

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE UNCONVENTIONAL THESIS OF AN UNCONVENTIONAL  
EDUCATOR: A HEIGHTENED PERFORMATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

By

REBECCA MAE MALDONADO  
Norman, Oklahoma  
2016

THE UNCONVENTIONAL THESIS OF AN UNCONVENTIONAL  
EDUCATOR: A HEIGHTENED PERFORMATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC  
CURRICULUM

BY

---

Dr. Crag Hill, Chair

---

Dr. Lawrence Baines

---

Dr. Priscilla Griffith

© Copyright by REBECCA MAE MALDONADO 2016  
All Rights Reserved.

Dedicated to all first year teachers.

May you rock the education world and empower your students!

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the people, who continuously pushed me out of my comfort zone and challenged me to achieve my dreams.

A special thanks to my awesome professors, who have put up with countless email rants and papers written for the oddest perspectives.

A high five to my two sons, who have wondered why mom is sitting in the brown chair reading and writing so much.

A kiss on the neck to my sweet and wonderful boyfriend, who through attitudes, meltdowns, and celebrations has always encouraged and supported me to keep going.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgement.....	iv
List of Illustrations.....	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Chapter 1 – My Life and My Research Purpose.....	2
Chapter 2 – My Plan, My Decision, and My Reasoning.....	13
Chapter 3 – My Pedagogy and Using the Reflective Practice.....	38
Chapter 4 – A Reflection of a Year of Instructional Strategies.....	55
Chapter 5 – Adding to the Reflective Practice Dialogue.....	84
References.....	96

## List of Illustrations

2-1	Goal Poster by Rebecca Maldonado.....	15
2-2	OSAT Test Results - Rebecca Maldonado.....	26
3-1	Dale’s Cone of Experience.....	40
3-2	Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy.....	41
3-3	Multiple Intelligence Wheel.....	47
3-4	The Flow of Instruction in Differentiated Classroom.....	49
3-5	Do Your Happy Dance!.....	52
4-1	Choice Board by Rebecca Maldonado.....	72
4-2	SMART Goals Template by Rebecca Maldonado.....	73
4-3	Marzano Scale by Rebecca Maldonado.....	74
4-4	Assignment Example #1 by Rebecca Maldonado.....	79
4-5	Assignment Example #2 by Rebecca Maldonado.....	80

## Abstract

This is an unconventional thesis about the reflective look back at my first year of teaching. The purpose of the thesis is to advocate for future, new, and current teachers to start using the reflective practice to enhance student learn. It also introduces the new in class reflective practice of Pause, Think, Use. In addition, it takes a look at education concepts, i.e. pedagogy, instructional strategies, action research, auto ethnography, and the new heightened auto ethnography. Due to the level of importance of my students to me, a “Student Spotlight” has been included before every chapter to recognize a student, who made a difference in my life and teaching career.



# Student Spotlight

*Name: Kesha*

*Age: 15 - Freshman*

*Ethnicity: African American*

*One student I never thought I had to worry about was Kesha. Kesha excelled in everything she did. Most of the time she was the first one done with her work. Without being asked, she automatically moved onto more advanced work. She was quiet and respectful; however, if she needed help on the advanced work, she would ask. She was everything you could ask for in a student: brilliant, strong, work-ethic, respectful, the list goes on.*

*Although the second semester, Kesha ended up in my Algebra I- 1st Semester. class. This class was for the students, who failed or got no credit for having ten or more unexcused absences. I was in utter disbelief when I saw her name on my roll. She rocked my Algebra I Enhancement. How did she fail her Algebra core class?*

*After the first class, I talked to Kesha about why she was in this class. She ended up having 13 unexcused absences in her Algebra core class 1st semester. Kesha said she spoke to the assistant principal about making up the unexcused absences by going to Saturday school. As soon as she made them up, then she could get transferred out of the class.*

*She made up her absences; however, neither the counselor or the assistant principal would transfer her out of the class. No matter how much I advocated for Kesha. They still would not transfer her out of the class. I started seeing less and less of Kesha. Ironically, she was doing her work from wherever she was and turning it in on Google Classroom.*

*Kesha and I communicated through Google Classroom. I explained to her that unless she showed up for class she would ended up getting no credit for the class even though she did all her work and had an "A." That is exactly what happened. Kesha had 32 absences in that class. She received a no credit for the class, even though she had an "A" and did all her work.*

## Chapter 1 – My Life and My Research Purpose.

Since when does life require a nap every afternoon? Since when is my house a disaster? Oh that's right, since I started teaching and going to graduate school full time. Even though anxiety and depression are not my thing, every once in awhile I feel the world closing in around me. Usually, the feeling of ultimate failure occurs in the last month of each semester; hence, why I am completing my thesis now instead of waiting until the last moment. As much as I try to keep my life in balance, I struggle with it. The struggle is not as bad as when I first started graduate school; however, the psychological pressure I put on myself, from wanting to do my best, is still there. My escape from reality to recharge my batteries is going to the theater and watching movies; however, recently school has even been mentally encroaching on that.

This semester I am taking a young adult literary criticism class. The class totally rocks. I am working on perfecting my Marxist literary criticism lens. Why Marxist? On top of spending two months in China, the Marxist literary criticism lens seemed to be the most obscure and challenging. Before this class, I had little knowledge of Karl Marx and his theory. Now I am watching the animated movie *Storks* and being bombarded with Mr. Marx's theories. What does the Marxist literary criticism lens have to do with *Storks*? I am glad you asked.

First let me give you a brief overview of the Marxist Theory. In 1848, Marx wrote "The Communist Manifesto", his plan to overturn the power of the

Capitalist. Marx categorizes society into two classes: bourgeois and proletarians. By using their massive economic power, the bourgeois oppress and hold back the proletarians. As industries developed, the bourgeois gained more political power. Marx writes, “We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange (1848, pg. 5).” This development of power left the workers, the proletarians, powerless and subject to the will of the bourgeois. In a revolt, the proletarians formed a union; although, it was no match for the power of the bourgeois. The unions then formed an alliance creating a trade union. The trade union began to become involved in the political system in the form of the Communist party. Together, as the Communist party, the proletarians gain political power and overthrew the bourgeois, stripping away all the bourgeois had gained through oppression. Over time an evolution of evening out power occurred to establish a global communism utopia! Well or at least that was Marx’s plan. (Marx and Engel, 1848)

\*\*\*Spoiler Alert\*\*\* Everyone knows storks used to deliver babies, but not everyone knows why storks stopped delivering babies. *Storks* takes place eighteen years after the decision to stop delivering babies was made. Storks now deliver online packages. Junior, the best worker stork, is called up to Hunter, the head boss. Hunter is a large masculine stork. He uses little tiny birds as stress balls and as the ball to his ball and paddle. In light of Hunter being promoted to chairman, Hunter informs Junior that for all his hard work Junior is going to

become “the booooooooo.” When Junior hears “the booooooooo”, his head explodes with power. There is a catch to all this; in order for Junior to become boss on Monday, he has to liberate, fire, the orphan Tulip. (Samberg, Crown, & Grammer, 2016)

Tulip is the cause of the storks no longer delivering babies. When she was a baby, the stork, supposed to be delivering her, opened up her pod and was exposed to “baby cuteness.” “Baby cuteness” is extremely dangerous. It caused the stork to go insane and want to keep the baby. For everyone’s safety, Hunter ordered the whole company to stop the baby delivery service and to go into delivering packages. Long story short, there is a side plot of Tulip and Junior having to deliver a baby, Tulip accidentally made. (Samberg, Crown, & Grammer, 2016)

As a result of the side plot, Junior realizes power is not everything and storks need to go back into the baby delivering business. Junior, Tulip, and the other birds end up overthrowing Hunter. The birds, Hunter once used as stress balls, ended up being the final cause of Hunter falling off the cliff. With the restoration of power, things went back to the way they used to be and everything was glorious once again. (Samberg, Crown, & Grammer, 2016)

*Storks* is a great introduction to the Marxist literary criticism lens. The bourgeois is cleverly disguised as Hunter. The proletarians are the birds. Junior, Tulip, and the birds overthrowing Hunter is the revolution to restore power. I am

going to be using this example in my final for my class, where I am developing a syllabus for a undergraduate Marxist literary criticism lens class.

To think this all began with a plan, or should I say “THE PLAN.” However, before we get into the story about “THE PLAN,” let us review why we are here and discuss the key terms you will run across. I am writing a thesis about the reflective practice because the reflective practice has been essential in successfully navigating teaching day in and day out. I am also here as an advocate for all teachers: future, new, and veteran. Using the reflective practice in your career is going to help you and your students soar to new heights. Why are you here? Pause for a moment to figure out why are you here and what do you hope to gain from reading this thesis. When you are ready, let us dive into the reflective practice.

The purpose of this heightened performative autoethnography study is to add to the conversation about the reflective process. Throughout my first year and nine months of my teaching career, I have engaged in the reflective process, including performing one action research project. By using the reflective process, I have developed and strengthened my pedagogy, which in turn has enhanced my students’ learning. The main problem confronting me was that I was an English teacher teaching Math. Before we get too far into the story, we need to review a few important definitions and see what research and models are available concerning pedagogy and the reflective practice.

Pedagogy is a hard-to-define word thrown around in the education world. The common general definition for pedagogy is “the science and art of education (Daniels, 2016).” However, if you take a closer look at scholarly writing, you will see a more detailed picture. In the book *Understanding Pedagogy: And Its Impact on Learning*, Mortimore (1999) define pedagogy as “any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance the learning in another (p.3).” Siraj-Blatchford (2010) describes pedagogy as “the full set of instructional techniques and strategies that enable learning (p.149).” Tochon and Munby (1993) explain pedagogy as “live processing developed in practical and idiosyncratic situations (p.207).” In this thesis, I will define pedagogy as the set of methods or instructional strategies used by a teacher to enhance student learning.

An undisputed necessity in effective teaching, reflective practice has been defined by many scholars. Catherine Fosnot (1989) states, “An empowered teacher is a reflective decision maker who finds joy in learning and in investigating the teaching/learning process” (p.xi). Killion and Todnem (1991) explained reflective practice as “the practice or act of analyzing our actions, decisions, or products” (p.8). Bright (1996) added a more thorough interpretation, “A genuinely critical, questioning orientation and a deep commitment to the discovery and analysis of positive and negative information concerning the quality and status of a professional’s designed action” (p.165).

For the purposes of this thesis, reflective practice will be viewed a scaffolded form of metacognition, “thinking about thinking” (Jordan, 2016, p.6).

Two predominant models or processes used in the reflective practice include the ALACT model and the Theory of Action in the Reflective Practice. Developed by Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) the ALACT model consists of a cycle of five stages: (1) action, (2) looking back on the action, (3) awareness of essential aspects, (4) creating alternative methods of action, and (5) trial. York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore, and Montie (2006) compiled six steps to create the Theory of Action for Reflective Practice. In the Theory of Action in Reflective Practice, to enhance student learning the teacher needs to go through six steps: (1) pause, (2) openness, (3) inquiry, (4) thinking, (5) learning, and (6) action. The Theory of Action for Reflective Process is explained as a step model; as opposed to the ALACT model which is conveyed in a cycle model.

In *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*, Boed, Keogh, and Walker (1985) delve into the importance of using writing as a reflection tool.

Journaling makes invisible thoughts visible. It provides a means of describing practice and of identifying and clarifying beliefs, perspectives, challenges, and hopes for practice. (York-Barr et al., 2006)

In *Becoming a Reflective Teacher*, Marzano (2012) recommends “teachers maintain a reflection log (p.61)” along with a teacher progress chart found on page 71. Fun writing activities found in Natalie Goldberg’s (2005) *Writing Down the Bones* can also be used in reflective practice. Activities in her book

include creating a list of topics, writing down your first thoughts, and fighting tofu, creating an argument dialogue between a dictator and a resistor (Goldberg, 2005). More structured forms of reflective writing consist of action research projects and autoethnographies.

“Action research is an ethical inquiry that allows educators to reflect on their educational values and the ways in which their teaching can reflect those values” (Hendricks, 2013, p. 29). *Improving Schools Through Action Research: A Reflective Practice Approach* “follows the principle of systematic inquiry based on ongoing reflection” (p.11). The action research process cycles through stages of evaluation, reflection, and action. Action research projects can be done collaboratively, based on a classroom, or participatory. All three types of action research projects’ sole purposes are to improve the teaching practice. This book provides a number of action research resources and articles based on content areas. An action research project is a written report containing the following eight areas:

1. The reflection that led to the identification of your area of focus, including research questions
  2. Review of the literature
  3. A description of the participants and setting of the study
  4. An explanation of the intervention or research method used
  5. A description of the data collection strategy used
  6. Information related to how you increased validity in your study
  7. A description of the results based on your analysis of the data
  8. Conclusions you made - including your reflective planning - based on those results
- (Hendricks, 2013, p.177)



Pages 178-179 have a detailed checklist for the action research report.

(Hendricks, 2013)

The category of an autoethnography situates itself under the umbrella of qualitative research. Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research “as a broad explanation for behavior and attitudes” (p. 61). In Creswell’s (2013) book, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, he states, “We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored” (p.47). He continues, “We conduct qualitative research when we want to *empower individuals* to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and a participant” (p. 48).

An autoethnography is a form of narrative qualitative research. Creswell (2013) claims an “autoethnography is written and recorded by the individuals who are the subject of the study” (p.73). Narrative writing structure should contain maximum flexibility in structure. “Narrative researchers encourage individuals to write narrative studies that experiment with form” (p. 220). Different overall writing structures can include: flexible and evolving processes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), three-dimensional space inquiry model (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), story chronologies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), temporal or episodic ordering of information (Riessman, 2008), themes, order of their story, and dialogue and performance (Riessman, 2008). Embedded writing structures can encompass: epiphanies (Denzin, 1989), themes, key

events, or plots (Czarniawska, 2004; Smith, 1994), metaphors and transitions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lomask, 1986), progressive-regressive methods of zooming in and out (Czarniawska, 2004; Denzin, 1989), themes or categories (Riessman, 2008), and dialogues or conversations (Riessman, 2008).

William M. Sughrua (2016) takes the writing of autoethnographies to a new level in his book, *Heightened Performative Autoethnography: Resisting Oppressive Spaces within Paradigms*. In describing the author's role in heightened performative autoethnography (HPA), Sughrua states:

The author-researcher is somehow wholly within the performance, serving as the protagonist, antagonist, first-person witness, or minor character inside the story while the story transforms into narrative. As such, the author-researcher of HPA does not really seem to analyze the performed themes or to be analyzed by those themes, as seem the case with the other major types of autoethnography. Rather, the author-researcher is bound up in the very performance or enactment of the themes. (p. 41)

Key characteristics in HPA include six characteristics:

1. Dramaturgical context
2. Submerged role of author-researcher within this context and its story-to-narrative transition
3. As a result of this submersion, the tentative, opaque, and/or inconclusive voice of author-researcher, which give a sense of vast 'space' and 'openness.'
4. From this 'openness,' the resultant thematic field relating to criticality and social justice.
5. Within this critical thematic field examples of multitude of possible subthemes.
6. Sense of permanence, unchangeability, or mimetic permanence of the text, which lends a classic "literary" quality to the work, and which ensures (1), (2), (3), (4), and (5) above. (p.51)

The last important key fact about HPA is the story is fixed and it is the story which changes the reader or author. (Sughra, 2016)

Since you are now familiar with the research and process of the reflective practice, let us journey back to my plan for graduate school and my first year and nine-weeks as an educator. Before continuing to Chapter 2, make sure to pause, take some time to reflect and write down how Chapter 1 relates to you, your career, and goals. I always like including the diamonds in the rough (diamonds are important nuggets I need to remember) and making one or two action steps to implement into my reflective practice, career, or goals. You are a rock star teacher. You got this!

