The Creation of a Ninth Grade Literacy Course: One Teacher's Experiences in Teaching a Standards-Based Literacy Course

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THE CREATION OF A NINTH GRADE LITERACY COURSE: ONE TEACHER’S EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING A STANDARDS-BASED LITERACY COURSE

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Literacy
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

By
Katie Gray Keating

May 2014
THE CREATION OF A NINTH GRADE LITERACY COURSE: 
ONE TEACHER’S EXPERIENCES IN INITIATING AND TEACHING A 
STANDARDS-BASED LITERACY COURSE

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Thank you to my best friend, for always listening and providing the unending support of a sister.

And finally, thank you to my principal for inspiring me, and all who know her, to never stop learning.
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This study examined one teacher’s experience with teaching a ninth grade literacy course. In response to consecutively low reading test scores, the administration in a rural high school in South Central Kentucky established a literacy course for all ninth grade students. This research illustrates the teacher’s implementation and instruction of that course. In addition, the research investigates how the results of a formal reading assessment might be used to improve the reading course in the future.
Chapter One

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to “draw a picture” of the complexities of designing and establishing a literacy course intended to increase student college and career readiness in a rural Kentucky high school with low reading scores. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe “portraiture [as] a method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism” (p. xv) and seeks “to combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor” (p. 3). Using the method of portraiture, the teacher’s notes regarding establishment of course work that meets literacy standards and the effectiveness of that course work, combined with an analysis of student test scores, the teacher tries to illustrate the course’s impact on student reading comprehension and vocabulary growth. This portraiture allows the reader to visualize the creation and instruction of a ninth grade literacy course.

The teacher’s voice permeates the chapters of this research study as she was the subject/teacher in the study; however, the intention is that “voice” helps establish connections with the reader in hopes that this project might better inform other teachers and schools who undertake literacy/reading courses at the high school level. The teacher attempted to capture thoughts, decisions, collaborations, successes and failures in the development and implementation of this literacy course as, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), “the knowledge and wisdom drawn from these life experiences [are used] as resources for understanding” (p. 95).
Statement of the Problem

The chief complaint among teachers at the targeted high school is that students do not comprehend what they read. Students also voice that it is true; they do not comprehend most of what they read. Educators observe a vicious cycle that is often created as a student’s struggle to comprehend text may cause a negative attitude toward reading, and the negative attitude toward reading often limits the student’s interest in comprehending what they read. Students may struggle to comprehend grade-level text for a variety of reasons, including limited experience with books or learning disabilities, but it is generally accepted by the literature that students living in poverty are more likely to struggle with reading than their more affluent peers. In fact, researchers are continuing to find a link between low socioeconomic status (SES) and poor reading comprehension (McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2010). Because a large majority of students at this high school live in poverty, this is not only a problem in schools across the nation—it may also be a serious issue at the high school in this project.

According to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (2012) in the state of Kentucky, high school student college readiness is “the level of preparation a first-time student needs in order to succeed in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution” (para. 2), and career readiness is “the level of preparation a high school graduate needs in order to proceed to the next step in a chosen career, whether that is postsecondary coursework, industry certification, or entry into the workforce” (para. 3). In Kentucky, the standards for readiness are based on national assessments, such as the ACT. The ACT Test is mandatory for all eleventh grade students in the state, and the
Kentucky system wide standard of college readiness for reading is an ACT score of 20 (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2012).

The high school administration and faculty at the participating school have been unhappy with the reading scores in the past and wanted to make a change in students’ course work to address the reading concerns. Table 1 shows reading scores from the Kentucky School Report Card (Kentucky Department of Education, 2014) for this high school and averages for the state of Kentucky during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years.

Table 1

*Reading Test Score Information for This High School and Comparable State Averages*

<table>
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<th>KY State Averages 2012-2013</th>
<th>2012-2013 School Year</th>
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<td>Average Reading PLAN Score (Grade 10)</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students meeting Reading PLAN Benchmarks</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Reading ACT Score (Grade 11)</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students meeting Reading ACT Benchmarks</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administration at the participating school decided to create a literacy course designed for all freshmen students. The course was to focus on four basics of literacy: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The administration further decided to offer the new position to an existing English faculty member who had a degree in Middle Grades Education with concentrations in English/Language Arts and Social Studies. This
teacher had been teaching Freshman English at this school for three years. Furthermore, the teacher was two semesters of course work away from completing a Master’s Degree in Literacy Education and demonstrated that she was passionate about literacy. The administration realized that the English teacher in question would finish the necessary course work by May of that school year, and decided that she was the most qualified individual in the school to take on the new course. The course was designed to be a 12-week mandatory course for all freshmen. The course would enter a 12-week rotation with two other courses and therefore would serve one-third of the freshman class per rotation (three groups total).

**Theoretical Framework**

This research project is based on previously conducted research regarding reading comprehension and students living in poverty. Recent test scores released by the Kentucky Department of Education, and reported on the School Report Card, indicate low reading scores for students at the participating school. Literature supports the idea that there may be a link between low socioeconomic status and low reading level (McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2010; Morris, et al., 2012) and as determined by the Free and Reduced Population at this high school, approximately 67% of students at this school live in poverty. In response to consecutively low reading test scores, the school administration authorized the establishment of a 12-week literacy course required for all incoming ninth grade students.

Three texts were primarily used to establish the collaboratively designed curriculum for the literacy course. First, Schmoker (2011) argues that if schools “choose to take just a few well-known, straightforward actions, in every subject area, we can
make swift, dramatic improvements in schools. Some believe we could virtually eliminate the achievement gap within a few years” (p. 1). Second, in The Core Six (2012), Silver, Dewing, and Perini argue there are “[Six Core] practices that students need to cultivate to become independent learners; “these practices also “meet the demands of the Common Core to provide a basis for college and career readiness” (vii). And third, in The Essentials of Reading (2013) Petty, Super and Bryant present numerous reading strategies “to increase [student] effectiveness with using print for learning” and “all aspects of the reading processes are addressed with particular emphasis on the skills and strategies that align with the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts” (p. xxi).

**Purpose of the Study**

Existing literature examines the “achievement gap” among students who live in poverty compared to their more affluent peers (Noble, Wolmetz, Ochs, Farah, & McCandliss, 2006) and researchers have attempted to provide information to educators on why the gap exists and how to bridge the gap (McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2010). For an educator in a school with a large percentage of students living in poverty, this information is necessary to ensure that all students are successful. Furthermore, there is also literature available to assist educators in implementing effective literacy practices (Mason & Galloway, 2012; Silver, Dewing, & Perini, 2012; Schmoker, 2011; McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2010; Tregenza & Lewis, 2008; Tomblinson, 2004; Valencia & Buly, 2004) including successful reading strategies to improve reading comprehension of all students (Petty, Super, & Bryant, 2013). This study attempts to “draw a picture” of how a school along with a ninth grade teacher can utilize and implement suggestions in the
existing literature to establish a successful literacy course that attempts to increase college and career readiness of all students.

**Research Questions**

For the purposes of this study, the following questions were addressed:

1. How is a ninth grade literacy course that attempts to increase college and career readiness as delineated by the state of Kentucky developed and implemented?

2. How can the results of a formal reading assessment be used to increase the likelihood that a literacy course will improve college and career readiness in the future?

**Methodology**

The research design for this project is both qualitative and quantitative in nature; it is a mixed methods study. Qualitatively, this research project is designed to examine the ways in which a ninth grade literacy course is collaboratively designed and then taught by the appointed teacher. This portraiture of that process illustrates the thorough analysis of collaborative curriculum design, teacher decisions, standards alignment and teacher observations and reactions. Quantitatively, to determine any effect that enrollment in a literacy course had on student reading comprehension and vocabulary growth, pre-test and post-test scores using the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test were analyzed. Data collection took place within the normal confines of the ninth grade literacy classroom.

**Definition of Terms**

**Achievement Gap**—“one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).
Argumentative Writing- The argumentative essay is a genre of writing that requires the student to investigate a topic; collect, generate, and evaluate evidence; and establish a position on the topic in a concise manner (Baker, Brizee, & Angeli, 2013). This mode of writing is represented in the Kentucky Core Academic College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1).

College Readiness- “College readiness is the level of preparation a first-time student needs in order to succeed in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution” (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2012).

Career Readiness- “Career readiness is the level of preparation a high school graduate needs in order to proceed to the next step in a chosen career, whether that is postsecondary coursework, industry certification, or entry into the workforce” (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2012).

College and Career Readiness- “Every student should graduate from high school ready for college and a career” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Literacy – The term “literacy” and “reading” are used interchangeably throughout this document. Both “literacy course” and “reading course” refer to the same class taught at the participating school.

Poverty- a family of four that lives on $23,550 per year (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). This is measured in Kentucky schools based on a student’s eligibility to receive Free or Reduced Lunch meal prices.

Reading Comprehension- refers to an individual’s ability to understand what they read
Reflective Writing - based on the essays of Michael Eyquem de Montainge; writing as exploration and discovery, not writing as final thoughts on established truths (Alexander, n.d.).

Toulmin Model of Argument - based on the work of Stephen Toulmin; an effective way of getting to the how and why levels of the arguments we read. It is a type of textual "dissection" that allows us to break an argument into its different parts (such as claim, reasons, and evidence) so that we can make judgments on how well the different parts work together (Colorado State University, 2014).

Research Design

Baseline data needed to be determined for those students entering the second rotation of the 12-week reading course. The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was administered on the first day of class in the second rotation of students (week 13 of the fall 2013 school year) to determine the baseline level of student reading comprehension and vocabulary. In order to measure the effect on student comprehension and vocabulary growth as a result of the literacy course, a different test version of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was administered again at the end of the course. This literacy course provided instruction in all areas of literacy, but the focus of this research project is on reading instruction. Therefore, for the scope and purposes of this research project, only measures of comprehension and vocabulary growth will be discussed.

The school administration requested the course be developed as a 12-week course (trimesters), where all freshmen rotate through the course during the school year.
The school year began with one-third of all ninth graders enrolled in the course for the first 12 weeks of school. After 12 weeks, a second group, or one-third of the ninth graders, rotated into the course and, finally, the last one-third of the ninth graders (approximately 90 students) rotated into the course for the last 12 weeks of the school year. This research project focuses on this second group of students. There are four classes of the literacy course in each rotation period, and all students in each class of the second rotation were tested using the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test before and after the 12-week literacy course. All students in the course are ninth grade students.

An additional component of this research design is a reflective journal that the teacher of the literacy course kept to chronicle her thoughts, fears, discoveries, and processes as she taught the course. This component of the research project is completely holistic in nature and aligns with the qualitative research process of portraiture as described later in this paper. The reflective journals, notes, anecdotes, and other personal summations of the teacher are her thoughts alone and serve only to possibly inform other English teachers who may find themselves being asked to serve similar literacy/reading challenges at other schools.

Instrumentation

**Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test.** The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test is a nationally-normed and recognized assessment, and the results of this test can be trusted as valid. The Gates-MacGinitie is a paper-pencil, group-administered survey test that is designed to reveal the test-takers basic level of reading achievement in terms of comprehension and vocabulary. According to the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests Directions for Administration, the vocabulary section is a test of word knowledge as
students must choose the word or phrase that means most nearly the same as the test word (p. 5). There are 45 vocabulary questions and students have 20 minutes to complete this section of the test. The comprehension section of the test “consists of prose passages selected from published works. The passages are fiction and non-fiction, from various content areas, and written in a variety of styles” (p. 5). There are 48 comprehension questions and students have 35 minutes to complete this section of the test.

**Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

In order to possibly determine the effect the literacy course has on student reading comprehension and vocabulary growth, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test materials were used to administer the test to all the second rotation students in the reading course as a pre-test and post-test measure of comprehension and vocabulary levels. Because this is a nationally normed, trusted measure of student performance and skill, accurate data to indicate student growth from the beginning of the second rotation to the end of the second rotation (12 weeks) were collected.

This research study utilized a mixed-methods design that investigated a quantitative question in addition to a highly qualitative question. Quantitative data were collected using a within-subject design; the same second rotation group of students were tested using the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test as a pre-test and post-test. Student scores from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test pre-test and post-test were compared using a paired samples *t*-test. By comparing the pre-test and post-test results using the paired samples *t*-test, differences in scores and levels of significance were determined.
The determination of the significance of the difference was accomplished by running an analysis of effect size using Cohen’s $d$.

Qualitative data were gathered through a variety of personal reflections documented in logs, journals, observation notes, and lesson plans. As described by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), this portraiture style allows the reader to see inside a person’s head and heart and “hear the self-reflection, the thought cycles that move [the researcher] from ‘harsh judgment’ to respectful regard” and allows the reader to be drawn into the classroom scene as the teacher reveals inner stirrings and opens himself or herself up for scrutiny (p. 52). These qualitative data, including the decisions made and how self-reflections guided the teacher’s perceptions during the literacy course, were documented using the portraiture method.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The students in this study were students who were enrolled in the ninth grade literacy course. This research study attempted to measure the effectiveness of the new literacy course and its curriculum for the purpose of course assessment. The design of the literacy course was a collaborative effort including, but not limited to, the entire English faculty at the participating school, science teachers, health and physical education teachers, the eight English teachers at the high school connected to the ninth grade participating school as these students matriculate to the high school, both administrative principals at the participating school and the connected high school, and the teacher hired to teach the new literacy course. Because the task of designing effective curriculum and instruction for a new course was a daunting challenge, the school system wanted a research design to measure how effective the course was in terms of student
growth in comprehension and vocabulary as a means of program/course evaluation. Completed and scored Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests will remain locked in a secure location on WKU’s Bowling Green campus. Institutional Review Board approval from Western Kentucky University for analysis in this research project was applied for and received.

**Discussion**

This study has the potential to impact schools that are seeking ways to increase student college and career readiness while also improving student reading comprehension and vocabulary. This study illustrates the creation of a new literacy course, including reflections from the lead teacher regarding the process and the implementation of the course; this allows insight for other schools and teachers to avoid those same mistakes. The study describes the curriculum, structure and the kinds of results other schools may be able to expect upon creation of a similar literacy course. Classroom content teachers can also benefit from this study as they may mimic this study in their own classrooms to introduce students to a variety of successful reading strategies.

Content area teachers should use reading strategies in their classrooms if schools expect to see dramatic literacy growth (Schmoker, 2011, p. 2). Literacy skills and strategies should be embedded in all content area classrooms, as this may be a more successful approach than an isolated literacy-specific course. This study may serve as a necessary professional development for teachers at this and other high schools.

Based on the purpose of the study and the determined research questions, chapter two presents a review of the literature that examines the potential impact poverty has on
student reading development, the seriousness of the reading crisis in the United States and ways in which secondary educators can bridge an achievement gap that often exists between students of poverty and their more affluent peers.
Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

This review of literature centered on the reading comprehension levels and practices of students living in poverty. The school in this research project has approximately 67% of students who qualify for free/reduced meal prices indicating that the majority of students live in poverty. The goal of this review is to determine what high schools and secondary educators can do to enhance students’ reading comprehension, especially of students who may be living in poverty. Several empirical sources were reviewed to determine if there is an identifiable link between poverty and reading development/ability and to determine what secondary educators can do in the classroom to help reduce the gap in scores between students who do and students who do not live in poverty, as determined by qualification for Free and Reduced Lunch Meal Prices. The review of the literature is organized in the following categories: Why children of poverty may struggle to read; why this link is an alarming problem in our nation; and finally, what secondary educators can do to enhance student reading comprehension.

Why Children of Poverty May Struggle to Read

It is likely clear to many educators that there are often more students in lower-level reading classes who may live in poverty than students who do not. Educators and researchers alike continue to be interested in this link between socioeconomic status and reading achievement. Understanding why children of poverty often struggle to read is imperative for educators to successfully provide reading instruction. Before secondary
educators can help, they must understand the reasons that children of poverty often struggle to comprehend text.

According to the work of McIntyre, Hulan, and Layne (2010), there are three major factors that affect literacy development: Literacy Levels of Parents/Caregivers; Adult-Child Interactions; and Access to Print. An important key to this study is that educators cannot assume that children of poverty do or do not have: parents of low literacy, few interactions with adults around print, or access to print.

“However…poverty is a predictor of these factors…” (p. 44), and there is certainly an intricate relationship between family income and school achievement. These three characteristics often, but not always, describe low socioeconomic parents/families. First, according to the authors, many students struggle with reading because low socioeconomic status (SES) families generally have fewer print materials in their homes. Print materials, especially educational print materials, are expensive, and for families with little income, money may be needed to pay for other necessities, like bills (p. 44). The ways in which children spend out-of-school time impacts academic achievement; if time is spent reading educational print materials out of school, students will be more likely to develop into strong readers. Second, adult-child interactions are vital to academic development. Students living in poverty may have parents/caregivers who work more hours than the parents of their wealthier peers, or may have parents who work hours that restrict the amount of time spent with the child. Due to common poverty-level work schedules, the adult-child interactions may be limited. Third, the literacy levels of parents/caregivers are key factors in academic development. Some parents may not know how to help students in terms of their literacy development—this
does not imply that the parent does not care about the literacy development of the child. These three characteristics of parents/homes often describe a family in poverty, which in turn may help explain the common link between low socioeconomic status and poor reading comprehension. Many children have parents with low literacy levels, which continue the cycle of low literacy (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

Noble, et al., (2006) also highlight the many elements that underlie the SES gap in reading achievement “including differences in schooling, physical health, emotional support, parenting practices and stress. One factor worth particular mention is the SES gradient in reading-related experiences, such as the degree of print in the home…” (p. 642). Both McIntyre, et al., (2010), and Noble, et al., emphasize the presence of print in the home as a factor contributing to reading achievement. Furthermore, just as McIntyre, et al., emphasized, the child/parent interaction, Noble, et al., also states that there is a strong connection “between cognitively stimulating experiences and academic achievement [which has] been well documented” (p. 642). Socioeconomic factors do impact brain behavior in reading illustrating that “cognitive, social and neurobiological influences on reading development are fundamentally intertwined” (p. 642). The home and social environments of students do impact students’ reading development; for a school whose students largely live in poverty, reading development will likely be impacted by students’ home environments.

