 2001, *Petey* (Mikaelsen, 1998)

Angel will facilitate this evening.

Welcome. Snacks

Return reflective writings.

Divide into groups:

Group 1: Be ready to talk about Petey's illness, his symptoms, and his diagnosis and treatment. Try to find quotes from the book that describe his physical appearance.

Group 2: Diagram the relationships in the book. Interpret the relationships by using symbols and words.

Group 3: Discuss and provide strategies to provoke a thoughtful and constructive discussion of the book.

Presentations: Group 1, Group 2

Group 3 will continue the discussion of the book using the strategies they have designed.

Reflective writing:

Writing: In several of the books, medical conditions have been central to the story line. 1. Compare and contrast characters and situations in these novels. 2. How does medical technology play into treatments and philosophies in the different books? Discuss writings. (If we run out of time, we will discuss these next week.)

Session #9, Oct. 29th, 2001, *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998), "The Morning is Full" (Neruda, 1969), "The Word" (Neruda, 1988), and "The Life of Lincoln West" (Brooks, 1990).

Welcome. Snacks. Pass out reflective papers.

Group discussion of previous week's reflective writings:

1. Compare and contrast characters and situations in novels we have read that include medical conditions or medical themes.

2. How does medical technology play into treatments and philosophies in the

different books?

Oral reading of *Voices in the Park* (1998), "The Morning is Full" (Neruda, 1969),

"The Word" (Neruda, 1988), and "The Life of Lincoln West" (Brooks, 1990). Please

read and have others read orally.

Divide into groups. Please do not facilitate discussion with the same person you

facilitated with in the past. Each group will take a different author's works and

prepare a discussion for the cohort. These discussions should include their author's

work and others that are being discussed tonight or have been discussed in the past.

Discussions facilitated by group leaders.

Writing: What did you get out of the evening's discussions? What can you take back

to your own class? What ideas are interesting and worth further thought or

discussion?

The Evolution of the Cohort

The cohort met nine Monday evenings from August 27, 2001 to October 29, 2001

with the exception of Monday, Sept. 10th when I was unavailable to meet. Each meeting

lasted approximately one hour and forty-five minutes in length. The cohort met in a

centrally located church. The room designated for the cohort was the upstairs youth room

that was set up casually with numerous sofas, chairs, tables, and even included a pool

table in the back of the room. I provided snacks such as bagels, raw vegetables, potato

chips, bottled water, and assorted chocolate bars each week on a separate table. I

arranged the snacks in a decorative manner and served on lighthouse theme plates and platters. There was no intentional significance to the lighthouse pattern except that the dishes were pretty and interesting to look at. Since food can be a bonding agent, I tried to provide for a variety of tastes, and also encouraged participants to take plenty. One cohort member could not eat sweets; therefore, I tried to keep her special needs in mind. At times, while the discussion continued, I brought snacks to the discussion table to refill plates, and several teachers took extra bagels or chocolate bars home for the next day's lunch.

At the first couple of cohort sessions, I arranged the chairs in a circle close to a dry eraser board, but eventually the cohort moved to an octagonal table where food, drink, and papers could be spread out more effectively. The table seemed more comfortable so that teachers didn't have food and notes in their laps. The table also provided a better space for a tape recorder.

The cohort evolved in structure and responsibility level. Session #1 on August 27th began with a welcome and distribution of books. Originally, there had been seven cohort members, but one teacher withdrew before the cohort sessions began. Therefore, we began and ended the cohort with six volunteer teachers. All six teachers were present for the first session. Each teacher received copies of seven young adult books: *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998), *A Long Way From Chicago* (Peck, 1998), *Julie of the Wolves* (George, 1972), *The Dark Side of Nowhere* (Shusterman, 1997), *The View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996), *Small Steps* (Kehret, 1996), and *Petey* (Mikaelsen, 1998). The book, *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) was unavailable at the time of book distribution in Session #1, but would be read orally in the final cohort. Poems by Pable Neruda and

Gwendolyn Brooks were not distributed at that time either although they would eventually be incorporated in the final cohort.

During Session #1, I was the facilitator. I defined and explained strategies that supported the aesthetic stance in discussion. I also presented book talks on several of the books we were going to read, and distributed and explained the participant forms, parent consent forms, and oral assent forms. I controlled the time spent on each activity. Once the preliminary information and materials were dispensed, teachers were asked to do their first of many writings. In Session #1, the writing was called a quick write to refer to a short, reflective writing of about five to ten minutes. Later, the term would be dropped in favor of simply, "writing" since I came to realize that the terminology "quick write" had the connotation of hurriedness or shallowness.

The discussion following the quick write which focused on how discussion played out in classrooms when cohort teachers were children, was the first real opportunity for teachers to direct their attention to others in the group other than to me. Although talking did occur earlier during the book talks and a get acquainted exercise in which teachers talked about different bonding exercises they had been subjected to at previous workshops and conferences, teachers mostly directed their attention to me and not to each other. Now the first real discussion on discussion when they were kids changed all that. The discussion was open, honest, and was preceded by writing. The discussion tugged at personal opinions and responses to background knowledge, and began a foundation of commonality, humor, curiosity, and mutual acceptance. Still, though, I was in charge.

Session #2 was styled in a similar manner. I facilitated the cohort, but teachers came in a little more comfortably, and each had read all or part of *My Life in Dog Years*

(Paulsen, 1998). They now knew where the room was located, understood how the cohort worked, were "armed" with "stuff" to talk about, felt comfortable retrieving snacks, and knew that the environment would be safe and supportive. All six teachers were present for the session.

On the dry eraser board, I had listed techniques to use during discussion that supported the transactional model of reading described by Rosenblatt (1978). The list contained the following words and phrases: support of related materials, activation of background knowledge, retelling, prediction, monitoring of prediction, open-ended questioning, acceptance of responses and interpretations, the sharing of ideas (negotiated meaning), humor, naming strategies, modeling, think alouds, and respect.

We discussed Oster's article, "Using the think-aloud for reading instruction" (2001). I presented a book talk on several of Paulsen's books: *Woodsong* (1990), *The Voyage of the Frog* (1989), and *Harris and Me* (1993), and the group responded and shared information and ideas about those Paulsen books and others they had read. Then the cohort discussed *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998). I remained the self appointed facilitator and attempted to model and name various strategies while I facilitated the discussion. Teachers shared their personal dog stories, empathized with those who lost dogs they loved, and laughed with those who told humorous stories about their dogs. The two participants who weren't "dog people" commiserated with each other about how "dog people" were different from "cat people." Teachers talked more to each other as responses to prior experiences were brought into play. Teachers found common interests and similar feelings of empathy and concern. They relaxed into a conversation about their

own dogs and the dogs and characters in the book. As the facilitator, I felt that I had lost "control" of the discussion and was both scared and pleased by it.

Following the discussion, the writing assignment focused on two areas: strategies and techniques that teachers used to facilitate discussion in their classroom, and how teachers felt about the discussion on *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998). Once the papers were written and discussed, the cohort was adjourned.

Session #3, September 17th, was the first Monday following the national tragedy of the trade center destruction and the attack on the Pentagon. One cohort member (Merlin) was absent. I struggled with how to approach the topic that was obviously on everybody's minds, and how to move on to the next discussion on Richard Peck's book, *A Long Way to Chicago* (Peck, 1998). The real and fictional were worlds apart. At the beginning of the cohort, once snacks were retrieved, I asked teachers to describe what happened in their classrooms on September 11th, and how they dealt with the tragedy. How did they talk about the situation with their students? A quiet settled over the teachers as if they weren't prepared to go back there. It was if no one wanted to talk about it, but the underlying current was thick with sadness, shock, and pain. I tried not to ignore the tragic events, but brought the opportunity to the table to share difficult and painful thoughts common to every member of the cohort.

Once the initial discussion was at a stopping point, I asked teachers to write a page about themselves that could be shared with the reading audience of this research. Those self-written introductions can be found in the final section of Chapter III labeled "Meet the Cohort."

Following the writing, I modeled the strategy of thinking aloud by pretending that I was assigned to write a poem. Using the dry eraser board, I spontaneously wrote a poem about autumn while thinking aloud about how to do it. Following the modeling of the think aloud strategy, I assigned teachers to groups of two to "think aloud" their ideas regarding *A Long Way From Chicago* (Peck, 1998). They could write a poem, create a time line, or jot down notes on how they would facilitate a discussion on the book. By modeling the think aloud process, I presented a real example of the benefits of thinking aloud and listening to someone who was thinking aloud. Teachers attempted to "think aloud" for each other while they jotted notes on *A Long Way From Chicago* (Peck, 1998). Then a discussion of the book followed which utilized many of their notes and prose from the think aloud process. Although I was initially the facilitator of the session, the small "think-aloud" groups facilitated while they presented and shared ideas with the whole group.

Session #3, therefore, evolved because it provided opportunities to express feelings about current situations, and then moved to an instructor modeling of a strategy, a practicing of the strategy in small groups, and a discussion which utilized information gained from the strategy of thinking aloud and offered members of the cohort opportunities to facilitate parts of the discussion.

Session #4, September 24th, was similar to Session #3 in that teachers experienced another opportunity to practice a model presented by the facilitator. Three cohort members (Merlin, Emilea, and Brandeira) were absent. This time, I presented a book talk on *Julie* (1994) and *Julie's Wolf Pack* (1997) by Jean Craighead George because I wanted to encourage teachers to bring in related texts in their discussions. Then teachers were

asked to prepare a book talk on one of the books the cohort was using. They worked alone or with a partner, prepared book talks, and presented those to the rest of the cohort. In this way, teachers were practicing strategies that supported the aesthetic stance of helping young people live through the experience of the text by providing them with related literature in order to stimulate further ideas.

After the book talks, the cohort discussed *Julie of the Wolves* (George, 1972). I continued to model strategies that supported the aesthetic stance while facilitating the discussion. The discussion included retelling, rereading, asking open-ended questions, accepting multiple interpretations, thinking about and responding to prior experiences, thinking aloud, using prediction and monitoring of prediction, naming strategies, utilizing small groups, and working within an environment of mutual acceptance and respect.

In the final writing of Session #4, I asked teachers to examine the practical value of practicing discussion in a cohort. I chose this topic to reinforce the practice of using the aesthetic stance in discussion with students. The cohort concluded with a discussion of the written reflections.

Prior to Session #5, I listed on the board strategies and qualities that could be associated with taking the aesthetic stance as a discussion facilitator. The list was also included in a weekly agenda distributed to cohort members at the beginning of each session. I had been very disappointed with the previous week's absences; therefore, I was pleased to see all cohort members present. Since several members had been absent the week before, I divided the teachers into groups with different assignments. Teachers who had been absent worked on book talks while other teachers prepared responses to open-ended questions about *The Dark Side of Nowhere* (Shusterman, 1997). Here again was

another evolution. Teachers had different goals, and then they came together to listen and share. In that the teachers had different assignments, the sharing time became less repetitive and more interesting. The added dimension of doing different things before discussion caused me to rethink how the next sessions should be structured.

Once responses and book talks had been shared and discussed, the main discussion on *The Dark Side of Nowhere* (Shusterman, 1997) commenced. Like the tutor who scaffolds the child's reading by reading loudly at first with the child and then fading into the background, I talked less and encouraged teachers to talk to each other. Upon completion of the discussion, I offered another idea to initiate further thought. That was to activate multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999) by providing visuals to go along with the discussion. I passed out a doodle sheet with six doodles (everyone got a copy of the same sheet), and asked teachers to turn the doodles into pictures related to one of the books used in the cohort. The drawing assignment raised negative reactions because this was a new and unexpected aspect of the cohort. Comfort levels dropped, and the assignment became a chore. Teachers apologized for not being able to "draw" while I coaxed and encouraged them to have fun with the doodles and think about how they could relate the doodles to ideas in the books. After a period of time, we shared our drawings. My objective was to show how each member began with the same doodles and invented something unique which was a personal reaction and interpretation to ideas in the books we had read. This objective was to support the strategy of accepting multiple interpretations. Unfortunately, the cohort members were so stressed by having to draw that they were initially very uncomfortable drawing and sharing.

In this evolution, the facilitator pushed beyond grouping and discussion to a visual stimulant before further discussion and writing. Pictures were hesitantly shown and shared with lots of negative comments, but were none-the-less stimulants for further thought and reactions. The writing that followed focused on whether other cohort members' interpretation of text affected their own interpretations. This writing included any or all books the cohort had discussed so far.

Session #6 was an outcropping of the new ideas attempted in Session #5. One cohort member (Ellen) was absent. I began by asking teachers to "throw" words or phrases on the board related in any way to the evening's book, *The View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996). Teachers started slowly and then began to feel more comfortable with the idea. This few minutes of "throwing related words" on the board stimulated thoughts and brought teachers into the special world of the book. Conversation flowed as this activity played out.

Next, I asked teachers to divide into groups. Each group had a different goal. Group One was to build a diagram on the board that would help the cohort understand the relationships in the book. The diagram was to include personal interpretation of text. The diagram would remain on the board for the evening as reference for all members. Group Two was to retell several events that occurred in the book and explain why they chose those events to retell. Group Three was to plan how to facilitate a discussion on the book, and then to facilitate the discussion following the presentations of Group One and Group Two.

This was the real moment of change when the teachers progressed beyond simply participating in discussion to taking on responsibility for individual and group gain. It

was an exciting moment. Teachers sprang into assigned roles with vigor. Everybody was talking at the same time. I was officially relieved of my facilitation responsibility, and I leaned back into more of the observer role as I gave control away to the responsible parties. The cohort had evolved.

Session #7 was similar in structure to Cohort #6. Session #7's book was *Small Steps* (Kehret, 1996). Two cohort members (Ellen and Brandeira) were absent. I again divided the teachers into groups with different goals. Group One became experts on Polio in order to share the history, symptoms, and recuperation strategies with the cohort. Group Two diagrammed the relationships on the board and expressed their interpretations of those relationships. Group Three facilitated the discussion of the book following the presentations of Group's One and Two and attempted to model strategies that supported the aesthetic stance within the discussion.

The writing in Cohort #7 evolved as well. Teachers were asked to compare and contrast characters in *Small Steps* (Kehret, 1996) to characters in other books the cohort had read. The agenda read, "Is Peg in *Small Steps* (Kehret, 1996) like Julie in *Julie of the Wolves* (George, 1972)? Are their struggles similar/different? Is Alice in *Small Steps* (Kehret, 1996) emotionally needy like any of the characters in *The View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996)? Can you compare Grandma Dowdel or Joey Dowdel from *A Long Way From Chicago* (Peck, 1998) to characters in other books? Why? What about Jason Miller in *The Dark Side of Nowhere* (Shusterman, 1997)?" Suddenly teachers were faced with numerous characters from which to choose and fountains of characteristics to compare and contrast. The writing and discussion that followed this assignment was the most intense yet due to the preponderant opportunities of choice and imagination.

Session #8 continued the pattern of change and growth. All cohort members were present. I stepped out of the picture almost completely. There was still an agenda that I expected to be followed, but I asked Angel to facilitate the cohort without any input from me. The evening's book was *Petey* (Mikaelsen, 1998). Angel facilitated the cohort. She followed the agenda by dividing teachers into groups. Group One's effort was to talk about Petey's illness: his symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment. Group One was also to locate quotes in the book that described his physical appearance. Group Two was asked to diagram the relationships in the book and to interpret the relationships using words and symbols. The diagramming would remain on the board to help teachers reference dates, people, and places during the discussion. The third group's goal was to prepare to facilitate the discussion by thinking about open-ended questions to stimulate interpretation and honest conversation among members.

Since this was the third time specific groups were set up, teachers were asked to participate in a different group than they had in the past. I wanted teachers to take different responsibilities each time the group met, but I wanted them all to practice facilitation of discussion, and they did.

The writing assignment in Session #8 was similar to the previous cohort. Teachers were asked to compare and contrast characters and situations in previously discussed novels that had to due with medical conditions. The second part of the writing was to look at medical technology's changing treatments and philosophies in the different books. Although this was more than enough for a twenty-five-page research paper, it was used as an example to show how several books could be discussed repeatedly with different

lines of thinking and interpretations. Using the medical component, every book the cohort read could be discussed again in a different perspective.