# Student Spotlight

*Name: Pablo*

*Age: 14 - Freshman*

*Ethnicity: Latino*

*Mr. "I wanna be center of attention." Do I need to say any more? Pablo is the student, who taught me, "Everyday is a new day." Some days he could not even make it into my classroom without starting something. By something, I mean trouble. He was the leader of the pack. His friends would be just fine until he walked in. When he walked in, it was like the signal for chaos.*

*Not every day was like this, some days I would get about five solid minutes of peace and quiet out of him; then all of sudden something would trigger the chaos, and he would be bouncing off the walls. I made him my helper and all the other things you are supposed to do with attention seekers, but nothing seemed to work. One of the biggest problems was his cell phone. He would go on and on about this story about how his dad is supposed to call him.*

*One day when I was talking to him outside in the hall to calm him down. I will admit I was a wee bit frazzled. I said to him in an extremely stern and demanding voice, "Let's just call your dad right now! Let's see what he thinks of your behavior! Do we all just need to sit down together and have a meeting together about your behavior?" I will never forget the look on Pablo's face.*

*He looked down at the ground and his eyes filled with tears. They were not crocodile tears. The tears were real. As he lifted his head, tears poured down his cheeks. "He's in prison, Ms." he muttered.*

*I had no idea his dad was in prison. I quietly and gently asked him, "Where is your mom?" I could see the rage start building up inside of him. His eyes narrowed and he pressed his lips together. Like a cannon, he shouted out, "My mom... my mom... my mom was deported! She is in Mexico. I am supposed to be staying with my aunt and my uncle, but they don't want me, just like YOU don't want me. I work at a fast food chain, just so I can get what I need to survive."*

*Overall, his behavior never improved though. More and more often the principal and other teachers sent him to in school suspension. The day after he got out he would always be like hell on wheels. Eventually, he was transferred to an alternative education program.*

## **Chapter 2 - My Decision, My Plan, and My Reasoning**

I am challenging you to be the best teacher you can be through the realization that the key to being the best teacher is helping students discover their strengths, so they can become who they are meant to be. In *Kung Fu Panda 3* (2016), Po unearths the key to teaching and comes to the realization, “I don’t have to turn you into me. I have to turn you into you.” After this realization, Po uses each panda’s individual strength to successfully teach each panda kung fu to defeat the dreaded Kai. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is not to turn you into me instead to turn you into you by modeling the reflective practice I did to make my first year and nine weeks of teaching successful.

You will notice as I write this thesis with the exception of the action research project. I will be using a technique called Think Aloud. I consistently practice think aloud in my classroom. Unfortunately, we are not in the classroom, so you will have to experience it through my words. Sometimes writing makes me nervous. I always wonder how much description do you give and how much to do you leave to the reader’s imagination. Think aloud is most widely-known for helping students with reading comprehension; however, the reason it helps with reading comprehension is the technique triggers and strengthens their metacognition skills, which is a fancy term for students’ thinking about their thinking. (McKeown & Gentilucci, 2007)

I think it is safe to say all teachers, regardless of the subject they teach, want their students to be thinking about what they are thinking about in the

classroom. I want my students to think about what they are thinking about in my class and preferably in life. I teach Algebra Enhancement, a fancy term for the low of the low high school students, who (let's be honest) do not want to be in school. I teach Algebra Enhancement at a low of the low high school, where (let's be honest, again) we have a problem with teacher absences because not even the teachers want to show up. Some people might say this is a cynical viewpoint; however, the fact is out of 85 teachers, on a daily basis we have 15-20 teachers absent that is a 17.6%-23.5% absentee rate. Coming from the corporate world, I consider this a huge problem; however, that is not the problem we are solving in the thesis. We are solving the problem of being a Math teacher trained in English Education.

How did I end up teaching Math for two years, when I am working on my master's in English Education? Excellent question. First of all, let me say teaching Math was NOT part of my plan. Yes, I always excelled in Math as a student. I excelled to the point I tested out of the Math requirements in college. I find it interest how I can be good a subject, yet not want to teach it. Truth be told, I enjoy English because of how the challenges in writing and reading develop critical thinking skills. Let me tell you about my plan, my decision, and why I decided to do a heighten performative autoethnography for my thesis.

## My plan

Ever since I was a little girl, I have made plans. From the age of seven through dropping out of film school, I always had a goal poster with a great, big director's Academy Award smack in the middle. Below is a goal poster, if Google Docs was around back then, I would have had growing up. My original goal posters were made from cutting out pictures in entertainment magazines. I wanted it all: the house on the beach, the Dodge Viper, being a director at Industrial Light and Magic (during my teenage years; however previous to my teenage years, I wanted to be a director for Warner Bros), attending Academy of Art University (it flip flopped between that and attending University of California, Los Angeles film school (UCLA)), and the coveted academy award. The most important part to making the goal poster was I knew I could attain my goals.



Goal Poster by Rebecca Maldonado 2 - 1

In the third grade, I started making five year written plans. In the eighth grade, my classmates voted me “most likely to succeed.” As you can tell from the dropping out of film school comment, life happened. I got married, had kids, got a divorce, moved to Oklahoma. I’ll leave it up to your imagination why I moved from California to Oklahoma.

As a single mom with two boys, one who is on an individualized education plan, and no support of any kind (parent, significant other, extended family, or the like), I focused on what was most important, getting myself financially stable. Six classes before graduating with my bachelor's degree from the business school I had attended before the divorce occurred, I dropped out. I would stay out of school for the next six years as I established a career and financial stability in Oklahoma.

Between California and Oklahoma, I have held a management position in the retail industry, the nonprofit sector, and the corporate world. After having a total of ten years under my belt, while managing my own store, I had just become the area supervisor for a finance company, and my employees started to tell me, “Wow, Becki, you are really good at training. Have you ever thought about teaching?” Directing, managing, and teaching all falls under the same category. When I was younger, people used to tell me I should be a teacher. My planning wheels started spinning again. Before I could finish my undergraduate degree, I knew I needed to pay off the rest of my marriage-incurred debt and put money away in savings, just in case of emergency. I created a three-year plan to



have the marriage debt eliminated and have a cushy savings account. Fast forward two years and nine months. I completed my goal and prepared to go back to the business school online to finish my undergraduate.

When I went back to school, I dropped my hours from 80 hours per week (no exaggeration) to 50 hours per week. Of course, my boss noticed. Reading way too much into me cutting my hours (remember, I was middle management at the time. I had more freedom than most employees), my boss began to freak out on a daily basis. When I brought up finishing school, she acted as if I was speaking a foreign language to her.

With three classes until I completed my bachelor's degree, due to the conflicts at work, I was fuming all the time. Finally, my boyfriend sat me down and calmly said, "Just quit. You have the money. Focus on school. Focus on your dream." Now, it is against my nature to "just quit." I needed to develop a plan. After all, it is a little crazy for a single mom to up and "just quit" her job.

During my three-year plan and doing a hefty amount of research, I realized I wanted to be a university professor, which meant I had to get my Ph.D. To some people, the letters Ph.D. intimidate them. To me, getting a Ph.D. sounded like an achievable goal. I am smart. I already do research. If I could live through my ex-husband and all the trials of being a single mom, surely, I could get my Ph.D. Yes, I am extremely self-confident, well, sometimes.

First step of devising my next plan was looking up graduate schools. Check. The second step was figuring out whether or not I had enough money.

Check. Third step was making sure I was going to be committed for better or worse to this plan and follow through. There is nothing I hate more than creating a plan and not following through. Check. Check. My oh so exciting plan for graduate school was quit my job so I could finish my bachelor's degree strong, and not work while going to graduate school, at least through getting my masters. Ta-da!!!

My plan did change a little. A lady I used to work with at a non-governmental organization asked me if I would help teach English to visiting scholars on campus. Due to my humanitarian relief experience, I already had a special place in my heart for other cultures. Immediately, I fell in love with teaching English as a Second Language.

When I applied to graduate school, I applied for the World Languages Program, a program for teachers of foreign languages. I mean, English is a foreign language to some people, right? Nope, wrong. Graciously the Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum department accepted me into English Education program.

While talking to my advisor, he informed me if I wanted to teach teachers at a college of education, most colleges of education require a minimum of three years of classroom teaching experience. My non-profit teaching English as a Second Language did not count. No problem. I will teach while I am working on my Ph.D.

In my first graduate class, one of my classmates was a part of a program called Urban Teacher Preparation Academy (UTPA). In this program, you participate in one year of student teaching, then two years having your class while being mentored by a master teacher (The University of Oklahoma, 2016). Sweet! UTPA fit right into my plan. I had already missed the deadline to apply for the 2015-2016 year. UTPA is only in coordination with a specific school district. Being super proactive, I thought, “Why don’t I sub in that school district to figure out what school I wanted to be placed at the following year?” Genius plan, or so I thought. Ha!

The second day of the school year, my first time subbing in a public school classroom, I accepted a one-day Math subbing position. Two class periods into the day, the Math department head informed me he would briefly like to talk to me. He started asking me odd and random questions like, “Would I be interested in a full-time teaching position?” On my planning hour, I get called to the principal’s office. The principal offered me a full-time teaching position as a Math teacher. My inner hiring manager screamed, “Are you crazy? You don’t even know me.” We talked about the requirements for my position and my personal career and education plan. Not knowing whether to turn it down or to accept it, all I said to him was “I’m flattered you are offering me the position. Do you mind if I think about it?” As I walked out of the office door, the principal’s secretary asked me if I would sub a few more days because the teacher I was subbing for is still sick.

## **My Decision**

I am good at Math, but do I want to teach Math? Ugh! Numbers! Boring! I relish English because you get to explicitly teach critical thinking skills, talk about how to communicate with other people, discuss different cultures in English class. However, the Math job opportunity is a foot in the door. I could just teach Math for a year, establish positive relationships with the people at my school, then switch to English next year. After all, I do need three years teaching experience. Yep sounds like a good plan! But wait, how is this going to affect my master's degree? Oh, and due to my boyfriend's work schedule, I only get to see him during the day. If I start teaching during the day, when are we going to see each other? Wait! How is this going to affect my relationship? Hold up! I do not want to ruin my relationship just because of Math! Okay, I better talk to my adviser and my boyfriend and see what they think. I have to admit I believe this is the first time in my life I have ever been able to turn to two people and get sound advice.

I email my advisor, "Crisis – Do you have time to meet?" Well, the length of the email extended into oblivion, but that's the shortened version without all the blah, blah, blah. I texted my boyfriend, "We need to talk tonight." Oh, that sounds bad. Although before I could type a follow-up text, he calls me. Clarifying everything was okay and giving him the gist of what was going on, he agrees we should talk about it in person.

**Researching the requirements.** After school let out, I went home and began researching. The head principal mentioned something about me needing to get emergency certified. What is that? How does that differ between being traditionally certified through a university? Why is this so complicated? I googled “Oklahoma education emergency certification.” As I scrolled down the page, I noticed another phrase popping up, “Alternative Certification.” Ugh! There is another path! I decided to click on the link “Teacher Certification Paths| Oklahoma State Department of Education.” I clicked on the link, “Emergency Certification (Admin Use Only).” Behold, there stood the emergency certification procedure. To be expected, most of it was paperwork. Before I could read all the way through the bullet points, a bolded paragraph caught my attention. It read:

The application and all supporting documents must be received in Professional Standards at least two weeks before the State Board of Education meeting that month. Any completed application packet received within two weeks of the State Board of Education meeting will be held over until the next month’s meeting. (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2014)

“I have to be approved by the State Board of Education!” I verbally exclaimed to myself. As one of my dear friends would say, “BREATHE!” Okay, I’m breathing. I better read through the rest to make sure I understand.

All the other requirements were paperwork, except one. “Verification that the applicant has either passed the requested subject area test or is registered for the next available test date (Oklahoma State Department of Education,

2014).” A test?!? No problem, I can vanquish tests in my sleep, especially Math, thanks to my innate critical thinking skills. Before I get too gung ho, I better research and see what this test is.

I googled “Oklahoma education math test.” First link to pop up was “Certification Examinations for Oklahoma Educators (CEOE).” Sounded like the right one, so I clicked on it. The website had a whole bunch of links. Finally, my eyes wandered to a link, which read, “Tests.” I figured that was a logical choice for a link to click on. Three types of tests appeared: Oklahoma General Education Test (OGET), Oklahoma Professional Teaching Examination (OPTE), and Oklahoma Subject Area Tests (OSAT) (Pearson Education, Inc., 2015). I flipped back to the Oklahoma State Department of Education website to verify, which test I needed to take if I decided to do this whole emergency certified thing. Ah, in plain print, the website says, “subject area test (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2014).” Eh, there were 54 OSATs, not all for Math, of course. Three OSAT titles had the word Math in them: Advanced Mathematics, Elementary Mathematics Specialist, and Middle Level/Intermediate Mathematics (Pearson Education, Inc., 2015). I shot a quick email to the head principal stressing, “IF I take the position, which OSAT Math test, do I need to take?” He verified I would be obligated to take the “Middle Level/ Intermediate Mathematics” test. On the CEOE website, in the OSAT section, I clicked on “Middle Level/Intermediate Mathematics.”

The most awesome aspect of the website is it has blueprints on each of the test and materials to let you know what you need to focus on when studying. All you have to do is click on the link, which says, “View the preparation materials available for this test” (Pearson Education, Inc., 2015). While initially researching the test, I, myself, clicked on the preparation link. Not being too sure about if I was going to take the test, I just quickly clicked on the link, which stated, “Test Framework.” This link led me to a pdf of the blueprint or in their words the competencies of the test. The subareas of the test included four areas: Mathematical Processes and Number Sense, Relations, Functions, and Algebra, Measurement and Geometry, and Probability, Statistics, and Discrete Mathematics. (National Evaluation Systems, Inc., 2005). Wait, remind me again what Discrete Mathematics is.

I scrolled down to competency 0016 “Understand the principles of discrete mathematics.” Five bullets laid out the knowledge needed about discrete mathematics: apply various counting strategies, analyze recurrence relations, apply the basic elements of discrete mathematics, identify potential applications of discrete mathematics, and demonstrate a knowledge of matrices and their operations (National Evaluation Systems, Inc., 2005). Being overwhelmed by the mathematical vocabulary, I put my research to rest.

**Talking to my boyfriend.** Shortly, after putting my research to rest, my cell phone buzzed. The text from my boyfriend read, “headed your way.” I started preparing all the information I researched and acquire throughout the

day; although, I, a bag of mixed emotions, remember secretly hoping at times and fearing at other times he was going to encourage me to stick to my original plan of not working while completing my master's. The doorbell rang.

After 40 minutes of me laying out the facts for him, he lovingly and calmly states, "Our relationship will be fine, regardless of what you choose to do." That was that. I could no longer use my relationship as an excuse to turn down this position.

**Talking to my advisor.** The next day I was informed the teacher I was subbing for actually was out for a serious long term medical cause. Regardless of whether I took the position or not, I was asked to stay for at least a month to cover for her. Since I had not made up my mind, I decided it would be best just to agree to cover her classes for her.

A couple of days later, I had my first meeting with my advisor about the situation. This session was really about determining which is better, traditional certification or emergency certification. When I first started graduate school, we had already built the classes required for traditional certification into my master's program.