The work of Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda (2011) highlights how poverty places children at risk for delays in academic achievement and discusses how the development gap between low SES and high SES children is noticeable and measurable even by the age of three years. This study illustrates the severity of the situation; by the
time that secondary education teachers meet these struggling readers, they may have been behind their peers in terms of academic and reading achievement for years (p. 1058).

**Why the Link Between Reading and Poverty is an Alarming National Problem**

Students of poverty may struggle to read for a variety of reasons, and this issue is an alarming problem across the nation. Researchers Morris, et al., (2012) conducted controlled evaluations of remedial reading interventions and discussed the effectiveness of two intervention programs for children with reading disabilities. The authors reported that 34% of the 4th grade students in the United States are significantly below average in reading skills (p. 99). The statistics for children in poverty and of varying ethnic groups is significantly higher: 50% of children living in poverty in the United States read below the basic level (p. 99); 54% of African American children living in the United States read below a basic level (p. 99); and 51% of Hispanic children living in the United States read below a basic level (p. 99). The authors concluded that the future of these nearly ten million American youth will be severely limited (p. 99).

Teacher beliefs and attitudes tremendously impact student achievement, according to McIntyre, Hulan and Layne (2010), especially as it relates to students living in poverty. Educators of low SES students must understand that both the school and the teacher can tremendously affect the achievement of low SES students. The curriculum and instruction offered to the students and the high or low expectations teachers have for particular students make a sizeable impact on the effort and achievement of students living in poverty. What teachers believe about students’ backgrounds and the expectations they hold for their students does affect students’ reading achievement.
Teachers must make a diligent effort to hold high expectations for all students and to create and maintain a positive learning climate, regardless of the students’ backgrounds.

The ways in which teachers perceive their students is comparable to the ways in which teachers perceive themselves and their roles as educators. Zwiers (2011) discusses the seriousness of the reading predicament for the future of American students and provides methods for secondary educators to assist struggling readers (which will be discussed in the next section of this literature review). Zwiers challenges the ideology of many content-area educators as he emphasizes that all secondary educators must realize that many of their students struggle to read—and if teachers want these students to succeed in their classrooms, they must teach them how to successfully comprehend text in their content area. Zwiers states that “the mental capacity to effectively remember, manage, and prioritize thoughts comes from years of reading millions of pages of a variety of narrative and expository texts—and from good teaching” (p. 543). Teachers must understand that they (teachers) can comprehend text because it is likely that they have had extensive practice in reading and, as emphasized by McIntyre, et al., (2010), and Morris, et al., (2012), not all students have had those same experiences. Therefore, educators across the United States are allowing their students to fall behind their peers simply because they refuse to teach the student how to effectively comprehend assigned reading in their classes.

Valencia and Buly (2004) also highlight the reading comprehension issue plaguing schools across the United States. The authors begin by stating, “Every year thousands of students take standardized tests and state reading tests, and every year thousands fail them…every year, these numbers will grow exponentially and alarming
numbers of schools and students will be targeted ‘for improvement’” (p. 217). Though many educators may believe that standardized test scores should not drive instruction, these scores still seem to do so. Legislators and school districts continue to look for the miracle program that will turn the test scores around, but according to the authors, because so much time is spent “teaching to the test,” less time is spent in the classrooms on focused authentic reading instruction. The authors state, “…if we are really going to help students, we need to understand the underlying reasons for test failure” (p. 218). The authors believe large amounts of children are failing these high-stakes tests because they struggle to comprehend what they read.

Valencia and Buly (2004) believe that children are failing high stakes, standardized tests because they have difficulty comprehending text. This is a serious problem in the United States; our students are consistently not meeting benchmarks on standardized reading assessments and graduating from high school struggling to comprehend text. According to Schmoker (2011), in order for schools to see improvement, they need to focus only on the essentials; however, the present state of most schools involves frustrated teachers and leaders because the states/nation mandate the implementation of new programs and initiatives that “cannot possibly succeed in the absence of decent curriculum, lessons, and literacy activities” (p. 2).

Students in the United States are falling behind international performance of reading and engagement. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2012) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 survey results provides international data useful for comparison among nations. According to the OECD PISA 2009 Technical Report, PISA surveys 15-year-old students in
participating countries every three years (p. 3). PISA examines how well students are prepared to meet the challenges of the future in terms of reading, science and mathematics. The data is considered valuable for researchers, policy makers, educators, parents and students as the knowledge and skills of populations is linked to the future economic and social well-being of participating countries. According to the OECD Executive Summary (2010), 470,000 students in 65 countries participated in the PISA survey. OECD indicates that, “PISA’s conception of reading literacy encompasses the range of situations in which people read, the different ways written texts are presented, and the variety of ways that readers approach and use texts, from the functional… to the deep and far-reaching…these kinds of reading literacy skills are more reliable predictors of economic and social well-being than the number of years spent in school or in post-formal education” (p. 6). Hong Kong is the top performing reading literacy country, with a mean score of 533 (p. 6); the United States ranks 15th, performing with the same mean scores as Poland and Iceland (500) and similar to the OECD mean score of 494 (p. 6). Mexico is the lowest performing OECD country with a mean score of 425 (p. 6). Students are struggling to comprehend text across the United States, and with the 2009 PISA results for comparison, students in the United States are being out-performed in regard to reading by fourteen other nations.

**How Secondary Educators Can Address the Gap in Student Reading Comprehension:**

Literacy in poverty-stricken homes is an area of concern across the nation; teachers must be educated on ways they can improve student comprehension in their
classroom. The following articles focus on skills that can promote literacy development, specifically reading comprehension.

Schmoker (2011) boldly states that if educators made a “few well-known” and “straightforward actions,” schools would see dramatic improvements (p. 1). Garnaut (2007, as cited in Schmoker 2011, p. 1-2), argues that the achievement gap could essentially be eliminated within a few years if schools would focus only on three essentials: reasonably sound curriculum, sound lessons, and purposeful reading and writing in all disciplines. Furthermore, Schmoker states that schools have been implementing various initiatives over the past 30 years, none of which produce the learning results promised. “[Teachers] must focus on three matters first—and these alone—until they are at least reasonably well implemented in school” (p. 5) and the result will be a “breathtaking” impact.

Schmoker (2011) emphasizes the importance of sound curriculum and Silver, Dewing, and Perini (2012) provide just that. They also emphasize that educators must make research work by implementing strategies that have a strong research base and that actually work in the classroom (p. 2). This practical book for educators focuses on “six core practices that students need to cultivate to become independent learners” (p. vii). The authors provide detailed descriptions of and common core alignment for each of their six core practices, all of which are backed by a strong research base, that make classroom application easy for all teachers.

The Core Six strategies presented by Silver, Dewing, and Perini (2012, p.3) are:

- Reading for Meaning: Develops skills that proficient readers use to make sense of rigorous texts. Meets these Common Core skills: Managing text complexity;
evaluating and using evidence; developing the core skills of reading (finding main ideas, making inferences, and analyzing characters and content).

- **Compare and Contrast:** Students conduct thorough comparative analysis. Meets these Common Core skills: conducting comparative analyses of academic content; conducting comparative readings of two or more texts; integrating information from multiple sources.

- **Inductive Learning:** Students find patterns and structures built into content through an inductive process (analyzing specifics to form generalizations). Meets these Common Core skills: finding patterns and making logical inferences; supporting thinking with evidence; mastering academic vocabulary.

- **Circle of Knowledge:** Framework for planning and conducting classroom discussion that engage all students in deep thinking and thoughtful communication. Meets these Common Core skills: speaking, listening and presenting; integrating and evaluating information; collaborating with peers.

- **Write to Learn:** Writing is integrated into daily instruction and develops students’ writing skills in the key text types associated with college and career readiness. Meets these Common Core skills: developing higher-order thinking through writing; writing in the key Common Core text types: arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives; writing for a wide range of texts, audiences, and purposes.

- **Vocabulary’s CODE:** Strategic approach to vocabulary instruction that improves students’ ability to retain and use crucial vocabulary terms. Meets these Common Core skills: mastering academic vocabulary, improving literacy across all strands.
(reading, writing, speaking/listening, and language); building background knowledge as a foundation for success in school, college and career.

Furthermore, sound curriculum, according to Tregenza and Lewis (2008), requires explicit and direct reading strategy instruction that may result in improved reading comprehension of students. Tregenza and Lewis examined the effect of teaching students how to use a range of active reading strategies and explored the impact of reading strategy use on student reading comprehension while also monitoring the effect reading strategy use has on student attitude toward reading. The authors repeatedly used a variety of reading strategies in middle and high school content-area classrooms. After two or three uses of a particular strategy, Tregenza and Lewis began to notice student independent use of reading strategies—which was the primary goal. As a result of their action research, the authors observed students using reading strategies independently; they determined that repeated use of reading strategies positively impacts students’ attitudes toward reading, and the students’ standardized test scores also improved.

Tregenza and Lewis’ (2008) research suggests that explicit reading strategy instruction is vital to improve student reading comprehension and Petty, Super and Bryant (2013) offer a plethora of explicit reading strategies for students. The text is specifically targeted to college students, senior-level high school students and adult learners, however all strategies can be adapted to meet the reading needs of high school students. This text is divided into five parts to address all facets of the reading process, with one section particularly focusing on strategy-based reading comprehension.

Kamil and the U.S. Department of Education (2008) present an explicit description of effective comprehension instruction. According to the department, the
most important strategies for increasing reading comprehensions are: summarizing, asking and answering questions, paraphrasing and finding the main idea. According to the Department of Education, students must be active readers and teachers must explicitly model and explain reading strategies; teachers should not assume that students know how to accurately use a strategy. Teacher assistance will “empower [the students] and give them more control over their reading and understanding” (p. 18). The Department also warns about potential roadblocks as most secondary educators do not know how to provide direct, explicit comprehension strategy instruction. Training on content area literacy instruction should be provided in professional development sessions and reading coaches need to be utilized in classrooms to help demonstrate and guide reading comprehension strategy instruction. In addition, many content-area teachers believe they are not responsible for teaching reading strategies; these teachers must understand the purpose of teaching reading strategies is to enhance student comprehension of text and is valuable time spent in the classroom.

In addition to repeated use of reading strategies, Tomblinson (2004) emphasizes the importance of utilizing interesting reading material that will engage reluctant readers. If students are interested in what they are reading, they are much more likely to comprehend the material. Tomblinson recommends increasing student interest by providing choice in reading material. The personal investment in the selection process encourages interest and the likelihood that students will connect to the text on a personal level. As a result, student comprehension should improve. A final approach in increasing reading comprehension is to provide predictable amounts of time for reading in the
classroom; for instance, silent sustained reading. Tomblinson emphasizes that the only way one will become a better reader is to read.

Mason and Galloway (2012) argue for teachers to recognize the skills low income students generally have as opposed to focusing on the skills and reading strategies struggling readers do not possess or utilize when reading. According to the authors, “if there is one instructional strategy that teachers can implement to support the academic success of children, especially those in low socioeconomic communities, it is to let them talk” (p. 29). The authors emphasize the importance of establishing a classroom culture that is comfortable; an environment where students feel their home language is respected and appreciated. The authors indicate that using rich discussions in class will expand student vocabulary will scaffold student reading and writing skills. Furthermore, allowing students the opportunity to talk about what they are reading will engage students in their learning, will provide them with opportunities to receive feedback, and will expand their language skills to include those in academic contexts.

The arguments of Schmoker (2011) and Silver, Dewing, and Perini (2012) align with Mason and Galloway’s (2012) emphasis of class “talk.” Schmoker states, “Discussion is a critical companion to reading” (p. 117) and there should be plenty of opportunity for students to verbalize their experiences, opinions and support arguments by providing evidence for their claims” (p. 117). Conley (2005, as cited in Schmoker 2011, p. 117) emphasizes that, in order to be adequately prepared for college or career, students must be able to differentiate between strong and weak arguments and to respectfully disagree with their peers. Silver, Dewing, and Perini (2012) stress strategic class discussions (“Circle of Knowledge”) as they will engage all students in “deeper
thinking and thoughtful communication” (p. 3) while also meeting the requirements of the Common Core.

**Review of Literature Conclusion**

Paramount in the review of the literature is that a link exists between low socioeconomic status and students who struggle with reading. This review examined explanations for why this link may exist, why this link is an alarming problem in schools across the United States, and what educators can do to ensure all students comprehend what they read, especially students living in poverty. This link between low socioeconomic status and low reading achievement may provide at least a partial explanation for the low standardized reading scores at the participating, school and the literature reviewed underscores considerations for the development of a ninth grade literacy curriculum to meet the needs of struggling readers.

Looking at what the literature reveals in terms of populations of students, demographics of the participating school, and recognizing how program or course assessment can inform schools, administrators, curriculum specialists, and teachers, it was important to design a research project that measured aspects of effectiveness. Chapter Three explains the organization of the study; methodologies for data collection, and analysis of data; descriptions of survey instruments; risks to participants; and a brief overview of sites and participants.
Chapter Three

Research Methods and Procedures

Organization of Study

The goal of this study was to explain how a high school develops and implements a ninth grade literacy course that attempts to increase students’ college and career readiness in reading and, by using data derived from formal assessment, measures course effectiveness. This study focuses on one teacher’s observations, decisions, and experiences in teaching a literacy course at the ninth grade level. Research questions that guide this project include:

1. How is a ninth grade literacy course that attempts to increase college and career readiness as delineated by the state of Kentucky developed and implemented?

2. How can the results of a formal reading assessment be used to increase the likelihood that a literacy course will improve college and career readiness in the future?

To address the identified research questions, a qualitative study supported and enhanced by quantitative data helped to capture literacy course development and course assessment. A case study, according to Stake (1995), is “expected to catch the complexity of a single case” (p. xi) and is utilized when the case “itself is of very special interest” (p. xi). This research study is of special interest to schools across the state that may wish to implement a literacy course in their high schools and/or attempt to improve their students’ college and career readiness in reading.

Qualitatively, data were collected and presented as social science portraiture. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe this process known as “social science
portraiture;” which is “a method of qualitative research that blurs boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics and subtlety of human experience and organizational life” (p. xv). The teacher of record for this course maintained observation notes, field logs, journals and lesson plans to qualitatively inform this research study specifically in ways related to design and implementation of the literacy course. This type of portraiture methodology allows investigators to record the voice of their subjects (in this case the teacher is teacher/researcher) along with “their authority, knowledge, and wisdom” (p.xv) while inviting readers to join the journey, step by step (p. 50).

According to Donmoyer and Galloway (2010), any qualitative methods that are employed must play a secondary role, that is, they must be used “as a complement to quantitative measures of student outcomes [to help] explain the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the intervention [and] identify conditions that hinder implementation of the intervention” (p. 27). Therefore, quantitative data were collected using the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test. The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was utilized as a pre-test and post-test; it was used to measure the overall effect of the course as a means of program/course assessment.

**Data Collection**

Patton (1990) states, “Qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents” (p. 10). Qualitatively, this research study examined the collaborative development of the literacy course by focusing on written documentation including artifacts, journals and notebooks. Furthermore, data gathered via journals and
observation notes allowed the teacher to reflect on the most effective ways to execute
course instruction as these “qualitative methods permit the evaluator to study selected
issues in depth and detail” (Patton, 1990, p. 13).

Additionally, these journals and observation notes helped the teacher reflect on
the course and student success. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest that
“natural environments will inevitably present constraints, restrictions, and barriers—but
they will be familiar ones and the researcher will be able to observe the ways actors
negotiate these points of resistance” (p. 43). Notes related to these reflections, especially
at juncture points in instruction, were located in the margins of lesson plans and
journals/notes. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis also state that “the researcher inevitably
experiences surprises: events, experiences, behaviors, and values that she had not
anticipated, and to which she must adapt and respond” (p. 43). Journals, notes and
annotated lesson plans also reflected any unforeseen events that impacted instruction
and/or have implications for future literacy instruction.

This accrual of data reflect Patton’s (1990) notions of qualitative research by
“finding out what people do, know, think and feel, by observing, interviewing and
analyzing documents” (p. 94). Journals and observation notes allowed the teacher to
reflect upon the collaborative course development process and implementation, share
feelings, emotions, struggles, successes, and any gains and setbacks in the real
classroom. This reflects Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis’ (1997) description of
portraiture—readers are allowed to see “inside [the portraitist’s] head and heart and see
the ambivalence, the contradictions, and the turmoil” (p. 52). Daily interactions in the
classroom provided the teacher with opportunities to document how the collaboratively
developed literacy course aligned with, and provided students with, opportunities for growth within the Kentucky Core Academic Standards for ELA.

English (2000) suggests that portraiture too heavily relies on the researcher’s own interpretations, yet, as an investigator and subject of study, personal interpretation is key to the first question of this research project. The primary goal of data collection is to provide course assessment. By illustrating the development of a successful literacy course, and by hearing directly from the classroom teacher, the ability to express herself fully and naturally (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 43) is important to the improvement of the course over time and in development of similar, future courses.

Quantitatively, data were collected using the Gates MacGinitie Reading Tests. The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was used as a pre-post assessment because, according to the Gates-MacGinitie Directions for Administration (2000), the test can be used to measure student reading achievement and therefore as a measure of the effectiveness of a literacy course (p. 2). The second rotation group of ninth grade students was administered the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test as a pre-test and post-test, therefore the quantitative data were collected using a within-subject design. A paired samples t-test, which is a valid measure used to determine if there is a significant difference between the average values of the same measurement made under two different conditions (Easton & McColl, n.d.), was used to compare the difference in the average scores on the pre-test and post-test in each subtest (vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy). The paired samples t-test enabled the researcher to see if the difference in scores was significant and if so, how significant. In order to measure the impact of results that were found to be statistically significant, it was important to
measure the size of the effect. A common measure of effect size, \( d \), is used when comparing two means such as in a \( t \)-test. Therefore, the researcher determined the level of significance of the difference by running an analysis of effect size using Cohen’s \( d \).