The final session, #9, evolved again. This time, the cohort moved beyond young adult literature to poetry by Pablo Neruda and Gwendolyn Brooks, and to a children's book, *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998). All cohort members were present. I asked Victoria to facilitate since she had introduced me to poetry by Gwendolyn Brooks that she had used in class. This was accomplished prior to the meeting so that Victoria was aware of her responsibility a week ahead of time. Each group prepared to facilitate a discussion on their choice of provided texts. Comments such as "I'm thinking that…" "Maybe this will work…" and "Just talking about poetry sometimes helps" filtered through the "noise." Then the group met around the table, read their texts aloud to each other, and facilitated the discussion for each other. The participant observer found it difficult to stay completely out of the picture. A few "teachable" moments seemed to pass by unnoticed, but each facilitator found her unique combination of aesthetic stance strategies to utilize in the facilitation of the discussion.

The final writing was dedicated to what teachers got out of the evening's discussions, and what they could take back to their classes. Therefore, the writing evolved from looking at how teachers responded to prior experiences to analyzing discussions to comparing and contrasting ideas within several books to thinking about what all this means to the future of discussion in each teacher's classroom. The structure of the sessions evolved from my control as facilitator to complete release of responsibility into competent hands.

Pragmatics of the Study

Participant Information

Participants were informed that they were free to decide whether or not they wished to participate, and that they could withdraw participation at any time during the process. Participant information remained confidential. Pseudonyms chosen by the participants were used to retain the confidentiality of the participants. The purpose of the study was to understand the nature of practicing discussion in a cohort. Data was collected and analyzed on a continuing basis for the duration of the research. Data collection included observations, tape-recorded interviews, field notes, and tape recordings of cohort sessions, student-written paragraphs, and participant reflections. Participants completed just over sixteen hours of practicing discussion as a cohort. Discussion techniques that were modeled and practiced in the cohort were based on Rosenblatt's Model of Reading (1978).

First Interview Questions

1. Tell me about discussion in your classroom. What is that like?

2. Why do you use discussion in your classroom? What is its value?

3. What strategies do you currently use in your classroom to facilitate discussion?

4. Who gets involved in the discussion? What do you do about those who are not involved in the discussion?

5. What is your behavior when you facilitate discussion? Where do you stand? Sit?

6. What is the behavior you expect from your students?

7. Where did you learn to facilitate discussion?

8. Have you attended any seminars or workshops that have devoted time towards facilitating discussion? Tell me about those?

9. How do you test?

Second Interview Questions (Following the Conclusion of the Cohort)

1. What discussion ideas were generated in the cohort?

2. How were we successful as a cohort in discussion using the aesthetic stance?

3. How were we not successful?

4. Did your views of discussion change during the course of the cohort? Explain.

5. How do your actions in the classroom exhibit your (changing) views?

6. How have students reacted to the changes you have made?

7. What kinds of bonds developed and/or changed over the course of the cohort?

8. If you look at the cohort as a form of staff development, would you support or oppose this type of professional development? Why or why not?

9. How could we improve the cohort?

10. How did you feel about the reflective writings?

Literature Used in the Cohort

A media specialist with ten years experience in the field of elementary and young adult literature recommended the elementary and young adult literature that was used in the cohort. I chose the poetry by Pablo Neruda and Gwendolyn Brooks for the final cohort.

My Life in Dog Years (Paulsen, 1998)

A Long Way From Chicago (Peck, 1998)

Julie of the Wolves by (George, 1972)

The Dark Side of Nowhere (Shusterman, 1997)

The View From Saturday (Konigsburg, 1996)

Small Steps (Kehret, 1996)

*Petey (*Mikaelsen, 1998)

Voices in the Park (Brown, 1998)

"The Morning is Full" and "The Word" by Pablo Neruda

"The Life of Lincoln West" by Gwendolyn Brooks

Data Sources

Data sources included (1) observations and field notes, (2) interviews, and (3) documents.

1. Observations and field notes:

A. I observed participants in their classrooms at least twice (once before and once after the completion of the cohort). Participants determined the observation times that occurred during classes in which they had planned class discussions. Each observation was determined by length of class, 45 - 55 minutes. On several occasions, I stayed for two classes.

B. I took field notes during and following cohort sessions.

2. Interviews: I interviewed each participant before and after practicing discussions in a cohort. Interviews were 45 minutes to 1 hour in length.

3. Documents:

A. Cohort sessions were tape-recorded.

B. Teachers submitted teacher reflections at each cohort.

C. Analytic memos were generated from the onset of the research. All analytic memos were dated.

D. I collected student-written paragraphs regarding the value of discussion in the classroom.

Data Analysis

Analysis in qualitative case studies was ongoing. I created a start list of codes prior to the fieldwork as Miles and Huberman suggested (1994). But I was prepared to redefine or discard codes as they began to "look in applicable, overbuilt, empirically ill-fitting, or overly abstract" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). When categories became too numerous to manage, as they did after the first set of interviews, I collapsed the codes

into a controllable set. As the coding proceeded, I became aware of "new interpretations, leads, connections with other parts of the data" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These ideas led me to further realizations regarding the data. I used pattern coding (clustering) to group emerging themes. I mapped pattern codes and checked them with the next sets of data collection.

1. Observations and field notes:

   A. Field notes taken during observations in the classroom were typed and coded, clustered, and mapped for emerging patterns and ideas.

   B. Field notes from cohort sessions were reviewed and coded, clustered, and mapped for emerging patterns and ideas.

2. Interviews: Tape logs were generated and coded, clustered, and mapped for emerging patterns and ideas.

3. Documents:

   A. Tape logs were created and coded, clustered, and mapped from tape recordings of the nine cohort sessions.

   B. Teacher written reflections were coded, clustered, and mapped for emerging patterns.

   C. Analytic memos were used to report moments of particular interest and understanding during the research process. Analytic memos were dated and coded.

   D. Student-written paragraphs were coded, clustered, and mapped for emerging patterns.

Issues of Rigor

In order to convince readers of the veracity of my findings, certain methods in this post-positivistic design were employed. Member checking in which participants were asked to examine rough drafts of writing in which they have been featured was utilized (Cresswell, 1998). Secondly, triangulation of interviews, observations, and document analysis was procured.

Finally, several ideas from Stake's (quoted by Cresswell, p. 214) "critique checklist" for case studies were utilized as a means of verification:

1. Is there a sense of story to the presentation?

2. Has the writer made sound assertions, neither over - nor under-interpreting?

3. Is the role and point of view of the researcher nicely apparent? (Stake, 1995, p. 131)

Meet the Cohort!

In the third session of the cohort, teachers were asked to introduce themselves to the reading audience. Following are their written introductions that can help the reader find themselves in one or more cohort participants. Pseudonyms for personal names were chosen by the participants, and have been used to replace their true names and locations that they mention in their introductions.

Meet Merlin

Growing up, I always knew that priorities in our home were: God, family, and education. There was never a discussion concerning "if" I would go to college. I graduated from Plentiful College with a B.A. in Elementary Education, then earned an M.A. in Elementary Education several years later from Heading On University. I taught in one state from 1972-80 then moved to this state. I was in medical management and management consulting for 7 years then returned to teaching in 1987. This is my 15th year of teaching in Medium Town (or should I say Camelot?).

My husband and I stay extremely busy ranching 'on the side.' We have a tremendous view overlooking the Winding River with 29 momma cows, 29 calves, and one bull. I have not lost my passion for teaching, but my love of the land and 'ranch life' has increased my anticipation for retirement. (Merlin, self-written introduction)

Meet Brandeira

At 50 years old, I am relishing menopause! Estrogen is great! I feel comfortable with myself and a bit of a rebel to boot. A short 5'2", red headed (thanks to Lady Clairol) Army Brat, I have a penchant for speaking my mind. I would love to be a storyteller some day. I am the 'Rock' for my family, but the crybaby to my husband. I cry at movies, love to tailor clothes (that never fit from the store

because I'm squatty) and do cross-stitch. I just love sweets (which my rotund

waistline proves)! I have 5 children and 10 grandchildren. I have a history full of

pain that I often pull out, sort through, and shove back. However, I have also been

blessed with great moments. I guess I can be mercurial.--this I think, makes me an

interesting teacher.

P.S. My sense of humor is askew, but functioning!

I do not always follow directions. I have taught 20 1/2 yrs. and substituted for 2

years additionally. I have taught every grade from 6-12. I am secondary trained

and taught gifted for almost 8-10 years and language arts and history the rest. I

have masters in secondary Language Arts education. (Brandeira, self-written

introduction)

Meet Emilea

In many ways when I look around the building where I teach I feel like I'm a lost

generation. Where do I belong? At 37 years of age I find that most of my

colleagues are either 5-10 years older than me or 5-10 years younger. Fortunately

I am able to adapt and see to work cohesively with everyone.

After graduating from high school it was important for me to get a college degree.

I received a degree in Social Work and worked as a caseworker for the Charily

Children's Home in Big City and the Boys' Friend Ranch in Smaller Town for the

first 8 years after college. While working, I returned to school and received a

Masters degree in Special Education and have been teaching for 7 years. My first

1½ years were in elementary; however, I am now at the middle school level and feel this is my 'niche.' Six and a half years ago I married a wonderful man. We met playing softball and have lots in common; however, we have many opposite interests as well. We are GREAT together. I have a stepdaughter who is 24 years old. We have a pretty good relationship and I think she has learned many things by my example. I try not to tell her things I think she should do. I also have two grandsons–ages 5 and 2.

My pride and joy is my 1½ year old daughter, Lacey. We went through three previous pregnancies w/ heartache before she was born. What a joy she has been. (Emilea, self-written introduction)

Meet Victoria

I teach a 2 yr. branch campus of a state university. For 5-6 years before 1993, I taught adjunct for several area colleges. I'm a writing teacher, and whether teaching Humanities or literature or freshman comp, writing is always a significant part of my teaching (Duh!).

I earned an education bachelor's degree in English, but for many years after that I worked in family businesses and raised my children – who are all readers and pretty good writers. Returning to school to complete a master's degree was pulling all the parts of what I loved together. Also, it's the thing to do for forty plus matrons these days.

College students are great, and I enjoy them. I have taught many adults who can't read very well or write a correct sentence. They have taught me a lot about literacy. And I have taught them about a new world of words. For many it was an infatuation with their own abilities that came about when they determined to learn. Learning is really ageless. (Victoria, self-written introduction)

Meet Ellen

I am a 50-year old extremely experienced high school English teacher. I have taught 23 years. My educational background reads on paper like this: BA+16. Actually, I have about 30+ extra hours, but I never completed any degrees above bachelor level. I teach AP English, English IV, and an elective mythology/poetry class. My students are my raison d'etre, and unfortunately sometimes, I care a lot about their concerns outside the classroom – they are a real study in human behavior. (Ellen, self-written introduction)

Meet Angel

I truly am a 29 year old graduate of Major State. Go Wild Horses! My B.S. degree is in elementary education, and I have an endorsement to teach language arts. Despite my elementary foundation, I have always found myself at the middle school level. After college, I taught one year at a private school where they eventually dumped grades 7-10 all subject areas on me. Needless to say, I left

after that one year of hell! I then found myself subbing and working retail until I found my current position teaching 8th grade English. I am in my fifth year at this school. I don't know – maybe it's hanging out with 13 year olds or maybe it's chasing my 2 year old daughter around, but I don't feel a day over 21. (Angel, self-written introduction)

Summary of Chapter III

In Chapter III, I have explained the rationale for doing a qualitative study and explained the rational for the specific design of a case study. I have described the theoretical framework in Rosenblatt's Model of Reading (1978), which emphasizes the aesthetic stance, and I have defined the methods that I employed for the study which included two sets of interviews, two sets of observations, and nine 1 ½ - 2 hour sessions in which participants discussed elementary and young adult literature. I have explained the procedures of research and included the literature that was discussed in the nine sessions of the cohort. My data sources were observations, interviews, and documents. My data analysis techniques included the search for emerging patterns through coding, clustering, and mapping. I described the issues of rigor with which I verified my findings which included member checking and triangulation of data. Finally, I introduced my readers to members of the cohort by including introductions of self, written by the participating teachers.

CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis

Discussion is a creation. Visually, it can be compared to a work of art sculpted by

many hands that began the sculpture not knowing what the final shape would be, or a

watercolor brushed by muted or vibrant colors that melt into each other to create

something new. Like a theatre production, discussion evolves during rehearsals or early

stages and continues its evolution during production. The participants of the discussion,

each experiencially unique, bring their ideas to the table. The pieces of discussion do not

create a collection of pieces, but a new design. Discussion is a creation of blending,

reshaping, building, and ultimately, transforming.

In this qualitative case study, the focus was on practicing discussion in a cohort.

The discussions were theoretically framed in Rosenblatt's Model of Reading (1978) in

which she asserts the value of taking the aesthetic stance to live through the experience of

the text. Facilitators who take the aesthetic stance during discussion provide an

environment in which richer, more meaningful discussion can take place. Participants are

encouraged to respond to their prior experiences, build on the experiences of others, and

gain understanding through the variety of perspectives produced in the discussion. The

cohort practiced discussing multiple texts (elementary and young adult literature and

poetry) over the course of ten weeks. During the time of the cohort, data collection

included observations, interviews, and documents. Data analysis took the form of description, emerging themes, development of issues, and details about specific issues.

Focus Question:

1. What happened when teachers formed a cohort to practice discussion of young adult and elementary literature while taking the aesthetic stance?

Ancillary Questions:

1. Were teachers using the aesthetic stance during discussion in their classrooms prior to the commencement of the cohort?

2. What was discussion like when teachers were children?

3. What do students today think about discussion?

4. What did teachers gain from the cohort?

5. Was the cohort a viable format for practicing discussion?

The Environment

Data from initial observations revealed that teachers often switched between taking the aesthetic and efferent stances in the facilitation of discussion in their classrooms prior to the commencement of the cohort. Each initial observation was typed and coded for emerging patterns. I worked with a preliminary list of thirty-seven codes drawn from my observations that reflected what I observed teachers doing during discussion in their classrooms. I collapsed those codes to eighteen patterns. The patterns provided a picture of how teachers were facilitating discussion. It was clear that the cohort teachers were strong teachers. In a variety of ways, they provided enriching

experiences for their students. But the observations helped me to see how they switched between the efferent and aesthetic stances in the classroom. It is easier to take the efferent stance because the teacher can retain control over the close-questioning procedure which is the standard procedure used to gain information from the text and assess whether students have read the material. The efferent stance is useful in providing a foundation of information in order to explore the deeper interpretations and ideas that taking the aesthetic stance will provide. But if the dominant teacher stance is efferent, the discussion may never proceed to a deeper level. In order for a teacher to facilitate a discussion of ideas and interpretations rather than to expect a regurgitation of explicit information, the teacher may take the aesthetic stance as the dominant stance in the classroom.

Although teachers took the aesthetic stance at times, I also observed them switching to the efferent stance during class discussion. Angel, Emilea, Ellen, and Merlin asked plotline or single answer questions during the time that I observed their discussions in the classroom. When these teachers took the efferent stance, they expected single answer "correct" responses. The efferent stance is valid in that the information in the text is a foundation upon which to build interpretation and construct meaning, but the richness of the discussion relies on the teacher's ability to take the aesthetic stance, which promotes the discussion of ideas and interpretation. When teachers relied on the efferent stance, they asked close-ended questions, which were often asked at break neck speed as Angel did in her discussion of *The Pearl* (Steinbeck, 1970). As Merrow suggests, "...racing through history or literature (or almost any subject) at a breakneck pace leaves no time for questions and smothers curiosity" (2001). Close-ended questions directed by the teacher had to do with plotline, character traits, and other pieces of information that

were acquired by reading efferently, rather than experiencing the text and constructing

meaning by connecting to prior experiences and working with multiple perspectives.