After he asked me some questions, the answer to which was the better path to take would be determined by whether or not I would ever be teaching high school outside of the state of Oklahoma. If my long term plan included teaching outside of Oklahoma, then the traditional route would be best because other states do not recognize a majority of emergency and alternative certifications. If



my long term plan did not include teaching outside of Oklahoma, then I could get by with the emergency certification. Although, he gently reminded me traditional certification always looked best on a curriculum vitae (CV), a fancy name for an education resume.

The answer to that question was crystal clear. To me, the thought of teaching high school is just a step, a to do on the checklist of becoming a university professor. I had no intentions of moving out of Oklahoma. I am in graduate school. My kids love Oklahoma. My boyfriend lives here. I have no intentions of teaching high school long term, let alone in another state.

**My decision.** Originally, I titled this section of my thesis “The Decision.” After reflecting on how the decision was made, I realized it was not “the decision”; it was “my decision.” As you can see, the two people I confided in for an answer did not give me an answer. One eliminated my fear. The one helped me process the information through asking a series of questions. I made the decision; therefore, I need to take ownership of my decision.

I decided to take the position. By the time I committed to taking the position, I only had three days left to take the Middle level/Intermediate Math test to have it scored in time for the State Board of Education meeting to have my emergency certified application approved. With teaching high school, taking graduate classes, and the short time frame, I had little time to study. I used [khanacademy.org](https://www.khanacademy.org) to brush up my Math skills (Khan Academy, 2016). To pass the test, I needed to score a 240 out of 300.



## **My Reasoning**

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have taken EDEN-5253/ Research in English Education in my first semester of graduate school. I highly recommend all incoming graduate students take this class or one equivalent to it their first semester of graduate school. In this class, I learned the foundations of a strong thesis and bought the book vital to my thesis writing process, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches* by John W. Creswell (2013).

The five narrative approaches include narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Narrative research encompasses biography study, autoethnography, life history, and oral history. At the time, narrative research did not appeal to me, especially the autoethnography choice. Phenomenological research explores the meaning of lived experiences. I am not one to delve deep into hidden meanings. Grounded theory is research to create a theory. At the time, I thought, “Who would do something without a plan?” Next is ethnography, the study of groups of people. That’s it! I can do my thesis on my English as a Second Language students. Of course, that went down the drain when I made my decision and had to stop teaching English as a Second Language. Last but not least, case study, not a methodology, but referring to the real-life setting used for the study itself. Well, I am not working in a lab, so more than likely my thesis will involve a case study. (Creswell, 2013)

My other class for my first semester of graduate school was EDEN-5273/Creativity in Teaching Composition. For the first paper I wrote for this class, the professor barked at me about writing in the third person and not having a voice. Of course, I did not have a voice. I just came from 13 years in the business world. The word “I” does not exist. You, as a person, do not exist because you are always representing your company. It is not about you. It is about the company. Working in the corporate world is like being assimilated into the Borg (Roddenberry & Hurley, 1989) or, for the Karl Marx fans out there, should I say assimilated into the Bourgeois (Marx & Engels, 1848). Hmmm, looking at it through a Marxist Literary Criticism Lens, perhaps Gene Roddenberry got the idea for the name for the Borg by just shortening the word Bourgeois. Interesting. Very Interesting. Okay, back to my ranting about being barked at. The truth is I did lose my voice. I just never realized it until that moment. For me, the problem was not that I lost my voice because I had learned to live without it; the problem was I had no idea what it meant to get my voice back or what my voice sounded like.

I am not speaking about my vocal voice. That was still very much still intact. I am referring to my writer’s voice. The easiest way to describe a writer’s voice is to burrow into rhetoric. According to *Understanding Rhetoric: A Graphic Guide to Writing*:

“Rhetoric is about presenting a character that an audience will trust and about both inspiring passionate emotions and structuring rational arguments. Rhetoric is also about saying the right thing

at the right time” (Losh, Alexander, Cannon, and Cannon, 2014, page 114).

An exceptional writer should be able to change his or her rhetoric, writer’s voice, depending on the audience. Changing one’s writer’s voice is equivalent to code switching between different languages, dialects, and vernaculars. One would not talk to his or her mother the same way one speaks to his or her friends or employer. Notice the last two sentences I just changed my writer’s voice into the third person to sound more profession.

Why am I writing the thesis in first person with such a casual voice? Is not a thesis supposed to be formal and professional? Some theses are expected to be formal and profession. To determine the type of voice you should use, you need to look at the situation, audience, and motive. My thesis is an autoethnography, meaning it is about studying some aspects of the author’s teaching and learning. Not to discount you as the reader, who is reading this after it has been published, but I have two audiences: the reader after it has been published and my thesis committee, who has to approve it. The members of my thesis committee know me better than I would like to admit. If I do not sound like me and I seem fake, I will lose all validity to my thesis. I write in the first person and like I speak in real-life to increase the validity of thesis. I want you, as the reader, or my thesis committee to feel like you are talking to me face to face. Also, gaining back my writer’s voice and having the confidence to write with it is crucial to me and a vital part of my reflective practice journey. Thanks

to that professor, from there on out every paper I have written in graduate college I have reflected on finding my writer's voice.

In my second semester, I took EDEN-5233/ Theory and Practice of Teaching Literature. For the main project of the class, each student had to write a history of his or her reading. We each had to do three drafts. Each draft was due at different times throughout the semester. Let me forewarn you my history of reading is not the cutesy stereotypical paper about lamenting over how much I love to read. Growing up I did not like to read, and I did not need to read to make good grades. You could classify me as a reluctant reader. I did not realize it until this semester that my viewpoint of reading was holding me back as a writer. Hold on before I go into that story; I have to finish the second-semester story and tell you about the revelation of the third semester. Back to this history of my reading assignment. Feeling brave, I decided to exercise my voice. Oops, I obviously applied it too much because I got a note back on my second draft suggesting to tone down my criticism of the "You will read and you will love to read!" English teacher bandwagon. For my third draft, I changed my rhetoric not to be so offensive and more politically correct, if you know what I mean.

In my third semester, two classes helped me find my writer's voice. In ILAC-5003/ Models of Instruction course, on one of my paper's, my professor wrote: "looks like you found your voice." Wait! How did she know I lost my voice and was looking for it? I did have the same professor before, in my second semester, for EDRG-5573/Culture, Language, & Literacy. Did that professor

recognize I had no voice in the second semester? Is it that obvious?!? The funny thing about the paper she commented on I did not even think about my writer's voice. I just wrote it like I would if I were talking to another teacher about instructional strategies. I would never have imagined anything of great importance would come out of that paper.

The other class relevant class to the finding of my voice journey was EDEN-5223/ Theory & Practice of Teaching Composition. In this class, we had to make a history of your writing. Just in case you have not caught on, writing about your history of something allows you to reflect back and see how you have improved or can improve in certain areas. For this assignment, each student was supposed to make copies of the reading samples throughout their childhood till present and write about each one of them. Well, I did not have the best childhood. My mom destroyed all my stuff when I moved to Oklahoma. The only real writing samples I had were from the business college I attended. Those had no voice whatsoever. They were bland, written in assimilated third person Borg voice (Roddenberry & Hurley, 1989). In retrospect, I could have and should have written about my perspective of the assimilated third person Borg voice and the importance that voice plays in business. At the time, I was too ashamed. No one wants to read papers that have no voice. I threw some no voice sample papers in there wrote two to three sentences about each of them and called it good. I was so ashamed of my no voice. I do not even remember

looking over the paper when I got it back. I am pretty sure I just stuffed it in my bag and called it good.

My fourth semester consisted doing a three-week study abroad in China, then doing instructional coaching and teaching English as a Second Language in China. Nice, huh? Well, that is another paper for another time. Perhaps, I can incorporate those stories into my dissertation. For future plans, I would like to go back to China or another country to visit and teach to continue my English as a Second Language research. No telling what the future has in store.

This semester is my fifth and final semester for my master's. Hip hip hooray! I am taking a young adult literature class this semester. If you remember, I am not too keen on the whole sitting down and reading a book thing. I am much to active and go-go-go for that. In this class, we have to read one young adult book per week. YIKES! Actually, it's not too bad. You are not going to believe what the first writing assignment of this class was. You guessed it, a history of my reading. I have had four previous classes with the professor teaching this class. I know from my previous semesters I need to write it in a non-attacking tone but at the same time not to be ashamed of it. He graded each paper in six areas: ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Guess what! I received a five out of five in all areas, except conventions. I got a four out of five. I can accept that. It's just grammar. The important part to me was I got a five out of five in voice! I did it! I got my voice back!



While finding my voice is super important, another revolution within this class helped me to be a better writer. Earlier I mentioned my mindset about reading held me back as a writer. I discovered my view of reading held me back from writing in depth. Subconsciously, somewhere way far back in my mind, I thought, “No one wants to read this.” Because of that mindset, I tended to be brief and to the point. All of my professors had been working on me to add more description; “No one can read your mind.” Finally, something clicked in this class. Maybe it is the fact I authentically enjoy reading young adult literature. Maybe it is sitting in a class with a group of people who are way too excited about literature and reading. Maybe it’s a mixture of everything combined. Whatever the reason. My mindset has gone from “No one wants to read this” to “Hey, someone out there is going to want to read this.” I feel more free and positive when writing.

Oh, you will notice I didn’t just get my voice back by reflecting once on a paper and presto the problem was magically fixed. I had to work and reflect on every paper of my master’s program to get my writer’s voice back. The important part was I kept repeating the reflection process. Each time when I reflected, I found a piece of the puzzle to help me solve the mystery to get my voice back. I would encourage you, wherever you are on your journey, to be patient with yourself and persevere.

I chose to do a heightened performative autoethnography because my self-growth, research, and practice of the reflective practice are essential to the

dialogue about myself becoming a more effective teacher and training more effective teachers. A month ago, I came across a book titled *Heightened Performative Autoethnography* by William M. Sughrua. The author has coined the phrase “heightened performative autoethnography” to be set aside for advocacy autoethnographies. When I read the book, I thought the methodology was perfect for my thesis. I am an advocate for me, for you, for current teachers, and for future teachers. The education world is plagued with politics, burnt out teachers, teachers who do not care, teachers who care but have not been given direction, Lone Ranger teachers, and many other categories of teachers. As current teachers and future teachers, we need to take action to start making changes. The generations to come are counting on us. Mahatma Gandhi said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” Problem solving comes through reflective practice.

Start with you and pick one problem to resolve. As problems within your class resolve, other people will recognize the difference. Share your discoveries with other people; then you can expand the reflection process to pairs, small groups, the school, and even the district. The change starts with you. Last year one of the teachers wrote:

“Just wanted to tell you something...

We were talking after the staff meeting yesterday, and we've both noticed how well your Enhancement kids are doing. We feel like they come back to our rooms knowing what's going on. What you are doing is working. (I even noticed Samuel solving an equation yesterday!)

Not everyone can handle Enhancement classes (or this job in general), and you've been a great addition to our team. I hope you know how much we appreciate you!”

In Chapter 5, I will go in depth into the reflection process. Now, don't skip ahead and just read Chapter 5. The means of getting to the destination is just important as getting to the destination itself. Sit back and enjoy the journey. Chapter 1 was an introduction to me, the purpose of the thesis, and the literature review. In that chapter, you reviewed the scholarly definitions and research about pedagogy, an autoethnography, heightened performative autoethnography, action research, and reflective practice. Chapter 2 - here we are looking at my plan, my decision, and my reasoning for doing a heightened performative autoethnography. Chapter 3 looks at my pedagogy and the use of the reflective practice. Chapter 4 is an action research project done overlooking my first year of teaching. Just FYI, an action research project is the most structured way of doing the reflective process. Let me use bullet points to clarify what you can expect in the upcoming chapters:

- Chapter 1: My Life and My Research Purpose
- Chapter 2: My Plan, My Decision, and My Reasoning
- Chapter 3: My Pedagogy and Using the Reflective Practice
- Chapter 4: Action Research Project: A Reflection of a Year of Instructional Strategies
- Chapter 5: A Reflective Analysis of the Six Steps of the Theory of Action for Reflective Practice

I am sorry. Did you think my reasoning had something to do with my decision? Did you want me to tell you about how because I have had such an excellent experience teaching Math that I wanted to shout it from the rooftops? Since it is just you and me, let me be honest. I am not entirely sure I made the right decision. I love my students. A majority of my students are English Language Learners, so I have had the exciting opportunity of teaching them both conversational and academic vocabulary. I have also had the exciting opportunity to learn how to apply reading and writing across the curriculum. With that said, some of the adults have made teaching much more challenging than need be. I have stayed at the school only because of the unconditional support of my head principal.

On the other hand, do I know where I would be right now if I did not accept the position? No. I could be teaching English with a teaching team that performs well together or I could be stuck at a school with an unsupportive head principal. I have reflected over and over again. What I have discovered is, with the reflection practice, it is not about looking back to see if you made the right decision. It is about looking back, so when you go forward, you grow and are a better person, teacher, and student.

# Student Spotlight

*Name: Sarah*

*Age: 14 - Freshman*

*Ethnicity: Caucasian*

*Second week of school, Sarah came into my classroom with her black long-sleeve shirt on. Black was Sarah's favorite color. I am not sure if the black long-sleeve shirt was her favorite shirt or her only shirt. Up until that point of time that was the only shirt I ever saw Sarah wear. That day the sleeves of her shirt looked different, almost wet in parts.*

*As I walked over to her, I noticed there was blood seeping through her sleeves. I asked her if everything was okay. "No!" she growled at me. I motioned to her to come talk to me out in the hall and gently asked her, "May I please see your arms?" "Why do you want to see my arms?" she snapped at me. "I am concerned you may be hurt," I replied. From the expression on her face while pushing up her shirt sleeves, one could tell Sarah was in pain. She then confessed to me that she cut up her arms during lunch because there was no point in living. We took a walk to the counselor's office.*

*Sarah was gone from school for three weeks. When she came back, she gave me a big hug and with a smile on her face said, "Thank you, Ms. M! Is it okay if you are the one come and talk to if I need to talk?" "I would be delighted," I responded.*

*Sarah never came to talk to me about anything dramatic. Sarah was an avid reader. We developed our relationship through talking about what books she was reading. Frequently, when she walked into my classroom the first thing out of her mouth would be, "Ms! You have got to read this book." She would go on and on all about the plot and drama in the book. Oddly enough, it was like the books brought her to life or allowed her to escape her life.*

*She even ended up confiding in me about the teacher she thought was cute. Towards the end of the school year, she came up to me before leaving class and commented, "You are more like my mom than my teacher. I mean if you were my mom you would be a cool mom."*

### **Chapter 3 - My Pedagogy and Using Reflective Practice**

Csibra and Gergely (2006) note, “Pedagogy is costly for the teacher; it requires her to engage in an activity (knowledge manifestation, over and above simple functional knowledge use) that benefits someone else (the learner), but not herself” (p. 6). Developing your pedagogy takes time and knowing your students and your instructional strategies. By using the reflective process, you get to know your students and instructional strategies, thereby developing and forming your pedagogy. Before reading Chapter 3, take time to write three to five sentences about your students then write three to five sentences about your instructional strategies. While reading Chapter 3, keep both your students and your instructional strategies in mind and see if you can start making connections between your students and your instructional strategies.