**Narrative on Formal Assessment**

According to Johnson (2012), the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test is a norm-referenced reading achievement test that measures essential literacy skills as determined by the National Reading Panel. The main purpose of the test is “to measure the general level of student reading achievement” (para. 1) and the test results, when combined with other reading data, may be used for evaluating instructional programs. The test can also be trusted as reliable and the test reliability measures are presented in the technical report. Johnson writes that, “the reliability estimates indicate strong total test and subtest internal consistency levels with coefficient values at or above .90” (para. 9). Furthermore, both content and construct validity is high and is thoroughly documented. Because the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test is “a well-developed and reliable norm-referenced reading achievement test” (para. 12), it was used as the primary means of formal assessment in the literacy course used to inform this research study.

The 55-minute pencil/paper reading test was administered on two separate occasions: Form S was administered on the first day of the second rotation of the literacy course to provide pre-test data, and Form T was administered on the last day of the second rotation of the literacy course to provide post-test data. All students completed the tests during their regularly scheduled literacy course class time (on the first and final class days of the second trimester). Assessments were scored at the school, and the raw
scores were converted to grade level equivalencies using the Gates-MacGinitie Scoring Manual.

**Specific Risks and Measures**

The name of the high school or the district will not be released at any time in writing. The school will be referred to as “a high school in southern Kentucky” or “a rural high school in southern Kentucky.” Additionally, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test pre-test and post-test scores were blinded, and no names or otherwise identifiable information were provided by the school to the researchers when analyzing the results.

**Overview of Sites and Participants**

**High school demographics (Grades 9-12).** The high school was located in a rural farming community in southern Kentucky. The total approximate enrollment is 1,266 students. There were 638 male students and 628 female students. The free and reduced lunch population measures 67% of the school’s total population. The high school was composed primarily of Caucasian students, 96% of the total population (1,213 students). The remaining 4% of the student population was comprised of Hispanic/Latino, African American, American Indian, Asian students or students who identified themselves as two or more races. Twenty-six students identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino; thirteen students identified themselves as African American; one student identified themselves as himself/herself as American Indian; two students identified themselves as Asian, and three students identified themselves as two or more races.

**Ninth grade demographics.** Ninth grade students had their own content teachers and took core classes with only other ninth grade students. There were 335 ninth grade
students; 170 male students, 165 female students. Ninety-seven percent (324 students) of the ninth grade population identified themselves as white/Caucasian. The remaining 3% of the student population was comprised of Hispanic/Latino students, American Indian students or students who were two or more races—seven students identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino; one student identified himself/herself as American Indian and three students identified themselves with two or more races.

**Second trimester literacy course (focus of the study) demographics.** This research study took place during the second trimester literacy course, and the whole population was used in the study. In this trimester course, there were approximately 90 total students: 40 male students and 50 female students. Eighty-nine students identified themselves as white/Caucasian, and one student identified himself/herself as two or more races.

Chapter Four describes the results of the research study as it details the setting, analysis, and results in terms of the two designated research questions that frame this project.
Chapter Four

Results

The purpose of this study was to explain how a high school develops and implements a literacy course that attempts to increase students’ college and career readiness in reading and, by using data derived from formal assessment, measures course effectiveness. In response to low reading test scores, the administration at a rural high school in southern Kentucky decided to establish a mandatory literacy course for all ninth grade students. This study included the reflections of a ninth grade English teacher who was the teacher of record for the reading course.

This study examined two research questions. The first question was: *How is a ninth grade literacy course that attempts to increase college and career readiness as delineated by the state of Kentucky developed and implemented?* This chapter will report on the results obtained after collection of qualitative data gathered via observation notes, journals, and annotated lesson plans throughout course development and implementation. The second question was: *How can the results of a formal reading assessment be used to increase the likelihood that a literacy course will improve college and career readiness in the future?* This chapter will report on the results obtained after quantitative data were gathered via a formal reading assessment. In the current analysis, the researcher used a paired samples $t$-test to compare results of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, used as a pre-test on the first day of the course for the second cohort of students, to the results of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, used as a post-test on the last day of the course for the same group of students. The results provided the school
with imperative information regarding course improvement and future literacy course development.

**Setting**

This research study took place in a rural high school in southern Kentucky and focused on the implementation of a literacy course, which was designed for all ninth grade students by various members of the high school administration and faculty. The high school administration and faculty had been unhappy with the standardized test reading scores in the past and wanted to make a change in student course work to address the reading concerns. The administration decided to create a literacy course designed for all freshmen students, which would focus on four basics of literacy: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

**Research question one.** How is a ninth grade literacy course that attempts to increase college and career readiness as delineated by the state of Kentucky developed and implemented? Qualitative data were collected via observation notes, journals and annotated lesson plans throughout the course to address this research question. The purpose of this data collection was to help “draw a picture” of the process of implementing the ninth grade literacy course. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe this process of identifying emergent themes found in holistic studies as the portraitist “gathers, organizes and scrutinizes the data, searching for convergent threads, illuminating metaphors, and overarching symbols, and often constructing coherence out of themes…” (p. 185). Data to address this question are reported in the following
sections: Course origin and history, course goals, class logistics, overall curriculum framework, course design, materials and one teacher’s experience.

Course origin and history. Administrators and faculty at the participating school were aware of the fact that reading scores for the high school were low and had been low for several years in comparison to other school districts. Many teachers realized that a majority of students simply did not comprehend grade level text, and students struggled with comprehending text and with vocabulary. The idea of establishing a literacy course in this high school had been present for several years. Many teachers, administrators and site-base council and school board members had expressed interest in creating a literacy course for students, but the plan never came to fruition, due largely to funding issues, until the summer of 2013. For many years, the ninth grade student schedule contained a “rotation” class; the courses offered in the rotation differed over the years and included classes such as: health, physical education, family/consumer sciences, and business. In July 2013 an unexpected event occurred which opened a teaching position in the ninth grade rotation. The ninth grade principal, a longtime supporter of establishing a literacy course in the high school, seized the opportunity to establish a literacy course and situated it in the ninth grade rotation. As it happened, ninth grade was an ideal setting for the literacy course in this high school. The ninth grade students were housed in their own wing, separate from the rest of the high school. The separations of ninth grade students and classes from the rest of the students established a more suitable learning setting, and, because the ninth grade teachers all have common planning, a sense of camaraderie existed among teachers that enhanced the learning environment.
The administration recognized that content area teachers needed to use literacy content and strategies to enhance their curriculum, however, establishing the literacy course was the current best opportunity for increasing student reading comprehension and vocabulary at the high school. To ensure that all teachers had buy-in and understood the goals of the literacy course, a collaborative effort was used to create the course. English teachers at the participating school and the adjoining high school, science teachers, health teachers, physical education teachers, and administrators (two principals) helped develop the course in July and early August of 2013.

**Course goals.** Goals for the new course included improving students’ reading comprehension and vocabulary levels. The course focused on reading strategies that would be easily transferrable to content classes at the school, and those strategies were practiced using authentic reading experiences (Tomblinson, 2004) daily within the reading course. Furthermore, many high school students simply despise reading, so attempts were made to “win over” the students by offering high interest reading passages. Tomblinson emphasizes the importance of utilizing interesting reading material that will engage reluctant readers. If students are interested in what they are reading, they are much more likely to comprehend the material. Therefore, to help increase student comprehension, reading materials were selected that interested students in the course.

In his book, Schmoker (2011) describes literacy integration into content area classes, and although this course was an independent literacy course, the development team accepted Schmoker’s argument to focus only the essentials to establish a successful course. Schmoker delineated three things that underscore good literacy instruction:
reasonably coherent curriculum, sound lessons and purposeful reading and writing (p. 2). Furthermore, Schmoker’s template for authentic literacy was used to design much of course construct: close reading/underlining and annotation of the text, discussion of the text, and writing that is informed by close reading, discussion and annotation (p. 74).

In order to focus on the designated areas of literacy, the course curriculum needed to require students to actively read class texts, discuss, and write about those same texts on as much of a weekly basis as possible. Informed by Schmoker (2011) it was determined that if students were to thrive in the class, two things must be done successfully: teach students how to actively read and increase student interest in reading material.

Class logistics. The administration determined that the newly named Leadership Literacy course would last for 12 weeks and would be included in a rotation of classes with a health course and a physical education course. This rotation system allowed for all ninth grade students to spend a trimester in each of the three required courses (Leadership Literacy, Health, Physical Education).

Overall curriculum framework. The Leadership Literacy course was designed by school administration to be a 12-week course, where all freshmen rotate through the course during the school year. One-third of all ninth grade students (rotation one) started the course the first 12 weeks of school in the fall of 2013. After 12 weeks, a new group (rotation two) of one-third of the ninth grade students rotated into the course and, finally, the final group (rotation three) of remaining one-third of the freshman rotated into the course for the final 12 weeks of the school year. Four classes were taught per day of the Leadership Literacy course, with each lasting 55 minutes. The data presented in this
section and for the purposes of this study are all reflective of students in the second rotation. Table 2 outlines the Leadership Literacy trimester weekly schedule by topics covered.

Table 2

_Leadership Literacy Trimester Weekly Schedule_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Weekly Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Establishing Classroom Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Introductions, Classroom Expectations, Course Expectations, Classroom Procedures, Presentation of necessary background content</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>Reading Strategy Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Read/Speak/Write weekly schedule</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>One reading strategy per week for four weeks</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Review Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Students choose strategy to read weekly articles</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>Formal Writing Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>MLA Instruction, Research Time, Outline, Draft, Peer Edit, 2nd draft, teacher edit, final typed copy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>Formal Public Speaking Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>1 ½ week of instruction, student prep for presentation (with technology: Prezi or PowerPoint)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>½ week student speeches (with peer evaluation)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final day</td>
<td>Gates MacGinitie Reading Test (Post-Test)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specific reading strategy instruction, which is the focus of this study, took place during weeks three through six of the course. Table 3 illustrates the specifics of daily activities during those weeks of reading strategy instruction.
Table 3

*Reading Strategy Instruction: Weekly Schedule*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 1 (55 min)</th>
<th>Class 2 (55 min)</th>
<th>Class 3 (55 min)</th>
<th>Class 4 (55 min)</th>
<th>Class 5 (55 min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| “Reading for Meaning”  
1. Introduce reading topic & hook reader interest  
2. Introduce weekly reading strategy (establish purpose)  
3. Practice active reading strategy: teacher demonstration and scaffolding- whole class reading of 1st article | Independent Practice  
1. Student practices strategy with a partner (with a new, related article)  
2. Student uses strategy independently (in continuation of 2nd article or with a new, related article)  
Homework: Prepare discussion topics and questions for day 3 Discussion. | Discussion Day  
1. Whole Class Discussion: Socratic Seminar | Writing to Learn  
1. Students write in response to the article topics. Prompts are either argumentative or reflective in nature. Students are encouraged to make text connections. Writing assignments vary from formal to informal. | Formative Assessment  
1. Students use the weekly reading strategy to read a new unrelated non-fiction text and respond to 8 multiple choice questions regarding the text.  
3. Students score quizzes and graph scores to monitor reading strategy success each week and reflect on the weekly reading strategy.  
5. Students vote on the reading topic for the upcoming week. |

**Course Design.** The course began with the teacher providing an introduction of expectations, getting to know her students, establishing an inviting classroom environment, and providing explanations for weekly class routine and activities. Wong
(2004) emphasizes the importance of establishing procedures and expectations as he states “the most important thing a teacher can provide in the classroom during the first week of school is consistency” (p. 84).

Specific reading strategy instruction (weeks 3-7). Beginning on the third week of class, specific reading strategy instruction began. Two books that were utilized to inform weekly reading strategy instruction and weekly schedule were *The Core Six* by Silver, Dewing, and Perini (2012) and *The Essentials of Reading* by Petty, Super and Bryant (2013). Silver, Dewing, and Perini argue that there are six core “practices that students need to cultivate to become independent learners;” these practices also “meet the demands of the Common Core to provide a basis for college and career readiness” (p. vii). These Core Six practices are: Reading For Meaning, Compare and Contrast, Inductive Learning, Circle of Knowledge, Write to Learn, and Vocabulary’s Code. Silver, Dewing, and Perini offer basic explanations and Common Core alignment of each practice (p. 3) and those are summarized as follows:

- **Reading for Meaning**: Develops skills that proficient readers use to make sense of rigorous texts. Meets these Common Core skills: Managing text complexity; evaluating and using evidence; developing the core skills or reading (finding main ideas, making inferences, and analyzing characters and content).

- **Compare and Contrast**: Students conduct thorough comparative analysis. Meets these Common Core skills: conducting comparative analyses of academic content; conducting comparative readings of two or more texts; integrating information from multiple sources.
- **Inductive Learning**: Students find patterns and structures built into content through an inductive process (analyzing specifics to form generalizations). Meets these Common Core skills: finding patterns and making logical inferences; supporting thinking with evidence; mastering academic vocabulary.

- **Circle of Knowledge**: Framework for planning and conducting classroom discussion that engage all students in deep thinking and thoughtful communication. Meets these Common Core skills: speaking, listening and presenting; integrating and evaluating information; collaborating with peers.

- **Write to Learn**: Writing is integrated into daily instruction and develops students’ writing skills in the key text types associated with college and career readiness. Meets these Common Core skills: developing higher-order thinking through writing; writing in the key Common Core text types: arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives; writing for a wide range of texts, audiences, and purposes.

- **Vocabulary’s CODE**: Strategic approach to vocabulary instruction that improves students’ ability to retain and use crucial vocabulary terms. Meets these Common Core skills: mastering academic vocabulary, improving literacy across all strands (reading, writing, speaking/listening, and language); building background knowledge as a foundation for success in school, college and career.
These strategies helped form the curriculum for the literacy course and for the weekly reading strategy instruction, as did the alignment with the Kentucky Core Academic Standards.

A different active reading strategy each week was paired with the “article of the week.” The book *The Essentials of Reading* by Petty, Super and Bryant (2013) informed the selection of the following reading strategies: Text Annotation, Cornell Notes, Summarization, and Reduce and Produce (Appendix A). Each week, during weeks three through six, students were taught a new reading strategy. Week seven served as a reading strategy review week. Table 4 includes a description of each selected reading strategy and its alignment with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading.

Table 4

Reading Strategy Explanation and KCAS Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Strategy</th>
<th>Explanation of Strategy</th>
<th>Alignment with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text Annotation</td>
<td>Self-question as you read focusing on three questions: what does this author want me to know? (Central ideas and themes); what does this author want me to believe? (Influences my thinking); how is the author building the themes or ideas together to make a certain argument? Mark each presented idea in the text and take notes in the book/article directly beside the reading. (Petty, Super, &amp; Bryant, 2013, p. 157).</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell Notes</td>
<td>On a clean piece of paper, create a two-column chart. Label the left column “Key Words” and label the right column “Notes.” Under the left column, write down essential words from the text (Petty, Super, &amp; Bryant, 2013, p. 54); under the right column, write down notes from the text and reactions to the text.</td>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9</strong> Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarization</td>
<td>First, annotate the assigned text following the directions for Text Annotation. Then, create a “cheat sheet” of information from the text including: major headings, summary sentence from the introduction, new vocabulary, key points from graphs or illustrations, questions you have about the reading, summary sentence from end of chapter (Petty, Super, &amp; Bryant, 2013, p. 261).</td>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1</strong> Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. <strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2</strong> Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce and Produce</td>
<td>Reduce the amount of information presented in the text by using any text marking style (underlining, highlighting, etc.). Create a two-column chart to transfer important information into a one-page summary and implications sheet. Produce something as a result of the reading (Petty, Super, &amp; Bryant, 2013, p. 107), for instance a</td>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1</strong> Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. <strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2</strong> Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beginning in week three, strategic, standards-based reading instruction began using the determined weekly class schedule described in Table 3. Students spent the first two days each week reading a non-fiction, “article of the week” text using a different active reading strategy, a strategy selected from *The Essentials of Reading* (2013) and described in Table 4. To heighten students’ ownership of the weekly articles and to increase student motivation to read, students voted weekly to determine topic of the article of the week. Tomblinson (2004) emphasizes the importance of student-choice regarding reading materials. Voting took place on the fifth instructional day; the teacher nominated several high interest topics, and students voted on the topic that most interested them. The winning topic then determined the “article of the week” selection. These grade-level appropriate articles were gathered from a variety of sources including *The New York Times, Upfront Magazine, Huffington Post, The New York Times*, and *ESPN* (Appendix B). A “hook” was presented prior to assigning the article to the students, and for the first two days of each week, the teacher modeled active reading and guided student ownership of active reading.

On the third day each week, students participated in a Socratic Seminar (Appendix C) discussion. In this formalized discussion, students were required to compose and ask open-ended questions to one another, to respond to questions, and to
express and/or defend their opinions verbally. According to Israel (2002), Socratic Seminar is a “formal discussion, based on a text, in which the leader asks open-ended questions” (p. 89). Within the context of the discussion, each student records and tallies (Appendix D) the comments of others “as students listen closely to comments, think critically for themselves, and articulate their own thoughts and their responses to the thoughts of others. [Students] learn to work cooperatively and to question intelligently and civilly” (p. 89). During the Socratic Seminar, students were scored on two items: preparation for the discussion and participation in the discussion (Appendix E).