Considering that teachers told me in initial interviews that discussion time ranged

in their classes from 35% of the time (Merlin's classroom) to 75% of the time

(Brandeira's classroom), it is important to look at what students said about discussion.

Teachers in the cohort were encouraged to ask their students to voluntarily write a

paragraph about what they thought about discussion in the classroom. I began with a

sampling of thirty-two eighth grade student-written paragraphs. I coded each paragraph

and collapsed the codes into patterns. I created a chart from the patterns to discover two

emerging themes: (1) Discussion cleared up confusion and helped students understand

the text better, (2) students wanted to hear what their classmates thought (See Table 1).

Students enjoyed hearing multiple perspectives of text.

Table 1

Students' Thoughts on Discussion

What Students Wrote about Discussion (from 32 eighth grade student-written paragraphs):	Number of students who addressed this issue:
Freedom to express opinions and feelings openly	5
To better understand things and clear up confusion	20
So you can learn easier and get smarter	5
Discussion means less homework	2
Gives me an idea of how my classmates think; shows me different perspectives	15
Learn writer's intent	2

Twenty out of thirty-two students stated in their paragraphs that discussion was a time for clearing up confusing issues. "I like discussion because it helps me to better understand things" (Student #2). This was a common thread in the majority of papers. Fifteen out of thirty-two students claimed that they wanted to hear what other people thought and how others' thoughts compared to their own. "Discussion is very important to me. The reason why is because you can learn so much. And teach a lot more than the teachers because our peers listen. And actually understand from our point of view 'cause most teachers can't relate. I'm glad we're allowed to have discussions in class 'cause we understand students a lot better than we do teachers" (Student #14). In this last quote, it is important to note that more value was placed on what peers had to say rather than what the teacher had to say. By taking the aesthetic stance in facilitating discussion, teachers offer more freedom in the classroom. They facilitate the discussion and are engaged in listening to student responses. Teachers are participants, but they encourage students to talk among themselves. If students lose their way in discussion by basing their ideas on blatant errors, then the teacher will first listen to see if other students correct the error before intervening. Peer support, as Student #14 indicated, is highly sought after in discussion.

The word, discussion, sometimes has the negative connotation of implying a session of teacher-driven questioning. Certainly, the cohort validated the connotation when they expressed what discussion was like when they were students. In the first cohort, teachers were asked to write and then discuss what they remembered discussions were like when they were children. Teachers took about ten minutes to write their thoughts on the subject, and then they brought their ideas to the table. Teachers wrote

reflectively and then shared their ideas with the cohort. The data collected represents themes from the discussion verified by their written paragraphs which were coded for emerging patterns.

Most of the teachers agreed that their early experiences in discussion could be described as closed, rigid, and medical (See Table 2).

Table 2

What discussions were like when teachers were children:
Rigid, closed, medical, like preparing for test
Teachers seeking correct answer only
Student spoke only when called on
Discussion focused on names, dates, and facts
Personal feelings and interpretations not included
Students sat in rows
Lack of teacher praise or encouragement
Lack of teacher guidance toward correct answer
No creativity or openness
Few opportunities to work in small groups
Lack of discussion, mostly worksheets and writing assignments

Table 2 (continued)
How teachers, as students, responded to this type of discussion:

Hiding from view

Having lots of ideas but not given opportunities for expression

Taking efferent stance in reading

Lack of ability to facilitate discussion as teachers

Didn't feel safe

Pressure to have correct answers

Put on the spot

Participation was reserved for those who knew the correct answers and volunteered. Teachers offered little praise or encouragement and didn't attempt to guide or lead students toward successful responses. Students didn't risk responding with personal opinions, and there was great pressure because the discussion was for the purpose of the test alone. Students who were unprepared often hid behind larger students. Student creativity, interpretation, safety, and openness were not issues to be considered by classroom teachers at that time.

Brandeira defined discussion as "real rigid" when she went to school because teachers were only looking for "correct" answers, and "freedom and openness was not an option." She continued that discussion was focused on what was going to be on the test; therefore, it was "regimented" and "closed."

When Brandeira was asked whether this type of discussion led to taking an efferent stance (Rosenblatt, 1978) during reading, she replied that it did. "You read for facts. You read for information. You tried to pick out the right word that was supposed to express the right idea. Your personal feelings did not come in. It was almost like surgical

in your discussion. Medical. That's how we did it." Brandeira also explained that students

sat in rows and were called upon in a certain regimented order.

Merlin added that teachers might call on only those who probably had the "right"

answers. She remembered that teachers generally didn't show a great deal of emotion

when students responded correctly or incorrectly. "You got just a very short nod of the

head, or an affirmative. And if it were wrong, you were not led into the correct answer.

Some one else had to give the correct answer or the teacher would give the correct

answer immediately." In connection to Merlin's ideas, Brandeira added that there was no

creativity or openness in the discussion.

Ellen was surprised with the verbal responses. She explained that although her

junior high experiences were contained to "lecture format with question answer sessions

which were tied in with chapter work," her high school experiences were different. At

this point, she read orally from her writing,

> High school classes experimented with different types of groups: partners, small
>
> group symposium, etc. I enjoyed the small group preparation for presentation to
>
> the class. During the time that students participated in small groups or partners, I
>
> honestly cannot remember the teacher's presence. I'm guessing that he/she may
>
> have been grading papers or something. I remember hearing some of the best
>
> school gossip then. (Ellen, written reflection)

Brandeira added that she never did a single group activity in high school.

Emilea stated that she could not remember a single novel that she read in high

school because she "was reading for information." She remembered books that she had

read on her own, though. According to Emilea, even the teachers who had a "desire for

openness," restrained their discussions to taking an efferent stance. "It (being open) wasn't the thing to do until later on."

Victoria's remembrances took the responses she had to her prior experiences and applied them to her own teaching patterns. In the discussion, she said,

> The thing I noticed is that when I started teaching, I didn't know how to teach my students to discuss. Thinking back, when I went to school, my teachers didn't know how to (discuss) either because they had teacher directed classes that were all lecture which is really passe' now. Just saying you're not going to lecture anymore doesn't mean you know how to manage a discussion. If the teacher doesn't know, or doesn't have those expectations, to make students feel comfortable and safe enough to do this (discussion), students aren't going to take any chances." For Victoria, "Preparing for a discussion was like preparing for a test; I mean, it was terrible pressure. (Victoria, oral discussion)

Angel brought up the fact that when she was a student, half the class was "safe" because the teacher only called on volunteers. She remembered sitting in the back behind a big football player. "It can be an easy out as much for the teacher as for the kids. They (the teachers) don't have to deal with the wrong answers." On the other hand, Angel remembered a tenth grade teacher whom she loved because of her open discussions. "She called on everybody randomly; she loved literature. The characters were alive to her. I was never scared in her class. And she never asked for volunteers, ever." Angel said that now she asks students questions to help her figure things out.

From Angel's ideas about a "good" teacher, Victoria extended the idea by suggesting that journalism class provided an arena for thought, discussion, and

responsibility. "We knew we had to work together. We knew we had deadlines. The secret is to involve the kids and give them part of the responsibility."

Certain teachers and certain classes provided opportunities for freedom in discussion. Journalism and yearbook classes were mentioned as two arenas for open expression of ideas. Teachers who loved their chosen fields of interest, who made students feel safe, and who used small groups in the classroom were considered teachers who provided freedom in discussion.

Upon listening to Victoria's thoughts on journalism, I realized that my experiences were similar. Yearbook class had provided opportunities for discussion, openness, creativity, and humor that other classes didn't permit. The difference was that in journalism and yearbook, student talk was authentic; it had purpose. The expectation in the class was that students would talk to each other and build on each other's ideas. It wasn't about waiting for the teacher to spoon-feed information or to ask plot line questions; it was about real people in real situations, which provided discussion, decision, and response. Teachers had taken the aesthetic stance in classes like journalism and yearbook.

Today, though, we have opportunity to rectify the negative connotation of the word, discussion, by taking the aesthetic stance in discussion and inviting students to wrestle with ideas, connect with prior experiences, and become transformed by discussion. In the student paragraphs that I read regarding discussion, it is clear that students wanted to reach new understandings, and they wanted to hear and think about what their peers had to say. Student #22 appropriately stated, "Discussion creates ideas in everyone's minds and makes people think. Discussion benefits anyone participating."

Strategies That Support Taking the Aesthetic Stance During Discussion

In this section, I will discuss some of the individual strategies that support the aesthetic stance. I will name the strategy that we practiced in the cohort, explain its value, provide a picture of how each was modeled and experienced in the cohort, and illustrate how participants grew in their awareness and experience of using each strategy. I will use data collected from tape recordings of the nine cohort sessions, reflective writings, and interviews to discuss the growth in awareness and experience. The strategies that I will discuss are bringing in and responding to prior experiences, accepting multiple interpretations, responding to intertextuality, predicting and monitoring prediction, using small groups, and thinking aloud. Initially, I considered these the most important strategies to consistently model and practice in the cohort.

Bringing in and Responding to Prior Experiences

"The answer, of course, is that the reader of any text must actively draw upon past experience and call for the 'meaning' from the coded symbols" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 22). Rosenblatt refers to bringing in and responding to prior experiences as a necessity in reading and discussing aesthetically. Bringing in and responding to prior experiences makes perfect sense in the construction of meaning and the ability to live through the experience of the text. Rosenblatt explains that the reader need not have the identical experiences as the author, but "he must have experienced some needs, emotions, concepts, some circumstances and relationships, from which he can construct the new

situations, emotions, and understandings set forth in the literary work" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 77). For example, as an actress in college, my director always encouraged me to think about a time in my life when I felt sadness in order to produce the same emotions necessary on stage to convince an audience of my saddened state. I was to draw upon emotions that I had felt at an earlier time by connecting to my prior experiences. As Reenie in *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (Inge, 1957), I had several tear-filled emotional moments on stage. In order to better prepare myself for those melancholy moments, I sat back stage and remembered how I felt on the day of my grandmother's funeral. Sadness welled up in my being. Bringing in those experiential moments allowed me to understand the moments of sadness in the play and generate the necessary emotions to present my distress to the audience. On a side note, William Inge wrote *The Dark at The Top of the Stairs* (1957) as an autobiographical account to seek a deeper meaning that he couldn't understand at the time. In each cohort session, I modeled bringing in and responding to prior experiences and encouraged others to bring in their experiences as well for us to share and build on. Cohort members easily and freely connected with their past experiences and related their experiences to the text. During the duration of the cohort, members shared personal stories ranging from dogs they owned, loved, and lost, to friends they knew who had suffered polio or severe illnesses. In session #2, Angel set the stage for the discussion of *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998) with her dog story. "Dogs are your best friends. I love dogs. I went through a divorce, and I had a little puppy, and she's the reason I'm here. She literally could sense your moods. I mean, when I was crying, it was dark in the room, she would crawl up by me and lick my tears." Members of the cohort responded empathically to Angel's story. It was a bonding

moment for the group and took us beyond the efferent stance of information to a deeper level of meaning.

Bringing in and responding to prior experiences deepened the construction of meaning. It wasn't just where a person had been or what they owned, but it was the whole person's variety of experiences that brought deeper meaning to each discussion. Ellen stated in her final interview that the special education teacher, Emilea, told her things she had never considered due to Emilea's daily contact with students with special needs. As a special education teacher, Emilea had worlds of experience in understanding the nature of children with special needs. Ellen explained that she and Emilea discussed their own "learning disabilities" which were different from each other. "I have mine in math and that sort of thing. It was really just a rich time," Ellen said.

The fact that the members arrived at the cohort with their own set of circumstances strapped on their backs brought into play a myriad of philosophies and ideas. The power of aesthetic discussion was that the responses to prior experiences were freely shared and built upon. Each member's construction of meaning was enhanced and opened for further interpretation by the shared responses of the group. Rosenblatt suggests that when students connect and respond to their prior experiences, they may need to adjust and readjust their own constructions of meaning as they interpret text. Students may find that they have used prior experiences to the extent that they lost relevancy to the text, and they will need to self-correct (1978, p. 11). But in classes around the country, students are limited to shallow responses rather than offering personal interpretations. They have been careered in giving correct responses only, or sit quietly waiting for the teacher to intervene and tell them the "correct" answer. As we

practiced the strategy of bringing in and responding to prior experiences each week,

individuals "adjusted" their own constructions of meaning as they wrestled with others'

prior experiences. The cohort became accustomed to the strategy and arrived eager and

ready to share how they had connected to the text in personal ways.

Accepting Multiple Interpretations

Asking open-ended questions and accepting multiple interpretations recognizes

the reader's personal transaction with the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). The value in

recognizing different perspectives is that students feel free to express their opinions

instead of seeking the "correct response" from the teacher's mind or answer sheet. Other

students also learn and grow by listening to their peers and thinking about the

perspectives of others.

During the cohort, teachers practiced asking open-ended questions and

experienced the excitement of accepting, learning, and making discoveries from

multiple interpretations. Brandeira said in her final interview that the cohort was a

place for sharing ideas and interpretations and building on them.

Emilea focused on the opportunity to discuss a variety of interpretations

based on different people's perceptions of meaning in the books. During cohort

session #6, she said that accepting multiple interpretations was like rereading

Proverbs in the Bible. Each time she read the same proverb, she would gain a

different meaning by it. In the final interview she said, "…it kinda expanded my

way of thinking. To listen to what other people had to say. That's helpful for me

to share with my students. Just because you feel this way about the book doesn't mean you're wrong, just because someone doesn't agree with you. Your interpretation and how you feel about the book is right. But that's the beauty of a book. Everyone gets to interpret it their own way."

Ellen also focused on the variety of perspectives that were generated in the cohort. She explained that some members found stories in *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998) in Session #2 to be roll-on-the-floor-funny while other members found them only mildly amusing.·

A Long Way From Chicago (Peck, 1998) provided an example of the richness of diversity in the discussion. Most members found the character of Grandma Dowdel to be a humorous and a deep down inside good-hearted person. Ellen did not. She was bothered by Grandma Dowdel and expressed her concerns about the character quite adamantly during the discussion. "Her lessons, I just thought were cruel."

From the moment that Ellen disagreed with the main character's "good heartedness," a barrage of new ideas entered the discussion. Teachers owned up that maybe there were some situations that they just couldn't agree with in the book. Interpretations of prior experiences scaffolded new perceptions. All kinds of grandmother stories were shared to eager listeners. Differing perspectives were acknowledged, respected, and responded to in the discussion. In the following segment of the discussion, teachers engaged in an evolution of discussion from a positive view of the book to concerns they had about Grandma Dowdel and the relationship that she had with her own children and grandchildren:

Emilea:	*I was just thinking a lot of grandmas are like that. They don't want to seem like they're hospitable. They want to help people. They want to do things. Look at Grandma Walton on the T.V. show. She was like that. She liked having that control over the whole family without saying a whole lot. And my grandma, she was hospitable, but she had a neighbor across the street. They were great friends, but they were great enemies, kind of like Effie Wilcox.*

(Lots of agreement.)