Whether or not the method is effective, that is a whole other conversation. That is the conversation I want to have with you today. I know teachers who use methods which suit them personally but are not effective and do not work for the students. Their classes are out of control, the students do not learn anything, and both the teacher’s and the students’ levels of frustration go through the roof. Why would a teacher want to come to work only to deal with five to seven classes of madness? Please do not tell me it is because they are comfortable. There is nothing comfortable about feeling frustrated and out of control. The statement “the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results” has been in the center of long debate

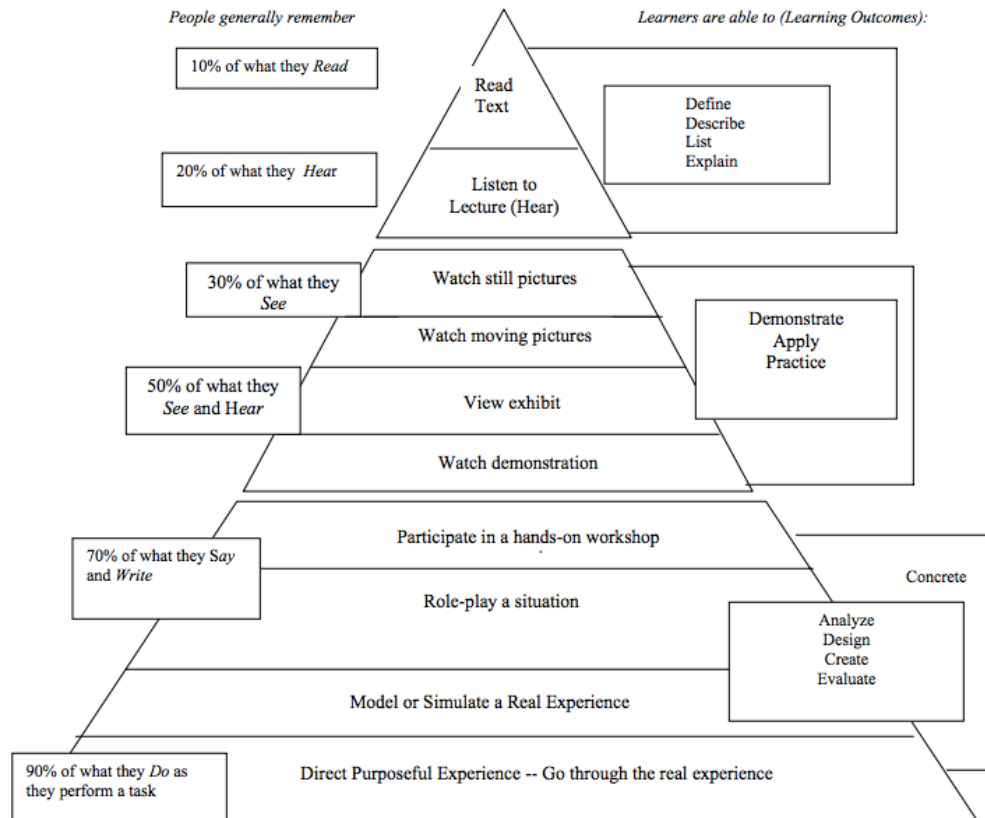
about who originally said it; regardless of who said it, there is a nugget of truth which needs to be heeded.

On the flip side, I also know teachers, whose classes are zombified, sitting there silent and mentally checked out, and the teacher is up in front of the classroom just gabbing away about whatever the lesson of today is on. Zombified students are no better than out of control students. When the symptom of zombified students occurs, the cause is passive engagement, sometimes referred to as passive learning.

In 1969, Edgar Dale created Dale's Cone of Experience. Dale took different instructional strategies and figured the retention percentage after two weeks (see page 37). On the bottom part of the triangle is where the active learning/engagement occurs. You will also notice the bottom active learning part of Dale's Cone of Experience aligns with Bloom's Revised Taxonomy upper levels: analyze, evaluate, and create.

Revised in 2001, Bloom's Taxonomy addresses the depth of which the student is learning. "In 1956, Benjamin Bloom with collaborators Max Englehart, Edward Furst, Walter Hill, and David Krathwohl published a framework for categorizing educational goals: Taxonomy of Educational Objectives" (Bloom, Anderson, & Krathwohl, 2001). The original categories of Bloom's taxonomy are Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. Commonly, they are thought to be put in a hierarchy order with Knowledge being the least in-depth level of learning and Evaluation

being the most in-depth level of learning. In 2001, a group of scholars and theorists added to Bloom’s Taxonomy and revised it to appear as what is known as Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (see page 38) (Bloom, Anderson, & Krathwohl, 2001).



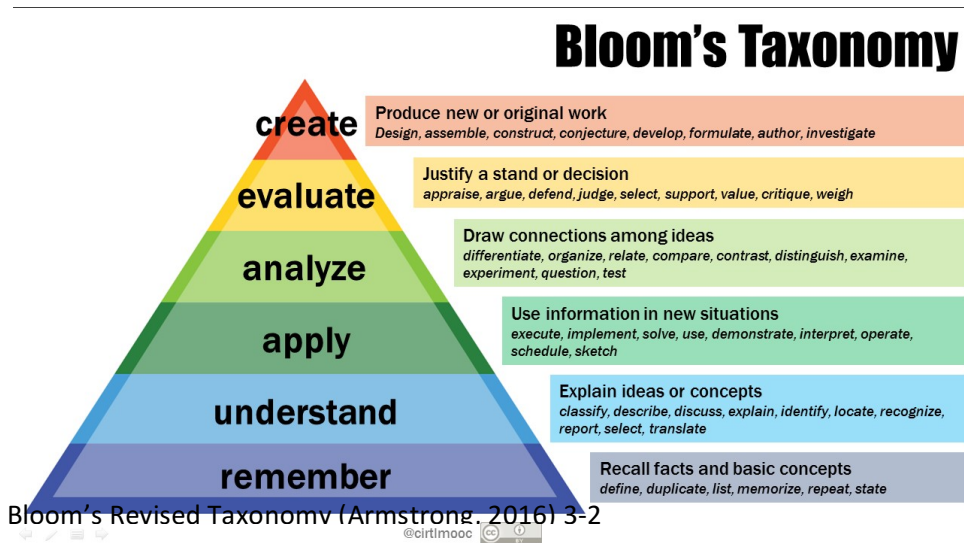
Source: Adapted from E. Dale, *Audiovisual Methods in Teaching*, 1969, NY: Dryden Press.

### Dale’s Cone of Experience (Anderson, 2016) 3- 1

Based on Dale’s Cone of Experience and Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy, to achieve the level of deepest learning, we should be teaching our students at the analyze, evaluate, and create level. When they learn at these deeper levels, they also gained the knowledge they would have learned in the apply, understand, and remember levels. For example, an assignment on the analyze



level would be compare and contrast linear and nonlinear functions. To complete the assignment the students have to know what a linear function and a nonlinear function is (remember level). Part of comparing and contrasting is describing a linear function and a nonlinear function (understand level). If a student is comparing and contrasting a linear function and a nonlinear function, you have to know how to solve both types of functions (apply level).



Let me explain in English pedagogy terminology. Summarizing a book is on the remember level. Identifying similes and metaphors would be on the understanding level. An apply level assignment would include a student learning how to write a five-paragraph essay. At the analyze level, students should be making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections. Reading through a literary criticism lens would bring the assignment up to the evaluate level. At

the create level, students should be able to write an essay based on clarity of ideas, not a preformatted concept such as the five-paragraph essay.

As a reminder, even though I gave assignment examples at the remember, understand, and apply levels, I am not endorsing the use of these assignments. The assignments I used as examples are popular English assignments because they are easy to teach. Just because they are easy to teach does not mean we should teach them. We need to always be continuously challenging ourselves to teach on the analyze, evaluate, and create levels, so our students are actively learning and actively engaged.

### **Starting the Reflective Practice from Scratch**

I did not come across the book with the Theory of Action for Reflective Practice until the third nine weeks of my first year of teaching (York-Barr et al., 2006). Having come from thirteen years of management experience, always looking for ways to improve the effectiveness of processes is part of being assimilated into the corporate Borg. Lean Six Sigma is a popular methodology used by businesses. Speed and quality come from eight parts of this process: eliminate waste, continuous improvement, teamwork, stable yet flexible processes, continuous flow, problem-solving methodology, processes without variation, redesign and innovation (Lean Six Sigma Institute, 2016). During my 90-day review at one job, my boss said to me, “Boy! I wish I could clone you.” I responded with, “Hire the people, and I will do it.” She hired eight new people. Within one month, I had created a fully functioning team.

What was my secret? My secret was the same as Po's enlightenment from Kung Fu Panda 3 (2016), "I don't have to turn you into me. I have to turn you into you." Wait! Doesn't that contradict the assimilated into the corporate Borg statement? No. To survive in the corporate Borg, you have to appear to be assimilated. If you do not play by corporate rules, one word, "termination." Having to play by the rules may sound like a horrible thing, but it is the way life is. If you do not play by the rules and pay your electricity bill, your electricity will get shut off.

Let me tell you how I successfully created a team. First, I put my employees into positions which suited their strengths. One employee I had was extreme OCD and loved routines, so I placed her in an extremely detail-oriented position. I hated doing that part of the job, but because of her strengths and personality, she loved it. Second, their training was not me doing their job for them.

From the beginning, I laid out clear expectations and acted as the facilitator, allowing them to take ownership of their jobs. Individually, I walked them through the process while they did all the work and took notes. From their notes, they practiced it enough to get good; then they had to train me how to do it. At our weekly department meetings, they cross-trained each other. I edited the procedures they created into the department's employee handbook. As the time grew closer for me to leave, I delegated more of the complaint phone calls to them. We turned the discussion to how to resolve more complicated

problems. After I had left, sadly, the person hired to replace me found out she had cancer. The department went on without a manager for over a year; however, because the employees had taken ownership over their jobs, they problem solved and worked together as a team just as effectively as if they had a manager.

Most of my learning as a manager came from trial and error. I understand some teachers' argument about not needing research; if a teacher uses trial and error, they are engaging in the reflective practice. A situation occurs. The teacher looks at that situation to see why it did not go as planned, figures out what went wrong, then changes it. I do not want to water down the reflective practice too much into a trial and error mechanism. Using the reflective practice allows us, as teachers, to achieve our goals and not go out of our mind while doing so.

### **Goals for My Classroom Environment, Myself, and My Students**

I have extremely high goals/expectations for my classroom and students. My classroom environment must be a safe, positive learning environment to encourage the most enhanced learning. Expectations for myself include being a facilitator; I am not a dictator or tyrant. I expect my students to be self-sufficient and to take ownership of their education. Just because I have set goals and expectations, does that mean those goals and expectations are achieved automatically? Of course not, that is where reflective practice comes into play. Reflecting on what has happened or even what is currently happening allows me

to reach my goals. Using the reflective practice allows me to create a classroom where mistakes can occur. When addressing issues in class, I engage my students in the reflective practice to help them identify a better course of action next time.

### **My Pedagogy**

In Chapter 1, we looked at different scholarly definitions of pedagogy. I even defined pedagogy for this thesis to mean the set of methods or instructional strategies used by a teacher to enhance student learning. You may be thinking, “Well, that is not my concept of pedagogy.” or “That is not how I learned it.” I am going to challenge you to practice the first three steps of the Theory of Action for Reflective Practice. Step 1 - pause and take a mental step back. Step 2 - have an open mind. The authors of the Theory of Action for Reflective Practice define open mindedness as “recognizing that there are multiple ways to view particular circumstances or events” (York-Barr et al., 2006, p.10).” They also summarize Webb’s (1995) notion of open mindedness as “consideration of changing viewpoints and letting go of the need to be right or the desire to win” (York-Barr et al., p.10). Mortimore (1999) on page 1 in his book, *Understanding Pedagogy: And Its Impact of Learning*, acknowledges the following:

The term pedagogy is seldom used in English writing about education. Where writers have used the term, they have often been criticized for using an ill defined or poorly developed idea. We do not recognize this criticism as fair. Rather, we recognize that, as with other complex ideas, pedagogy will be difficult to define - even in the formal literature of the subject. The boundaries of the subject may seem unclear, but the ways in

which different writers have drawn them may itself be instructive.

His wisdom leads us into Step 3, which is inquiry. I am challenging you as the reader to ask yourself as you are reading, “How does the information presented on pedagogy in Chapter 1 and this chapter enhance your understanding of pedagogy, and how are you going to use it to enhance your student’s learning?”

We can see from Siraj-Blatchford’s (2010) definition of pedagogy, “the full set of instructional techniques and strategies that enable learning” (p.149), pedagogy is a collective noun, just like rain is a collective noun. Like how rain is made up of raindrops, pedagogy is made up of instructional strategies. Based on the size, the amount, and other variables of the raindrops, the rain changes: i.e. from light rain to heavy rain or from warm rain to cool rain. Thus, the same with pedagogy if you change your instructional strategies, then your pedagogy changes. If you consider pedagogy a mindset, mindset is a collective noun; a mindset consists of different points of view about different ideas. Your mindset changes when your points of view change.

When you read through my action research project in Chapter 4, you will notice I used many different instructional strategies to work towards and make sure I achieved my goals. Right now I want to talk about three of the foundational instructional strategies that have shaped how I select other instructional strategies I use. I must warn you I like to work smarter, not harder, so they are research-based ideas and methods.

I view each class period as a journey to my goals and expectations. Some days there are more obstacles than other days. Some days the students are unfocused for a variety of different reasons, so I end up having to switch the instructional strategy I planned on using that day. Other days students are way more engaged and on top of it then I can even imagine, so I have to change my instructional strategies to something else to allow more room for the students to grow.

**Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy** - I have previously discussed Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy in this chapter. Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy is the driving force behind all of my lesson plans and assignments. It is the foundation of my pedagogy and influences all the other instructional strategies I use.

**Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences** – Before I mentioned I trained my employees based on their strengths. Through research,



Multiple Intelligence Wheel  
(Ostwald-Kowald, 2014) 3-3

Gardner realized there are eight different categories of people and people learn better based on their category (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). For example, if I have a music smart student in my class, during individual work time, I do not allow him to wear his headphone while working, I

could be hindering his learning process because he thinks better while listening to music. To accommodate my music smart students, during individual work

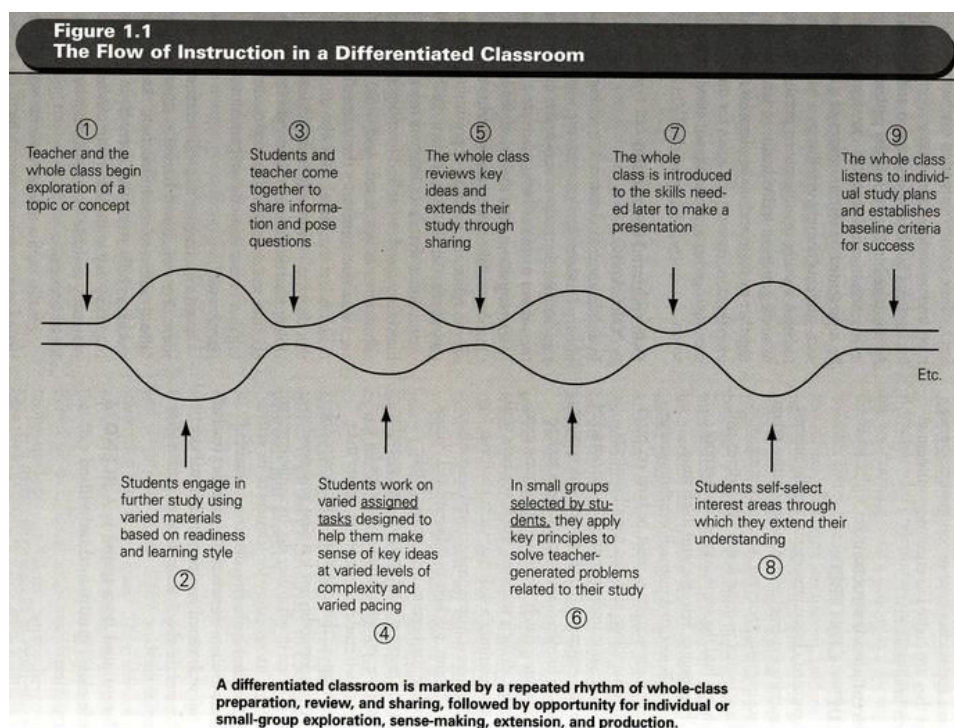
time all students have the option of putting in their headphones and listening to music. Before implementing the music privilege, I had a problem with a couple of students having to disrupt the class or argue about listening to music. After reflecting and realizing they were music smart students, I made it an open policy to listen to music during individual work time. Since then, I have not had a problem with them. They put in their headphones and work.