Socratic Seminar is supported by Mason and Galloway (2012) as they argue that “if there is one instructional strategy that teachers can implement to support the academic success of children, especially those in low socioeconomic communities, it is to let them talk” (p.29). Allowing students the opportunity to speak in class in settings like Socratic Seminar, according to Mason and Galloway, expands student vocabulary, scaffolds student reading and writing skills, provides students with opportunities to receive feedback and expands their language skills to include those in academic contexts. Table 5 illustrates the ways in which Socratic Seminar aligns with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading and Speaking.
## Table 5

### Socratic Seminar Explanation and KCAS Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socratic Seminar Step and Explanation</th>
<th>Alignment with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading</th>
<th>Alignment with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Read in Advance                    | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1**
Prior to discussion, students actively read multiple texts and compose high-level, open-ended questions in response to the text. | n/a |
|                                       | Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. |
|                                       | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3**
Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. |
|                                       | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4**
Interpret words and phrases as they are used in text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. |
|                                       | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8**
Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. |
|                                       | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9**
Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or
2. Ask questions and share opinions verbally. During discussion, students share their questions regarding the text and respond to questions of others.

| 2. Ask questions and share opinions verbally. During discussion, students share their questions regarding the text and respond to questions of others. | n/a |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3 Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to ask, purpose, and audience. |

| 3. Listen to the opinions of others. Respond to the opinions of others. During discussion, students listen to the opinions of others and thoughtfully respond to the opinion of others. | n/a |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3 Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. |

On the fourth and fifth days of the week, students wrote about the weekly topic. Schmoker (2011) emphasizes that “these two skills—reading and discussion—would in turn be the basis for success on the required writing assignments” (p. 118). Weekly active reading and discussion informed students about the weekly topic and prepared
them to successfully write about the topic. The writing prompts were either reflective or argumentative in nature. Reflective prompts were treated as journal entries. This procedure allowed students to build a habit of writing for reflection as opposed to writing for a class grade. Conversely, argumentative prompts required students to use the Toulmin Model of Argument (Appendix F); students composed a formal thesis statement, cited strong textual proof to support their claim, and provided explanation as to defend the connection between their proof and thesis (Appendix G). Table 6 illustrates how these writing prompts align with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Task and Explanation</th>
<th>Alignment with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Argumentative Prompts using the Toulmin Model of Argument | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1**  
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.  
**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4**  
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.  
**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9**  
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.  
**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10**  
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. |
| Reflective Prompts in journal-style format | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2**  
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.  
**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3**  
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or
the sake of reflection and connection to the text.

events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9**
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10**
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

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On the fifth day of the week, in addition to completing a weekly writing task and voting for the upcoming reading topic, students completed a weekly formative assessment. An important aspect of any course is how students are assessed to inform instruction and gauge learning. These formative assessments were developed to measure student reading comprehension while using the set reading strategies (Appendix H).

Black and Wiliam (1998) define formative assessment as “those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged” (p. 2) and this assessment becomes formative “when the evidence is used to adapt the teaching work to meet the needs [of the students]” (p. 2). To establish consistency in these weekly formative assessments, five non-fiction articles of similar length (707-904 words) and similar readability (9.0-10.6 Flesh Kincaid Grade Level) were collected. The readability of the texts was measured using the Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level available in Microsoft Office Word. The corresponding multiple choice questions were formulated: each test contained eight multiple choice questions — one main idea question, one cause and effect question, two vocabulary questions, two detail questions and two inference questions. These formative assessments were scored in class, and
students were required to document their performance on each formative assessment (Appendix I).

Formal writing instruction (weeks 8-9). Following the five consecutive weeks of reading strategy instruction, the teacher taught a formal writing unit. The English department at the high school teaches students the Toulmin Model of Argument (Appendix F); therefore, the teacher taught writing instruction following that model as well and scored the final piece using a common analytical argument scoring rubric used by the high school English department (Appendix J). Students selected one of the five argumentative weekly topics from the course to expand upon and compose a formal five paragraph argumentative essay. The literacy course allowed students the opportunity to take their writing pieces through the entire writing process including formal research (Appendix K), drafting (Appendix L), instruction on proper MLA Documentation (Appendix M), peer editing (Appendix N) and final drafting. Table 7 illustrates how the formal writing unit aligns with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing.

Table 7
Formal Writing Instruction and KCAS Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Unit Instruction</th>
<th>Alignment with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Students conduct research online regarding their selected topic to gather relevant information to support their argumentative claims. | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.  
**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, access the credibility and accuracy of each source and |
| Students compose the first draft of a five paragraph argumentative essay which includes establishing claims and defending claims with textual support while avoiding plagiarism. | integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9**
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. |
| --- | --- |
| Students participate in peer-revision sessions to improve writing and also meet with the teacher for a writing conference to improve the strength of their arguments. | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5**
Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. |
| Students type their formal argument essays in a clear and coherent format that follows the guidelines set forth by the Modern Language Association (M.L.A.). | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4**
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. |
| **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6**
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others. | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10**
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. |
**Formal public speaking unit (weeks 10-11).** Following the formal writing unit, and at the request of the high school English department and school administration, the teacher taught a two-week formal public speaking unit. Class time that allowed for explicit public speaking instruction was scheduled. Schmoker (2011) states that “presentations should be based on the students’ formally written papers. These are ideal preparation for presentations, promoting both knowledge and confidence” (p. 120). Following public speaking instruction, and at the advice of Schmoker, students turned the information in their formal argumentative essays into formal argumentative presentations (Appendix O).

Students presented a four-to-five minute formal, argumentative presentation to their peers. The teacher offered feedback to students for their presentations, but students were also responsible for listening to the speeches of classmates and offering feedback including strengths of the speakers and suggestions for improvement (Appendix P). Table 8 illustrates how the formal public speaking unit meets the demands of the Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening.
**Materials.** Using the recommendations by Schmoker (2011), the literacy course was structured in this manner: each week, day one was dedicated to teacher-guided active reading, day two to independent active reading, day three to discussion, day four to informed writing and day five to continuing the writing task and formative assessment.

*Day one and two reading materials.* The teacher taught students four active reading strategies (Text Annotation, Cornell Notes, Summarization and Reduce and Produce (Appendix A); table 4 illustrates reading strategy alignment with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Standards for Reading. One week was spent teaching each strategy—four consecutive weeks, and the teacher spent
one final week reviewing those strategies. On the first two days of every instructional week, students were taught and practiced a new reading strategy. The materials used for guided and independent active reading varied each week based on student interest and class vote. The personal investment in the selection process encourages interest and the likelihood that students will connect to the text on a personal level. As a result, student comprehension should improve. Therefore, on the fifth day of each academic week, students voted on popular topics about which they would like to read. Based on student vote, appropriate texts were selected (Appendix B). These texts were always non-fiction and were gathered from a variety of news sources. Often the teacher was able to utilize content from the book *Text and Lessons for Content-Area Reading* by Daniels and Steineke (2011). Deliberate attempts were made to limit the length of weekly articles to three pages as the teacher did not want students to be overwhelmed with the required reading in literacy class, but excited about the topic and about using the weekly class active reading strategy. Day one began with an article based on the selected weekly reading topic, and day two presented a new article on the same topic. Therefore, by the start of day three, students had actively read two articles about the weekly class topic.

Prior to students reading the texts each week, the teacher previewed the texts and identified difficult or unusual vocabulary words. Daily activities were created with those determined words to introduce students to the words and offer opportunities for students to master the new vocabulary in and out of context. Students completed these daily vocabulary activities at the start of each class that required students to complete the following: define the word, identify a synonym of the word, tell in what context the word would likely be heard, and use the word correctly in a sentence (Appendix G).
**Day three Socratic seminar.** On the third day of each week, students participated in a Socratic Seminar discussion (Appendix C). Prior to entering class, students composed open-ended, high-level questions corresponding to the weekly class topic and texts. Before students entered class their desks were divided into two circles; with one circle of desks creating an “inner circle” and a second circle of desks, arranged directly behind the first circle, creating an “outer circle” of desks. Upon entering class, students determined a partner for the discussion, and when class began, one partner sat in the inner circle, and one partner sat directly behind them, in the outer circle. Next, the time dedicated to class discussion was divided in half because every class period has two discussions; one for each group of students. If the discussion was planned to last 30 minutes, the first “round” of discussion, in which the “inner circle” partner participated, lasted 15 minutes. When the first 15-minute discussion ended, the partners switched seats, and the second partner participated in the second “round” of discussion for 15 minutes.

Students sitting in the outer circle, those not currently participating in the discussion, were responsible for taking notes and tracking their partner’s contributions to the discussion. To effectively monitor partner contributions to the discussion, students in the outer circle completed a “tally sheet” recording their partner’s contributions to the group discussion (Appendix D). This tally sheet required students to record what their partner actually said and to tally the number of questions, the number of answers and the number of times students expanded on/elaborated on another student’s answers. After both rounds of discussion, students completed a common scoring rubric reflecting their participation in the Socratic Seminar (Appendix E). The scoring rubric required students
to score themselves based on the number of questions asked and level of their questions, the quality of their answers, their discussion etiquette, and discussion preparation. The scoring rubric is a common rubric used for Socratic Seminar discussions in the high school, by all content areas.

*Day four writing materials.* After actively reading and participating in a Socratic Seminar discussion, students were very informed on the topic of the week. The writing prompt on the fourth day required students to respond to the text in written format (Appendix G). Some writing prompts were reflective, as they required students to make personal connections to the text. Students were encouraged to just “get their thoughts out;” similar to the format of a journal entry. These were not collected, but rather the teacher circulated the room as students wrote, and “checked off” that students were participating correctly on the assignment. These reflective writing assignments were not collected for three primary reasons: first, students needed to simply have the opportunity to write without the pressure to write “correctly;” second, reflective writing offers students time to actually think and connect personally to the topic of the text without the pressure of another person hearing or seeing their opinion; finally, students are held accountable by the state of Kentucky for argumentative writing, not reflective writing. Other writing prompts were argumentative and required students to take a stance on a topic and defend their opinion using textual support. These argumentative writing assignments were collected and students were provided specific feedback regarding content and clarity (Appendix J).

*Day five formative assessment materials.* Each week, on the fifth instructional day, students completed a formative assessment to assess how effectively they could use
the weekly reading comprehension strategy (Appendix H). The assessments consisted of a non-fiction passage and corresponding multiple-choice questions. To begin designing the weekly formative assessments, five articles of similar length and similar readability were located. To measure the readability of texts the Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level readability scale as determined by Microsoft Office Word was used. The articles selected for formative assessment ranged from 707-904 words, and ranged from a 9.0-10.6 Flesh Kincaid Grade Level. Multiple-choice questions were developed for each formative assessment. Each test contained eight questions: one main idea question, one cause and effect question, two vocabulary questions, two detail questions and two inference questions.

Additional materials. Two instructional weeks were dedicated to formal essay composition during the Leadership Literacy course. Table 7 illustrates the formal writing unit alignment with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Standards for Writing. Schmoker (2011) states that, “an essay is the best possible all-in-one assessment of students’ abilities to both read and write effectively” (p. 119). Students selected one of their argumentative writing pieces composed during the course and expanded upon it to write a formal, five-paragraph argumentative essay. Class time was dedicated to: researching the topic (Appendix K); drafting an argument (Appendix L); peer-revising the argument (Appendix N); conferencing with the teacher; making final revisions to the argument; and properly citing sources and information following Modern Language Association format (Appendix M). Students’ writing was scored for organization of the argument, strength of the argument and mechanics (Appendix J).
Schmoker (2011) argues that “all of this writing should culminate in a presentation” (p. 119) and therefore, in addition to essay composition, two instructional weeks were dedicated to formal public speaking instruction. Table 8 illustrates the public speaking unit alignment with Kentucky Core Academic Standards for College and Career Readiness Standards for Speaking and Listening. Students were required to convert their formal argumentative essay into a formal presentation. Public speaking instruction included: overcoming the fear of public speaking (Appendix Q); practicing and improving the key elements of successful public speaking; effective speech planning and preparation; utilizing technology to enhance a formal presentation; and finally the delivery of a four to five minute speech (Appendix O).

One Teacher’s Experience

This portraiture aims to illustrate a teacher’s personal and professional journey to execute a new literacy course, a course mandatory for all ninth grade students, at a rural high school in southern Kentucky. This portraiture style allows the reader to see inside the teacher’s head and heart and “hear the self-reflection, the thought cycles that move [the researcher] from ‘harsh judgment’ to respectful regard” and allows the reader to be drawn in as thoughts are revealed and the teacher opens herself up for analysis (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 52). Data were gathered via reflective journals throughout the process to cooperatively develop the framework of the course. The narrative that follows is the teacher’s summation of notes, journal entries, anecdotes, and thoughts as she approached, taught, and reflected on the reading course. The inclusion of this information is to aid other teachers at the middle and high school level who might
also be challenged to teach reading courses aimed at better preparing students for college and careers.

**Initial planning.** On a summer day in July of 2013, the ninth grade principal shared that, through a series of unexpected events, an opportunity to develop and implement a ninth grade literacy course had presented itself. The principal was looking for a current teacher with a background and passion for literacy and offered the new position as literacy teacher to an existing English teacher. The teacher’s journals reflect the following as to her immediate concerns.

To be honest, I was reluctant. I would like to say that I accepted the position whole-heartedly upon first hearing the offer, but that’s just not true. My first thought was not “yes, I want it!” … it was more like, “wow, this is an awesome opportunity for our school, but I don’t know if I am the person for it” type of thought. As a teacher with only three years of experience, making a decision like this—to leave my current position and take on the role of teaching a brand new course was huge. I knew that as far as literacy certification was concerned, I might have been the most qualified person in the school for the job; but, as far as teaching experience was concerned, I was still brand new. One of the remarkable qualities of this high school is that there is very little turn-over; teachers start and end 20+ year careers at this high school, so while I had been teaching three years, I was still the newest teacher. Was I really the best candidate for the job? Certainly this unexpected opportunity to teach a literacy course for all students deserved the best shot at being successful. With such little teaching experience,
did I possess the skills to not only teach the course, but also ensure my students would be successful? (Teacher Reflective Journals and Artifacts).

While it is common to have literacy or reading specialists, those teachers with advanced degrees like a MAE, at the elementary levels, it is somewhat more unlikely to have them at the middle and secondary level. Many times English teachers are “drafted” as “next best thing” to a reading teacher, and they are put in charge of initiatives aimed at improving reading scores and ensuring students are prepared for the rigors of reading in college and career. When English or other content teachers are asked to assume these roles as literacy instructors, they have to make decisions about leaving the job or teaching assignment they love for the “unknown” of teaching reading. The English teacher in this case expressed similar concern as she summated:

My second thought, was it smart to step away from what I currently had, an awesome position in an established English department, into a clean-slate classroom? My thoughts centered on the fact that I was just becoming confident in my current English position. I am comfortable with the familiar; the unfamiliar is scary and intimidating. To be honest, I loved my current position—I had taught ninth grade English for three years with an outstanding freshman English department. I had quickly grown to be close friends with these women and I knew that we were building a very successful department together. Why leave a teaching position that I already loved? I knew that I was happy teaching ninth grade English, so was it logical to take a chance that I might be happy in this new position? (Teacher Reflective Journals and artifacts).
Schmoker (2011) warns that little changes in schools, especially in terms of students learning, if teachers are motivated by the fear of failing. Volumes are written about how hard it is to change school culture, to change teaching practices, and to change behaviors in general in any aspect of life. This teacher experienced many of those same emotions and worries.

The third and yet again, almost immediate thought, was honestly: what if I fail? What if one of two things happened: either the course is unsuccessful or I am unhappy? Or even worse, what if both of those things happen? Will I lose my job if this new course turns out to be a flop? Can I go back to teaching English if I am unhappy (or worse, unsuccessful) at teaching literacy? And, could I even ask that question of my principal out loud? On the one hand, I doubted myself, and on the other hand, I was requesting that the administration simply make me happy. Yes, I was selfish. But, reader, keep this in mind: I was already successful and already happy in my current position. I think it is safe to assume that most professionals want those two things in their careers—to find success and happiness. Within three years, I already had them both. I was scared to jeopardize that (Teacher Reflective Journals and artifacts).

As with any real change in a school, administrative support is crucial. Although the principal had desired to establish a literacy course for some time, this sudden opportunity called for immediate action. Someone to teach the course had to be identified, and a team had to be pulled together to develop the course. The role of administrators is to break down barriers for teachers and to listen to their concerns.
principal demonstrated her listening abilities as the English/soon-to-be reading teacher shared the following fears with her.

I openly shared with my principal all three of these primary concerns. She listened and simply assured me that while she did not have all of the answers, she was confident that I was the teacher for the job. She told me that she would not have offered such an opportunity to someone whom she thought might have been qualified. She knew that I could do this and that I would give the course the dedication it deserved.

In my heart, I knew that what I needed to do, and what I truly wanted, was actually the same thing. I knew as soon as I hung up the phone that I would accept the position. I did, however, take some time to think about the consequences of the decision and weigh my options. Then, I let the administration know that I wanted the job. Once I committed to taking the position, my whole heart was in it. I am not one to do anything half way, and while I may not have jumped on the opportunity immediately, I was determined to make the course a success. I knew if the course was successful, I would be happy in the position. Didn’t Albert Einstein say “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity?” I knew it would be difficult, but I took that opportunity and ran with it (Teacher Reflective Journals and artifacts).

The course begins. While making a decision to teach the new course was a complex one, the teacher found that the real work was just beginning. Materials for reading courses in elementary schools are plentiful. However, as the grades go up, the number of resources and materials available for adolescent readers goes down. There
was no hand-book, no other literacy teacher, or established literacy department in the high school to guide the teacher or offer suggestions. Content teachers and other English teachers collaborated, offered suggestions, brainstormed alignments with their content, and worked to develop the course, but this was not like a pre-packaged reading program that came in a nicely wrapped box. Even with the literacy curriculum framework developed there were still items left to teacher discretion – reading materials, assessments, and routines. While this teacher knew the KCAS ELA standards for English, there was a learning curve for the reading standards. This teacher expressed that she was out of her comfort zone on day one of the course.

The first day of school arrived and I was nervous! I think most teachers get a little nervous on the first day of school; first-impressions between teachers and students are so important. I knew that if students were going to make these swift and dramatic improvements because of my course, they would have to like my class. I simply thought about the classes I learned the most in and it is obvious that I liked that class, I liked that teacher, and I liked the environment in the room. I wanted my students to both like and respect me and my class. I knew students had to know I cared about them and expected them to succeed; this was critical if they were going to take the risks necessary to truly learn in my classroom throughout the 12 weeks. Most people, including my students, decide if they like me based on their first impression of me. That’s why I spent the first week and a half establishing a positive learning environment: getting to know one another, presenting expectations, practicing classroom procedures, etc. I left school on the first day feeling wonderful; at the end of the first week, I felt
energized. I had been given an opportunity to truly inspire and teach students in whatever way I knew was effective and I was not going to waste that opportunity (Teacher Reflective Journals and artifacts).