Merlin:	*That relationship was understated.*
Researcher:	*You've mentioned control. Would you say that was another theme?*
Emilea:	*Oh yes, definitely. She liked to control her surroundings without them necessarily knowing it. It was her way of watching over things. She never said it out loud. She just did it with her actions.*
Victoria:	*Remember when they had Pioneer Days?*
Brandeira:	*And they had the two old farts.*
Victoria:	*Yea.*
Victoria:	*The kids had thought her house was so primitive anyway, and she said, 'You haven't seen anything yet.' The kids were afraid to show her the lanterns they found in the attic.*
Emilea:	*Oh, yea.*
Victoria:	*That's so true of elderly people. It just captured the way they think. They want things simple. It's comfortable. 'What's wrong with it?'*
Brandeira:	*It's worked for twenty years. Why should I change?*
Victoria:	*Exactly. I like the generations that mix. What they learned from each other.*
Angel:	*I loved the story, too... I laughed out loud. That she (Mary Alice) could squeeze two dollars like Grandma. I loved the story. You never knew what she would do next. When we were doing our think alouds, it came out that she cheated. She was mean to the people who deserved it. She was good to the people who deserved it. Then she cheated. And she lost when she cheated. She taught lessons about just being human. How many kids go, when they are at a science fair, and want to switch the cards? That's just a temptation that we all have. So she was very, very human. I liked it.*

Ellen: *Well, I didn't. I don't know, maybe at a different time, I would have had a different impression. But she bothered me a lot. It was just overkill. I kept thinking about... I star in every book I read. I was the foreign child in the United States. And this kind of woman would have made me stay in my room forever. I would never have come out. Her lessons, I just thought they were cruel. There's no need for anybody to go to that extreme to be able to have that much power, supposedly, in her to do those kinds of things. She was good to her grandchildren, but then she wasn't overly affectionate or anything like that. Everything I got from her, it was either neutral, or it was this power thing. For some reason, maybe because of the setting it was in, or maybe with my background, I did not like it. She wasn't the kind of grandmother I wanted. I'm glad I didn't have her because I like heroes. They have to be honest and good. She bothered me because she wasn't, and maybe I needed a hero that was honest and good when I read it.*

Researcher: *Were you looking for a hero?*

Ellen: *Not particularly, but you know the events that have gone on this week, and you know, for somebody to be so self righteous that she would go out and do these things to other people. I mean, they were bad, too I tried to think, maybe, at that time it would have been funny, but to me, at this moment, it's not. I'm not really sure why, or if I need to go into therapy. She was, indeed, far from typical. So many of the things that they highlighted in there were things I didn't get a good feeling from. It just wasn't a good book that I enjoyed.*

Angel: *I will say, there were several times when I said, 'I wonder if the parents know what goes on out there,' that they keep sending them every summer? I thought that in the beginning. 'Do these parents really know where they are sending their kids to stay?' I did think that because somebody could have really gotten hurt with some of the stuff that happened. But then it was kind of like, I had to take it kind of lightly.*

Brandeira: *It never talks about the parents ever going to see her.*

Angel: *It doesn't.*

Victoria: *That bothered me.*

Emilea: *That bothered me, too.*

Brandeira: *And that she never went up there. And they never went down there. They saw their grandmother once a year for two weeks. But there were no parents. Their parents popped them on a train and sent them.*

Ellen:	*That bothered me a lot, too.*
Brandeira:	*Like some of the parents now a days. Pop their kid on the plane and send them to LA to see their grandparents.*
Researcher:	*I kept thinking, if it's so easy for them to get there once a summer, does she (Grandma) go for Christmas, Thanksgiving?*
Brandeira:	*Yea. There wasn't anything else there.*
Ellen:	*But I loved the way it ended.*

Brandeira suggested in her final interview that different perspectives were based on "baggage." She added, "Those differences made it that much better. Someone else came up with something that none of the rest of us would have seen."

Victoria found the variety of perspectives "refreshing." In her final interview, she said,

It was refreshing to hear somebody have a different angle from mine. Very

refreshing. At first, it was even like a class situation. Your're kinda afraid to

disagree. But you really do (disagree), but you just sit there. And then somebody

else does, and you say, "Darn, why didn't I say that, because I felt that way, too.

(Victoria, final interview)

"Different angles" was a succinct way of describing what happened during the discussion of *A Long Way From Chicago* (Peck, 1998) as is shown in the previous dialogue. Members of the cohort first described endearing characteristics of the older generation such as the ability to control their surroundings without others knowing about it and helping others in quiet ways. The discussion evolved into Grandma Dowdel's human side in which she cheated and lost because she cheated. When Ellen jumped in and painted the dark side of Grandma Dowdel, participants found different angles they

hadn't delved into previously. They looked at the possibility of the children or others

getting hurt due to Grandma Dowdel's actions. From the darker picture came new

concerns regarding Grandma's children and their lack of involvement with her. From that

angle came the frustration about the children being shipped off to Grandma's and then the

wider concern that many of today's children are shipped off to relatives in distant

locations. Because cohort members felt free to reflect on many angles of the character

and to say what they thought, a multi-dimensional view of Grandma Dowdel developed.

Responding to Intertextuality

Intertextuality was an important concept in the cohort because participants were

encouraged to bring in their knowledge and understanding of other texts and offer

comparisons, contrasts, and themes that related the texts. In the cohort, I modeled

bringing in related texts by presenting other books by the same author or other books

with a similar theme. As we progressed through the cohort sessions, I encouraged

teachers to make text-to-text comparisons. The reflective writings presented a quiet time

of reflection in which teachers were asked to think about themes running through the

books we had read and discussed.

A good example of the strength of bringing in related texts occurred in the

reflective writing session after the discussion of *Petey* (Mikaelsen, 1998) in Cohort

Session #8. This is Brandeira's reflective writing:

> Everybody is "crippled" – either physically, emotionally, mentally, or socially. It
>
> is how one "walks" through life that ends up making the difference. Whether it is

Peg Kehret's battle with polio or Gary Paulsen's fight to survive in a less than

hospitable world, the tools are what count. Julie faces challenges in change; Petey

faces imprisonment in a crippled body; Joey Dowdel battles misunderstanding

and alienation in the strange world of his Grandma that he ends up loving

desperately; Jason Miller must find the real self. One crisis after another

bombards each 'hero' but each character's handicap eventually becomes his/her

greatest strength. The academic team in *The View From Saturday* is a bunch of

yo-yo's with a set of emotional ups and downs that one needs to have a scorecard

to follow. However, it is the little things that end up being the catalysts to big

changes and victories for all the characters. Jason Miller in *The Dark Side of*

Nowhere ends up becoming a leader and a 'savior' once he finds himself. Petey

teaches others the value of self; Peg never "defeats' the disease, but she learns

like the other characters it is the little things that make all the difference. Success

is in painted toenails and knock-knock jokes, gifts at weddings, going fishing, and

mysterious tea parties. Alice's first birthday party and Tommy's iron lung

cheerleading, dogs that save lives or destroy neighborhoods – all have something

in common. The characters must leave their cocooned existence to allow both

themselves and others to grow – whether to survive nature, win a championship,

get poetic justice, or just have fun. All the characters don't understand the plan –

but each has a "chocolate milkshake" to get them propelled into the fray.

(Brandeira, reflective writing)

In Brandeira's reflective writing, she discovered a central theme running through

the books, and that characters from the different books we read had common

characteristics. By bringing in related texts, her thinking and meaning reached deeper levels.

Predicting and Monitoring Prediction

Predicting and monitoring is a strategy used in a balanced approach to reading to help readers think about possibilities and monitor whether they were correct or not. There is no need for students to be correct in their predictions, so much as it is necessity to monitor the predictions based on new information in the text. Like thinking aloud, prediction is the verbal recognition of engaged and active thinking. Prediction, as I mentioned, is most often used in reading, but it is also a strategy that supports the aesthetic stance in discussion. "What if" questions provide the participants opportunities to take the information in the text and expand on their original thoughts. By expanding on possibilities, participants were constructing meaning on deeper levels.

In the cohort sessions, prediction and monitoring of prediction were an active part of discussion. In discussion of *The View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996) in session #6, the facilitators asked the group the following question: "With the knowledge you have of the characters and the plot, change the story and predict alterative plots and endings."

Victoria: *How about Ham getting on the academic team?*

(Lots of agreement.)

Brandeira: *That's a whole different story.*

Merlin:	Or you could create Ham getting on the team in such a way that he has enough of a victory that improves his self-esteem such that he doesn't have to be a bully anymore.
Emilea:	We see growth and change.
Angel:	Or what about the other dog getting the treats?
Brandeira	Yea.
Emilea:	Whooo.
Researcher:	No, what about Ham getting the treats?

(Lots of laughter.)

Brandeira:	Or Nadia, continuing her anger for years and years and years, and not getting over it?
Emilea:	That would make a long story, wouldn't it?
Merlin:	That's depressing, isn't it?
Emilea:	What if the Dad hadn't had the dream to open up Sillington House?
Brandeira:	What if Julian gave up and didn't try to have his tea party?
Emilea:	Or what if he had just sent out regular invitations?
Victoria:	What if he (Julian) had invited the whole class?

(Lots of teachers talking at the same time.)

Merlin:	Or if he had done it (invited people) openly? Because they made a big issue of how this turns into winners and losers. The ones who got the invitations were the winners, and the ones who didn't were the losers.
Angel:	What if the teacher weren't handicapped?
Emilea:	I thought about that.
Researcher:	Did she need to be handicapped to make the story?
Brandeira:	I already am. Aren't we all?
Angel:	But they came together to help her.

Researcher:	*They (the academic team) helped her. They wanted her to stand on her own two feet.*
Angel:	*It was important to the team. So I think that played a huge role in the book.*
Merlin:	*I don't see that as making a difference. If she hadn't have been in a wheel chair, it would have been something else. I wear glasses and hearing aids.*

The previous dialogue of the participants in the cohort exemplified how prediction can be used in discussion to build on the information in the text. The suggestion that Ham make the academic team raised the idea that perhaps his victory in making it on the team would increase his self esteem and reduce his need to bully others. Another thought provoking suggestion about the teacher's handicap raised questions about everyone's "handicaps." Teachers also disagreed as to whether the teacher's handicap was an important role in the book. These predictions propelled teachers beyond the efferent level of information into a world of possibility and consequence.

Once students are familiar with the characters and plot, they can imagine the characters in different time periods, in different situations or in different relationships. Students monitor the prediction by not going beyond the possible scope of what they know and understand about the characters and their relationships to each other. For example, no one predicted the outcome if Mrs. Olinsky could fly. Flying was beyond the scope of the book.

Victoria found value in prediction, the freedom to voice opinions and to "speculate on life application." She indicated that the cohort was interested enough in the story to think about what might happen to the characters after the end of the book. She found that the group stimulated each other. In her final interview, she stated, "We would

kind of encourage each other and bring out our new ideas and try them out. We felt safe

enough to do that."

Merlin said in her final interview, "This forces the students or the participants in

the cohort to use their brain because there's no incorrect answer. It's their opinion, and

they've got to draw from their experience, and their beliefs to come up with an answer to

that type of a question. And that's what we need to do with children, not give them one-

answer questions. Give them open-ended questions that they have to think about it and

use their brain."

Using Small Groups

I considered the use of small groups a strategy that supported the aesthetic stance

because small groups create situations in which students have more opportunity to speak

and negotiate ideas before a full group discussion. Small groups can be used in

preparation for a larger discussion. That was how I modeled their use in the cohort. In

session's #6 - #9, teachers were asked to divide into small groups and work on different

goals in preparation for the whole group discussion. Group #1 often created the visual

interpretation of the characters or settings in the book, Group #2 often highlighted

specific events through retelling and explanations of why those parts were significant to

them, and Group #3 created a list of open-ended questions to facilitate the continuation of

the discussion following the presentation of ideas from Group #1 and Group #2. In this

way, teachers took the responsibility of facilitating a share of the discussion. I decided

that this sharing of facilitation was a successful means of stimulating member

participation and enriching the full group discussion. Instead of the participant observer asking the questions, the cohort members became the facilitators and asked the questions that were meaningful to them. In session #9, for example, Merlin and Angel facilitated the discussion of the children's book, *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998). Their questions included the following:

1. Compare Charles' mom and Smudge's Dad.

2. How does the font indicate the atmosphere of each voice?

3. Would changing the order of the "voices" affect your reaction to the book?

4. Would it be possible for Charles and Smudge to be friends? Explain.

5. Go through and compare/contrast pictures for each phase of their walk per each voice!

The small group created these questions and invitations in order for participants to construct a deeper meaning; I didn't predesign the questions. Angel and Merlin arrived at the questions through a dialogue with each other before presenting their questions and invitations to the larger group.

Another small group in Session #9 facilitated the discussion of "The Morning is Full" by Pablo Neruda. Ellen and Brandeira discussed the poem between them before presenting their ideas to the rest of the group. They also invited the group to help them make sense of the poem and to consider possible meanings. The following dialogue was taken from the discussion of "The Morning is Full" by Pablo Neruda. Ellen began the discussion with her concerns about the poem and then invited other participants to look at possible meanings. I have included the poem following this dialogue so that the construction of meaning among the participants was apparent.

Ellen: Let's go to "The Morning is Full" first. My problem with it, and maybe you guys can give me some insight on this, too. We worked out, oh, two or three different scenarios on this, but there are about two areas that I just don't get what the pronouns are. I know that sounds pretty stupid, but I really didn't understand that.

Merlin: There's never anything stupid when you are talking about trying to interpret a poem.

Ellen: The problem that I had was the possessive "our" on line six and on number eleven and again on thirteen. Who is "she?" "Her" and "her mass of kisses?" As we looked at that, we tried to come up with some way of looking at it. Now it was real helpful that someone had said you could look at this as a love poem, but then again, the morning is a time of, you know, everything in it is so delicate and so beautiful that you could look at it as a male/female thing if you wanted. You could also look at it as life and death. There are so many different levels. Did you guys have any, when you read it, and you stumbled across those pronouns, did you have that feeling? And what did you attach to what they were supposed to mean?

Merlin: I kept going back to the title, "The Morning is Full."

Ellen: Mm hhhm...

Merlin: And then it said "The morning is full of storm."

Ellen: Hmmm...

Merlin: I almost think it is the storm. "Her mass of kisses breaks and sinks, assailed in the door of summer's wind." A storm can be singular or plural in my mind. I mean we've got "her" and "our."

Ellen: "The wind that topples the storm in a wave..." That's on line eleven.

Angel: See, I thought "her" was the morning.

Emilea: I was thinking it was the morning.

Ellen: O.K.

Brandeira: O.K.

Ellen: O.K. Storm or morning. I know morning will work. But then again you can look at it... I thought it was so interesting that "The morning is full of

storm in the heart of summer." Storm in the heart is passion, sadness, you know.

Brandeira: *I don't see it as the heart of the summer. The storm in the heart.*

Ellen: *Yes. The "storm in the heart of summer".*

Brandeira: *The "white handkerchiefs of goodbye." Again, some sadness. Waving them, like saying goodbye to them. "The numberless heart..". I think of numberless...*

(Several teachers murmuring. Several teachers whispering lines of the poem to themselves.)

Ellen: *I had problems with that, too.*

Brandeira: *I'm thinking that the numberless heart; it's almost as if they are talking about souls which are these immortal things that you can not touch. No dimension to them. It's a possibility.*

Ellen: *Those two lines just really haunted me. "Beating above our loving silence." I know that when you listen to the wind and you hear all these different things going on. I'm not sitting there and loving silence. I'm having to comfort my Australian Shepherd if there's any lightning.*

(Laughter.)

Ellen: *I don't know why it's "our loving silence." I don't know who "we" are. Is it just "we" the people who experience this storm? And we love the... what do we love? The wind? I don't. I hate it.*

(Lots of laughter.)

Merlin: *Some people enjoy storms.*

(Several teachers agree.)

Brandeira: *And the lightning and the thunder. The "loving silence" makes me think that someone is dead or something is dead because I think that someone has gone and died. And it's "orchestral" and "divine," so I'm thinking, are we going to heaven?*

Emilea: *There's also the contrast of the wars and the songs.*

Merlin: *Yes...*

Brandeira: *More like a language full of wars. And songs. Think of all the songs that are marching off to war songs.*

Ellen: *Think of all the songs that are sung at the funerals. You've got language that has the wars and the songs. It's almost like the violence and then natural...*

Merlin: *The people that are left behind are the war and the sadness.*

The Morning is Full (Neruda, 1969, p. 9)

The Morning is full of storm
in the heart of the summer.

The clouds travel like white handkerchiefs of goodbye,
the wind, travelling, waving them in its hands.

The numberless heart of the wind
beating above our loving silence.

Orchestral and divine, resounding among the trees
like a language full of wars and songs.

Wind that bears off the dead leaves with a quick raid
and deflects the pulsing arrows of the birds.

Wind that topples her in a wave without spray
and substance without weight, and leaning fires.

Her mass of kisses breaks and sinks,
assailed in the door of the summer's wind.