**Differentiated Instruction** – Differentiated Instruction works hand in hand with Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Carol Ann Tomlinson is the queen of differentiated instruction. Two of her books that have guided me along my merry way are *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms* (2001) and *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design* (2006).

*Differentiated Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms* provides the basics of what is differentiated instruction and what is not differentiated instruction. On page 46, the flow of instruction in a differentiated classroom illustration adds a visual model to the intervals in differentiated instructions. These ebbs and flows happen throughout multiple classes. Please do not try to cram it into one 50-minute class period. The other key about differentiated instruction is you have to train your students. Having a learner centered environment and having students working on different assignments can be quite chaotic if clear policies, procedures, and expectations are not set up and



practiced. In my action research project, you will see how I used differentiated instruction and my policies, procedures, and expectations.



The Flow of Instruction in a Differentiated Classroom (Tomlinson, 2001, p.6) 3-4

People have all sorts of ideas about what a learner-centered environment looks like, so let me explain my viewpoint of a learner-centered environment and how it formed my classroom. My classroom is closely modeled from the section titled “Structure of the Learning Environment” on pages 121-122 in *Curriculum Theory* by Michael Stephen Schiro (2013). Both the social and academic structures are extremely well designed and explicit expectations for both areas are given and upheld. Students are given the responsibility to keep themselves on track, to get the needed materials, along with cleaning up at the end of class. They also know there is a high expectation for words and actions

when it comes to keeping the classroom a safe, positive environment.

Academically, the students are given the choice to choose three assignments to complete from the choice board. At the same time, they know just because they have freedom to choose they still need to complete three assignments. We have fun and listen to music, all while in the process of learning. In Chapter 4, you will see a more in depth view of how my pedagogy and my classroom evolved. (Schiro, 2013)

### **Using the Reflective Practice**

The action research project has the reflective practice chunked by nine-week quarters; however, every day and every class I used reflective practice. A student might bring up a good point or demonstrate a way to do something one class and the class would get it, so the next class I would incorporate his or her idea. If students were having a rough day, and I had planned to have them on the Chromebooks, mini laptops with no hard drives made to be used with the internet and documents have to be saved via a cloud drive, i.e. Google Drive; magically, we would do a paper and pencil based project, which did not involve Chromebooks. I had fixed my mind on my goals of having a safe, positive learning environment, creating self-sufficient students who took ownership of their education and making sure I was a facilitator, not a dictator or tyrant.

Quickly, I recognized my students had a healthy case of learned helplessness. I had to pause, be open to changing, question how I could change my policies and procedures to stop enabling their learned helplessness, think

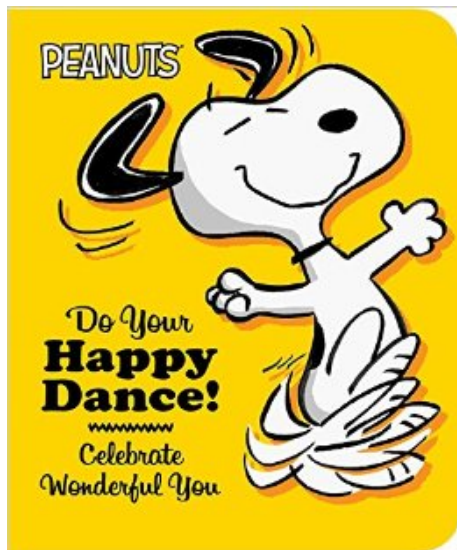
about the answer, research the answer, then make the necessary changes to enhance student learning. These also happen to be the six steps (Pause, Openness, Inquiry, Thinking, Learning, and Action) of the Theory of Action for Reflective Practice (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2006).

As you can already tell, this is an unconventional thesis. To stick with that theme, I have left my action research project “as is” from when I originally wrote it. Two unconventional formats that will catch your eye are that it is written in present tense and well my literature review is not the best. My literature review is more summary than synthesizing. Referring back to Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy, summarizing, where you explain the main idea of what is in one resource, would be included in the understanding level; while synthesizing, where you combine ideas from different sources to paint a collective picture of the topic, would be included in the analyze level. Chapter 3 of *Improving Schools Through Action Research: A Reflection Practice Approach* contains 22 pages of the essentials of how to do a literature review. Even on page 53, the author states:

“Reviewing literature is not a process of listing related articles or summarizing individual articles or books in separate paragraphs (which is actually an annotated bibliography). Instead the process is one of finding themes in the literature that can be used to inform the action research study and organizing the themes in a logical, coherent way” (Hendricks, 2013).

If I know it is wrong, why am I leaving it “as is”? First of all, it shows growth. If you compare my literature review in Chapter 1 to the literature review in my action research project (Chapter 4), you can definitely tell that my synthesizing abilities have increased. I am sure when the time comes to write my dissertation, my synthesizing abilities will have improved even more. Leaving my literature review in my action research project “as is” also is my way of celebrating the growth in my abilities from the beginning of my master’s program to the end of my masters program.

I will go into this more in Chapter 5. Learning is a process. Even though you try your best, you may not do it right the first time. Whether you are teaching, engaging in the reflective practice, synthesizing education materials,



Do Your Happy Dance! (Jeralds. 2016) 3-5

like with any other skill, the more you do it the better you will get. The important part is your skills continually grow and you do not become stagnant or give up. I am extremely proud of myself and the growth that has occurred during my master’s program. If you are new to research, remember when it gets

frustrating to look back and see how much you have grown to encourage yourself to keep going. If you are in one of those frustrating learning growth periods and want cry and give up, first crying is allowed and okay; second, look

back and see how much you have grown to encourage yourself to keep going.

Before moving on to Chapter 4, write down ability or skill you struggled with and through hard work and perseverance have overcome. Afterwards, take a few minutes to do the happy dance and celebrate.

# Student Spotlight

*Name: Juanita  
Age: 16 - Freshman  
Ethnicity: Latino*

*As a newcomer, someone who has been in the United States less than twelve months, Juanita spoke no English; although, she loved to speak Spanish. We first met when I substituted for the Spanish Algebra class long term. Those students and I were like chips and salsa. I felt like I had a unique relationship with each one of them.*

*Juanita ended up in my Algebra I - 1st Semester class because even being taught in Spanish she failed Algebra. Of course, two of her other friends from that class failed algebra also and were put into my class. There were so excited that I changed Khan Academy to Spanish for them. I let them do their presentations and any assignments in Spanish. I emphasized to them, "I do not care what language you do your work in. I want to see you focused and learning Algebra." The three of them in a group worked out splendidly.*

*One day Juanita came to my class during lunch and tears with a paper to sign. It was a paper to unenroll in school. Completely shocked, I asked her why she wanted me to sign the paper. She explained to me that she was in three English classes, three Math classes, and a French class, and she could not do it anymore. While in the United States, she had been living with her older brother and sister. She convinced her parents to let her come back down to Mexico and live with them. Mexico high school is not required. She continued on about how she could work and bake and help her parents in Mexico. It was too difficult here in the United States.*

*I pleaded with her to let me talk to the counselors about changing her schedule. With tear filled eyes, she said it was too late. Without my signature, Juanita walked out of my room. I have never seen Juanita again.*

## **Chapter 4 - A Reflection of a Year of Instructional Strategies:**

### **A Reflexive Inquiry about My Core Values as an Educator**

Growing up, I went to public school from kindergarten to second grade. Third grade through eighth grade, I went to a Lutheran private school. Ninth grade through eleventh grade I went to a Baptist private school. Because I had to take more classes during a school year in private school than students in public school, I transferred to public school for my senior year and graduated a semester early.

The name “goodie goodie” followed me throughout K-12. Compared to the experiences of my students, I feel my negative experiences in school were extremely limited. In eighth grade, my teacher passed away of a heart attack during spring break. Besides my third grade teacher, Mr. B was the best teacher I had had up through high school. My class had been labeled the worst class in the school’s history. He never treated the students that misbehaved any differently than the students who did behave. He engaged the students in the material, using different resources, ways, and ideas to present the material. He and Mr. M stood at opposite sides of the spectrum.

During eighth grade, we had the option to eat our lunch in class and take an Algebra class. Mr. M was our Algebra teacher. Mr. M had been our seventh grade teacher; all the students already knew how to push his buttons. I am pretty sure a majority of the students went to Algebra class more as entertainment value than for the actual value of Algebra. They would get him so riled up he

would throw down the papers and go storming out of the classroom. At first, he used to return, but then he stopped returning. After a while, he just stopped showing up. Not everyone in the class misbehaved. I feel like when he gave up, not only did he give up on the students, who misbehaved, but he also gave up on the students who truly wanted to learn. By giving up on all of us, I feel like he labeled all of us as bad students, but then again we were the worst class in the history of the school.

Having these two contrasting teachers in 8th grade plays a large role of who I am as an educator. When I first entered through the doors of the urban high school I currently teach at, I was unaware of its reputation and student behavioral problems. The first week I was at the school there was a fight in my classroom between two girls. Even with two teachers between them in the classroom, they still tried to carry on the fight by taunting and cursing at each other. To these new freshmen, saving face was more important than the consequences to come. The student who started the fight was already classified emotionally disturbed, so she was immediately transferred to a school that could better serve her. Since that fight I rarely saw the other student. Sometime in the third quarter, she came back to my class to let me know that she was going to go to an alternative education school.

At my school, there is a high attendance issues with teachers. Out of 85 teachers, 43 of them have been teaching for three or less years. The average annual turnover is over 50%. My students tell me stories over and over again of



the inconsistency of adults in both their educational and personal lives. Even though working at my high school is extremely stressful and full of more than the average daily challenge, I think these students deserve a consistent adult, who cares enough about them to show up to work every day. Does that make me a stereotypical “White Knight”? Maybe or maybe I am just a teacher who cares because I know what it is like to be given up on, and my skin color just happens to be white.

Ironically, I teach Algebra to the lowest of the ninth grade student population. When I first started, I was handed a stack of worksheets. After the first three weeks even I wanted to ditch class. Early into my master’s program, I had already been learning about different ways to engage my students in the learning process. Not really knowing what I was doing but knowing something had to change, I embarked in different instructional strategies to see what would best fit my students.

### **Research Focus**

While working on my English Education master’s degree, I am a first year Algebra Enhancement teacher. For the classes being examined in this study, my students are 100% ninth graders. I am most interested in enhancing student engagement and motivation. My desired outcome, which is also my assumption about the topics, is as students become more engaged and motivated behavioral problems will occur less. Having never taught in a high school setting, I do not have any anticipation as to which instructional strategies will

work the best to enhance student engagement and motivation. One of my preconceptions is student engagement is similar to employee engagement, and learning needs to be based on their learning styles. I am assuming when learning is tailored to the needs of the student, all students are able to learn the material necessary. My main core value is being a consistent adult and advocate for my students. Through this study, I am advocating for my students by searching for the most effective instructional strategy.

### **Literature Review**

*Improving Schools Through Action Research: A Reflective Practice Approach* by Cher Hendricks (2013) gives an easy to read yet comprehensive approach to using action research to reflect and improve strategies within the classroom. Action research is a systematic approach consisting of three steps: reflect, act, and evaluate. Content of an action research project should include eight different sections:

- (1) The reflection that led to the identification of your area of focus, including research questions,
- (2) review of the literature, (3) a description of the participants and setting of the study, (4) an explanation of the intervention or research method used, (5) a description of the data collection used, (6) information related to how you increased validity in your study, (7) a description of the results based on your analysis of the data, and (8) conclusions you made-including your reflective planning - based on those results. (p.174)

The book covers how to write each section in depth, along with research methods in education and the importance of doing action research in schools. (Hendricks, 2013)

In Lasley's (1992) article, "Promoting Teacher Reflection" three different types of focuses for reflection questions are covered. The technical focus address effectiveness, classroom management, and organization. The conceptual focus questions looks at the effectiveness of practices currently being used. The dialectical focus zooms in on the needs of the students. When examining all three focuses a balanced reflection can occur. (Lasley, 1992)

*Reflective Practice to Improve Schools* by Jennifer York-Barr, William A. Sommers, Gail S. Ghore, and Jo Montie (2006) is a guide to reflective practice, a less systematic approach than action research. The authors have created Theory of Action for Reflective Practice, which involves six steps to achieve enhanced student learning. The first step is to pause, to create space for the second step of openness. Openness refers to having an open perspective and open heart to be able to proceed to the next step of inquiry and questioning of strategies used. Questioning strategies used triggers the thinking stage, which helps one to examine goals, beliefs, and practices, essentially metacognition. As one thinks he or she learns resulting in growth. Applying what is learned is called the action stage, ultimately resulting enhanced student learning. (York-Barr, Sommer, Ghore, and Montie, 2006)

In *Becoming a Reflective Teacher*, Robert Marzano (2012) explores each of his 41 elements from his book *The Art and Science of Teaching* (2007).

Marzano believes to get the most out of the reflective practice the teacher must engage in focused practice, based on a growth goal the teacher focuses on strategies related to the goal. In addition, Marzano also advocates for focused feedback, having teachers track their progress over time. (Marzano, 2007)

According to Jay Jordan (2016) in “Activating Learning: Teaching for Metacognition”, metacognition is “thinking about thinking.” He claims integrated reflection is more powerful if done throughout the course. In addition, he continues on to talk about the pros of reflective writing: emotional engagement, developing strategies, and active learning. He ends his article with, “Most importantly, facilitating students’ metacognitive practices positions students as self-sufficient learners, giving them the tools to shape their own academic futures.” (Jordan, 2016)

Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe collaborated in 2006 on the book *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design*. Understanding by Design a method to develop curriculum by starting at a primary goals and breaking it down into lesson plans to achieve the goal. Differentiated Instruction targets the use of instructional strategies to increase effective learning for all students. Various ways of planning and using instructional strategies are incorporated into this book. It also stresses the

importance of authentic work and offering appropriate choices through use of a product and performance tic-tac-toe. (Tomlinson and McTighe, 2006)

Carol Ann Tomlinson (2001) wrote another book titled *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*. This book breaks down the basics of differentiated instruction, what differentiated instruction is and what it is not. She covers a variety of planning and in class management methods for differentiated instruction. (Tomlinson, 2001)

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

This action research project is a ground theory reflection about how the different instructional strategies affected my students learning engagement and motivation and how different instructional strategies met or did not meet the needs of my students. The year will be broken down into the first four weeks, the last five weeks of the first nine-weeks, the second nine weeks, the third nine weeks, and the fourth nine weeks. To guide my reflection, the primary reflection question is a technical focus question - “What practices are or are not effective in the classroom?” The first secondary reflective question is a conceptual focus question - “Does current practice tend to foster or diminish students’ attentiveness to assigned tasks and learning?” The second secondary reflective question is a dialectical focus question - “What needs are not being addressed by current teacher’s or school’s practices?” In the “Results” section of the paper, the answers to each question will be labeled by the type of focus and not the specific question.