**The course continues.** As the trimester continued and the teacher became more comfortable with the curriculum and the standards, a new level of “footing” took place. The first several weeks went well. Students seemed to be excited to come to my classroom; students were even “hanging out” in my classroom before school started. I was following my weekly schedule designed from the advice of Schmoker (2011), and students seemed to be “getting it.” While practicing active reading as a class (Text Annotation), students began to share their approval of using reading strategies to help maintain focus while reading. Class discussion, Socratic Seminar, was held weekly; after the first two weekly Socratic Seminar sessions, students began to voluntarily share that they enjoyed the discussions, even students who were never shy to vocally share their dislike for school. Students who didn’t like school, students who were not good at public speaking, were, without being prompted, sharing their approval of class discussion. And more than that, they were discussing what they read in class; they were actually, authentically, talking about a class text. *They get it!* (Teacher Reflective Journals and artifacts).

**Reflection on emotion.** While journaling is a great practice for teachers, it also allows for their deepest worries and insecurities to surface. This teacher was no exception to that. The journals followed a roller-coaster of highs and lows that most teachers would recognize any time they take on new content, new challenging students,
new standards, or any other change that pushes them, stretches them, or even threatens them. Knowing how this teacher anticipated some of the challenges, worried about some of the unintended outcomes, and realized that she knew she was opening herself up for possible failure, some of her final summations provide insight into her thinking and her plans.

I took the literacy teacher position because I wanted to seize the opportunity to truly make a difference for my students—to grow them into better readers, better speakers and better writers. Throughout the course, I noticed students asking questions, making comments and sharing ideas in positive ways. Students appeared to be excited to participate in class activities and to simply be in the class. Many students shared appreciation for instruction provided in the course that they were expected to know in other courses; for instance, basic drafting and editing procedures for writing tasks. I am consistently realizing that students know when they are learning skills that are actually helpful and they know when teachers care about them. This course is still a learning experience for me; every day, and with every new trimester of students, I am diligently working to improve and perfect the course because the students deserve it. This journey has never stopped being a challenge - challenging is good. I’ve learned that being comfortable could become grounds for not improving. I don’t want to be comfortable anymore; if I want my students to be challenged, I will have to be challenged as well to consistently offer a course that improves the literacy skills of each student who walks through the doors of my classroom (Teacher Reflective Journals and artifacts).
**Research question two.** *How can the results of a formal reading assessment be used to increase the likelihood that a literacy course will improve college and career readiness in the future?*

*Results of students below grade level.* Figure 1 shows the mean pre-test and post-test scores in terms of reading vocabulary, reading comprehension and a total score for literacy for students who entered the literacy course reading *below ninth grade level* as measured by the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test. The 12-week course appeared to have an effect on students’ post-test scores when compared to pre-test scores in each of the three areas reported. Students’ vocabulary (N = 33) post-test scores $M = 8.603$ were higher than pre-test scores $M = 7.406$. Similarly, students’ (N = 38) comprehension post-test scores $M = 7.547$ were higher than pre-test scores $M = 6.908$; with total literacy scores (N = 35) having a post-test average of $M = 8.224$ compared to the pre-test scores $M = 7.161$. 
Figure 1. Mean Gates-MacGinitie Reading test scores for students entering the literacy course reading below ninth grade level. Vocab = vocabulary; Comp = comprehension.

A paired samples $t$-test was conducted on the pre-test and post-test pairs for each subtest (vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy). The literacy course appeared to have an effect on student vocabulary growth as evidenced by the statistically significant average difference between pre-test and post-test administration, $M = 1.197$, 95% CI [.644, 3.037], $p = .001$. There was also a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores on the comprehension subtest, $M = .639$, 95% CI [.639, 1.917], $p = .050$. Finally, in terms of students’ total literacy scores, there was a statistically
significant difference between pre-test and post-test results, \( M = 1.064\), 95% CI [.619, 2.746], \( p = .001\).

In order to gauge the impact of results that are found to be statistically significant, it is important to measure the size of the effect. A common measure of effect size, \( d \), is used when comparing two means such as in a \( t \) test. Cohen (1988) suggested using the following anchors when considering effect sizes:

- 0.2 = small effect size
- 0.5 = medium effect size
- 0.8 = large effect size

The effect size value for the analysis of vocabulary pre-test and post-test scores (\( d = .742\)) suggested a medium to large practical significance. The effect size value for the comprehension subtest scores (\( d = .374\)) suggested a small to medium practical significance while the total literacy effect size (\( d = .660\)) suggested a medium to large practical significance.

**Results of students above grade level.** Figure 2 shows the mean pre-test and post-test scores in terms of reading vocabulary, reading comprehension and total literacy for students who entered the literacy course reading above ninth grade level as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. The 12-week course appeared to have had no effect on students’ post-test scores when compared to pre-test scores in each of the three areas reported. Students’ vocabulary (\( N = 53\)) post-test scores \( M = 12.51\) were actually slightly lower than pre-test scores \( M = 12.65\). Similarly, students’ (\( N = 59\)) comprehension post-test scores \( M = 11.78\) were slightly lower than pre-test scores \( M =
12.52; with total literacy scores (N = 53) having a post-test average of $M = 12.61$ compared to the pre-test average $M = 12.46$.

![Bar chart](image)

**Figure 2.** Mean Gates-MacGinitie Reading test scores for students entering the literacy course reading above ninth grade level. Vocab = vocabulary; Comp = comprehension.

A paired samples $t$-test was conducted on the pre-test and post-test pairs for each subtest (vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy). The literacy course did not appear to have an effect on student vocabulary growth as the average difference between pre-test and post-test administration was not statistically significant, $M = -.138, 95\% \text{ CI} [-.587, .035], p = .379$. The average difference between pre-test and post-test scores on the comprehension sub-test indicate a statistically significant decline, $M = -.739, 95\% \text{ CI} [-1.879, -1.077], p = .001$. Lastly, in regards to students’ total literacy scores, there was
not a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test results, \( M = .145, \)
95\% CI [.023, .558], \( p = .281. \)

In order to determine the size of the statistically significant impact, a common measure of effect size, \( d \), is used when comparing two means such as in a t-test. Cohen (1988) suggested using the following anchors when considering effect sizes:

- 0.2 = small effect size
- 0.5 = medium effect size
- 0.8 = large effect size

The effect size value for the analysis of vocabulary pre-test and post-test scores (\( d = - .146 \)) suggested no practical significance. The effect size value for the comprehension subtest scores (\( d = -.592 \)) suggested a medium sized decline and finally, the total literacy effect size (\( d = .156 \)) suggested no practical significance.

**Discussion**

In order to determine how the course can be improved or developed in the future, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was used to determine a baseline scores and post-course score indicating student growth on three subtests: vocabulary, comprehension, and total literacy grade equivalencies. Student scores prior to the literacy course (pre-test) and following the literacy course (post-test) were analyzed using a paired sample t-test to compare the results of each subtest. This analysis allowed the school to determine whether there was a significant difference between the average values of the pre-test and post-test in each category (vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy) for students who entered the course reading below ninth grade level as well as for those students who entered the course reading above ninth grade level.
As shown in Figure 1, the data suggest students who entered the course reading below ninth grade level, on average, improved in vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy after the 12-week course. However, students who entered the course reading above ninth grade level did not improve in vocabulary, comprehension or total literacy; in fact, students seemed to digress slightly in vocabulary and to significantly digress in comprehension. In order to determine how the course can be improved and should be developed in the future, three major implications must be discussed: why the course was effective in increasing student vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy for students reading below ninth grade level; why the course was ineffective in increasing student vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy for students reading above ninth grade level; and the fact that more students pre-tested as reading above ninth grade level than below ninth grade level.

Based on Vygotsky’s (1978) theoretical construct of the Zone of Proximal Development, a student’s ideal zone of learning is between what the student can do on their own and what they can do with the help of a more knowledgeable other. Referencing Vygotsky’s work, if the student entered the course reading below grade level, this course was effective in increasing student vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy because the course was designed to meet the needs of students who were reading below grade level. Because the high school’s most recent test scores indicated that many students may struggle with reading, the teacher naturally assumed that most students entering the course were reading below ninth grade level. Therefore, students struggling to comprehend ninth grade level text were the target group and the course work was designed by the school to target this specific group of students. The materials
were at ninth grade level, the teacher’s expectations of student performance on class activities, especially writing, was set for a ninth grade student, and the teacher took into consideration that students were reading below ninth grade level as she set course pacing. Because of this targeted instruction, the course was effective for the students who scored below ninth grade level. On average, students who entered the course reading below ninth grade level increased scores in all subtests. This course was effective for this group of targeted students because they were working within their Zone of Proximal Development throughout the 12 weeks.

Students who were reading below grade level increased their vocabulary scores nearly twice as much as their comprehension scores during the 12-week course. Traditionally, vocabulary does not improve as quickly as comprehension and therefore the teacher assumed that student comprehension would be more likely to improve while in the course.

As shown in Figure 2, the data suggest students who entered the literacy course reading above ninth grade level did not improve in vocabulary or comprehension and only slightly improved scores in total literacy. The course work was planned under the assumption that most students were reading at or below ninth grade level; materials, pacing, writing expectations were all set based on this assumption. Based on Vygotsky’s (1978) theoretical construct of the Zone of Proximal Development, for students to grow, their knowledge must be stretched as a result of instruction. For students who entered the course reading above ninth grade level, course instruction did not require them to work in their Zone of Proximal Development, which resulted in no growth. The instruction was tailored to target students reading at ninth grade and below; pre-test scores indicated
that the average student who scored above ninth grade level was not just above, but drastically above ninth grade, with an average total literacy of above 12th grade. Therefore, the instruction was two to three grade levels below their total literacy level and not within Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, resulting in no growth.

The data also indicate that more students pre-tested as reading above ninth grade level than below ninth grade level in vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy. In fact, only 39% of the students pre-tested below ninth grade level in total literacy, which indicates that the teacher was teaching to the minority; only 39% of students, those scoring below grade level in total literacy, made reading gains while in this course. It was assumed that the majority of students entering the course were reading at or below grade and the assumption was incorrect; 61% of students were reading above grade level and as a result, those students did not make reading gains in this course. Had instruction been tailored to the correct grade level of all students, more students would likely have been impacted as a result of the course.

**Chapter Summary**

To gather data for this study, personal reflective journals, observations, and lesson plans proved to be the most efficient means in collecting adequate and relevant qualitative data to answer the first research question. The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was used as a pre-test and post-test and results were analyzed for quantitative data to address the second research question. Chapter Five analyzes these results to determine key findings and implications of the study as a whole. In addition, further research is suggested and lessons the teacher learned as a result of the study are included for reader reference.
Chapter Five
Discussion

The purposes of this study were to (1) “draw a picture” of the intricacies of designing and establishing a successful literacy course for ninth grade students in a rural Kentucky high school, and (2) to show how the results of a formal reading assessment can be used to improve the reading course. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe “portraiture [as] a method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism” (p. xv) and seeks “to combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor” (p. 3). Using the method of portraiture, teacher journals and observation notes illustrate the journey many English teachers are being asked to make to meet the reading needs of high schools across the country. Journal entries and notes detail the establishment of course work that meets Kentucky Core Academic Standards for English/Language Arts for content areas and shares the many considerations that teachers and schools face when implementing a new literacy course. This portraiture allows the reader to visualize the creation of and instruction in, the ninth grade literacy course. Through analysis of a formal reading test scores implications were found that address ways in which the course can be improved in the future to increase student college and career readiness in reading.

Two primary questions served to guide the scope of this study:

- How is a ninth grade literacy course that attempts to increase college and career readiness as delineated by the state of Kentucky developed and implemented?
How can the results of a formal reading assessment be used to increase the likelihood that a literacy course will improve college and career readiness in the future?

This chapter first includes key findings and conclusions based on qualitative and quantitative data collection. Data were gathered via reflective journals, observations, and annotated lesson plans as well as through formal reading assessment of students’ comprehension and vocabulary. The second section of this chapter outlines implications of these findings, as well as recommendations for fellow teachers, administrators, and others who may be interested in promoting student literacy growth, especially through implementation of an independent literacy course for high school students. This section also includes references to literature directly related to the topics of this study that help to make sense of the data and its implications for future course improvement and development.

**Key Findings**

The particular problem at this high school was consistently lower than desired reading test scores as measured by the PLAN test, for tenth grade students, and the ACT test, for eleventh grade students, both of which are mandatory state assessments.

Additionally, many teachers at this high school commonly voice the concern that students seem to have difficulty comprehending grade level text. A large majority of students at this high school live in poverty as determined by the Free and Reduced Lunch population, which is 67% of students. Literature reviewed supports that in fact a link often exists between low socioeconomic status and poor reading skills (Morris, et. al., 2012; McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2010; Zwiers, 2011; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Noble,
et.al., 2006; Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). If teachers realize that many students are living in poverty and may have more difficulty comprehending grade level text than their more affluent peers, the question becomes, what should be done to reduce this gap? How can instruction and support increase student literacy, especially students’ reading comprehension and vocabulary?

In response to these questions, the administration at the participating high school commissioned a team to develop a literacy course for ninth grade students. Further, an English teacher on faculty was reassigned to implement a ninth grade literacy course for the purposes of increasing college and career readiness, as delineated by the state of Kentucky. This study examines the development and implementation of this new, ninth grade literacy course. Findings from this research project will be discussed in no particular order of importance; all are crucial findings not only for improving the literacy course, but also are vital information pieces if the students, teachers, and administrators at this high school desire students’ reading performance to improve in the future.

The first key finding was that the second rotation of ninth grade students at this high school did not appear to follow the noticeable pattern of low reading test scores, as demonstrated by other students at this high school in the past. The data from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, which was utilized as a pre-test and post-test assessment in this literacy course, indicates that over 60% of the students (those students enrolled in the second trimester literacy course who were examined for this research study) scored above ninth grade level for total literacy on the pre-test and less than 40% scored below ninth grade level for total literacy on the pre-test. A hypothesis for this research project might have been, “Ninth grade students score below grade level in comprehension and
vocabulary.” That would have been false as the data reveals that most ninth grade students are actually reading above grade level. In planning this literacy course, assumptions were made about the students that, in fact, proved presumptuous. One result of this was that the teacher operated somewhat from a deficit mindset and, thus, a deficit way of teaching. This incorrect assumption appears to be valid for two reasons: analysis of formal standardized test reading scores and, through observation of an apparent lack of student motivation and interest for reading. The ninth grade students at this school are much more competent than they credit themselves, or that teachers seem to credit them. Actually, the average grade level equivalency for ninth grade students scoring above grade level, was twelfth grade; significantly higher than expected.

The second key finding was that literacy curriculum and coursework was an appropriate match for the targeted course population. Although the number of target students (those reading below grade level) were much smaller than anticipated, the instruction was effective for this targeted minority in terms of comprehension and vocabulary growth. Students who were reading below ninth grade level improved their scores in every subtest of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy) as evidenced by their pre-test and post-test score comparisons. So, when the course is working, that is when coursework is appropriately tailored to the intended group of students, students’ reading comprehension and vocabulary, and consequently college and career readiness, improved. As student college and career readiness improve, it may be assumed that standardized test scores (PLAN, ACT) would also improve.
The third key finding was the literacy course was not effective in increasing reading comprehension and vocabulary for the majority of students in the course. Students reading above ninth grade level, who were the majority of students in the literacy course, were not part of the targeted group; in fact they scored well above the target group. Analysis of data from the Gates-MacGinitie pre-test and post-test indicated that students did not make significant gains in either comprehension or vocabulary as a result of this course. It can be reasonably assumed these students did not make reading gains because instruction was not targeted for them, but rather for students reading below ninth grade level. Again, a look at Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development will explain why students who were presented with materials at or below their reading levels would not be expected to demonstrate growth as they were not challenged.

**Implications**

There are many implications that can be drawn from each of the three key findings. These implications will be reviewed in the same order as the findings; not by importance as all are vital for any individual or system intending to design a course that is established to increase student reading comprehension and vocabulary. There are several implications that can be drawn from the first key finding, which was that a majority of students are actually reading above ninth grade level. Being informed by recent high school standardized reading test scores and student socioeconomic status, teachers and administrators expected that most of the students were likely reading at or below grade level, which caused instruction and reading materials to be targeted at the ninth grade level. This belief, and the corresponding expectations for students, resulted
in no growth for the majority of students enrolled in the course (Vygotsky, 1978). To avoid this surprise in future, students should be pre-tested at the beginning of the course; those scores must be immediately analyzed, to avoid deficit teaching. It is imperative that teachers know the accurate reading level of every student prior to instruction. Because students test on a variety of reading levels, teachers must also offer differentiated instruction to allow for student growth. There are two clear ways to offer differentiated instruction in the literacy course. First, pre-testing can occur prior to the start of the school year and the administration can plan student schedules based on test scores; there would be different classes for different levels of reading. For instance, students reading at or below ninth grade level would be in one class, students reading above ninth grade level in another, and possibly a course for college level instruction for students scoring higher than twelfth grade. The second way instruction could be differentiated would be within each class. Pre-testing would occur on the first day of the course and the teacher would plan instruction for each class based on those results. As a result, students reading at all variety of reading levels may be present in one classroom, which would require the teacher to offer texts at a variety of levels to students in the same classroom.

In addition to analyzing pre-test scores prior to the start of the course, diligent efforts must be made to hold high expectations for all students regardless of the students’ backgrounds (McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2010). Regardless of the percentage of students living in poverty, regardless of standardized test scores, if the literacy course is going to increase students’ reading comprehension and vocabulary, teachers must avoid preconceived notions about student reading capability and rely on pre-test results and
formative assessments. Literacy instruction must avoid going “down” to the perceived level of the student; instruction must remain at a higher level and students will be expected to improve to meet that level of instruction. This implication follows Vygotsky’s (1978) basic premise of the Zone of Proximal Development and is vital if all students are going to increase their levels of college and career readiness.

Implications from the second key finding, that the targeted course population was an appropriate match for the curriculum and coursework, are straightforward. For students who were reading below ninth grade level, the literacy course significantly improved reading comprehension and vocabulary. In future courses, for this group of students, the same types of instruction need to take place. Literature reviewed supported the established literacy course work. First, literature supported offering purposeful and authentic reading and writing tasks (Schmoker, 2011; Tomblinson, 2004) as students were responsible for selecting reading topics, readability of texts were considered, and purposeful writing occurred as students reacted to the selected texts. Second, literature also supported that purposeful and explicit reading strategy instruction, which was offered in this course, would likely result in reading comprehension growth (Petty, Super, & Bryant, 2013; Silver, Dewing, & Perini, 2012; Tregenza & Lewis, 2008). Third, literature supported class discussions (Mason & Galloway, 2012; Silver, Dewing, & Perini, 2012; Schmoker, 2011), such as the weekly Socratic Seminar, as a means of improving student reading comprehension.