So much happened in the previous dialogue. First Ellen and Brandeira had the freedom to wrestle with the poem before approaching the rest of the group with their ideas. In their partnership, they built a foundation on which to grow. Then Ellen very honestly opened her questions and suggestions up for consideration. Several members felt secure enough to take a shot at possible interpretations which provided a segue to other meanings. As participants talked, others listened and whispered phrases of the poem to

themselves. They tasted the ideas, tried them out on their tongues as they constructed meaning in different ways.

Emilea thought that the evolution of the cohort in moving from facilitator control to small groups in which participants facilitated parts of the sessions and then to complete participant facilitation was a positive idea that she stated in her final interview. "The working with groups and having us be the discussion leaders, I thought that would kinda be a good idea to take ownership of the discussion."

Angel liked the way the members of the cohort were divided into groups previous to the discussion. She could see herself dividing her classes into small groups with different goals and then getting back together to continue the discussion as a whole. Angel said in her final interview:

And there was the one group who always did the mapping of the relationships because I think the mapping and the diagramming of the relationships is something that I'm going to start doing. So I really loved that technique. We always had one group that was leading the discussion. And the first group always analyzed a medical aspect or something like that. And I liked that 'cause I could see myself using that sort of thing in the classroom with different groups, and they're all working on different aspects of the book and then come back to present. So that's an idea that I got from it. (Angel, final interview)

Thinking Aloud

The strategy of thinking aloud supports the aesthetic stance because it helps the reader to stop and verbally express opinions, information, or ideas related to the text. The reader may bring in prior experiences in order to connect to the text. Teachers who use this strategy often think aloud before, during, and after reading to students. They may say such things as, "Oh, I hope he doesn't go in there" or "I wonder what she meant by that?" Thinking aloud is not just for teachers, but for students, too. The act of thinking aloud helps readers realize their thinking processes and reminds them to monitor the reading. If sentences, paragraphs, or even chapters have been read without the act of thinking, very little meaning has been constructed. If the reader is thinking aloud before, during, and after reading, construction of meaning is enhanced. Thinking aloud helps readers know what is going on in their heads in relationship to text. Thinking aloud can include retelling, restating, asking questions, making comparisons and contrasts, making connections to other texts or pieces of information, and creating new ideas or interpretations.

In the cohort, I took the idea of thinking aloud and extended its usefulness as a reflective preparation technique for discussion. Instead of thinking aloud during the reading of the text, cohort members were asked to reflect on the text both verbally and in writing while someone else listened to their thoughts. Once this occurred, partners returned to the full group with their ideas and notes, and the discussion commenced. I found the technique to be valuable because the process of thinking, writing, and listening

stimulated a variety of ideas to bring to the discussion. Let me back up and explain how I modeled the think aloud in the cohort.

In Session #3, I modeled the think aloud strategy by pretending that I had been assigned to write a poem about autumn. Before beginning the poem, I thought aloud about what I knew about poetry. I said (and wrote on the board),

I'm thinking, what do I know about poetry? Well, I know that sometimes poems rhyme, and sometimes you have patterns of AA BB, or AB, AB. In poetry sometimes you have figurative language or symbols, or you have images. You see pictures in your mind. So you want good descriptions. That's all I can think about right now. I'm trying to figure out what I know, and, of course, this is bringing in prior experiences. O.K., another area I have to think about is autumn. What do I know about autumn? I know about leaves and color, and I know that it is a time of dying, and wind and weather changes. Autumn. Oh, it's jacket weather. What are those flowers? Chrysanthemums bloom. O.K. that's all I can think of right now. I know something about a poem. I know something about autumn. Now I've got to put that together. While I'm writing, I'm going to be constantly going back and revising it. O.K. (writing on the board as I am creating the poem), Wild dancing, wild dancing ... leaves ... trespass on my head. Trespass on my head. Crisp, cold ... That's something else I know, I like alliteration. Crisp, cold wind sails them on. I'm not rhyming, obviously. Wild dancing leaves trespass on my head. Crisp, cold wind sails them on. Autumn catches my imagination and laughs at summer blooms gone dead. Oh, maybe I am rhyming! That's a start. (Participant Observer)

In the example of thinking aloud, my goal was to show my thought processes as I was writing. My thought processes included asking myself what I knew about a poem and what I knew about autumn. Then, equipped with my background knowledge, I began to write and edit the poem. This was how I modeled the think aloud. This is how the cohort observed my thinking processes. I called it the think/write aloud. Once the strategy was modeled, cohort members divided into partners and began to think aloud about the book, *A Long Way From Chicago* (Peck, 1998). Members wanted to know if they should focus on the whole book or just one of the stories. I suggested that they make the decision with their partners. They might write a paragraph or a poem about a particular story, a character, a setting, or a time line. It would be fun, I thought, to bring a variety of ideas to the discussion.

Each group did something different. After talking and writing down assorted images, Brandeira produced the following verses in her think aloud:

Three trees south of

where 2 paved streets touched

in 3 room white washed castle

made of clapboards & spit

reigned a queen w/

nothing more than 8th grades

adorned w/home grown

spices & chipped dishes

nothing matched

under-sized, over-used dish pan

with Quaker Oats prize towels

chicken & home made noodles

that tasted as good as sex

the floors moaned, the two-holer reeked

the windows lied from

beneath 2 layers of grime

the best poker players of 4

generations held court

this wizened old broad

taught me about boys

and opened hearts. (Brandeira, think aloud)

Each group brought their think/write aloud ideas to the table, and the discussion began in full force. They had voiced their evolving thoughts and heard themselves organize and shift through their thoughts on the book. And their partners had listened to their thought processes.

Once the discussion was over, cohort members were asked to write about what they thought of the think/write aloud. Angel wrote,

I have to reconsider my original opinion on the think aloud. I think my reaction at first was negative because I couldn't think of a place to begin, so I felt uncomfortable. I then tried to place students in that position and saw that it could be truly traumatic for some. However, after the discussion it brought forth, I see some definite benefits. After the think aloud, everyone was prepared to contribute to the conversation. At that point, the comfort level rose because the opinions had

already been said once. Now I can see using this technique in the classroom.

(Angel, written reflection)

Common Gains in the Cohort

In determining the common gains in the cohort, data was analyzed from the written reflections and from the final interviews. Written reflections and final interviews were coded for emerging patterns and themes. Initially, I began with thirty-three codes that I collapsed to twenty-five codes. Then I created a chart of the codes so that I could list teachers who spoke or wrote about similar or personal gains in the cohort. Common gains included the value of mutual respect, bringing in and responding to prior experiences, the enjoyment of talking about literature and poetry, the value of multiple perspectives, the usefulness of visual representations, group work which helped participants take ownership of the discussion, and the need for a comfortable and safe environment. Refer to Table 3 for "Teacher Gains in the Cohort."

Table 3

Teacher Gains in the Cohort

What teachers said they gained from the cohort:	Brandeira	Emilea	Angel	Victoria	Merlin	Ellen
Respect for each other	X	X	X	X	X	X
No one tried to be more exceptional than another/ open to each other.	X	X	X			
It made me break out of a mold	X					

Table 3 (continued)

What teachers said they gained from the cohort:	Brandeira	Emilea	Angel	Victoria	Merlin	Ellen
Read more young adult literature			X	X		
Bringing in and responding to prior experiences. Sharing and building on each other's experiences.	X		X	X	X	X
Learning from multiple perspectives	X	X	X	X	X	X
Back off and let my own students generate more of the discussion	X		X			X
I felt just like the kids by having to do assignments	X	X		X		
Visual representations useful.		X	X	X	X	X
Participants taking ownership of discussion/feeling responsible.		X	X	X		X
Group work was positive aspect.		X	X	X		X
Enhanced and validated what teacher was already doing.		X			X	
Challenged teacher to look at facial expressions when other kids were talking.		X				

Table 3 (continued)

What teachers said they gained from the cohort:	Brandeira	Emilea	Angel	Victoria	Merlin	Ellen
Getting to know other people in the district; building relationships.		X	X		X	
Writing caused good insights		X		X		
Recommending more books to students.			X			
Freedom to voice opinions.				X	X	
Feeling the need to write more.					X	
Comfort and safety important		X		X	X	X
Thinking about the book and the discussions after the cohort.	X			X		
Sharpened burden to present quality literature.				X		
Comparing/contrasting characters/situations from different books.			X			
Listening more to students.					X	X
You don't have to be pretty or charismatic to discuss.						X
Predicting events in and beyond the story.				X	X	

The Value of Mutual Respect

Valuing mutual respect was a common gain in the cohort. Angel

commented on respect in her final interview. She said that respect made it easier

to open up to each other and to gain understanding of multiple perspectives. In her

final interview, Angel said,

> First of all, I think the group really hit it off as far as our personalities because
>
> even when we disagreed, we were always willing to listen to the other people and
>
> were really open to one another. So I think it was a good balance of personalities.
>
> There were very different people. There were people who loved books, and there
>
> were people who disliked almost every book. So there were definitely some
>
> disagreements, but it was kind of good to get that going, and it was always done
>
> very respectfully which it isn't in the classroom sometimes. I got ideas of things
>
> from others that I never would have thought of that would open total new doors to
>
> looking at books in different ways that my little close minded self would not think
>
> of. (Angel, final interview)

Bringing in and Responding to Prior Experiences

I encouraged cohort members to bring in and respond to their prior experiences.

The use of this strategy was seen as a common gain in the cohort. Members valued the

experiences of each other and built on those experiences with their own thoughts and

ideas.

In session #7, Merlin told the cohort she had read *A View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996) two years before, and that she felt there were too many coincidences in the book. The fact that people from the same town migrated to another town for vacation didn't seem likely to her. Then she explained about her husband's hometown, and how all the folks there would meet at the same place each winter. "And then I'm thinking, it really isn't so unusual for the old people to flock to the same area," she said. Merlin had used her prior experiences to help her feel comfortable with the story line in the book. When she shared this experience with the rest of the cohort, they began to see that coincidences in the book were possible, and that *The View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996) was potentially more realistic than they had originally thought.

In session #2, *Harris and Me* (Paulson, 1993) was brought in as a related text to another of Paulsen's books, *My Life in Dog Years* (1998). The book, *Harris and Me* (1993) contains some language that I mentioned as a concern that teachers might not want to use the book in class. Brandeira immediately jumped in with a personal story. "My dad was career army. So as a result, I can be very creative, actually come up with some (words or groups of words) that are physically impossible." Brandeira's prior experience with foul language eased the cohort into a discussion on whether the text would be accepted by teachers, students, and parents.

During the reflective writing session in Session #2, Ellen wrote:

Once again, I leave the discussion richer for having heard so many ideas. The enthusiasm that lively discussion generates can let me enjoy aspects of the book that I hadn't considered. It also gave me insight into the personalities and value systems of the people in the group, both positive and negative. I also listened to

these ladies as if they were my teacher and wanted to lead me in a certain

direction. Human nature, ain't it grand? (Ellen, reflective writing)

These examples demonstrate how cohort members brought their prior experiences

into play and responded to each other's thoughts and ideas. The value of bringing in and

responding to prior experiences was a common gain in the cohort.

Exhilaration from Talking about Literature

The next common gain was all about exhilaration! Teachers found that talking

about literature and poetry was stimulating and enjoyable. In the final interview,

Brandeira stated, "I really enjoyed the stimulation while we were in there. I mean, it was

wonderful. We would go home, and I would be tired, but exhilarated! It was so much fun

to talk with these other people about literature." The fun of talking literature and poetry

was observed at every session. Teachers were offering and negotiating ideas, sharing

humorous comments, and providing background knowledge as they were engaged in

meaningful discussion. Victoria said in her final interview, "I think we also had an

interest in the literature that increased. We could hardly wait to start the next story. And

we compared it to the ones that we read at first. It was dynamic all the way through. It

just kept rolling around and working, so I thought that was good."

Ellen brought out the enjoyment level in her final reflective writing:

The focus for this week's discussion was incredibly enlightening. With the

different selections, group members contributed such diverse interpretations to the

material we read. The child's book was my favorite because the contributions

were from so many areas; the pictures, word choice, graphics. Besides, it was

great fun! I kept thinking about how perspective can be illustrated for students to

understand how differently we all perceive. (Ellen, reflective writing)

In her reflective writing for Session #4, Angel wrote:

I absolutely love hearing others' ideas; I would never think of some of the themes

presented. It is a constant reminder to me to be open-minded before reading,

during reading, and after discussion. Sometimes as an English teacher, I get

caught up in the vocabulary and literary license and figurative language and...

and... and... coming to these discussions refreshes me and reminds me to look at

themes, hidden and obvious, to appreciate the book on a different level. I feel I

return to the classroom prepared for more open, exploring discussion. I trust that

my students will gain from these discussions as I do. (Angel, reflective writing)

From these examples, it is apparent that teachers commonly enjoyed the practice

of talking about literature. Their enjoyment was backed by the knowledge that they were

gaining experience in taking the aesthetic stance, and that this experience made a

difference to them.

The Value of Multiple Perspectives

Since taking the aesthetic stance relies heavily on the use of open-ended questions

and the acceptance of multiple interpretations to text, the cohort members experienced

and practiced these strategies. The value of multiple perspectives was seen as a common

gain in the cohort. After the discussion of *Julie of the Wolves* (1972) in Cohort Session #4, Ellen wrote:

> So many new ideas bubble and seethe in my greasy little brain after listening to the ideas shared within the cohort. It makes me realize that students can be very much active listeners as well as participant in discussion. The quality of experience from reading a novel is great, but understanding from various perspectives opens a whole new line of thought. (Ellen, reflective writing)

After the discussion of The *Dark Side of Nowhere* (1997) in Cohort Session #5, Merlin wrote, "Any time another perspective is shared, I am awakened to a deeper understanding of the situation/book/idea being discussed."

Emilea also wrote reflectively about the variety of interpretations after the discussion of *The Dark Side of Nowhere* (1997). She wrote, "I think I am a very concrete type personality with a desire to be around others (at times) to learn different methods of teaching as well as interpreting someone else's perception that I might not have previously considered. (Help me to be more abstract!)"

During the discussion of *Small Steps* (Kehret, 1996) in Cohort Session #7, Emilea had just finished describing the visual representation that she and her partner had produced on the board when Merlin responded with a different interpretation (See Figure 1):

Merlin:	*I liked the way you put the book there because it meant so much to Tommy for Peg to read to him. And I really liked the...*
Emilea	*(laughing) That's not what we were thinking. I just put it there because she's the author, but that is true. And I thought about that. Then, I thought since it kinda looks like a butterfly, Peg had kind of come out of her cocoon and she had become a butterfly...*

(Everybody talking at once.)