## **Participants**

In this study, the participants include the students in the four Algebra Enhancement classes I have had throughout the year. The high school these classes are held at is a Title 1 urban high school. The students range from the age of 14 to 17 and are classified as Freshmen. Because of the vast variance of students being added and dropped throughout the year, the demographics will not be examined. At the beginning of the year, the four classes started with a total of 125 students. Throughout the year, there were 160 students that were enrolled for at least one day or more. At the end of the year a total of 58 students remained in the four classes. Out of the 58 remaining students, 53 of the students were original students from the beginning of the year. Reasons for students being dropped from the class: moving, at the end of the second nine weeks, students had a “B” in both Algebra Enhancement and Algebra Core, transferred to alternative education, schedule changes, and dropping out of high school. My End of Instruction Test Preparation class and Algebra 1 1st semester class were not included in this study because both classes were only one semester long and different instructional strategies were used due to the nature of the classes.

## **Methods for Data Collection**

To analyze my primary and secondary research questions, I chose three methods of data collection: reflective notes about observing students’ behavior and motivation, examining and assessing student’s comprehension, and core Algebra teachers’ feedback. The strategies chosen allow me to examine and

compare the data from each of the five time frames. Due to being the only adult in the classroom, reflective notes were the easiest way for me to record my observation of the change of students' behavior and motivation. Examining and assessing student's comprehension was chosen over examining student's work because a number of formative assessments, aside from formal assignments, were used throughout the year. The core Algebra teachers' feedback plays a significant role in this study because only at one point of the year was the behavior of the students so vastly different that the core Algebra teachers' gave any feedback. Overall, the strategies will help me triangulate the data to come to a more valid conclusion.

### **Plan for Increasing Validity**

The study incorporates the truth-value validity to ensure my results are accurate and truthful, consistency/dependability to see if I would get the same results with other students similar to mine, and catalytic validity to see what ways process and outcomes change my practice (Hendricks, 2013). Due to trying to improve my practice by finding what teaching strategies enhance student learning engagement and motivation, it is critical that I ensure that my results are accurate and truthful. The methodology of autoethnography applied to this action research project because the project focuses on my instructional strategies. The validity of the study needs to be consistent and dependable, so I can use the instructional practices with future classes. To increase this area of validity, I continued to use the instructional practices at minimum four weeks

and at most nine weeks. The teaching strategy found most effective in this study will be used in my next study to confirm the validity of the teaching approach. In addition, to add validity to the catalytic aspect, I engaged in continuous, ongoing reflective planning throughout the year.

### **Results of the Study**

**First Four Weeks of the First Nine Weeks.** During the first four weeks of the school year, I was instructed to do what the other Algebra teachers were doing. Every morning one of the other Algebra teachers provided me with copies of a worksheet that he or she made based on an Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skill (PASS) Algebra 1 Standard. Normally, the front of the worksheet was meant to be done together in class and the back of the worksheet was individual work. Often the worksheets were half pages. On the average the front page consisted of 5-8 questions, and the back page consisted of 4-6 questions (See Appendix A).

**Technical Focus.** These types of worksheets are ineffective. Students were not engaged in learning. Even though there were few questions, students were not completing the in class questions or the individual questions. Throughout the entire class, I continuously had to tell students to take out headphones, stop talking, stop texting, sit down, and correct other inappropriate behavior. During this time period, tests scored ranged from 5%-65%. The average test score was 43%.



For 108 students, for the first four weeks, there were a combined 217 absences, not including suspensions. This time period was before I received my district issued laptop to take attendance. Attendance was taken via paper roll sheets printed off by the main office. After taking roll, I was instructed to send a student to the main office with the roll sheet. The main office would then manually input the absences and tardies. When examining the attendance data in the computer, I noticed there were quite a number of days in which no absences were accounted for. This leads me to believe there are days, in which the roll sheet, once given to the student did not make it to the office or the office staff did not input all the roll sheets given to them. The actual absences may in fact have been as much as doubled from the recorded data.

***Conceptual Focus.*** Current practice diminishes students' attentiveness to assigned tasks and learning for reasons listed in the technical focus and dialectical focuses.

***Dialectical Focus.*** Students' needs that were not being addressed during this use of teaching strategies consist of autonomy, higher order of thinking, cultural reference points, connection to funds of knowledge, and engagement.

**Last Five Weeks of the First Nine Weeks.** After explaining to my assistant principal the ineffectiveness of the worksheets, I was given permission to start creating lesson plans. The head principal relocated me to a larger, more accommodating room. Upon request, I was given a chromebook cart consisting of 30 chromebooks, small laptops without hard drives produced by Google.

During this time period, there was not a set schedule for the types of assignments done throughout the week. I introduced my students to Khan Academy and to group work.

Because of the high poverty rate within the school area, many students do not have computers or internet access at home; therefore, in the beginning of the last five weeks, a majority of the time was spent teaching students, basic computer skills, i.e. signing in, internet navigation, and the functions of Khan Academy. The websites Cool Math and YouTube became distractions. A lot of scaffolding to promote self-discipline had to be created in order for students to use the computer as a tool and not a toy.

One of the main ways I scaffolded to promote self-discipline was explicitly telling them my expectations of them while using the computer and in reference to their overall education. Here is a list of some of my expectations:

- I expect you to do your best.
- I expect you to be responsible and complete your assignments.
- If wanting to listen to music, I expect you to use YouTube as a music listening device.
- If you do not know how to do a certain skill, I expect you to use the hints and watch the provided video by Khan Academy or to use Google to research it.

By explicitly stating my expectations, it made redirecting students I caught on YouTube or Cool Math easier to redirect. Throughout the class I constantly walked around monitoring and helping students. When I would find someone using YouTube not solely for listening to music, I casually asked them, “So

what's my expectation for using YouTube?" When they would answer, "To listen to music," I would respond, "Do you have all of your assignments done?" Their answer would lead to me asking, "So what's my expectation for you and assignments?" Usually by then, they switched back to working on Khan Academy, if not I would ask them one more question, "What website are you supposed to be on to complete your assignments?" When they got back to their assignment on Khan Academy, excitedly I would praise them with a statement to the effect of, "Thank you so much for doing your best and being responsible. I know all your hard work is going to reflect on the next test."

In addition to explicitly expressing expectations, we regularly discussed leadership skills. In the curriculum, I integrated concepts from John C. Maxwell's (2002) *The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player* and Sean Covey's (2014) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. Maxwell's team player characteristics constituted adaptable, collaborative, committed, communicative, competent, dependable, disciplined, enlarging, enthusiastic, intentional, mission conscious, prepared, relational, self-improving, selfless, solution oriented, and tenacious (Maxwell, 2002). Covey's effective habits included be proactive, begin with the end in mind, put first things first, think win-win, seek first to understand then to be understood, synergize, and sharpen the saw (Covey, 2014). By taking 15 minutes a week to incorporate leadership skills into the class, it helped my students to work better in groups, resolve conflicts inside and outside of the classroom, and take ownership of their education.

When using Khan Academy, I put students into a class in the program where I could recommend different skills for them to work on and could monitor each student's individual progress. The coach function on Khan Academy allowed me to see how much time each student spent on each problem, if he or she used a hint or watched a video for help. The students had a goal to reach practiced level on a certain skill, which meant he or she had to get five problems correct in a row without using a hint. If the student had four in a row and answered the fifth question incorrectly, he or she would have to answer additional questions until he or she successfully answered five questions correctly in a row. As part of a reward system when first getting settled in class, I gave a single jolly rancher to each student who was on task. When a student reached practice level on a certain skill, he or she had to raise his or her hand and show me the screen saying he or she reached practiced level. As a reward for reaching practice level, the student would receive an additional jolly rancher.

Jolly ranchers were also given to students for being on task while doing group work. Group work consisted of creating posters and doing class presentations on the skill that was being learned. Due to different gang affiliations and other outside social group drama, students had a lot of pushback to being placed in groups with other students they normally did not hang around with. I presented being able to pick their groups as a privilege, and if at anytime I felt working with their friends was a distraction, they would lose the privilege.

On occasion reminders of the privilege had to be given, but in all four classes, I never once had to take away the privilege of grouping themselves.

**Technical Focus.** Once students began using the computer as a tool, students enjoyed using Khan Academy and the instant feedback given by the website. Group work was productive for the most part, except for the few students, who refused to work because they did not want to work in groups. Both Khan Academy and group work is moderately effective. Test scores ranged from 40%-85%. The average test score was 67%.

At this time, I had received my district issued laptop and daily took roll on my computer that directly processed into the attendance program. I know the attendance and absences were recorded accurately. For 91 students, for the last five weeks of the first nine weeks, there were a combined 176 absences, not including suspensions. 63 of the absences were obtained by five students, who missed 10 or more days in the five-week time period.

**Conceptual focus.** If clear expectations are put into place for both the chromebooks and group work, both instructional techniques foster students' attentiveness to assigned tasks and learning for reasons listed in the technical focus and dialectical focuses. Additional instructional bonuses that helped was instant feedback from Khan Academy and instant gratification with receiving jolly ranchers for good behavior.

**Dialectical focus.** Students' needs still not being addressed consist of full autonomy, cultural reference points, and connection to funds of knowledge.

## **Second Nine Weeks**

During the second nine weeks, I used a structured organized weekly routine. Mondays, I did a lecture over the skill being learned for the week. Tuesdays, the students did individual work on Khan Academy. Wednesdays, the students worked in pairs developing mathematical vocabulary. Thursdays, the students worked in groups and gave a class presentation on the skill they had learned. Fridays, we wrapped up any loose ends and played Kahoot!. The structure was loosely organized around the basis of higher level thinking models: Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge. The idea was for students to develop their knowledge throughout the week to the point of being able to teach the skill by Thursday. The word teach is used in a liberal concept meaning to be able to communicate and explain the process in front of their peers.

***Technical Focus.*** Here are the instructional styles in order of effectiveness: Kahoot!, Group Presentations, Khan Academy, and pairs mathematical vocabulary work. Lecturing was an ineffective teaching strategy because low attendance rates on Mondays and lack of class engagement. For 85 students, there was a combined total of 444 absences, not including suspensions. 196 of the 444 absences were obtained by nine students with extreme attendance issues.

***Conceptual Focus.*** Kahoot!, Group Presentations, and Khan Academy fostered the most student attentiveness to learning and tasks.

***Dialectical Focus.*** Students' needs still not being addressed include full autonomy, cultural reference points, and connection to funds of knowledge.

### **Third Nine Weeks**

Jolly Ranchers were still being used to reward good behavior during the third nine weeks. After winter break, I incorporated differentiated learning by using choice boards (see page 68, 4-1) and SMART goals (see page 69, 4-2). Fridays were utilized to wrap up loose ends and play Kahoot!. The choice board idea was based on the Product and Performance Tic-Tac-Toe boards found on page 74 of *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design* (2006) by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe. Wanting to give my students as much as autonomy as possible, I did not want to limit their choice selection to having to pick three assignments in a row. In addition to the Written, Visual, and Oral columns, I added a fourth column for Khan Academy. Five of the assignments I put three asterisks by indicating that the students may do those assignments individually, in pairs, or in a small group. The assignments without three asterisks students had to complete individually. Altogether students had the choice of picking three of twelve assignments. Along with the assignments, the week's dates, standard of the week, and mastery statement of the week also appeared on the paper above the choice board.

Mastery statements of the week is an “I can” statement of what skill the students should be able to do by the end of the week. The “I can” statement is taken off of the weekly Marzano objective scales. My school district has adopted the Marzano methodology as a way of evaluating teachers. Marzano scales are based on a zero to four scale. Zero means “I am completely lost and have no idea what you are talking about.” One means “I know the basics of what you are talking about, but I cannot do the skill on my own.” Two means “I can do a skill needed to do the skill I am learning.” Three is the mastery level and means “I can do the skill on my own.” Four means “I can do the skill on my own and do the next step.” Level four is always reserved for the next skill in the progress order of learning or even a skill the student may not officially learn until the next year’s class. Marzano scales are mandatory for each teacher in the district to have posted in his or her room and students are supposed to rate themselves daily on their level of understanding.

**Week 3 - February 1-4, 2016**

<b>2.4 - Solve a system of linear equations by graphing, substitution or elimination.</b>			<b>Mastery Statement:</b> <b>I can solve a system of linear equations by graphing.</b>
Pick three activities to complete this week.			
<u>Written</u>	<u>Visual</u>	<u>Spoken</u>	<u>Khan Academy</u>
Write a Word Problem involving a Real Life Linear System (Include the Answer)	Create a Poster Graphing Linear Systems: One Solution, No Solution, & Infinite Solutions ***	Make a Video Explaining how to Graph and Find the Intersection Point of a Linear System ***	"Check Solutions to Systems of Equations" to Practiced Level
Create a "How to Graph Linear Systems" Study Guide: One Solution, No Solutions, Infinite Solutions***	Do a Frayer's Model : One Solution, No Solutions, and Infinite Solutions	Teach the Teacher How to Graph a Linear System and Identify the Intersection Point	"Solve Systems of Equations Graphically" to Practiced Level
Create a "How to find the intersection point of a linear system" Study Guide	Create a Google Slides Presentation How to Check Solutions to a Linear System***	Give a Class Teaching Demonstration on How to Graph a Linear System with No Solutions, One Solution, & Infinite Solutions ***	"Analyze the Solutions of Systems of Equations Graphically" to Practiced Level

\*\*\* Assignment may be done individually, in pairs, or in a group. Created by Rebecca Maldonado

Choice Board by Rebecca Maldonado, 4-1



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Week Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Fill out the following SMART Goal with assignment information. If you are doing an assignment in pairs or in a group, please make sure to include the names of the students you are going to be working with.

All SMART Goals should be:

- S - Specific
- M - Measurable
- A - Attainable
- R - Relevant
- T - Timely

This Week's Mastery Statement is:

I am going to complete the following assignments:

- Title of Assignment #1: \_\_\_\_\_ Date I am going to complete it by: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_
- Title of Assignment #2: \_\_\_\_\_ Date I am going to complete it by: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_
- Title of Assignment #3: \_\_\_\_\_ Date I am going to complete it by: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_
- Title of Assignment #4: \_\_\_\_\_ Date I am going to complete it by: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Created by Rebecca Maldonado

For me, I preferred to customize my scales with the standard we are working on for the week, so that students can have a better understanding of what they are expected to learn and can better gauge themselves of how they are doing. Below is an example of one of my Marzano scales. This scale was used during week two of a three-week lesson on Algebra 1 Oklahoma PASS (2009) Standard 2.1d - "Relations and Functions - Evaluate a Function based on tables, equations, or graphs." Week one of working on this standard, we worked on evaluating functions using a table. Week two, we were working on evaluating a function using an equation, and the students were already expected to have mastered evaluating a function using a table. The next week we were going to work on how to evaluate a function using a graph.