There are also several implications to be drawn from the third key finding, that the literacy course was not effective in increasing reading comprehension and vocabulary for students reading above ninth grade level. First, the belief by the school
system and teachers that these students were largely at or below ninth grade level was damaging to student growth and performance. Vygotsky’s (1978) theoretical construct of Zone of Proximal Development indicates that the instruction, which was targeted at ninth grade level, did not require students to stretch their knowledge, which resulted in no significant gains in reading growth.

Second, teacher expectations for students affects student reading success—if the expectations are too low, students will not likely make reading gains; and conversely, if expectations are set high, students will be more likely to make reading gains. McIntyre, Hulan and Layne (2010) indicate that what teachers believe about students’ backgrounds and the expectations they hold for their students does affect students’ reading achievement. It was believed that students were largely reading at or below grade level, especially considering the socioeconomic status of the school population, and as a result, instruction was targeted to ninth grade level. This belief, and thus the expectations for students, resulted in no growth for the majority of students in the course.

Third, students reading above ninth grade level may be able to make gains in reading comprehension and vocabulary as a result of this literacy course if more advanced texts and materials are used in the future. If instruction were tailored to the pre-test grade level equivalencies of students entering the course, even students reading above grade level, the course would be effective in increasing student vocabulary, comprehension and total literacy. As long as students are working in their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) growth can be expected. If higher level texts and higher expectations were set for this group of students throughout the course, growth would be expected. For that reason, to improve the course in the future, teachers need to
examine pre-test scores and select reading materials that are above the comprehension and vocabulary levels of students, which would aid these students to stretch as a result of instruction, resulting in reading growth. It is imperative to be cognizant of student reading levels when selecting course materials because, as indicated on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, students in this literacy course had average reading levels ranging from seventh grade to above twelfth grade. Therefore, differentiation must occur either in scheduling the literacy course or within each literacy class in order for the course to adequately and effectively stretch the knowledge of each student.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

It appears evident from this study that further questions need to be asked. While vocabulary and comprehension both improved significantly for students reading below ninth grade level, data indicate that these students’ vocabulary scores improved more than their comprehension scores. Further research may be necessary to determine why comprehension improved at a slower rate and if more direct comprehension instruction would result in greater comprehension growth. Research may also need to be conducted to determine how the Literacy course impacts student PLAN and ACT reading test scores. More information is also needed to determine how the literacy course impact and improves college and career readiness in regard to speaking/listening and writing. If differentiation occurs in the future, research would be necessary to determine which differentiation style is most effective in increasing student college and career readiness: within class differentiation, where many students are surrounded by more knowledgeable peers and a range of leveled texts are available; or between class differentiation, where students are scheduled into a class based on pre-test scores (below,
above or an advanced college-level course). Finally, the literacy course was designed to increase student college and career readiness and therefore, should impact student performance in any class which requires reading, writing and speaking. Therefore, research is needed on the impact the course may have on other subject areas. This would be particularly necessary if the literacy teacher made a diligent effort to connect the course to other classes, for instance using class texts that were associated with the same topics as in science or English class (for example, reading about current discrimination and racial profiling when students are reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee in English class). Finally, student use of the specific reading strategies taught in this course might be followed in the final three years of high school and research may seek to determine what motivates students to use the strategies independently.

**Lessons Learned**

At the end of this study, the English/would-be reading teacher’s summarized notes indicate that she has grown to realize that in the profession of education, there are times when we, as teachers, must step out of our comfort zones to do what is best for our students. She leaves the reader with her own thoughts and best advice for other:

We must take risks, even if the road ahead may be difficult. I have learned that being comfortable may not be what is best. If we are stepping away from the comfortable place we have grown to know, the road ahead will likely be difficult. However, I have learned that if I am taking a risk to do what is right, regardless of mishaps and struggles along the way, there will be a positive outcome. And it is a good thing that I do not have to face difficult situations alone. We cannot be afraid to seek help. I am a young teacher just starting her career, and already I
have learned that there are people who desire to help me succeed. You will find that to be true as well. As I grow as an educator, I will not settle for comfortable; I will continue to grow as a professional and make a difference for my students. I will help others as they desire to do the same. Furthermore, I encourage administrators to continue to look for opportunities to put the right teachers in the right spots, regardless of their years of service. Whether they be young or experienced teachers, a teacher who desires to make a positive difference in the lives of his/her students, is a good teacher and is the right one. And I have learned that I always want to be that teacher (Teacher Reflective Journals and Artifacts).
Appendix A: How To- Reading Strategies

The information for this How-To Reading Strategy sheet was gathered using *The Essentials of Reading* (Petty, Super, & Bryant, 2013).

- **Text Annotation**
  1. Students should self-question as they read by focusing on three questions:
     - What does this author want me to know? (Central ideas and themes)
     - What does this author want me to believe? (Influences my thinking)
     - How is the author building the themes or ideas together to make a certain argument?
  2. Mark each presented idea in the text (underline, highlight, etc.) and take notes in the book/article directly beside the reading—actually write on the text in the margins.

- **Cornell Notes**
  1. On a clean piece of paper, create a two column chart (T-Chart).
  2. Label the left column “Key Words” and label the right column “Notes.”
  3. Under the left column, write down essential words, phrases or ideas from the text.
  4. Under the right column, write down notes and reactions to the text.

- **Summarization**
  1. First, annotate the assigned text following the directions for Text Annotation.
  2. Create a “cheat sheet” of information from the text including:
     - major headings
     - summary sentence from the introduction
     - new vocabulary
     - key points from graphs or illustrations
     - key points from text
     - questions you have about the reading
     - summary sentence from end of chapter

- **Reduce and Produce**
  1. Reduce the amount of information presented in the text by using any text marking style (underlining, highlighting, etc.).
  2. Create a two-column chart (T-Chart) to transfer important information into a one-page “summary and implications sheet.”
  3. Produce something as a result of the reading; for instance a quick summary of the text.
Appendix B: Bibliography for class texts


Appendix C: How To- Socratic Seminar

Socratic Seminar is a student-led discussion based on Socrates’ theory that it is more important to enable students to think for themselves than to merely fill their heads with "right" answers.

Steps to Socratic Seminar:
1. Students are given opportunities to "examine" a common piece of text or multiple texts on the same topic.

2. Following reading, students compose open-ended questions regarding text content.

3. Students select partners. Arrange desks in two circles- an inner circle and an outer circle. One partner sits in the inner circle, the other sits in the outer circle, directly behind their partner.

4. Students in the inner circle discuss the text(s) in an open setting (for a predetermined amount of time), with teacher supervision (not teacher guidance). Students pose questions, respond to peer-questions, defend personal opinions using textual support and elaborate upon the opinions of others.
   a. Set a digital timer (on Smart Board if possible) so students can see how much is remaining in the discussion.

5. When the time is up, students switch seats with their partner, so students who were in the outer circle are now in the inner circle and ready for round two of discussion.

6. This second group of students now discusses the same text(s).
   a. Set a timer with the same predetermined amount of time as round one.

7. The partner sitting in the outer circle (who is not participating in the current discussion), uses the Socratic Seminar Tally Sheet (Appendix H) to keep track of what their partner contributes to the discussion.

8. Following both rounds of discussion, students complete the Socratic Seminar Rubric (Appendix I) about their own performance in the discussion. This encourages self-reflection.

Guidelines for successful student-led discussion:
Students Should-
  o Always cite the text

  o When commenting on or disagreeing with another’s opinion, briefly restate what they said before you make your point.

  o Don’t interrupt one another; wait to speak
- Be concise
- Stay on point
- Avoid verbal tics (overuse of “like” and “you know” etc.)
- Ask questions to fuel discussion
  Three levels of questions:
  - Level One: Literal (Avoid in Socratic Seminar)
  - Level Two: Inferential
  - Level Three: Global and/or Open-ended
- Refer to the text when needed during the discussion.
- It's OK to "pass" when asked to contribute.
- Students who have not read the assigned articles will not participate in the discussion.
- Ask for clarification if you are confused.
- Stick to the point currently under discussion; make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
- Don't raise hands; take turns speaking.
- Speak up so that all can hear you.
- Talk to each other, not just to the leader or teacher.
- Discuss ideas rather than each other's opinions.
- You, the students, are responsible for the seminar.
Appendix D: Socratic Seminar Tally Sheet

Student’s Name: _____________________    Observer’s Name: ___________________
Class: ______ Topic: ________________________

Directions: Tally up each time your partner poses a question (Q), provides an answer to a question (A) and (E) elaborates or provides analysis with textual reference.

You must include a brief description/summary of what they say for each tally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The student posed questions. (Questions require more than yes/no answers.)</td>
<td>The student provided thoughtful answers. (Answers were not simply yes/no.)</td>
<td>The student elaborated and/or provided analysis. Offered insight with textual references.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Tally: | Total Tally: | Total Tally:
# Appendix E: Socratic Seminar Scoring Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of questions posed</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student poses multiple higher level questions that propel the discussion to a higher level of analysis.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student poses some higher level questions that advance the discussion to a limited level analysis.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student poses one higher level question or multiple lower level questions that are part of discussion but do not advance the discussion to a higher level of analysis.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of answers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Answers are thoughtful and provide insight based on strong textual support and may build on others’ ideas.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Answers are somewhat insightful but they may be based on misreading / misunderstanding of text.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Answers are not based in text but formed solely on general opinion.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion procedures</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student appears attentive and provides eye-contact to those speaking. Student engages non-participants in the discussion. Student responds thoughtfully to diverse perspectives. The student is respectful to others. Student avoids the urge to speak too much.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student does demonstrate some indicators from level 3 but not consistently. Student may actively listen but does not comment or follow up to others’ comments. Students speaks for too long/ too often.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student's body language does not reflect attentiveness. Student dominates the discussion. Student interrupts others and may become confrontational/ rude.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion preparation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student comes to the discussion prepared, with notes and a marked/annotated text</strong></td>
<td><strong>Inadequate preparation and minimal notes</strong></td>
<td><strong>No annotation/notes completed before discussion.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F: How To- Toulmin Argument Writing

What is the Toulmin Model?

- Formal, analytical writing style
- Writing style that should be used in every class
- Applicable for one paragraph responses or multi-paragraph essays
- Design includes three steps: Claim, Data, Warrant

Claim:

- Thesis Statement
  - Your opinion about the subject (…or the answer to the question)
  - the topic sentence of the paragraph
  - (in both a one paragraph answer OR multi-paragraph response)

Requirements of the Claim:

- Clear and concise
- A general “rule of thumb” for a thesis statement: include three points of focus
- Sample Claim/ thesis statement:

  The life of the typical college student is characterized by time spent studying, attending class, and socializing with peers.

Data:

- The evidence or facts to prove your claim.
- An example FROM the text to support your opinion: a direct quote from the text.
- Take a fact straight from your text that supports your opinion.

Requirements for Data:

- All data must be cited! (no plagiarism)
Use quotation marks, include page number

- Data should be “set up” or introduced.
- Example Data:

  *Cullen concludes, “Of all the things that happened there, that’s all I remember” (11-12).*

  *Notice the quote was introduced; the writer included quotation marks and a page number in parentheses.

**Warrant:**

- The explanation of HOW your data supports your claim.
- Discuss the significance of the quote to your argument- not an interpretation of the quote, but why it fits your argument.
- For multi-paragraph essays: how the data supports the paragraph claim (topic sentence) and the overall thesis statement.

**Requirements for the Warrant:**

- An effective warrant should be at least 3-5 sentences.
  1. 3-4 sentences: relate the data to the claim; tell how the data supports the claim
  2. 1-2 sentences: conclude and/or restate the claim
  3. Warrant should be longer than the claim and data combined
Appendix G: Sampling of Vocabulary and Writing Tasks

- **Cyberbullying:**
  
  *Texts used:*
  
  

  **Weekly Vocabulary Words:** despondent, perpetrators, Misdemeanor, punitive, counterproductive, tolerant

  **Argumentative Writing Prompt:**
  
  o Lawmakers in states across the U.S. are debating over whether or not their states should enact cyberbullying laws. This is not a simple issue, so you need to think very carefully about it. As you read and re-read class texts, think about what they show you about the issue. Think about what position you will take and what evidence you will use to support your thinking.
  
  Do you support anti-cyberbullying laws in Kentucky and across the country? Be sure to use evidence from the texts, as well as your own knowledge, to support and develop your thinking.

  **Reflective Writing Prompts:**
  
  o How does the article regarding Rebecca Sedwick make you feel?
  
  o What are your reactions to this news article?
  
  o How can you relate to this situation?
  
  o Who can help you if you are being bullied online?
Sports Injuries:

Texts Used:

(Four sports-related texts are listed below: cheerleading, football, basketball and baseball. Students individually selected two of the four articles to read in class.)


Vocabulary: degenerative, traumatic, cognitive, ligament, concussion, dementia

Argumentative Writing Prompt:

- Athletes are injured everyday as they push their bodies to the limit doing what they love. Playing sports is voluntary, but many people believe that stricter restrictions on
protective gear should be mandatory, especially at the high school level. Should high school athletics alter the rules of the game and/or require more protective gear to protect athletes while playing sports?

**Reflective Writing Prompts:**

- Are sports dangerous?
- What is your passion- do you have one?
- What is a hobby/passion you could never give up, even if it caused you physical harm or injury?
- When are you the most determined? What do you delight in? In what activities, etc. do you take the most pride?

**Military:**

*Texts Used:*


**Vocabulary:** dismemberment, tenure, justify, legitimate

*Argumentative Writing Prompt:*

- Drawing information from each text, prove whether or not Charley, the main character in *Soldier’s Heart*, will likely or not likely suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
Reflective Writing Prompts:

- Do you think you might suffer from PTSD if you found yourself in such a situation?
- Imagine what it would have been like to suffer from PTSD before a clinical diagnosis was available versus today’s time. What would the differences be?

Malala Yousafzai:

Texts used:


Vocabulary: Rickshaw, activist, puissant, edict, province

Argumentative Writing Prompt:

- Based on the information provided, what can you infer about Malala’s character?

Reflective Writing Prompts:

- Compare your attitude of education to Malala’s attitude.
- Malala continues to risk her life for the right of education. For what right would you risk your life?
- There is an old quote that says: “You don’t know what you have until its gone.”
  
  Relate this quote to Malala and the kids in Pakistan, relate it to yourself and explain how Americans might learn from Malala.
Government Surveillance:

Texts Used:

Vocabulary: National Security Agency, scrutiny, contend, justifiable, compromise, counterterrorism

Argumentative Writing Prompt:
- What do the National Security Agency and the Obama Administration surveillance policies reveal about our current U.S. culture? As a normal, law-abiding American citizen, what are the implications of the phone surveillance program in your own life?

Reflective Writing Prompts:
- Do your parents/friends have your passwords for online activity? Should they?
- Is it ever worth it to sacrifice privacy for safety?
- How will the eventual Supreme Court decision affect our lives?
Appendix H. Formative Reading Assessments

(Formative Assessment 1)

Bibliographic Information:

Flesch-Kincaid Reading Level: 10.3
Word Count: 707

Astronauts Complete Rare Christmas Eve Spacewalk  

(Formative Assessment 1)

1. What is the primary purpose of this passage?
   a. NASA recently conducted the second Christmas Eve spacewalk ever.
   b. NASA’s Christmas Eve spacewalk mission repaired a faulty cooling pump on the International Space Station.
   c. American and Japanese astronauts work together to complete an important space mission.
   d. Because an astronaut almost drowned in their own suit, NASA revised space suits for all astronauts.

2. Which of the following was not true of the Christmas Eve Spacewalk?
   a. The Spacewalk took 7 ½ hours.
   b. The new pump weighed 780 pounds.
   c. A Japanese Astronaut aided in installation of the new pump.
   d. The mission required three spacewalks to complete.

3. If a small amount of water gets into a space suit,
   a. the suit is not viable.
   b. NASA suggests the astronauts still wear the suit, but with caution.
   c. the astronaut must repair the suit immediately.
   d. ammonia must be used to dispel generated heat.

4. As it is used in paragraph 1, *noxious* most nearly means
   a. invisible  
   b. rare  
   c. inattentive  
   d. toxic

5. The article suggests all of the following except:
   a. Astronauts are less likely to drown in their own suits now than in the past.
   b. Space programs from around the world work together to maintain the space station.
   c. The astronauts on the most recent Christmas Eve spacewalk were religious.
   d. Even NASA astronauts have accidents that can result in delays.
6. On the first lunar mission,
   a. the book of Genesis was read from outer space.
   b. an astronaut almost drowned.
   c. astronauts were almost poisoned with extremely toxic substance.
   d. science experiments had to be halted because a line conked out.

7. In comparison to the 2010 space walk,
   a. the astronauts in 2013 were able to complete the mission in a shorter amount of time.
   b. the astronauts in 2013 took longer to complete their mission.
   c. the 2013 space walk and repairs were less successful.
   d. the 2013 Hubble Space Telescope repair mission was more successful and took less time.

8. As it is used in paragraph 4, gingerly most nearly means
   a. recklessly   c. developmentally
   b. cautiously   d. coolly

Astronauts Complete Rare Christmas Eve Spacewalk  
(Formative Assessment 1)

ANSWER KEY

10 min. to read article
10 min. to answer questions

1. Main Idea
What is the primary purpose of this passage?
   a. NASA recently conducted the second Christmas Eve spacewalk ever.
   b. NASA’s Christmas Eve spacewalk mission repaired a faulty cooling pump on the International Space Station.
   c. American and Japanese astronauts work together to complete an important space mission.
   d. Because an astronaut almost drowned in their own suit, NASA revised space suits for all astronauts.