Victoria: *I like that.*

Merlin: *How she read to him. Then she eventually started reading to the younger children.*

Angel: *The book that her husband went and found for her in the antique shop. The book (symbol on the board) has many meanings.*

In this short excerpt, multiple perceptions were accepted to understand and think about the tiny illustration next to Peg's name. The illustrator had originally drawn the symbol to refer to Peg as the author of the book. Merlin, on the other hand, had seen its significance as a visual representation of Peg's kindness in reading to another patient. Emilea accepted that idea and added another; she had noticed that her drawing resembled a butterfly. She compared Peg to a butterfly coming out of a cocoon. That idea set everyone to talking at once. Then Merlin extended her original idea to describe the fact that Peg began to read to younger children in the ward. Angel added yet another interpretation when she reminded the cohort that the picture next to Peg's name could symbolize the importance of a children's book that Peg's husband found for her in an antique shop. In this simple excerpt, teachers played with ideas and enjoyed sharing sudden discoveries with each other. In each case, teachers constructed meaning through the freedom to discuss, accept, and learn from multiple interpretations in the cohort.
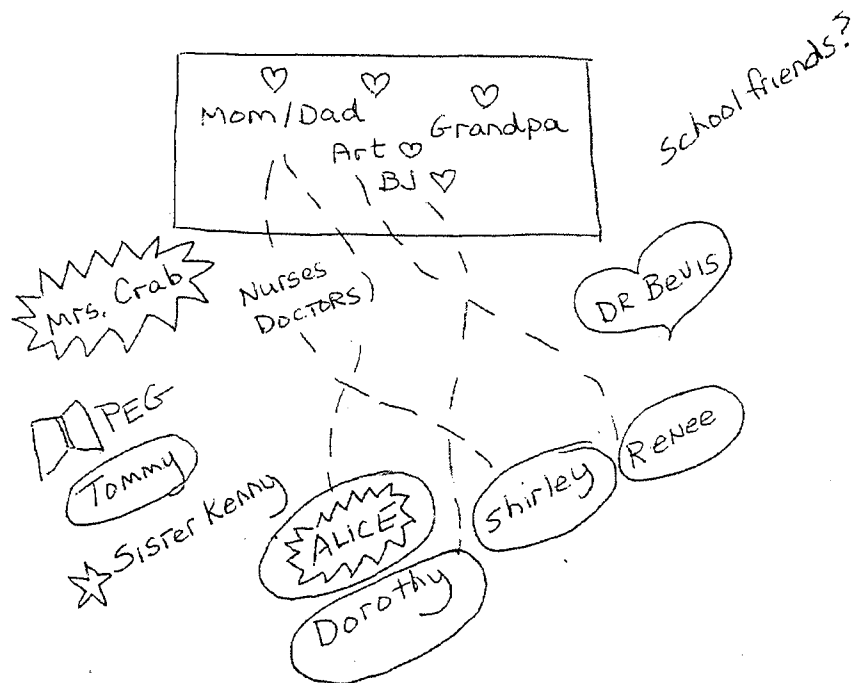
Figure 1. Visual representation of *Small Steps* (Kehret, 1996), Cohort Session #7.

The Usefulness of Visual Representations

During the cohort, visual representations were referred to as mapping, webbing,

graphing, doodles, and diagramming. The use of a timeline was also valuable to the

discussion. Most of these terms, however, were more linear, and signified a more

quantitative approach to literature. I changed the term to visual representation to indicate

that personal interpretation could also be significant in the design. The idea was not to

just list what happened and when (although that efferent information is helpful in laying

the foundation of the discussion), but to create symbols to express individual or

negotiated interpretation. Howard Gardner (1999) posited that more students could reach

deeper understanding by activating multiple intelligences. Gardner said, "I envision a

world citizenry that is highly literate, disciplined, capable of thinking critically and

creatively, knowledgeable about a range of cultures, able to participate actively in discussions about new discoveries and choices, willing to take risks for what it believes in" (Gardner, p. 25). Gardner's words describe the need to activate multiple intelligences in the oral world of discussion in order to provide meaningful experiences for visual learners. In preparation for facilitating the cohort, however, I had not thought seriously about using visuals to increase our understanding and provide a different means of sharing interpretation. I used one visual early on without the success I thought it would bring. But as we approached the discussion for *The View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996), I felt the necessity of adding visuals to help teachers "see" the complex relationships in the text. Beginning in Session #6, each visual interpretation was developed by at least two members of the cohort working together who were assigned to visually interpret characters and situations in the book. The visual representations became a foundation to the discussion because they served as reminders of character relationships, dates of specific events, and group members' personal ideas played out in symbols and drawings. The realization of the usefulness of visual representations was a common gain in the cohort.

In the final interview, Angel explained, "How cool it would be to have a wall with blank paper on it, and have them do a big diagram on it, and leave them up all year to where when they are having a discussion, they can look over (at it). At the bottom of the diagram, you could even do a chronological time line. You can just look at the bottom. And have it up there all year."

Merlin was very comfortable with the visual representations because of her sense of being a visual person. She had been one of the first participants to create a visual

representation in session #6 for *The View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996). In her

group's visual representation of the characters, there are dots and hearts, and lines

representing all kinds of connections between and among them (See Figure 2). Merlin

stated, "The webbing on the board, the directional interaction of the personalities of the

people visualized helps you to get to know they fit into the literature."

In the following dialogue taken from the discussion on *The View From Saturday*

(Konigsburg, 1996) in Cohort Session #6, it is clear that the visual representation was a

huge help in keeping the relationships clear so that the discussion could build from the

foundation of knowledge lent by the visual representation. Merlin stood at the board and

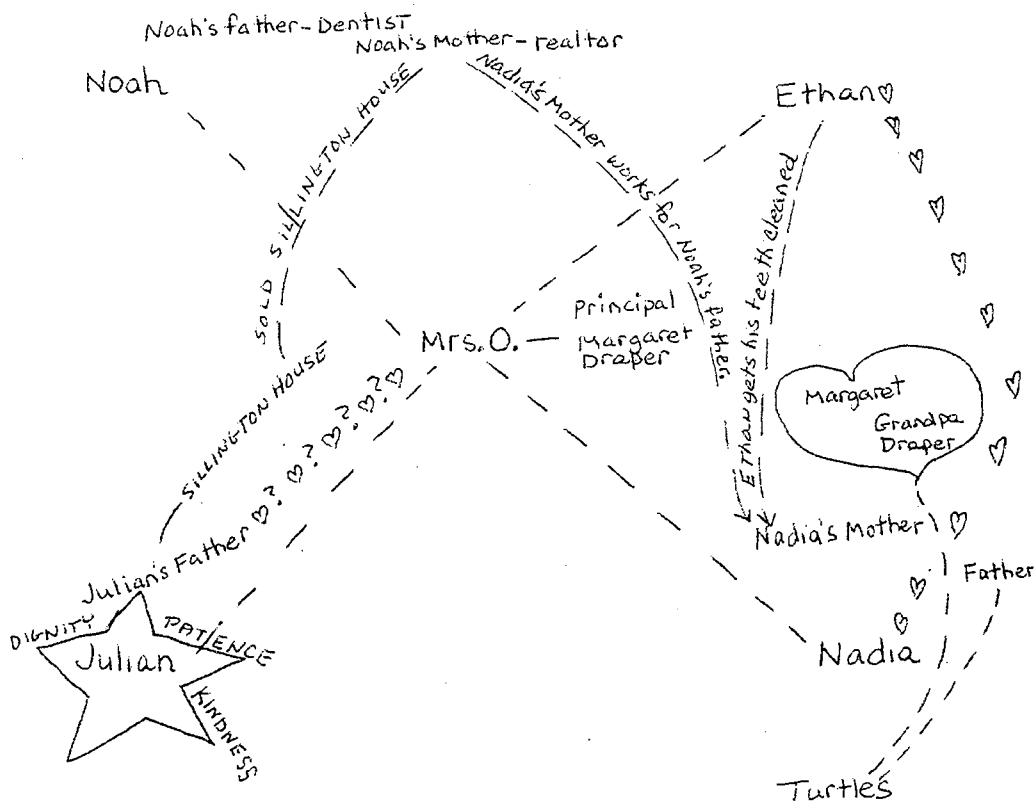pointed as she described the visual representation to the cohort.

Figure 2. Visual Representation of *The View From Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1996),

Cohort Session #6.

Merlin: They are just all inter-related. Julian not so much, but he is really the one who initiated it. He is the one who came in and started the tea party which pulled them all together.

Researcher: So he gets a star.

Merlin: Yes. And then, toward the end of the book, we are thinking there might be something between Mrs. Olinsky and Mr. Singh. We don't know about that.

(Verbal response at this idea from group.)

Merlin: And with Nadia, she has ties to both Ethan and Noah because Noah's Dad is the one her mother started working for, and Margaret really told her about the job, so that Nadia blames Margaret for her mom and dad splittin' up. If she hadn't had a job to go to, 'her mom couldn't have left her dad.' And then the turtles get her father out of the land of the morbid into the land of the living again, and that is brought in Margaret's influence over Izzy who is Nadia's father, Margaret being Ethan's grandmother. We figured that Ethan has this thing for Nadia, and then Noah's mom facilitated the employment for Nadia's mom, and Noah's mom sold Sillington Place and helped with the permits for Mr. Singh, Julian's Dad, and Noah was best man at the marriage of Margaret and Izzy. Mrs. Olinsky had been a friend and a colleague of Margaret for many years before her accident which caused her to be a paraplegic which we didn't even put down because it wasn't important.

Researcher: The 'teeth cleaned' goes to Nadia's mom. I put that in the wrong place.

Merlin: Gotcha. Because she works for the dentist, she cleans his teeth. What else have I left out? It's self explanatory because of the drawing.

Reseacher: Does everyone now know who everyone is and how everyone is related?

Merlin: We were definitely impressed with Julian's patience, kindness, creativity...

Researcher: And a diagram like this is going to be different for each group because it expresses how we feel about the characters and where we put them on the map.

Brandeira: You said that Julian gets a star because he pulled them all together which he did because he was just as needful as they are.

Merlin: Oh, absolutely.

Victoria: Even more so...

Merlin: *Even more so because he needed the friendship. Oh, yes.*

Brandeira: *He managed to come up with a plan, but had not the others been...*

Merlin: *Needful and receptive...*

Brandeira: *And receptive. If they had not been so receptive, he would have been like one of those poor little urchins on the outside looking in that the kids torment mercilessly.*

Victoria: *But he was the last one that Mrs. Olinsky chose because he was so quiet. Remember he was standing in front of the blackboard. She just didn't know about him.*

This segment of the discussion both identifies how the visual representation helped the discussants and how cohort members began to respond to the interpretations on the board. The usefulness of visual representations was a common gain in the cohort.

Group Work, Which Helped Participants, Take Ownership of the Discussion

The next common gain that emerged was group work, which helped participants take ownership of the discussion. During the sessions of the cohort, I gradually released control of the facilitation to the members. "The Evolution of the Cohort" which can be found in the appendices explains in detail how that ownership was handed over to the participants through the duration of the cohort. Participants became facilitators, and that responsibility and ownership was considered a common gain from the cohort. In the final interview, Ellen remarked in her final interview, "There was so much sharing, and there were different ways of doing it. With some of the different things with the graphing, with the giving the leadership, assigning the leadership and letting people bring their own style into it. I just thought that was wonderful. It was really a good experience."

In the earlier sessions, I divided the group into partners to practice the think aloud strategy and to write book talks over books that we were reading in the cohort. In sessions #6 - #9, I divided the cohort into three groups, each with a different goal. Group #1's responsibility was to visually represent the text. Group #2 either retold stories of the text and explained why they chose certain selections to retell, or they became experts on significant information in the text like polio or cerebral palsy. Group #3's responsibility was to create the list of open-ended questions and facilitate the discussion of the text following the presentation and discussion of groups #1 and #2. Therefore, each small group facilitated their share of the discussion. Every time we broke into groups, I asked teachers to participate with different people in different groups than they had previously. All members, therefore, practiced a variety of facilitation skills.

The Need for a Comfortable and Safe Environment

Another common gain that emerged was the importance of comfort and safety within the learning environment. The meeting room for the cohort offered comfortable seating and a well-lighted space. Snacks were always provided on decorative trays. Opinions were debated and discussed but never attacked. Emilea expressed this idea after the discussion over *My Life in Dog Years* (Paulsen, 1998). "I feel comfortable to say things because there's not a right or a wrong answer. I think the students feel more comfortable when there's not a right or wrong answer."

In the overall analysis of what happened when teachers formed a cohort to practice discussion of young adult and elementary literature, their views grew in

awareness, understanding, depth, and experience in taking the aesthetic stance. Teachers practiced the ideas in the cohort each week and became adept at taking the aesthetic stance during discussion. Common gains that emerged from the observations, interviews, and cohort sessions included the value of mutual respect, bringing in and responding to prior experiences, the enjoyment of talking about literature and poetry, learning from multiple perspectives, the usefulness of visual representations, group work which helped participants take ownership of the discussion, and the need for a comfortable and safe environment.

Individual Lessons Learned from the Cohort

Since each of us is unique with varying experiences and philosophies, it is important to look not just at common themes, but also at the individual lessons learned from the cohort. The teachers who formed the cohort ranged in age from twenty-nine to almost sixty. They ranged in teaching responsibilities from grade five to college level instruction. Teachers had from five to more than twenty-five years of experience; therefore, each brought to the table a collection of philosophies, emotions, truths, and stories that sometimes intertwined and sometimes branched beyond the commonalities that they shared. In the following section, I discuss the individual lessons learned from the cohort. These lessons emerged from the reflective writings, the second set of observations, and the final interviews.

Individual Gain: Brandeira

For Brandeira, the main change resulting from the cohort was the freedom that she began to offer in her classes, which was an aspect that she discussed in her final interview.

Believe it or not, while going through the cohort sessions, while actually watching how it should be done, not watching, participating in how it should be done, it made me start changing the way I discuss with my classes. It made me break out of a mold. You get into habits where you dominate the discussion. As a teacher, you dominate the discussion, but you want the kids to go a certain direction because that's what's on the test. And so I found myself allowing a little more freedom in the discussion and letting the kids take it a little further on their own. And it was amazing, when they were given the freedom to do that, they did.

Individual Gain: Angel

In her final interview, Angel focused on the way the cohort revisited books and compared and contrasted characters, situations, and plot lines with the book that was currently being read. In examining how she felt about this, Angel said, "But when you had us do that, some of those characters really had some things in common that you never really would have thought of until you looked back on them. And comparing and contrasting is part of my P.A.S.S. skills. So that's another thing I'm going to do once they have read some more books.

Angel's thought processes regarding what discussion really meant was the single biggest factor that would change the way she thought about facilitating discussion in her classroom. In her final interview, she said,

I've never looked at discussion being more than just a sitting and discussing: this person talks and this person talks. And so, I'm bringing back the visual thing again how discussion can be used to address more learners than just the auditory ones. Discussion is so auditory and just sitting and listening. And I finally realized that it doesn't have to be like that. It can be a visual thing there to see as you are discussing; you can get all the other ways of learning in with the discussion. Mine haven't been like that. Mine have always been the cut and dried discussion: one person talks, another person talks rather than including all the visual and all the hands on things and putting them in groups and then coming together to discuss. I haven't ever done that. So I'm excited about trying it.

Individual Gain: Emilea

Taking the aesthetic stance, according to Emilea, was a naturally occurring event in her classroom. For her, the cohort "enhanced and validated" the discussion they had in class. In her final interview, Emilea said, "... it challenges me to look at the facial expressions when other students are talking (to understand) their interpretation of the book or making predictions or something like that. To look at the other students and see if this is clicking with them." She explained that by monitoring facial expressions, she could tell if there was some disagreement and assure that child that it is O.K. to have

differing opinions and differing predictions. "That's the glory of the book. You can read and find out if you were right or see what else happens. It has helped me to look at facial expressions more to see their interpretation and their understanding of the book."

Individual Gain: Ellen

Ellen shifted in her understanding of the small groups. Ellen explained that she had always thought that the more intimate and honest discussions were experienced in dyad situations, rather than in groupings of three or more. She had also asked students to work with partners rather than working in groups of three or four. From the cohort, she learned that an intimate conversation could occur in grouping larger than two. In her final interview, Ellen said,

> And that was a real eye opener for me. And I found that just throwing those ideas around were just so enlightening to me. But the other side of me really conserves time. I think that also taught me the appreciation and problem solving, that sometimes you need that bouncing around time, in order to really come up with a synthesis. And I had not experienced that before. This was the only way I could was to go through this sustained almost training (Ellen, final interview).

Ellen also said that she became a better listener.

> And one thing I have noticed about myself, and I'm so proud. I'm a better listener. And that is something I needed. That was a character building experience for me because I gained so much from hearing other people, and I'm trying, and I try all the time now to follow that through in allowing other students, instead of

guiding them and pumping them, I'm letting them express themselves how they will, and waiting and listening and being courteous, instead of bang, bang, bang. And that was an important thing to learn; it was a vital thing for me to learn. I'm very grateful (Ellen, final interview).