Marzano Scale by Rebecca Maldonado, 4-3

Going a step further than choice boards and Marzano scales, I employed the tactic of SMART Goals, which was extremely successful with helping my employees stay on task, when I was a manager. On Mondays, along with their choice boards, students filled out a SMART goal sheet. On the SMART goal sheet, the students had to write their name, the week dates, and mastery

statement on the top of the sheet. On the bottom of the sheet, they wrote down the title of the assignment, the grade they expected to get on the assignment, and the date they were going to complete it by. Students did not always get the grade they expected, but it gave them a quality level to aim to achieve.

Even though all assignments were due by Friday, the students had to strategically plan out what day they were going to complete each assignment by to successfully complete all three assignments by Friday. For example, if the first assignment they chose was easy, the second assignment was difficult, and the third assignment was a group project, they would first have to discuss with their group what date worked best for their team members to complete the group projects, then fit the other assignments around the group project. A student's schedule could be complete assignment one on Monday (actual date), assignment three, the group project, on Tuesday (actual date), and assignment two on Thursday (actual date). Not having an assignment due on Wednesday did not mean they had a free day Wednesday; it meant they were aware and planning appropriately that assignment two was going to take them longer than one class period to complete. The student would be working on assignment two both Wednesday and Thursday.

Each student kept a paper copy of their SMART Goals and Choice Board in their individual folders. Google Classroom was used as a communication tool. When a student completed an assignment, he or she would go into Google Classroom and mark assignment one as done and also make a private comment

of the assignment title. Marzano scales, Socrative links, and other critical information was posted in Google Classroom.

The school administration also wanted all teachers to do daily entrance and exit tickets. Socrative was the tool I used for entrance tickets, or as I renamed them, entry refreshers. Socrative is a web page for teachers to create and give quizzes, hold online discussions, and other web based discussions. On top of the students' differentiated assignments, Tuesdays through Fridays, students logged in and took an entry refresher, which was a five question multiple choice quiz over different aspects of the week's skill. Socrative allowed me to randomize the questions and answers, making it nearly impossible for the students to cheat and adding validity to the true comprehension of the skill. So students did not get caught up on doing the entry refreshers all class period or doing it at random times of the class, I used a seven-minute timer with minute. I started the timer immediately after the bell rang. When the timer ended, I would close out my side of the entry refresher, which would kick any student who was still working on out. Those students would get a grade for the questions they completed. Students reasonably could complete the entry refresher within four minutes. Special Education students were given accommodations according to their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

I admittedly was less enthusiastic about exit tickets. On a daily basis, with five minutes before class let out, I or a student passed out sticky notes. On the sticky notes, the students had to write their name, their level of

understanding based on the Marzano scale, and one thing they learned that day. As they were walking out of the class, they would stick them to a large neon green poster board. Students would be given one point for doing all three sections, a half a point for doing two sections, and zero points for not doing the exit ticket.

**Technical Focus.** Differentiated Instruction, Choice Boards, SMART Goals, and using Socratic as an entry refresher were all effective. Students began to take ownership of their education. These instructional techniques were so effective that all the classes ran like a fine-oiled machine. Students would come in do their entry refresher, then start working on their assignments without little to no prompting. Four weeks into the third nine weeks, I received the following email from a core Algebra teacher:

“Just wanted to tell you something...

Steve and I were talking after the staff meeting yesterday, and we've both noticed how well your Enhancement kids are doing. We feel like they come back to our rooms really knowing what's going on. What you are doing is working. (I even noticed Juan Pablo solving an equation yesterday!)

Not everyone can handle Enhancement classes (or this job in general), and you've really been a great addition to our team. I hope you know how much we appreciate you!”

This out of the blue email adds validity to the effectiveness of the strategies used during this time period. During the entire year, no other emails or signs of hope

or positivity were given by this core Algebra teacher or other members of the core Algebra team.

Sticky notes exit tickets were ineffective and burdensome. Even though a majority of students completed them, most students did not honestly evaluate their skills. When replying to the question, “Name one thing you learned today,” a number of answers were “Nothing” or “I learned Math today,” or some other short phrase to the same effect.

Test score ranged from 45%-100%. The average test score was 76%. For 77 students, there was a combined total of 387 absences, not including suspensions. 112 of the 387 absences belonged to seven students with high attendance issues.

***Conceptual Focus.*** Research based strategies, such as differentiated instruction, entrance tickets, and SMART Goals foster the most student attentiveness towards tasks and assignments. Sticky notes exit tickets did not foster or diminish the students’ attentiveness; it just took up time.

***Dialectical Focus.*** Because assignments were interest and learning style based, all students’ needs were met.

#### **Fourth Nine Weeks**

After Spring Break, all Algebra 1 teachers were ordered to start reviewing for the End of Instruction (EOI) test, the high stakes Algebra 1 test needed in Oklahoma to graduate high school. To ensure everyone had the math skills necessary to pass the Algebra 1 EOI, I decided to stop the differentiated

instruction and give everyone the same assignment everyday. I termed these assignments “organic assignments.” All assignments given were on Bloom’s Taxonomy’s Creating Level. An example of one assignment would be:

Create and Solve Four Problems of Each:  
(Each example must have at least one negative sign)

Monomial X Binomial	Example: $3x(x^2-3)$
Monomial X Trinomial	Example: $-4(2x^2+6x-17)$
Binomial X Binomial	Example: $(x-4)(x+3)$
Binomial X Trinomial	Example: $(2x+1)(5x^2+6x-8)$

Assignment Example #1 by Rebecca Maldonado, 4-4

Students were only given the instructions and not the examples, so they would have to be able to demonstrate their mathematical vocabulary knowledge, along with knowledge of how to complete the process for the skill.

Due to the high thinking capacity of the assignments, I replaced the Socratic entry refreshers with written paragraph reflective entry refreshers. All reflective topics for the entry refreshers were meant to help students relax. An example of a topic entry refresher would be, “Write one paragraph (3-5 sentences) about what you are going to do to celebrate passing the EOI.” Students were given seven minutes to write their entry refresher.

We went back to doing group “teach the class” presentations on Thursday. I introduced them to the idea of code switching; they were all now university math professors and needed explain how to solve the problem using the mathematical vocabulary. I wrote three to five mathematical vocabulary

words on the board that each group was expected to use. Here is an example of a script of how to describe multiplying two binomials  $(x-3)(x+2)$ :

<u>Without Mathematical Vocabulary</u>	<u>With Mathematical Vocabulary</u>
<p>“You multiply the ‘x’ times the ‘x’ and you get ‘x<sup>2</sup>’ (x to the second), then you multiply the ‘x’ times the ‘2’ and you get ‘2x’. Next you multiply ‘-3’ times ‘x’ and you get ‘-3x’, then you multiply ‘-3x’ times ‘2’ and get ‘-6’.</p> $x^2+2x-3x-6$ <p>Then you add them up to get <math>x^2-x-6</math>.”</p>	<p>“When multiplying two binomials, the first step is to distribute the first term to the all of the terms in the second binomial. When distributing the variable in the first binomial to the variable in the second binomial, you add the exponents, giving you ‘x<sup>2</sup>’ (x squared). Next, when distributing the variable in the first binomial to the constant in the second binomial, the constant becomes the coefficient of the variable giving you ‘2x’. The second step is to repeat the process by distributing the second term, or in this case the constant, in the first binomial with all the terms in the second binomial. When distributing the constant of the first binomial with the variable of the second binomial, the constant becomes the variable’s coefficient, giving you ‘-3x’; then, when distributing the constant of the first binomial, which is a negative number, with the constant of the second binomial, which is a positive number, the result is ‘-6’.</p> $x^2+2x-3x-6$ <p>Step three is to combine the like terms, the terms that have the same variable and exponent, which is ‘2x’ and ‘-3x’. To combine like terms, you add the coefficients of each term and leave the variable and the exponent the same. This will give you ‘-x’. There are no additional like terms, so the answer would be the trinomial <math>x^2-x-6</math>.</p>



**Technical Focus.** Here are the instructional strategies in order of effectiveness: reflective entry refreshers, teaching the class, and organic assignments. Students enjoyed being about to talk about themselves in the reflective entry refreshers; also, some students mentioned how having to think of something positive helped them be more productive in class. Due to the cohesiveness of the class and being familiar with the expectations of the assignment, students looked forward to and prepared by using their academic vocabulary throughout the week. While some students had a high stamina, thanks to the previous differentiated instruction section, other students struggled with just wanting to be done with the year and did not want to think on the higher level. This mindset was extremely apparent after they had taken the End of Instruction test (EOI).

Test score ranged from 43%-95%. The average test score was 69%. For 58 students, there was a combined total of 254 absences, not including suspensions. 85 of the 254 absences belonged to six students with high attendance issues.

**Conceptual Focus.** Reflective entry refreshers and teaching the class assignments fostered students' attentiveness. Organic assignments had a mixed result because of the end of the year. More research needs to be done on organic assignments.

***Dialectical Focus.*** Along with cultural reference points, the English Language Learner students' language needs were not met. Even though the need of full autonomy was not met, Students were less resistant to doing assignments

# Student Spotlight

*Name: Ke'Shawn*

*Age: 17 - Freshman*

*Ethnicity: African American*

*Standing 6' 2", Ke'Shawn was a big, intimidating guy. He was frustrated, violent, and used his size his advantage. I am not afraid of much. I definitely was not afraid of him. He would get up in my face. I would just stare him down, "You are going to learn today. You need to go sit down." After a while he thought it was amusing that I never back down from him.*

*After a few weeks, he and I had no problems. We were buds and even had a special handshake when he walked in my door. Although, outside of my class he was still causing and getting in trouble. At one point, he was in in school suspension more than in my class.*

*One day when he came into my classroom early, I called him out about this trouble he was causing. His response was, "Don'tcha know. That's just the way I roll." I immediately challenged him back, "Don'tcha know. You are capable of rolling towards success instead of failure." "Ms. you're cool and all, but all those eyes out there," he paused, "Ahhh. Nevermind. You don't know nothing about the streets."*

*Right after that comment a principal peeked him head in the room, "Ke'Shawn, I need to talk to you." About 30 minutes later, I received an email that Ke'Shawn would be in in school suspension until he was transferred to an alternative education. A few days later I saw Ke'Shawn in the hall as the in school suspension students were walking to lunch. He did the special handshake and told me, "Thanks for believin'. Be Cool!" That was the last time I saw Ke'Shawn.*

~~Chapter 5—A Reflective Analysis of the Six Steps of the  
Theory of Action for Reflective Practice~~

**Chapter 5 - Adding to the Reflective Practice Dialogue**

You may have noticed I have changed the name of the chapter based on what I mentioned in chapters 1 and 2. The more I read and research about the reflective practice, the more I notice there is a gap in research. Excellent research has been done for reflective practice as an individual, with partners, in small groups, and as a school. Reflective Practice to Improve Schools: An Action Guide for Educators the most comprehensive, well-laid out book or article on reflective practice I can find (York-Barr et al., 2006). However, all the models and theories refer to reflecting outside of the classroom.

What about inside the classroom? What happens when that well thought out reflected on lesson plan goes awry? Are we supposed to get dig our heels in and say, “This is the way I wrote the lesson plan. This is how we are going to do,” then blame the students when they do not get it? When writing a paper if you notice you misspelled a word, put a comma in the wrong place, or write “their” instead of “there,” do you correct it or do say, “Nope! I cannot correct it. I am in the draft stage, not the proofreading stage, of the writing process”?

These may seem like silly, ridiculous rhetorical questions, but how often do we blame the students for not understanding or not having the tools, i.e. note taking skills? Recently, I received an email from one of my son’s teachers about him not wanting to do an assignment. The last sentence of the email read, “It

should have been fun.” I wanted to reply back and say, “Well, apparently, he did not view it as fun.” I refrained and instead replied, “Okay, I will have him do it this weekend.”

We all get into the funk of blaming the student. We notice the students are not getting the lesson; yet, we keep barreling through the lesson plan just as we wrote it. After all, the students should have studied more; the students should automatically know how to work on their own; the students should be able to make the connections we the teachers can make. It is not the fault of the teacher the students are not getting it. Before we get going too far down that road, let me clarify. I am not saying everything is the teacher’s fault. Yes, students need to be accountable.

What I am saying is sometimes as teachers, we forget what it is like to be students. We are so used to having note taking and listening skills. We have been reading for years upon years that we have no idea what it is like to be a reluctant reader. We have been doing math for years upon years that we have no idea what it is like to struggle with our multiplication tables. We have been doing adult life for so long that we have no idea what it is like to be a teenager and get caught up and distracted by the drama of being a teenager.

When I was asked to teach and develop a curriculum for a Math of Finance class geared towards struggling upperclassmen, I thought I had designed this fabulous unit lesson plan. The first problem I ran into was when I had them do an assignment finding information on a website. I thought I was

nice and helpful by giving them the website. At least I did not make them search it on a search engine and have to find the website. All the students are on their Chromebooks and this website. I start getting questions like, “Miss, where do we go?” and “What do we click on?” When planning the lesson, I had assumed as juniors and seniors, they would have enough reasoning skills to figure out a website. Let me be the first to admit I made a mistake and should not have assumed. When forming my lesson, I viewed the website from a graduate student’s perspective, not from a struggling junior’s or senior’s perspective. I also did not take into account the fact I always use a computer; however, more than likely, none of these students have computers at home.

Here I am mid-lesson. I have recognized the problem. Now, I have two choices: (1) I can either barrel through the lesson the way I had planned it, and probably none of the students will learn anything or (2) I can pull out one of my other pedagogy tools and help my students develop the skills they need to complete the assignment. Using reasoning skills is a skill they are going to need as an adult; therefore, even though we may not get through all of the lessons as planned, I know I would not be wasting my time if I choose option number two. All option number one is going to cause is frustration and no one, including me as the teacher, is going to benefit from it. Option number 2 is the best choice. Now I need to choose a different pedagogy tool.

If I give the students the answer is that going to help with their reasoning skills? No, plus this is not about me showing off my skills; this is about the

students developing their reasoning skills. A majority of my students are having the same problem, so we are probably going to need to turn this into a class discussion.

Jim Young's (2013) book *High-Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great Teaching*, has an excellent chapter titled "Effective Questions." In this chapter, he focuses on the type, kind, and level of the questions teachers ask. Types of questions consist of right/wrong vs. opinion, knowledge, skill, or big idea questions. Kind of questions involves determining whether to use an open question, meaning there is more than one possible answer, or a closed question, meaning there is only one answer. The level of the question refers to the depth of knowledge. He uses Bloom's Original Taxonomy. (I prefer Bloom's Revised Taxonomy.) You can use whichever or even Marzano's Taxonomy, or Webb's Depth of Knowledge, whichever one you prefer. On page 163 of *High-Impact Instruction* (2013), there is a lovely question chart for when you are reflecting outside of the classroom; however, right now we are inside the classroom, we do not have time for all of that. We have to think, and we have to think fast.

Really quick, the type is going to be an opinion question because we want the students to figure out where to go. Kind is going to be an open question because opinion questions are always open questions because the students can give more than one answer and we are not worried about right and wrong. Hold on. Let's talk about why we are not concerned about right or wrong because, yes, the idea is for the students to figure out how to navigate the website and

find the needed information. Although, if you click on the wrong link on a website, what do you do? Excellent job. You hit the back button. The world will not come to an end for clicking on the wrong link on a website. As for the level of the question, remember in Chapter 2 I said that we want to keep our students on the analyze, evaluate, and create levels. For this lesson, we are going to read and analyze titles of links to determine if they contain the needed information. As a teacher, I am going to be asking open ended, opinion questions on the analyze level; therefore, my questions are going to start with “Which one do you think...?”, “What do you think this means?”, and “If we click on this link, what kind of information do you think we will find?”