2. Detail
Which of the following was not true of the Christmas Eve Spacewalk?
   a. The Spacewalk took 7 ½ hours.
   b. The new pump weighed 780 pounds.
   c. A Japanese Astronaut aided in installation of the new pump.
   d. The mission required three spacewalks to complete.

3. Cause Effect
If a small amount of water gets into a space suit,
   a. the suit is not viable.
   b. NASA suggests the astronauts still wear the suit, but with caution.
   c. the astronaut must repair the suit immediately.
   d. ammonia must be used to dispel generated heat.
4. Vocabulary
As it is used in paragraph 1, *noxious* most nearly means
   a. invisible   c. inattentive
   b. rare        d. toxic

5. Inference
The article suggests all of the following except:
   a. Astronauts are less likely to drown in their own suits now than in the past.
   b. Space programs from around the world work together to maintain the space station.
   c. The astronauts on the most recent Christmas Eve spacewalk were religious.
   d. Even NASA astronauts have accidents that can result in delays.

6. Detail
On the first lunar mission,
   a. the book of Genesis was read from outer space.
   b. an astronaut almost drowned.
   c. astronauts were almost poisoned with extremely toxic substance.
   d. science experiments had to be halted because a line conked out.

7. Inference
In comparison to the 2010 space walk,
   a. the astronauts in 2013 were able to complete the mission in a shorter amount of time.
   b. the astronauts in 2013 took longer to complete their mission.
   c. the 2013 space walk and repairs were less successful.
   d. the 2013 Hubble Space Telescope repair mission was more successful and took less time.

8. Vocabulary
As it is used in paragraph 4, *gingerly* most nearly means
   a. recklessly
   b. cautiously
   c. developmentally
   d. coolly
Texting while Driving: How Dangerous Is It? (Formative Assessment 2)

1. What is the primary purpose of this passage?
   a. Texting while driving impairs the driver’s ability to keep their eyes and mind on the road.
   b. The prevalence of texting while driving is steadily on the rise.
   c. Younger drivers are more successful at texting while driving than older drivers.
   d. Texting while driving is just as dangerous as drunk driving.

2. Which of the following was not true of Intern Brown?
   a. Brown’s reaction time worsened while reading a text.
   b. Brown’s baseline reaction time for reading a text was better at 70 mph than at 35 mph.
   c. Brown’s reaction time for writing a text improved at 70 mph.
   d. Brown’s reaction time for reading a text was worse at 70 mph than at 35 mph.

3. The passage suggests that because texting while driving impedes reaction time,
   a. legislation prohibiting texting while driving should be passed.
   b. older drivers should be prohibited from texting and driving.
   c. speed limits should be lowered.
   d. only phones with “qwerty” keypads should be legal to use while driving.

4. As it is used in paragraph 2, wary most nearly means
   a. trustful
   b. cautious
   c. inattentive
   d. disbelieving

5. In paragraph 10, the passage implies that
   a. Regardless of if one thinks they are a good driver, texting while driving is dangerous.
   b. Texting with one hand is less risky than using both hands.
c. Texting while driving is hazardous and should be considered as dangerous as drunk driving.

d. Legislation outlawing texting while driving should not be passed because it would be too difficult to enforce.

6. From 2005 to 2008, texting while driving
   a. increased by 100.6 billion texts per year.
   b. was outlawed in a few jurisdictions.
   c. increased in vehicle simulated studies.
   d. increased by all drivers.

7. The study suggests all of the following except
   a. Intern Brown’s method of holding the phone above the dashboard may be safer than texting with both hands.
   b. Consequences of texting while driving would be more severe in real world driving situations with traffic and road signals than in this study.
   c. Texting while driving lowers response time of drivers of varying ages.
   d. Drivers who are texting have better response times when someone is riding shotgun than when driving alone.

8. As it is used in paragraph 10, formative most nearly means
   a. destructive
   b. shape
   c. developmental
   d. unyielding

Texting while Driving: How Dangerous Is It? (Formative Assessment 2)

10 min. to read article
10 min. to answer questions

1. Main Idea
   What is the primary purpose of this passage?
   a. Texting while driving impairs the driver’s ability to keep their eyes and mind on the road.
   b. The prevalence of texting while driving is steadily on the rise.
   c. Younger drivers are more successful at texting while driving than older drivers.
   d. Texting while driving is just as dangerous as drunk driving.

2. Detail
   Which of the following was not true of Intern Brown?
   a. Brown’s reaction time worsened while reading a text.
b. Brown’s baseline reaction time for reading a text was better at 70 mph than at 35 mph.
c. Brown’s reaction time for writing a text improved at 70 mph.
d. Brown’s reaction time for reading a text was worse at 70 mph than at 35 mph.

3. Cause Effect
The passage suggests that because texting while driving impedes reaction time,
a. legislation prohibiting texting while driving should be passed.
b. older drivers should be prohibited from texting and driving.
c. speed limits should be lowered.
d. only phones with “qwerty” keypads should be legal to use while driving.

4. Vocabulary
As it is used in paragraph 2, wary most nearly means
a. trustful
b. cautious
c. inattentive
d. disbelieving

5. Inference
In paragraph 10, the passage implies that
a. Regardless of if one thinks they are a good driver, texting while driving is dangerous.
b. Texting with one hand is less risky than using both hands.
c. Texting while driving is hazardous and should be considered as dangerous as drunk driving.
d. Legislation outlawing texting while driving should not be passed because it would be too difficult to enforce.

6. Detail
From 2005 to 2008, texting while driving
a. increased by 100.6 billion texts per year.
b. was outlawed in a few jurisdictions.
c. increased in vehicle simulated studies.
d. increased by all drivers.

7. Inference
The study suggests all of the following except
a. Intern Brown’s method of holding the phone above the dashboard may be safer than texting with both hands.
b. Consequences of texting while driving would be more severe in real world driving situations with traffic and road signals than in this study.
c. Texting while driving lowers response time of drivers of varying ages.
d. Drivers who are texting have better response times when someone is riding shotgun than when driving alone.
8. **Vocabulary**
As it is used in paragraph 10, *formative* most nearly means

a. destructive  c. developmental
b. shape       d. unyielding
How can orange be a blind boy’s favorite color? (Formative Assessment 3)

1. What is the primary purpose of this passage?
   a. Billy Dengler doesn’t allow excuses to get in the way of his dreams.
   b. Being blind increases the likelihood of accomplishing success with technology.
   c. Parents of blind children should treat their children as if they do not have a disability.
   d. Billy Dengler doesn’t want to have his eye sight.

2. Which of the following statements is true?
   a. Dengler can tell how many coins someone has based on the size of the coins.
   b. Dengler turned down an internship offer from Google because he wants to design his own software company.
   c. Dengler takes advantage of most devices that are designed for the blind.
   d. At age seven, Billy began teaching himself computer programming.

3. If it were possible, Billy Dengler might not want his sight back because
   a. he doesn’t believe blindness is a disability.
   b. he would have to learn to see all over again.
   c. he already reads so quickly with his screen reader.
   d. Google might not want to hire him.

4. As it is used in paragraph 2, luminous most nearly means
   a. radiant
   b. illuminated
   c. large
   d. dull

5. Based on the information in the passage, it can be assumed that Steven Moe, Dengler’s teacher,
   a. is jealous of Billy’s seemingly impossible abilities.
   b. is astonished at how few friends Billy has.
   c. is impressed with Billy’s self-reliance and eagerness to participate.
   d. is often corrected by Billy in class.
6. All of the following statements are true except
   a. Billy aided Google in solving an elaborate telephone based crime.
   b. The FBI discovered Billy’s talent at a technology based conference.
   c. Billy is interested in attending Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
   d. Billy may want to design his own software company in the future.

7. Based on the passage, which of the following statements is not true?
   a. Billy Dengler will likely a career in the computer/technology industry in the future.
   b. Billy Dengler does not use many devices designed for the blind because he adapts to his environment well on his own.
   c. Billy Dengler may complete an internship with Google in the future.
   d. Billy Dengler resents the fact that he is blind.

8. As it is used in paragraph 7, *chagrin* most nearly means
   a. happiness
   b. embarrassment
   c. anger
   d. weariness

How can orange be a blind boy’s favorite color? *(Formative Assessment 3)*

**ANSWER KEY**

10 min. to read article
10 min. to answer questions

1. **Main Idea**
   What is the primary purpose of this passage?
   a. Billy Dengler doesn’t allow excuses to get in the way of his dreams.
   b. Being blind increases the likelihood of accomplishing success with technology.
   c. Parents of blind children should treat their children as if they do not have a disability.
   d. Billy Dengler doesn’t want to have his eye sight.

2. **Detail**
   Which of the following statements is true?
   a. Dengler can tell how many coins someone has based on the size of the coins.
   b. Dengler turned down an internship offer from Google because he wants to design his own software company.
   c. Dengler takes advantage of most devices that are designed for the blind.
   d. At age seven, Billy began teaching himself computer programming.

3. **Cause Effect**
   If it were possible, Billy Dengler might not want his sight back because
a. he doesn’t believe blindness is a disability.
b. he would have to learn to see all over again.
c. he already reads so quickly with his screen reader.
d. Google might not want to hire him.

4. Vocabulary
As it is used in paragraph 2, *luminous* most nearly means
   a. radiant  
   b. illuminated  
   c. large  
   d. dull

5. Inference
Based on the information in the passage, it can be assumed that Steven Moe, Dengler’s teacher,
   a. is jealous of Billy’s seemingly impossible abilities.
   b. is astonished at how few friends Billy has.
   c. is impressed with Billy’s self-reliance and eagerness to participate.
   d. is often corrected by Billy in class.

6. Detail
All of the following statements are true except
   a. Billy aided Google in solving an elaborate telephone based crime.
   b. The FBI discovered Billy’s talent at a technology based conference.
   c. Billy is interested in attending Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
   d. Billy may want to design his own software company in the future.

7. Inference
Based on the passage, which of the following statements is not true?
   a. Billy Dengler will likely a career in the computer/technology industry in the future.
   b. Billy Dengler does not use many devices designed for the blind because he adapts to his environment well on his own.
   c. Billy Dengler may complete an internship with Google in the future.
   d. Billy Dengler resents the fact that he is blind.

8. Vocabulary
As it is used in paragraph 7, *chagrin* most nearly means
   a. happiness  
   b. embarrassment  
   c. anger  
   d. weariness
What’s the best smart watch?  (Formative Assessment 4)

1. What is the primary purpose of this passage?
   a. To inform readers about the design of a variety of smart watches.
   b. To review the overall quality of top smart watches.
   c. To persuade readers to purchase the Sony Smartwatch.
   d. To convince readers to purchase a smart watch.

2. According to the passage, all of the following statements are true except:
   a. Verizon estimated 485 million smart watches are projected to be sold this year.
   b. The Pebble E Paper Smartwatch is water resistant.
   c. The Sony Smartwatch 2 SW 2 costs upwards of $280.
   d. The author prefers the Sony Smartwatch.

3. Because of the high volume of smart watches being shipped and the large amount expected to be sold,
   a. smart watches may soon be as common as smart phones.
   b. smart watch makers will include envelope-pushing features such as the camera, voice command and loudspeaker.
   c. all future smart watches will sync to smart phones.
   d. this wearable technology will out sell the smart phone.

4. As it is used in paragraph 4, *exudes* most nearly means
   a. makes
   b. allows
   c. rules
   d. displays

5. The article implies that
   a. the author prefers the Pebble E Paper Smartwatch over its competitors.
   b. smart watches that are compatible with a variety of smart phones are most preferable to buyers.
   c. smart watches that flaunt best core app features such as the accelerometer and sports buttons are the most popular.
   d. smart watches that have the highest price tag are the most preferable for consumers.
6. The smart watch with the best value for the money is
   a. Samsung Galaxy Gear
   b. Sony Smartwatch 2 SW 2
   c. Pebble E Paper Smartwatch
   d. it is unable to tell from the information present in the passage.

7. Based on the information provided in the article, all of the following are true except
   a. If Apple creates smart watch integration, smart watch popularity would increase.
   b. Smart watches that are iOS and Android compatible are a favorite among consumers.
   c. Sony believes that its focus on the most basic and necessary features will make it a popular choice among many smart watch consumers.
   d. A smart watch with a focus primarily on the most basic and necessary features will not sell successfully.

8. As it is used in paragraph 2 titans most nearly means
   a. followers
   b. giants
   c. warriors
   d. supporters

What’s the best smart watch? (Formative Assessment 4)
3. **Cause Effect**
Because of the high volume of smart watches being shipped and the large amount expected to be sold,
   a. smart watches may soon be as common as smart phones.
   b. smart watch makers will include envelope-pushing features such as the camera, voice command and loudspeaker.
   c. all future smart watches will sync to smart phones.
   d. this wearable technology will out sell the smart phone.

4. **Vocabulary**
As it is used in paragraph 4, *exudes* most nearly means
   a. makes
   b. allows
   c. rules
   d. displays

5. **Inference**
The article implies that
   a. the author prefers the Pebble E Paper Smartwatch over its competitors.
   b. smart watches that are compatible with a variety of smart phones are most preferable to buyers.
   c. smart watches that flaunt best core app features such as the accelerometer and sports buttons are the most popular.
   d. smart watches that have the highest price tag are the most preferable for consumers.

6. **Detail**
The smart watch with the best value for the money is
   a. Samsung Galaxy Gear
   b. Sony Smartwatch 2 SW 2
   c. Pebble E Paper Smartwatch
   d. it is unable to tell from the information present in the passage.

7. **Inference**
Based on the information provided in the article, all of the following are true *except*
   a. If Apple creates smart watch integration, smart watch popularity would increase.
   b. Smart watches that are iOS and Android compatible are a favorite among consumers.
   c. Sony believes that its focus on the most basic and necessary features will make it a popular choice among many smart watch consumers.
   d. A smart watch with a focus primarily on the most basic and necessary features will not sell successfully.
8. Vocabulary
As it is used in paragraph 2 titans most nearly means
a. followers
b. giants
c. warriors
d. supporters
16-year-old to “make a difference” - by voting today (Formative Assessment 5)

1. What is the primary purpose of this passage?
   a. To inform readers about the passage of a new voting law.
   b. To persuade other states to lower the required voting age.
   c. To explore the political involvement of teens in the United States.
   d. To illustrate the lack of participation of older voters.

2. According to the passage, all of the following statements are true except:
   a. Montgomery County was the first in the nation to lower the voting age.
   b. Older voters are more likely to vote in elections than younger voters.
   c. Takoma Park officials also altered laws regarding same-day registration, paroled felons voting rights and candidate campaigning.
   d. The first election in which Miller will be able to vote is highly contested.

3. The passage suggests that 16 and 17 year olds were given the right to vote because
   a. of the 26th Amendment.
   b. they may show up to the poll more frequently an 18 years olds.
   c. the teens in Montgomery County are so politically active.
   d. of parent occupations.

4. As it is used in paragraph 2, heady most nearly means
   a. dull
   b. tedious
   c. exciting
   d. careful

5. In paragraph 14, the passage implies that
   a. parent political interest may impact a child’s political involvement.
   b. only persons with parents involved in politics should be able to vote.
   c. every vote impacts results.
   d. the voting age of 18 should be reconsidered across the country.
6. Voting patterns in Denmark suggest that
   a. 16 year olds are more interested in politics than their older peers.
   b. 16 year olds may be more likely to participate in elections than their older peers.
   c. a higher percentage of citizens in Denmark vote than in the United States.
   d. raising the voting age in America should be considered.

7. Based on the information provided in the article, it can be inferred that:
   a. the Takoma City Council desired more political involvement from the community.
   b. Maryland teens are more knowledgeable of politics than teens in other states.
   c. Voter participation in local elections is higher than in state or national elections.
   d. Maryland’s citizens are more politically involved than citizens of other states.

8. As it is used in the last paragraph (paragraph 15) vanguard most nearly means
   a. followers
   b. opposition
   c. unit
   d. front line

16-year-old to “make a difference”- by voting today (Formative Assessment 5)

ANSWER KEY

10 min. to read article
10 min. to answer questions

1. Main Idea
What is the primary purpose of this passage?
   a. To inform readers about the passage of a new voting law.
   b. To persuade other states to lower the required voting age.
   c. To explore the political involvement of teens in the United States.
   d. To illustrate the lack of participation of older voters.

2. Detail
According to the passage, all of the following statements are true except:
   a. Montgomery County was the first in the nation to lower the voting age.
   b. Older voters are more likely to vote in elections than younger voters.
   c. Takoma Park officials also altered laws regarding same-day registration, paroled felons voting rights and candidate campaigning.
   d. The first election in which Miller will be able to vote is highly contested.

3. Cause Effect
The passage suggests that 16 and 17 year olds were given the right to vote because
   a. of the 26th Amendment.
b. they may show up to the poll more frequently an 18 years olds.
c. the teens in Montgomery County are so politically active.
d. of parent occupations.

4. Vocabulary
As it is used in paragraph 2, heady most nearly means
   a. dull
   b. tedious
   c. exciting
   d. careful

5. Inference
In paragraph 14, the passage implies that
   a. parent political interest may impact a child’s political involvement.
   b. only persons with parents involved in politics should be able to vote.
   c. every vote impacts results.
   d. the voting age of 18 should be reconsidered across the country.

6. Detail
Voting patterns in Denmark suggest that
   a. 16 year olds are more interested in politics than their older peers.
   b. 16 year olds may be more likely to participate in elections than their older peers.
   c. a higher percentage of citizens in Denmark vote than in the United States.
   d. raising the voting age in America should be considered.

7. Inference
Based on the information provided in the article, it can be inferred that:
   a. the Takoma City Council desired more political involvement from the community.
   b. Maryland teens are more knowledgeable of politics than teens in other states.
   c. Voter participation in local elections is higher than in state or national elections.
   d. Maryland’s citizens are more politically involved than citizens of other states.