Individual Gain: Victoria

The shift that Victoria focused on in her final interview had more to do with the level of responsibility and the need to use quality literature in the classroom than of a particular strategy. In her final interview, Victoria stated,

> I've been in discussion groups before, but this one I felt the most responsibility to take part. I wanted to, for one thing. I wasn't intimidated after the first night or two. But I really felt a responsibility to do that. I had a part in it. Partially, it was the way you assigned the pairing up and the little projects that we had. That was very good, and I had a responsibility to prepare myself for that. So, I liked that. I try to do that in my class a little bit. (Victoria, final interview)

Victoria continued,

So you've got to capture their interest. Hook them with something. And I think the aesthetic reading, where they relate to their own lives is the best way of hooking them. I know my students who can relate literature to life situations become interested, become active, and that's really a good approach, I think, so trying to relate it to life issues is a big thing. (Victoria, final interview)

Individual Gain: Merlin

Like Emilea, Merlin said that her stance had been aesthetic all along. In her final inteview, Merlin said, "So I can't really say that it changed the way I looked at things. It really made me feel good to have the reinforcement and the research to back the way I enjoy teaching."

Summary of Individual Gain

Teachers reflected on and grew in awareness of what a good discussion was all about and came up with their unique ways of redefining discussion.

The Cohort as a Viable Format for Practicing Discussion

The cohort was designed to support research and suggestions that teachers need to experience a new activity before attempting to use the ideas in the classroom (Jongsma, 2000), that teachers become better teachers and reduce their sense of isolation by talking to each other (Palmer, 1998), and that teachers who experience new definitions of literacy will be influenced by them (Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1992). Therefore, the cohort was designed to bring a small group of teachers together in a supportive environment to practice taking the aesthetic stance in discussion of elementary and young adult literature. The cohort met nine times over the course of ten weeks.

Observations from the nine cohort sessions and data collected from the final interviews suggested that teachers all supported the idea that the cohort was a viable format for practicing discussion.

Brandeira supported the cohort as a form of professional development because, as she indicated in her final interview, teachers were reading books they wouldn't normally read. "We were doing things, ourselves, that we normally wouldn't do. We had to do it. It was very experiential for us. We're normally giving the assignments, but we were doing the assignments."

When Brandeira was asked about "having" to do assignments, she replied, "I felt like the kids! I don't want to. I have too many other things on my mind. It was wonderful. At the time, I thought, 'I've got to read another book! And I have 140 essays to grade.'"

Emilea also supported the cohort as a form of professional development, but explained that it would not be easy to implement due to the number of groups necessary to involve a large number of teachers. Emilea suggested in her final interview that the first group be made of volunteers and then increase from one group to two the following semester.

Angel supported the cohort as a form of professional development because it would encourage teachers to read young adult literature and poetry that they might not otherwise read on their own. In the final interview, she cited herself as an example.

When I first started teaching, I tried to read tons of young adult literature. I wanted to be able to recommend them to my kids. But now I find myself reading my (adult) books. I don't have a lot of free time to read. I like how it forced me to read young adult books, and even since the cohort, I have recommended *Petey*,

Small Steps, and *A View from Saturday* to some different girls in my class who came and asked me for recommendations… And all three came back and asked for another suggestion from me (Angel, final interview).

Ellen also supported the cohort as a form of staff development. She said in her final interview that it was better than any staff development. "I can't think of a better staff development."

Ellen continued,

As far as the vehicle, youth literature, I could probably enjoy something more like short stories or something like that just because of my own interests. I loved it. It was manageable, it wasn't something like 517 pages, and for that reason, it was a great vehicle, because we could enjoy a story, we could use this, and this whole thing about the aesthetic approach to the discussion of literature is something that I don't get to do in teaching as much as I would like…But this is what makes literature live is the aesthetic link. I always thought, when I read this, I always want to talk about myself. When I read a book, I star in it. What's wrong with me? And now I know (that) it's O.K. (Ellen, final interview)

Victoria also felt the cohort was a viable format for practicing discussion. She stated in her final interview,

Oh definitely. I think it's great in so many ways. But even though you have a professional relationship, it gets down to the personal, and you can really start respecting a person's particular style, like you say, or quirky angle on things, and it makes you more supportive. And when you have problems or they have

problems or issues, you trust each other enough to go in and say, "What can I do about this student or about this lesson, or whatever it is (Victoria, final interview).

Merlin's response in the final interview was also positive. In her final interview, she stated enthusiastically,

Adamantly support. It is my personal opinion that you can sit down and read a book, and you can get a lot out of it, but when you sit down in a group of 6 people, 7 people, 8 people, who have read the same book, discuss that book, oh so many of the details that I didn't see, Ellen would see. So many details that someone else didn't see, I would see. And it was art. And it broadened my understanding of the book. It made me become more aware of how important it is that you look at all areas, not just the ones that are important to me (Merlin, final interview).

From the level of interest and involvement in the cohort sessions and from data collected from final interviews, it was suggested that the cohort was a format for practicing discussion taking the aesthetic stance. The cohort provided opportunity for small group collaboration and practice over time. Teachers were doing assignments like their students had to do, they were introduced to more elementary and young adult literature which they could recommend to their students, they could practice the aesthetic approach in a supportive environment, and they could learn from the perspectives of others. In the cohort, teachers talked to each other, practiced living through the experience of taking the aesthetic stance, and were influenced by their experiences.

Summary of Chapter IV

In Chapter IV, I used triangulation of data from interviews, observations, reflective writings, and tape recordings of cohort sessions to discuss emerging patterns and individual gains. From the initial observations and interviews, I noted that four of the six teachers switched between the efferent and aesthetic stances in their classroom discussions prior to the commencement of the cohort. I observed that when teachers took the efferent stance, they asked questions at a rapid pace and searched for single correct responses. From thirty-two student-written paragraphs that I coded, I learned that twenty students valued discussion in order to clear up confusing issues in the text, and fifteen students valued the opportunity to hear what their classmates had to say. From the analysis of data collected from reflected writings and discussion in Cohort Session #1, I found emerging patterns regarding what discussion was like for teachers when they were students. Data indicated that five of the six teachers found that discussions were rigid in which teachers sought correct answers only. There was little praise, creativity, or opportunity to relate personal feelings, and there were few opportunities to work in small groups.

Upon completion of the cohort sessions, patterns of common gains emerged from the data. The data included tape recordings of cohort sessions, reflective writings, final observations, and final interviews. The common gains were in the following areas: the value of mutual respect, bringing in and responding to prior experiences, the enjoyment of talking about literature and poetry, the value of gaining multiple perspectives, the

usefulness of visual representations, group work which helped participants take ownership of the discussion, and the need for a comfortable and safe environment.

Individual gains for each cohort member were also addressed. For Brandeira, that meant offering more freedom in the classroom. Angel focused on the gain of understanding the value of bringing in related texts. Angel also became aware of what discussion could really be in the classroom, and how the use of visual representations could enhance discussion for visual learners. Ellen evaluated her thinking regarding small groupings. She also explained how she became a better listener in discussion. Victoria's individual gain came in her "burden" to provide quality literature for discussion. For Merlin and Emilea, the gain was in the reinforcement of research that backed their existing philosophies.

Finally, it was determined through the analysis of the cohort sessions and the final interviews, that the cohort was a viable format for practicing discussion.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

Introduction

People are imaginative and creative. They feel things deeply. They have experiences to share and interpret. When discussion is defined as a transmission of information from teacher to student or a regurgitation of information from student to teacher, then precious ideas are pushed away and remain untouched and unresolved. Those deeper feelings become replaced with superficial information. But when discussion is redefined according to Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading (1978, 1995) in which the teacher takes the aesthetic stance, discussion is considered a time of possibility and potential, a time for transformation. Rosenblatt relates the lack of feeling to some of our present day problems:

> Lack of such imaginative sympathy is probably back of many of our present-day
> difficulties. No matter whether the problem is just distribution of taxation or
> universal civil rights or federal-state relations, the basis of any ultimate decision
> should be is meaning for actual human lives. It is easy enough to understand the
> possible effect of a point of view on ourselves and on the human beings with
> whom we feel the kinship of family, class, nation, or race. We must also develop

the capacity to feel intensely the needs and sufferings and aspirations of people whose personal interests are distinct from our own, people with whom we may have no bond other than our common humanity (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 177-8).

It is interesting to propel her concerns about the lack of feeling which she originally talked about in 1978 and put them into the middle of our current terrorist crisis and the severity of problems in the Middle East. As a human race, we need to put feeling, thinking, understanding, and peer negotiation and perspective on the tables in our classrooms. As Rosenblatt said, we need to "feel intensely" (1995, p. 178). We need to absorb discussion participants in critical thinking. Participants need to be invited to engage in deeper levels of discussion.

Taking the aesthetic stance in discussion requires the facilitator to suggest to participants that they bring in and respond to their prior experiences. Asking open-ended questions and accepting multiple interpretations are strategies deemed necessary by Rosenblatt (1978, 1995) to encourage participants to reach beyond the efferent information and think about how they personally relate to ideas in the text and to their responses to the material. By emotionally connecting to text, participants can begin reflecting on and critically sorting through their own ideas. By listening to others' perspectives, they can increase their own understandings and help others to grow in their understandings and awareness. Using the strategies of thinking aloud and predicting and monitoring prediction also help the participants to engage in the construction of meaning.

I invited volunteer teachers together to practice the art of taking the aesthetic stance in discussion. I believe in the idea of practice as a time of repeated concentration on how to implement the strategies in discussion, which support taking the aesthetic

stance. In my years as a drama student at a state university and as director of drama at a high school in the Midwest, I found that practice invited discussion, promoted growth and interpretation, and offered time for peers to build on their personal ideas about the character and story of the text. Those not involved in theatre may think that practice is simply a repeat of the same material for the purpose of perfecting a performance, but it is much more than that. It is a process of transformation by which the actors respond to prior experiences, produce and refine their feelings and thoughts, and help shape the ideas of others. It is a group process, which provides group and individual gain. To me, the idea of practice went hand in hand with the idea of experiencing how to facilitate discussion taking the aesthetic stance; therefore, I brought volunteer teachers together to practice taking the aesthetic stance by discussing elementary and young adult literature. I wanted to see what would happen when teachers experienced and practiced taking the aesthetic stance in discussion. I wanted to know if they grew in awareness by their participation in the cohort. In the overall analysis of what happened when teachers formed a cohort to practice discussion of young adult and elementary literature, their views grew in awareness, understanding, depth, and experience in taking the aesthetic stance.

Conclusions

Discussion can Transform Participants

From the analysis of data in Chapter IV, I have concluded that when facilitators take the aesthetic stance in discussion, the participants wholeheartedly bring their feelings and perspectives to the table to share. They easily consider and build on each other's ideas, respond to prior experiences, create text to text comparisons, and construct richer, deeper meanings. They often come away from the discussion feeling exhilarated. I thought they would grow in their awareness and understanding, which they did. What I didn't expect was that they were transformed by the discussions. They discovered rich ideas, saw beyond their own parameters, and took paths not known to them before.

Like redefining literacy (Santa Barbara Discourse Group, 1994), discussion was redefined in the cohort. One of the main points that I learned from the Santa Barbara Discourse Group (1994) was that literacy needed to be redefined in the classroom, and that teachers who had experienced literacy in new ways would be influenced by those ideas. In the cohort, similarly, teachers experienced and practiced new ways to engage in and redefine discussion. They practiced taking the aesthetic stance described by Rosenblatt (1978, 1995) as they facilitated and participated in discussion. Data from cohort sessions, reflective writings, observations, and the second set of interviews indicated that teachers were influenced by their lived-through experiences in the cohort. They viewed discussion with new depth. The common gains were in the following areas: the value of mutual respect, bringing in and responding to prior experiences, the

enjoyment of talking about literature and poetry, the value of gaining multiple perspectives, the usefulness of visual representations, group work which helped participants take ownership of the discussion, and the need for a comfortable and safe environment. Individually, gains emerged as well. Ellen became a better listener, Emilea was challenged to watch facial expressions, Brandeira offered more freedom in her classroom, Victoria felt responsible for providing quality literature, Angel planned to use visual representations to help visual learners plus she came to understand that discussion was more than a transmission of information from teacher to student or from student to student, and Merlin valued the reinforcement of her teaching instruction strategies. Individual and common gains emerged from the cohort. For the participants, discussion was redefined in the cohort.

A reader might wonder why so many strategies were modeled and experienced simultaneously in the cohort. Wouldn't it have been better to single out one strategy rather than combine so many? My response is that the strategies worked together to produce the transformation. Multiple perspectives emerged as the pivotal strategy. The data frequently and consistently pointed to the abundance of ideas that were generated in the cohort as the harbinger of transformation. All of other strategies and gains supported and revolved around multiple perspectives. Mutual respect and a safe environment were necessary to permit the acceptance and discussion of multiple perspectives. The strategies of thinking aloud, bringing in prior experiences, and predicting possibilities purposely opened avenues of divergent thinking. Visual representation, which allowed interpretation, scaffolded the acceptance of multiple perspectives. Small groups provided voice for each participant's interpretations. The elementary and young adult literature

was purposely selected to proliferate a variety of responses. Under the shelter of practice, the participants walked beyond the foothills of awareness to the pinnacle of transformation in discussion.

Practicing

Members of the cohort practiced discussion over a period of ten weeks. We discussed eight elementary and young adult books, and two poems. We also discussed numerous topics related to the texts, ourselves, and our ability to take the aesthetic stance during discussion. Each discussion was a practice. Each practice provided arenas for sharing, interpreting, and building on concepts and philosophies. Practicing allowed participants to grow and share. Like actors whose names appeared on the cast list tacked to the drama teacher's door, teachers arrived at the cohort prepared to engage in practice. Practice is a time of self-help, peer support, and mentor coaching. Practice is a time for experimentation and interpretation without risk. Within the acceptable guidelines of responsibility to the group, practice provides a safe arena for participants to take risks. Cohort members felt comfortable to disagree with each other, to make suggestions about the inspirations that others brought forward, and to change the direction of the discussion midstream. Due to the safe environment of practice, cohort members took risks and grew in their understanding of text and each other.

Collaboration

Sarason (1999) described the current lack of pedagogical discussions among colleagues. Richardson & Anders (1994) suggested that teacher isolation from other teachers was an obstacle preventing teacher change. Palmer (1998) talked about the need of support and guidance from other teachers. In the cohort, therefore, I created an environment for teachers to talk to each other in whole group discussion, in partnerships, while they wrote reflectively, and over snacks. They offered curriculum ideas to each other, defined words and concepts for each other, applauded each other's ideas, fussed about school problems, home problems, and personal relationships, and respected the differences of opinion that arose. This type of collaboration among teachers supported learning.

The Cohort as a Model for Teacher Development

Teachers agreed that the cohort was a viable format for discussion. I believe that the cohort was a model for teacher development. It was similar to the National Writing Project model in that teachers worked together in small groups over a period of time. The features that made this teacher development unique were that teachers were expected to read a piece of elementary or young adult literature each week and come prepared to discuss the literature. They were responsible for the text, and they understood and were committed to the goal of preparation. Members didn't always complete the text for the particular week, but they had read enough to join in preliminary discussion and learn

from others. On two occasions, teachers told me they were embarrassed that they hadn't completed the text and planned to read the rest of it at home. One teacher explained that she hadn't liked what she had read so far, but following the discussion, she wanted to read the rest of the book. Participation in discussion was also an expectation in the cohort. Not one teacher ignored her responsibility to participate. In fact, sometimes, several teachers were talking at once!

Teachers as Readers

During the ten weeks of the cohort, teachers were asked to read eight elementary and young adult texts and several pieces of poetry. Their exposure to elementary and young adult literature increased dramatically, especially since five of the six teachers had read almost no young adult literature. Teachers were reading materials that they would not normally read on their own. They were exposed to texts specifically written for young people. As is normal in young adult literature, the stories revolved around young people and their adventures. Because teachers were reading more young adult literature, they were provided with a picture of adolescents from an adolescent point of view.