To demonstrate I am relying on the students for an answer, I am going to hook my laptop to my smart board and bring up the website on my computer. Through asking a series of questions, I am going to let them guide and direct me through the website, so the students understand my expectations. After modeling and letting them guide and direct me to click on links, then I will still continue to ask questions; however, then, I will get up and walk around monitoring them navigate the website on their own. When I feel confident the students have a better understanding of navigating the website by using their reasoning skills, I will stop asking questions and set them free on the assignment or perhaps allow them to work together in pairs for this particular assignment. Whew! Lesson saved!



Another troublesome obstacle, I came across was when on a lesson about budgeting. I thought I was starting off simple. On the board, I wrote down an amount for income and three amounts for bills to be paid. I asked them, “What Math operation do we need to use to find out how much money we have left over?” All I received were deer in the headlight looks, so I expanded, “Add, Subtract, Multiply, or Divide.” One student warily responded, “Divide.” Right then I realized I had taken how to do a budget for granted. There went that lesson plan. Understanding how weak the students mathematical processing skills were we did an experiment. I broke the class up to four groups. The first group had to add all of the figures. The second group had to subtract all the figures. The third group multiplied the figures. The last group divided all the figures. Not only did they have to do the mathematical processes, but they also had to report to the class if their answer was right or wrong and give a justified reason to explain their answer (Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy – Evaluate level).

What would have happened if I would have just barreled right through the lesson? Would the students have understood why we subtract the bills from the income to get how much money is left over? The whole goal of the reflection process is to enhance student’s learning, which is why it is important to use the reflection process both outside and inside the classroom. Outside of the classroom is when we use the theory of action for reflective practice: Pause, Openness, Inquiry, Thinking, Learning, and Action. Unfortunately, inside the classroom, we do not have time to walk through all six of the steps. I created a

simple in-classroom modification three step process, which works hand in hand with the outside of the classroom reflective practice.

### **Pause, Think, Use**

Pause, Think, Use – the only three-step you need to remember in the classroom. In this section, we will discuss the basics of Pause, Think, Use, including the proper mindset to engage Pause, Think, Use. By utilizing, Pause, Think, Use, you can say goodbye to frustrated students and hello to enhanced student learning. The best part is the more you use it, the more effective it is. Let us get started.

Before getting started, you should already have goals for you, your classroom, and students in place. If you do not, before reading any further, please stop and create goals as to what your ideal classroom would look like. Now do not go overboard and create two pages of goals. Take your ideal classroom and sum it up into two – three initial expectations to achieve. These expectations will serve as your goals. Once you have done this, please read on.

**Mindset.** While teaching, your mindset is imperative. You will need to have a compartmentalized mindset. Simply put, you will need to be able to teach and think at the same time. While you are teaching and you notice something is wrong or the students are not connecting with what you say, you are invoking in the Pause, Think, Use process. This is much easier than patting your head and rubbing your belly, I promise. Like any habit, it gets easier with time.

If you have difficulties teaching and mentally pausing at the same time, ask a thought-provoking question, then while you are using wait time, a real moment of silence, allowing students to come up with an answer. Use the seconds of wait time as your brief silence time to run through Pause, Think, Use. You can also use the question to transition into whatever method you chose to use.

When not in going through the Pause, Think, Use reflection process, as you are monitoring and observing the classroom environment, you should continuously be looking for actions, which are not in line with your goals. For example, a student is on his or her phone. This is an opportunity to use Pause, Think, Use. Are you going to address it? If you do address it, which tool are you going to use to solve it with? Another example would be there are five students not engaged with the lesson. Are you going to address it? If you do address it, which tool are you going to use to get those students engaged? You will go through the entire class in this mindset of observing and monitoring for actions, which could be obstacles to achieving your goals.

**Pause.** Whether using a compartmentalized mindset or wait time, immediately, the pause stage occurs when you recognize an obstacle in the way of achieving your goal. Even though the pause stage is a split second, it allows you to take a mental step back to evaluate the situation. As teachers, we want to make sure we are demonstrating healthy responses, not knee-jerk reactions. Sometimes when you take a step back, you will notice a response may not even be necessary, or

you can do the redirection in a way, which the students do not even realize it is not a part of the original plan. On the other hand, sometimes when you take a step back, you will notice a deliberate response is necessary, and students need to see that the change is not a part of the original plan. As you continue to walk through the Pause, Think, Use reflective process, you will start realizing the difference in your reactions when you do pause and when you do not pause.

**Think.** After you have taken the mental step back, it is time to evaluate the situation. The first question you need to ask yourself is, “Am I going to address it right now?” You might come across the situation where you realize your students are not making the connections. Is this a situation where you need to change your methodology right now or should you just make a mental note and engage in the reflective practice about it outside of class?

If you need to change your methodology, ask yourself, “What pedagogy/method tool can I use to help enhance student learning?” If you are at a total loss, feel free open up to your students and ask them a question like, “We seem to be struggling to make connections. What do you think we are struggling the most with right now?” Use your wait time, not only to allow them time to process the answer but allows you time to try to prepare an answer. They may have a reply right away and identify they are having problems understanding one part of the text. Right there you know you need to present the text in a different manner. You may realize they responded extremely well to the question you asked, so you are just going to continue to use the effective

questions method instead of barreling through the lesson plan. The more you engage in Pause, Think, Use and the reflective practice outside of the classroom the more fluid the process will get.

**Use.** To quote Albert Einstein or whoever the argument would like to give credit to again, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results.” Nothing will change in your classroom unless you change it. You are in control. Once you pause, think, then you need to use the other pedagogy you decided to use. What if it does not work? The better question is, “What if it does work?” This is also an opportunity for your students to see making mistakes are a learning experience, not an end of the world. Sometimes students do not try to do their work because they do not want to make a mistake. You making a mistake in front of them lets them know it is okay to make mistakes and the important part is you try, and you learn from your mistakes. In my class, I even make mistakes on purpose, so that I can edify my students when they catch the mistake. It is okay. As a teacher, you are not expected to be perfect; however, you are expected to learn from your mistakes. The only way to learn from your mistakes is by reflecting on them inside and outside of the classroom.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you for reading my thesis. The proofreader of this thesis, who knows me remarkably well, commented, “There is nothing conventional about you.” Truth be told, even during my filmmaking and managing careers, there

has never been anything conventional me. Like filmmaking, writing to me is about artistry, not about fitting into a formula. During the writing of this thesis, there was a little back and forth about mentioning the five-paragraph essay. Ironically, I feel like sometime research can turn into formulaic writing. Even for theses, there is a formula you are supposed to write it in. I like to call the structure the five-chapter thesis. Everything has to be done a specific and certain way.

One of my friends is a retired science professor. He asked me about how my thesis was going. The more I told him the bigger his eyes got. It was not because of the topic but because of the way I am formatting. I wrote it in first person and addressed the audience; then I put my literature review in Chapter 1, not Chapter 2. I know he was trying to be supportive, but I could tell he was blown away by the unconventional formatting of my thesis.

I am thankful my proofreader allowed me to keep the unconventional formatting. Writing is about telling a story. It is not about format. I believe we are going to draw more into scholarly writing; we are going to have to make research and scholarly writing more interesting to read. I hope I have successfully broken the mold on thesis writing and encourage other people, who are in a master's program, to make their thesis worth reading or even watching. The sky is the limit of how you can express your knowledge.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this as much as I have enjoyed writing. I love writing and the process of writing. This has been an inspiration to find

more time to write. When I got back from China, one of my professors told me to write about my experience to make sense of it. While this is not a writing about my experience in China, it is a writing and reflection on my first year of teaching.

After I have written, reflected, and thought about my first year of teaching, maybe I made the right decision. If the only purpose of my first year of teaching is to be an inspiring story of perseverance, then it is worth it. There is an old Japanese Proverb which says, “Fall down seven times, stand up eight.” Remember the reflective practice is not about looking back to see if you made the right decision. It is about looking back, so when you go forward, you grow and are a better person, teacher, and student.

## References

- Anderson, H. M. (2016). *Successful teaching excellence perspectives for pharmacy educators*. Retrieved from Queen's University:  
[http://www.queensu.ca/teachingandlearning/modules/active/documents/Dales\\_Cone\\_of\\_Experience\\_summary.pdf](http://www.queensu.ca/teachingandlearning/modules/active/documents/Dales_Cone_of_Experience_summary.pdf)
- Armstrong, P. (2016). *Bloom's taxonomy*. Retrieved from Vanderbilt University:  
<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>
- Bloom, B., Anderson, L., & Krathwohl, D. (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: a revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. New York: Longman.
- Boud, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (2013). *Reflection: Turning experience into learning*. Routledge.
- Bright, B. (1996). Reflecting on "reflective practice". *Studies in the Education of Adults* , 28 (2), 162-184.
- Clandinin, D., & Connelly, F. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design choosing among five approaches* (3rd Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed, methods approaches* (3rd Edition ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Csibra, G., & Gergely, G. Social learning and social cognition: The case for pedagogy. *Processes of change in brain and cognitive development* , XXI (21), 249-274.
- Covey, S. (2014). *The 7 Habits of highly effective teens: Personal workbook*. New York: Touchstone Book/Simon & Schuster.
- Czarniawska, B. (2004). *Narrative in social science research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dale, E. (1969). *Audiovisual methods in teaching*.
- Daniels, H. (2016). *Vygotsky and pedagogy*. Routledge.
- Denzin, N. (1989). *Interpretive Interactionism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.



- Fosnot, C. (1989). Enquiring teachers. In *Enquiring Learners: A constructivist approach for teaching*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Gardner, H., & Hatch, T. (1989). Multiple intelligences go to school: Educational implications of the theory of multiple intelligences. *Educational Researcher* , 18 (8), 4-9.
- Goldberg, N. (2005). *Writing down the bones*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Hendricks, C. (2013). *Improving schools through action research: A reflective practice approach* (3rd Edition ed.). Boston, MA, USA: Pearson.
- Jerals, S. (2016). Do your happy dance!: Celebrate wonderful you. Peanuts Worldwide LLC.
- Jordan, J. (2016, February 8). Activating Learning: Teaching for Metacognition. *L2 Writing*. Retrieved from [http://blogs.ncte.org/index.php/category/l2-writing/?utm\\_source=50509817&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=General](http://blogs.ncte.org/index.php/category/l2-writing/?utm_source=50509817&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=General).
- Khan Academy. (2016). Retrieved from Khan Academy: <https://www.khanacademy.org/?learn=1>
- Killon, J., & Todnem, G. (1991). A process of personal theory building. *Educational Leadership* , 48 (6), 14-17.
- Knight, J. (2013). *High-impact instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Korthagen, F., & Vasalos, A. (2005). Going to the core: Deepening reflection by connecting the person to the profession. In N. Lyons (Ed.), *Handbook of reflection and reflective inquiry: Mapping a way of knowing for professional reflective inquiry* (pp. 529-552). New York: Springer.
- Lasley, T. (1992). Promoting teacher reflection. *Journal of Staff Development* , 13 (1), 24-29.
- Lean Six Sigma Institute. (2016). *What is lean six sigma*. Retrieved from Lean Six Sigma Institute: <http://www.leansixsigmainstitute.org/what-is-lss>
- Lomask, M. (1986). *The biographer's craft*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Losh, E., Alexander, J., Cannon, K., & Zander, C. (2014). *Understanding rhetoric: A graphic guide to writing*. Boston, MA, USA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1848). *The communist manifesto*. Millennium Publications.
- Marzano, R. J. (2007). *The art and science of teaching: A comprehensive framework for effective instruction*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Marzano, R. J., Boogren, T., Heflebower, T., Kanold-McIntyre, J., & Pickering, D. (2012). *Becoming a reflective teacher*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.
- Maxwell, J. C. (2002). *The 17 essential qualities of a team player: Becoming the kind of person every team wants*. Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.
- McKeown, R. G., & Gentilucci, J. L. (2007). Think-aloud strategy: Metacognitive development and monitoring comprehension in the middle school second-language classroom. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52 (2), 138-147.
- Mortimore, P. (Ed.). (1999). *Understanding pedagogy: and its impact on learning*. Sage.
- National Evaluation Systems, Inc. (2005, October). *Field 25: Middle level/intermediate mathematics test framework*. Retrieved from Certification Examination for Oklahoma Educators: [http://www.ceoe.nesinc.com/Content/Docs/CEOE\\_Framework\\_025.pdf](http://www.ceoe.nesinc.com/Content/Docs/CEOE_Framework_025.pdf)
- Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills. (2009). Retrieved from [http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/C3\\_PASS\\_math.pdf](http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/C3_PASS_math.pdf)
- Oklahoma State Department of Education. (2014, May 7). *Emergency certification (administration use only)*. Retrieved from Oklahoma State Department of Education: <http://sde.ok.gov/sde/emergency-certification-administrator-use-only>
- Ostwald-Kowald. (2014). *Virtual learning connections*. Retrieved from Connections Academy Blog: <http://www.connectionsacademy.com/blog/posts/2013-01-18/Understanding-Your-Student-s-Learning-Style-The-Theory-of-Multiple-Intelligences.aspx>
- Oxford University Press. (2016). *Pedagogy*. Retrieved from English Oxford Living Dictionaries: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pedagogy>

- Pearson Education, Inc. . (2015). *Tests*. Retrieved from Certification Examination for Oklahoma Educators:  
[http://www.ceoe.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN\\_Tests.html](http://www.ceoe.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_Tests.html)
- Pearson Education, Inc. (2015). *Middle level/intermediate mathematics (025)*. Retrieved from Certification Examinations for Oklahoma Educators:  
[http://www.ceoe.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML\\_FRAG/OK025\\_TestPage.html](http://www.ceoe.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/OK025_TestPage.html)
- Riessman, C. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Roddenberry, G. (Producer), Roddenberry, G., Hurley, M. (Writers), & Bowman, R. (Director). (1989). *Star trek: The next generation - q who* [Motion Picture]. USA: Paramount Studios.
- Ficarra, G. (Producer), & Stoller, N. (Director). (2016). *Storks* [Motion Picture].
- Schiro, M. S. (2013). *Curriculum Theory* (2nd Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2010). A focus on pedagogy. *Early childhood matters- Evidence from the effective pre-school and primary education project* , 149-165.
- Smith, L. (1994). Biographical method. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 286-305). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sughrua, W. M. (2016). *Heightened performative auto ethnography*. New York: Peter Lang.
- The University of Oklahoma. (2016, July 5). *Urban teacher preparation academy*. Retrieved from OU Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education The University of Oklahoma:  
<http://www.ou.edu/education/resources/UTPA.html>
- Tochon, F., & Munby, H. (1993). Novice and expert teachers' time epistemology: A wave function from didactics to pedagogy. *Teaching and teacher education* , 9 (2), 205-218.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *How to differentiat instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*. Alexandria, VA, USA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Tomlinson, C. A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differential instruction and understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA, USA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Disney, W., Walsh, B. (Producers), Walsh, B., DaGradi, D., Travers, P. (Writers), & Stevenson, R. (Director). (1964). *Mary Poppins* [Motion Picture]. USA.
- York-Barr, J., Sommers, W., Ghere, G., & Montie, J. (2006). *Reflective practice to improve schools: An action guide for educators*. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Corwin Press.
- Young, J. (2013). *High-impact instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Corwin Press.