8. Vocabulary
As it is used in the last paragraph (paragraph 15) vanguard most nearly means
   a. followers
   b. opposition
   c. unit
   d. front line
Appendix I. Comprehension Strategy Student Monitoring Sheet
Directions: Record your score on each assessments using the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test and Strategy</th>
<th>Score (8 total possible)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Test 1  
* Astronauts Complete Rare Christmas Eve Spacewalk | /8 correct |
| Text Annotation | |
| Test 2  
* Texting while Driving | /8 correct |
| Cornell Notes | |
| Test 3  
* How can orange be a blind boy’s favorite color? | /8 correct |
| Summarizing | |
| Test 4  
* What’s the best smart watch? | /8 correct |
| Reduce and Produce | |
| Test 5  
* 16-year-old to “make a difference”- by voting today | /8 correct |
| Choose Strategy | |
Comprehension Strategy Success: Mapping

Create a bar graph to visually represent your number of correct responses with each strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of correct responses</th>
<th>Test 1 Reading strategy used: Annotation</th>
<th>Test 2 Reading strategy used: Cornell Notes</th>
<th>Test 3 Reading strategy used: Summarizing</th>
<th>Test 4 Reading strategy used: Red &amp; Prod</th>
<th>Test 5 Reading strategy used: Optional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reaction to Text Annotation:**

1. Have you or would you use this strategy to read independently (without teacher requirement)? Why or why not?

2. Do you feel more confident when you read while using Annotation than when you read without a reading strategy? Why or why not?

3. Have you or would you use this reading strategy in another class? If so, which classes? If not, why not?

**Reaction to Cornell Notes:**

1. Have you or would you use this strategy to read independently (without teacher requirement)? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel more confident when you read while using this strategy than when you read without a reading strategy? Why or why not?

3. Have you or would you use this reading strategy in another class? If so, which classes? If not, why not?

**Reaction to Summarizing:**

1. Have you or would you use this strategy to read independently (without teacher requirement)? Why or why not?

2. Do you feel more confident when you read while using this strategy than when you read without a reading strategy? Why or why not?

3. Have you or would you use this reading strategy in another class? If so, which classes? If not, why not?

**Reaction to Reduce and Produce:**

1. Have you or would you use this strategy to read independently (without teacher requirement)? Why or why not?

2. Do you feel more confident when you read while using this strategy than when you read without a reading strategy? Why or why not?

3. Have you or would you use this reading strategy in another class? If so, which classes? If not, why not?

**What was your selected strategy? _____________________:**

1. Why did you select this strategy?

2. Do you feel more confident when you read while using this strategy than when you read with another reading strategy? Why or why not?

3. Have you or would you use this reading strategy in another class? If so, which classes? If not, why not?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>APPENDIX J:</strong> Analytical Writing Scoring Rubric Criteria For Evaluation</th>
<th>5 Points</th>
<th>4 Points</th>
<th>3 Points</th>
<th>2/1 Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Introduction presents <strong>pertinent</strong> background information, author’s name, and novel’s title</td>
<td>Introduction presents background information, author’s name, and novel’s title</td>
<td>Introduction presents author’s name or title, but offers little useful background information</td>
<td>Introduction provides no background information and no author/novel name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thesis Statement</strong></td>
<td>Thesis statement clearly introduces the topic to be discussed and effectively shows the writer’s opinion with three reasons.</td>
<td>Thesis statement introduces the topic to be discussed and attempts to show the opinion with three reasons.</td>
<td>Thesis vaguely identifies the topic and/or opinion but does not effectively convey either topic/opinion.</td>
<td>Introduction includes no thesis statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literary evidence supports each major point (Data)</strong></td>
<td>Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries from text support major points and connects to thesis statement</td>
<td>Details from text support most major points and connect to thesis statement</td>
<td>A few details from text support some major points</td>
<td>Details from text are missing or do not support major points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elaboration explains how evidence supports major points (Warrant)</strong></td>
<td>Explanation of how excerpts and/or paraphrases support the thesis are thorough and correct</td>
<td>Explanation of how excerpts and/or paraphrases support the thesis are clear and correct, but <em>lack depth</em></td>
<td>Explanation of how excerpts and/or paraphrases support the thesis are vague, but mostly correct</td>
<td>Explanation of how excerpts and/or paraphrases support the thesis are vague and/or incorrect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>Conclusion freshly restates thesis and summarizes major points</td>
<td>Conclusion restates thesis and summarizes most major points</td>
<td>Conclusion exactly restates thesis or summarizes some major points</td>
<td>Restatement of thesis and summary of major points are missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization</strong></td>
<td>Standard English, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are used appropriately for this grade level throughout essay</td>
<td>Standard English, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are used appropriately for this grade level, with few problems</td>
<td>Inconsistent use of standard English, spelling, and capitalization</td>
<td>Minimal use of standard English, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Points Earned</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td>/30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix K: Argument Research Organizer

Name: ________________

Directions: Organize the required information to plan for your Annotated Bibliography and argumentative speech/essay.

* n/d: no date
*n/p: no publisher

SOURCE 1:

Reliability Information:

Is the website reliable? _____ YES _____ NO

Who is the author (is he/she credible?) __________________________

What is the author’s purpose? ____________________________________________

__________________________________________

Most Recent Update: _________________

Citation Information:

1. Article Author Name: __________________________

2. Title of Article: __________________________

3. Title of Web Magazine: __________________________

4. Publisher Name: __________________________

5. Publication Date: __________________________

6. Medium: Web

7. Date of Access: __________________________

Summary of Useful Information:

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________
SOURCE 2:
Reliability Information:

Is the website reliable? _____ YES _____ NO

Who is the author (is he/she credible?) _____________________________

What is the author’s purpose? ________________________________

Most Recent Update: __________________

Citation Information:

1. Article Author Name: __________________________

2. Title of Article: __________________________

3. Title of Web Magazine: __________________________

4. Publisher Name: __________________________

5. Publication Date: __________________________

6. Medium: Web

7. Date of Access: __________________________

Summary of Useful Information:

SOURCE 3:
Reliability Information:

Is the website reliable? _____ YES _____ NO

Who is the author (is he/she credible?) _____________________________

What is the author’s purpose? ________________________________
Most Recent Update: _________________

Citation Information:
1. Article Author Name: __________________________
2. Title of Article: __________________________
3. Title of Web Magazine: __________________________
4. Publisher Name: __________________________
5. Publication Date: __________________________
6. Medium: Web
7. Date of Access: __________________________

Summary of Useful Information:
________________________________________________________________________
Appendix L: Argument Essay Draft

Name: _____________________
Topic: _____________________

Paragraph 1:
Attention grabbing lead (shocking statistic, hypothetical or real scenario, thought provoking question, or notable quote)

Thesis/Opinion Statement (without “I think”, “I believe”, “In my opinion”, etc)
Opinions sound much stronger without the personal context.

USE THIS THESIS FORMAT:

_____________________ should be/ should not be _______________________ because
(Your Topic) (Allowed, legalized, enforced, etc.)

(Reason 1)

(Reason 2)

(Reason 3)

Paragraph 2:
Supporting evidence # 1 Use factual information for support, not just hear-say or personal opinion.

Claim: Begin with a topic sentence.

_____________________ should be/ should not be ____________________________
(Your Topic) (Allowed, legalized, enforced, etc.)

(Reason 1)

Data:

Data: provide statistics, facts, or quotes from credible sources; give credit to all sources!
(“According to an article entitled ‘The effects of Second-hand Smoke’ on healthwatch.com…”)

Warrant:

Warrant: Explain how the evidence (data) you just cited should persuade your audience to support your opinion.

TRANSITION: Be sure to use transitions between supporting evidence paragraphs. (i.e. Additionally, An even stronger point to consider is …..)
Paragraph 3:
Stronger Supporting Evidence #2 Remember to anticipate and address the opposing point of view, yet keep a polite tone. Show reasons the opposition will not work.

Claim: Begin with a topic sentence.
__________________________________________________ should be/ should not be _________________________________________________________________.
(Your Topic) (Allowed, legalized, enforced, etc.)

(Reason 2)
Data:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Data: provide statistics, facts, or quotes from credible sources; give credit to all sources! (‘According to an article entitled ‘The effects of Second-hand Smoke’ on healthwatch.com…”)

Warrant:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Warrant: Explain how the evidence (data) you just cited should persuade your audience to support your opinion.

TRANSITION: Be sure to use transitions between supporting evidence paragraphs. (i.e. Additionally, An even stronger point to consider is …..)

Paragraph 4:
Strongest Supporting evidence # 3 Examples, facts, stories, definitions, quotes from others who share the opinion all are methods of support.

Claim: Begin with a topic sentence.
__________________________________________________ should be/ should not be _________________________________________________________________.
(Your Topic) (Allowed, legalized, enforced, etc.)

(Reason 3)
Data:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Data: provide statistics, facts, or quotes from credible sources; give credit to all sources! (‘According to an article entitled ‘The effects of Second-hand Smoke’ on healthwatch.com…”)
**Warrant:**

Warrant: Explain how the evidence (data) you just cited should persuade your audience to support your opinion.

**Paragraph 5:**
Conclusion techniques…
- Call your audience to action
- Summarize your main point
- Use parallelism to connect to your lead technique
- Tell what could happen if the position is not accepted
- Leave the reader with a rhetorical question to ponder
Appendix M: Modern Language Association (M.L.A.) Documentation

Works Cited Page and Annotated Bibliography Notes

Works Cited Page:

Basic Citation Information:
- Last name, First name. Title in Italic. Place of publication: Publisher, Date. Medium of publication.

Book with ONE Author:
- Let’s do one together—The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Books with MORE than one author:
- Exactly the same as the previous, just add the second author’s name.
- Example:
- Notice that you only reverse the first author’s name.

Article in a Magazine:
  - Months with names longer than four letters should be abbreviated. Follow common abbreviation trends.

Electronic Sources:
- No URLs are necessary in website citations
  - They are only required if the citation alone does not easily lead readers to the source information.
- Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). Name of Site. Version number. Name of institution/organization associated with the site (sponsor or publisher), date of resource creation (if available). Medium of publication. Date of access.
- When info is not available (add info to # 18):
  - If no editor, author, etc. is given, just leave it out.
n.p. no publisher given
n.d. no date
n.p. no pagination

Website Practice:
- http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/index.htm

Article in an Online Magazine:
- Last name, First name. “Title of Article.” Title of Web Magazine. Publisher name,
  Publication date. Medium. Access date.
  Use n.p. if no publisher
  Use n.d. if no publishing date.
- http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2056610,00.html

Annotated Bibliography:
- What does annotated mean?
- An annotated bibliography is an annotated list of references.
  - It includes a citation (MLA Format)
  - It also includes an explanation of each source.
- Your explanation will consist of three sections:
  1. A Summary
  2. An Assessment
  3. A Reflection
Appendix N: Argument Peer Revision Checklist

Directions: Read your partner’s argument essay. Use this checklist to help your partner strengthen their writing. If each of the following items is present and correct, check it off the list as you go. If anything on this list is not present in their argument or is inaccurate, make a note of it on their paper.

M.L.A. FORMATTING:
- Font: Times New Roman or Calibri (Size 11 or 12)
- Page Number with Last name in upper right hand corner
- Correct Heading in upper left hand corner of the paper
  - Student Name
  - Teacher Name
  - Class
  - Date
- Title centered (without bold, italics, underline or all caps. Same size font as paper)
- Each paragraph is indented

ORGANIZATION:
- 5 paragraphs
- Introduction: with attention grabbing lead and 3 part thesis statement
- 3 body paragraphs: each with Claim, Data (quote), Warrant
  *Be careful here- spend plenty of time making sure this is accurate
- Conclusion: with thesis restatement and audience call to action
- Writer uses transitions between every paragraph

WORKS CITED PAGE:
- Title centered: Works Cited (without bold, italics, underline or all caps. Same size font as paper)
- All Sources accurately cited
- Works Cited is the last page
- Works Cited is a separate page
- All citations are alphabetical

SPELLING AND GRAMMAR:
- All words are spelled correctly
- All proper nouns are capitalized
- All punctuation is accurate
## Appendix O: Presentation Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Scoring Rubric</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
<td>You knew your audience and how to address them.</td>
<td>There were a few people to which your speech did not apply.</td>
<td>You seemed to know little about your audience.</td>
<td>You did not know your audience.</td>
<td>You did not know your audience at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Posture</strong></td>
<td>Excellent, confident posture throughout the presentation.</td>
<td>Somewhat confident posture throughout the majority of the presentation.</td>
<td>Your posture needs improvement as you did not appear confident.</td>
<td>Poor posture throughout the majority of the presentation.</td>
<td>Poor posture throughout the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eye Contact</strong></td>
<td>Excellent eye contact with all individuals.</td>
<td>You maintained good eye contact most of the time.</td>
<td>Little eye contact.</td>
<td>Virtually no eye contact.</td>
<td>No eye contact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word Choice</strong></td>
<td>Your word choice was excellent and appropriate for the audience. You avoided “ums,” “ers,” and “likes.”</td>
<td>Some of the words you chose could be replaced, but for the most part, your speech was good.</td>
<td>Frequently poor word choice (“ums,” “ers,” “likes.”)</td>
<td>Your audience might have been confused at times because of your overuse of (“ums,” “ers,” “likes”).</td>
<td>Poor word choice throughout the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Your content was accurate.</td>
<td>Your content was essentially accurate.</td>
<td>Your content was mostly unclear, unorganized.</td>
<td>Your content was largely unorganized and hard to follow.</td>
<td>Not enough relevant information was presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of Time</strong></td>
<td>4-5 minutes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Over or under 4-5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sources</strong></td>
<td>Natural inclusion of</td>
<td>Natural inclusion of</td>
<td>Natural inclusion for</td>
<td>Unnatural inclusion or</td>
<td>Unnatural inclusion or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation Scoring Rubric</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Slides</strong></td>
<td>All necessary slides included Minimum of 6 slides</td>
<td>All necessary slides included 4-5 slides</td>
<td>Some necessary slides were included &amp;/or 3-4 slides</td>
<td>Most of the required slides were missing</td>
<td>No PowerPoint Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Images</strong> (not required)</td>
<td>If present, images added to the overall effect of the presentation. No more than 5 images.</td>
<td>Images somewhat added to the overall effect of the presentation. &amp;/or 5 or more images.</td>
<td>Images detracted from the overall effect of the presentation. &amp;/or 6 or more images.</td>
<td>Images severely detracted from the effect of the presentation. &amp;/or 6 or more images.</td>
<td>One of more images was irrelevant and/or distracted the audience from the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Custom Animation</strong> (not required)</td>
<td>If present, custom animation mostly added to the overall effect of the presentation and did not distract the audience.</td>
<td>Custom animation did not add to the overall effect of the presentation and/or distracted the audience at times.</td>
<td>Custom animation did not add to the overall effect of the presentation and distracted the audience often.</td>
<td>Custom animation was inappropriately selected and frequently distracted the audience from the presentation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Slide Design** | Slides are easy to read:  
- Appropriate font selection,  
Number of words limited per slide,  
Complementary Colors used | Slides are mostly easy to read. One of the following are not appropriate: font, words per slide, color choice | Slides are not easy to read and two or more of the following are not appropriate: font, words per slide, color choice | Slides are not easy to read as all of the following are somewhat poorly selected: font, words per slide, color choice | Slides are not easy to read as all of the following are very poorly selected: font, words per slide, color choice |
Appendix P. Peer Speech Notes  
Name: ____________________

Directions: Take notes over the key points of each presentation including comments regarding the strengths of each speaker.

1. Speaker Name: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Points of Presentation</th>
<th>Strengths of Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Speaker Name: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Points of Presentation</th>
<th>Strengths of Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Speaker Name: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Points of Presentation</th>
<th>Strengths of Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Speaker Name: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Points of Presentation</th>
<th>Strengths of Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Speaker Name: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Points of Presentation</th>
<th>Strengths of Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Q. Public Speaking Notes

Suggestions and helpful hints to successful public speaking...

- **Speaking Anxiety:**
  Feeling nervous before giving a speech is normal! It’s important not to let the nervousness you feel about giving the speech distract you so much that you forget what you’re doing.

- **Human Fears…**
  - Flying: 18%
  - Death: 19%
  - Sickness: 20%
  - Deep Water: 22%
  - Financial Problems: 23%
  - Bugs and Insects: 24%
  - Heights: 32%
  - Speaking to a Group: 41%

- **Inevitability, something will go wrong…** When you mess up or do “something” wrong, just keep going!
  - Remember, try not to grip the podium.
  - However, there are worse things than gripping the podium…like what?

- **How prepared for public speaking are you?**
  - Compare how much your education has prepared you for *how to publically speak* versus *how to read & how to write*…
  - You’re seriously underprepared… We’ve got to catch up.

- **Coping with Speaking Anxiety:**
  - Practice, Practice, Practice!
  - Prepare well in advance
  - Aim to give a successful speech
  - Choose who you talk to before giving a speech wisely; if you both talk about how nervous you are, it will only make you feel less confident in your ability.
  - Speak extemporaneously (don’t memorize)
  - Believe in yourself!

- **Conversation versus Public Speaking:**
  - Conversations- loosely organized
    - ✓ Public Speaking- clearly organized
  - Conversations- no boundaries in topic
    - ✓ Public Speaking- language use is careful
  - Conversations- ramble
    - ✓ Public Speaking- Clean cut
  - Conversations- informal
Successfully Giving Your Speech:
- **Be Prepared**: Organize and practice with your note cards in front of a mirror or in front of family/friends.
- **Focus your purpose**: Remember what you want to accomplish!
- **Maintain Eye-Contact**: Look at your audience, not at the floor or only at your note cards.

Speaking Expressively:
- **Stand confidently**: Look alert and interested and use natural gestures. Try not to grip the podium!
- **Speak loudly & clearly**: Speak loudly enough so the back row can hear every word...don’t whisper, but certainly do not yell.
- **Make direct eye-contact** with your audience.
- **Use variety in speaking** (like you would in normal conversations)
  - **Volume and Stress**
- **Watch your rate**: speak comfortably and relaxed.

Let’s Practice: Impromptu Speaking
- Take 2 minutes to jot ideas down in response to the following question:
  
  *Tell me about your normal morning/day routine.*
  - Stand Confidently
  - Speak Loudly
  - Speak Clearly
  - Make Eye Contact
  - Appropriate voice volume & stress
  - Voice Rate

“**You have to expect things of yourself before you can do them.**” ~Michael Jordan

“**Whether you think you can or think you can't - you are right.**” ~Henry Ford
References


Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development


Dubuque: Kendall Hunt.