Interpretations

Discussion was transforming to participants because participants brought multiple perspectives to the table. Teachers were transformed during discussion. Throughout the dissertation, I have tried to help the readers understand the value of taking the aesthetic

stance during discussion. I have referred to Rosenblatt who described the transactional theory (1978, 1995), and I have produced a review of literature, which supports the excellence and influence of teachers who take the aesthetic stance. In the cohort, teachers were transformed by discussion. This was seen in their discussions during the nine cohort sessions, their reflective writings, and their final interviews. They emerged from discussion having considered points of view that they might not have thought of themselves. They understood concepts that alone they might not have understood. They laughed together, respected each other's thoughts and looked forward to another session of discussion. This idea of transformation through multiple perspectives can be looked at metaphorically using a box of crayons. Teachers entered the discussion with a box of six or eight different colored crayons, which represented the ideas, and concepts that they came with. By the end of the discussion, their primary colors had merged and grown into a box of forty-eight different colored crayons with so many new ideas to consider.

Implications

Implications for the Classroom Teacher

Members of the cohort made were influenced by their experiences. The cohort influenced their perceptions, and several suggested ways they had improved facilitating discussion in the classroom. The implication is that teachers involved in the cohort may redefine discussion in their classrooms. Because of their experiences, they may take the aesthetic stance in discussions in their classrooms. They may provide a climate that

encourages students to bring in and respond to prior experiences and move beyond the efferent level by asking open-ended questions and accepting multiple interpretations of text. They may promote the transactional model (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1995) of living through the experience of the text by asking feeling questions and encouraging students to talk to each other rather than just to the teacher. They may use the strategies of prediction and monitoring prediction as one method of thinking aloud. By dividing their students into smaller groups, they may provide students with further opportunities to voice ideas and build on each other's ideas. They may use visual representations to enhance the opportunities of visual learners and help all class members visually see and interpret the ideas in the text. Because teachers read seven books that most of them were unfamiliar with, they may recommend those books and other related books to their students. Having been exposed to young adult literature, they may consider reading more young adult literature for themselves and for the purpose of recommending those texts to others. Having been exposed to booktalking and having created and shared booktalks in the cohort, they may be more comfortable with continuing to provide booktalks for their own students.

As teachers redefine discussion in the classroom, they may want to consider reevaluating their testing procedures. If previous tests were based solely on information gleaned from reading and discussing material efferently, then teachers will need to rethink testing procedures. They may want to add open-ended questions to their tests in which students bring in related texts, contrast ideas in the text with their own experiences, or expand on multiple perspectives that have been discussed in class. For some teachers, the idea of reinventing the test to make it relevant to the discussion will be a difficult and

time-consuming task. On the other hand, the test responses may lead to deeper levels of meaning and understanding for teachers and students.

Teachers who have experienced collaborating in a cohort may seek opportunities with peers to establish other collaborative groups. In the cohort, multiple perspectives and ideas that they hadn't considered individually enlightened teachers. They may miss the opportunities and enjoyment of talking about literature with other teachers.

As teachers continue on their journey of understanding Rosenblatt's theory of reading (1978, 1995), it will be important for them to read related research and talk to other teachers about what they are learning. Collaboration among teachers is essential as they continue to utilize and ponder the value of taking the aesthetic stance during discussion.

Suggestions for Further Research

In considering ideas for future research, I recommend several avenues of opportunity. My research can be replicated to see if similar patterns emerge. My research highlighted what actually happened in the cohort. I was interested in the gains that cohort members made regarding teaching practices in facilitating discussion. Another researcher might replicate the study and focus on what else happened in the cohort. What kinds of bonds developed or changed in the cohort? Did the cohort inspire teachers to make personal changes in their lives? Since the cohort is a band or group of people committed to similar actions, research might be conducted to focus on the cohort effect, that is, how

members of the cohort pulled each other along and developed to a higher degree due to the encouragement of other cohort members.

Secondly, heterogeneous groupings can be used to see if similar patterns emerge among a variety of groups (e.g. Black women, mixed male/female, science and history teachers, etc.). Research of this nature might provide a picture of how members of different groups work together. Questions might include whether there were obstacles that prevented members from openly sharing with each other. Another question might revolve around the variety of gains made due to the existence of various cultural attitudes and norms. A third question might seek to know if members of heterogeneous groups continued to collaborate in any fashion upon the completion of the cohort.

My research could also be extended to include multiple observations over a period of time in the classroom before and following the cohort sessions. Observations would focus on whether teachers took the aesthetic stance and continued to use strategies that they had practiced in the cohort. It would be significant to see how students responded to discussion when teachers took the aesthetic stance and how the classroom environment changed. Beyond the strategies, though, it would be important to analyze how the unique individual gains played out in the classroom over an extended period of time, and how students responded to the changes teachers made. Following this lead, researchers might want to bring the cohort together after a period of three months and again after a period of six months to discuss pedagogical changes that had or had not continued to be utilized in the classroom. Transcripts of the original cohort could provide interesting and transforming discussions.

Another related area of research would be to invite a group of middle school or high school students (or a mixed group) to participate in a similar cohort. These are the ideas that I recommend for further research.

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Appendix A

Participant Consent Form

Doctoral student researcher, Oklahoma State University, College of Education: Evelyn
Eskridge

Address: 1704 Leawood Drive, Edmond, OK 73034
Telephone number: (405) 341-9394
Email address: peabody@flash.net

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. This form outlines the purpose of
the research and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

The purpose of this research is to examine an explore what happens when school teachers
form a cohort to practice discussion of young adult and elementary literature (1) in terms
of their views of the value of discussion and (2) their actions in their classrooms? Data
will explore what kinds of participant bonds developed and changed over the course of
the research, what discussion ideas were generated in the cohort, whether teachers were
able to use the aesthetic stance in the classroom, and what explanations can be suggested
for a shift to the aesthetic stance, if indeed, a shift occurred. Explanations to be
considered include the practicing of discussion in a cohort, the support and
encouragement of peers in the cohort, opportunities for reflection, and/or the
understanding and lived-through experience of using the aesthetic stance. The
explanations may be singular or in conjunction with each other. The explanations listed
may support or impede affected change in the classroom. Other explanations not
developed or noted here may become clear within the boundaries of the research.

As a participant, you are encouraged to ask any questions at any time about the nature of
the research and the methods I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to
me. Please contact me at any time at the address/phone number/email address listed
above. You may also contact Sharon Bacher, Institutional Review Board Executive
Secretary, 203 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, 74078 at 405-
744-5700 regarding any questions you have regarding the research, research subjects'
rights, or research-related injury to the subject.

I guarantee that the following conditions will be met:

1. Your real name will not be used at any point of information collection or in
   the report. All participants and locations will be given fictitious names that
   will be used in all verbal and written records and reports. .
2. If you grant permission for audio taping, no audio tapes will be used for any
   purpose other than this research. Based on your choice, these tapes will be
   destroyed upon publication of results.
3. Your participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw
   at any point, for any reason, and without any damage or injury to you. The

information collected and records and reports written that pertain to you can be turned over to you at the completion of the study.

4. Because all data is confidential, you are encouraged to respond honestly and · thoughtfully in the cohort.

Do you grant permission to participate in this research?
Yes _____ No _____

Do you grant permission to be audio taped?
Yes _____ No _____

Do you grant permission to be quoted directly? Quotes will be identified by pseudonym only.
Yes _____ No _____

Signature of participant _____ Date _____
Signature of researcher _____ Date _____
The participant will sign two copies. The participant receives a copy, and the researcher retains a copy.
Adapted from Research Consent Form, Gary Shank, 6 Feb 1996 QUALRS-L

Appendix B

Parent Consent Form

Dear Parents,   Date: _____

      This letter is written to request consent for your child's participation in a research project designed by Edmond resident and Oklahoma State University doctoral student, Mrs. Evelyn Eskridge. Your child's inclusion in the research is minimal. It consists of two handwritten paragraphs regarding discussions in one of their classes at school. Students' names will be eliminated from the paragraphs once they have been identified as those whose parents have consented to their child's participation. Grades will not be taken on the paragraphs. Grades will not be affected in any way by your choice of participation.

Please note:
      1. Data collected in this study is confidential; no names will be used in reporting the data. Student names will be eliminated, and the paragraphs will be identified by class and number.
      2. Because all data is confidential, students are encouraged to answer honestly and thoughtfully.
      3. While there may not be individual benefits for students in this study, there is also no risk (physical, mental, or psychological) to the students as participants in this study.
      4. There is no penalty for refusing to participate, and your child's grades will not be affected in any way.
      5. There are no right or wrong answers. Paragraphs should reflect how the student feels about the discussion in their class.

Please check one of the following boxes:

_____ I understand the information regarding the research and voluntarily agree to have my child participate in the research.

_____ I understand the information regarding the research and decline to allow my child participation in the research.
Print signature _____ written signature _____

Questions and comments are welcomed:
Researcher: Evelyn Eskridge
Address: 1704 Leawood Drive, Edmond, OK 73034
Telephone number: (405) 341-9394
Email address: peabody@flash.net

You may also contact Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, 74078 at 405-744-5700 regarding any

questions you have about the research, research subjects' rights, or research-related injury to the subject.

Please return the signed consent form by _____.
Thank you.
Evelyn Eskridge

Appendix C

Oral Assent Form

Teacher Script to be read to students prior to student participation in writing paragraphs that describe discussions in class.

Students, I'm going to ask you to write a paragraph about the discussion we just had in class today. Grades will not be taken on these paragraphs, and your participation will not affect your grade in any way. The paragraphs will be given to a person who is working on her doctorate in education. She wants to understand how discussions work in the classroom. Your thoughts about the discussion we just had could help her to understand how discussion works in the classroom. Since you get to choose whether to participate, and since your grade will not be affected in any way, I ask you to write honestly and thoughtfully about the discussion that we just completed.

Teachers, If students feel unsure what to write about, please say the following:
Students, some things you might want to include would be what you liked or didn't like about the discussion, what you would like to do if you led a discussion, and/or what you learned or understood better from the discussion. You might say how you participated in the discussion or how you would begin a discussion.

Appendix D

Letter to Participants

Evelyn Eskridge
1704 Leawood Drive
Edmond, OK 73034
341-9394
peabody@flash.net

Greetings to all participants,

Thank you so much for offering your time, experience, and commitment to this research. I wanted to give a brief overview of what I am planning. Also enclosed, you will find teacher participant forms, and a schedule. Please feel free to call me or email me at any time with questions, ideas, comments, or concerns.

At this time, we have six educators (including myself) who will meet once a week for about nine sessions during the early fall. Educators include one higher elementary, two middle school, one high school, one college teacher, and one unemployed doctoral student (me!). I am so excited about the different experiences each of you brings to the table. In each session, or cohort, we will be discussing elementary and young adult literature. I will supply all materials (you get to keep a copy of each book) along with snacks (from the grocery store; I'm a lousy cook), and we will meet at 6 p.m. each Monday at St. Mary's Episcopal Church (directions included). You also get $40 stipend at the completion of the study. We will look at discussion in relationship to Louise Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading in which the student becomes the central focus between text and author. The reader's prior experiences help him/her to construct meaning from the text, and his/her interpretation of the text may change with each additional reading.

In the cohort, we are going to practice discussion and look at how we facilitate discussions in the classroom. I will ask to interview you on two occasions in order to understand the techniques you use to facilitate discussion in your classroom. I would also like to observe you facilitating discussion on two occasions that you would set up. If possible, I would also like a participating teacher (one who is also involved in the research) to observe in your classroom on two occasions.

I won't be interacting with students at all, but I would be interested in having the students respond to two different discussions that you facilitate during the fall. I have parent consent forms and an oral assent form, and will be going over all the details with you at the first session. Student names will not be used.

I know this might sound a little scary, but I believe that we will all learn something from each other and will enjoy the time working together. In a way, we will all be researching what makes a good discussion, and how can we facilitate discussions

based on the Transactional Theory of Reading. I am not asking you to make any changes in the way you teach or to teach any of the materials that we discuss. I just ask that you read the materials and come to table with your thoughts and ideas. I will give you a notebook in case you choose to write remarks about the readings or the nature of research. In the sessions, I will ask you to write for about ten minutes after we have finished the discussion. Pseudonyms will be used on all data.

Your name will not be used. You will choose a pseudonym for yourself. All information regarding the research will be kept confidential.

Schedule: All meetings will be held at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, at 6 p.m., upstairs in the Sr. High Youth Room. Park on the south side of the building. The south door will be unlocked. After entering the south door, go immediately to the left and up the stairs. The Sr. High Youth Rm. will be the second door on your right at the top of the stairs. I will have signs posted.

Monday, August 27th:	Get acquainted. Distribute and discuss forms and materials.
Monday, Sept. 3rd:	Discussion: My Life in Dog Years by Gary Paulsen
Monday, Sept. 10th:	No meeting
Monday, Sept 17th:	Discussion: A Long Way From Chicago by Richard Peck
Monday, Sept. 24:	Discussion: Julie of the Wolves by Jean Craighead George
Monday, Oct. 1: poem	Discussion: Voices in the Park by Anthony Brown, and a from Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair by Pablo Neruda
Monday, Oct. 8th	Discussion: The View from Saturday by E.L. Konigsburg
Monday, Oct. 15th	Discussion: Small Steps by Peg Kehret
Monday, Oct. 22nd	Discussion: The Dark Side of Nowhere (This is a maybe)
Monday, Oct. 29th	Discussion: Petey by Ben Mikaelsen

Order of books could change. We'll talk about it.

In most cases, you are only responsible for the first few chapters of each book, although I highly recommend reading the whole book. Carry the book with you everywhere you go. It's amazing how many times you'll be able to read a few pages while you are waiting for the train to go by, waiting to pick someone up, or in transport to a different location. DO NOT READ AND DRIVE AT THE SAME TIME!!!! ALSO DIFFICULT TO READ AND SWIM OR READ AND SKI SIMULTANEOUSLY!!! WORKS WELL IN THE BATHTUB, THOUGH!

Thank you so much for participating in this research. I would like to schedule initial interviews and observations as quickly as possible. Call me or email me, and I will attempt to come a'runnin. Short notice is O.K. If I can make it work, I'll be there at your beck and call.
I can do interviews during planning periods, after school, at your home or mine (if you don't mind the clutter) or at St. Mary's church. Just let me know. Thank you again. I would like to schedule the interviews and observations before our first discussion

(Sept.3rd) if at all possible. If not, then as soon as we can. Did I say thank you? THANK
YOU.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Eskridge

Appendix E

Institutional Review Board Approval

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 8/14/02

Date: Wednesday, August 15, 2001   IRB Application No   ED024

Proposal Title: PRACTICING DISCUSSIONS: HIGHER ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS
AND CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Principal
Investigator(s):

Evelyn Eskridge   Barbara J. Walker
1704 Leawood Dr.   256 Willard
Edmond, OK 73034   Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Expedited (Spec Pop)

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved
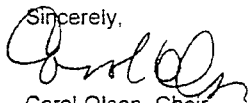

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the
expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals
who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a
manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol
   must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year.
   This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are
   unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB
procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to
the IRB, in 203 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA Ζ

Evelyn Marie Eskridge

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: TEACHERS TAKING THE AESTHETIC STANCE WHILE PRACTICING
DISCUSSION OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Putnam City West High School, Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma, in May, 1977; received Bachelor of Arts degree in drama with
distinction from the University of Oklahoma, 1977; Received Master of
Arts in English, Traditional Studies from the University of Central
Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma, 1988. Completed the requirements for the
Doctor of Education with a major in Curriculum and Instruction with an
emphasis in Reading at Oklahoma State University in August 2002.

Experience: Taught as Artist in Residence at Morris Schools from 1977-1978;
worked as manager of Wicker Works Company in Colorado Springs,
Colorado from 1978-1979; taught at Western Heights High School in
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma from 1979-1983; taught at Sequoyah Middle
School in Edmond, Oklahoma from 1983-1985; taught at Cimarron
Middle School in Edmond, Oklahoma from 1988-1996; managed St.
Mary's Episcopal Church in Edmond, Oklahoma from 1996-1999.

Professional Memberships: International Reading Association, Lambda Chapter
of Kappa Delta Pi, and Oklahoma City Professional Chapter of Zeta Phi
Eta