"...And, If You Have a Class Like That, I'd Like To Sign Up!": Beginning Teachers Navigating the Constraints of Teaching Literacy in a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, Professional Development School

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This dissertation, “. . . AND, IF YOU HAVE A CLASS LIKE THAT, I’D LIKE TO SIGN UP!”: BEGINNING TEACHERS NAVIGATING THE CONSTRAINTS OF TEACHING LITERACY IN A CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL, by KATHARINE SIMON KURUMADA, was prepared under the direction of the candidate’s Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

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ABSTRACT

“... AND, IF YOU HAVE A CLASS LIKE THAT, I’D LIKE TO SIGN UP!”: BEGINNING TEACHERS NAVIGATING THE CONSTRAINTS OF TEACHING LITERACY IN A CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL

by
Katharine Simon Kurumada

Preparing all teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) populations is essential in teacher education (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, & MacDonald, 2005). Simultaneously, current literacy policy serves to dictate how teachers teach literacy; requiring specific curricula and assessments, particularly in urban and low performing school districts (Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009). As new teachers enter classrooms, they are forced to negotiate the realities of teaching in urban, diverse schools with what they learned in their preparation programs (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to understand the literacy teaching experiences of three beginning teachers, graduates of an alternative teacher preparation program, who teach at the same CLD, Professional Development School. This naturalistic inquiry explored the intersection of these constructs through the questions; (1) What instructional decisions, resources, and strategies do alternatively certified beginning teachers enact when teaching CLD students? and (2) What are the contextual factors that influence beginning teachers’ literacy pedagogy? Luke and Freebody’s (1999) Four Resources Model, critical theory (McLaren, 1995), sociocultural views of literacy (Street, 1995), and constructivism (Savery & Duffy, 2001) served as theoretical lenses. Data collection took place over nine months and included interviews, observations, questionnaires, and teacher debriefs. The data was analyzed using a constant comparative approach.
(Merriam, 1998) and elements of Grounded Theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

These beginning teachers struggled to negotiate the prescriptive literacy mandates from the county and school. The context of the school challenged many of the theories and strategies teachers learned in their preparation program and caused tension between what they espoused about literacy and their enacted practices. Teachers felt that they were not adequately prepared to work with English Language Learners in particular, thus, they chose to adhere closely to the prescriptive curriculum. Decontextualized literacy activities dominated instruction and constrained CLD students’ opportunities for critical literacy learning. These findings suggest that teachers should be better prepared to work with ELLs and educated about the research behind current literacy policies. A Professional Development School model offers opportunities for continued learning in these areas.
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<td>English Language Learner</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
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<td>PDS</td>
<td>Professional Development School</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

I think that the expectation should be that things are crazy right now, and there’s going to be a lot of things just being dumped on you and expected of you and people are losing jobs and it’s high stakes everywhere. I don’t know if you can really be prepared for that. (Winona, Interview, 3/23/2010)

Teaching is hard work. Similar to Winona’s beginning years as a teacher, my own first years of teaching were exciting, exhausting, and challenging. In addition to working with students of a variety of linguistic, social, and emotional needs, there were many other factors that I did not realize I would have to negotiate daily upon completing my teacher preparation program. It soon became clear that teaching was not just a matter of covering the content within a particular grade level or supporting the social and emotional growth of students. Even more difficult and important was learning how to negotiate the multiple influences from administration, the school system, and national mandates. The large, urban school system where I taught had historically low standardized test scores and low teacher retention. I quickly learned that more salient than the curriculum I was required to cover were the experiences that my students came to school with. Some of my students were homeless, had families who struggled to make ends meet, or lived in foster care. It seemed that worrying about their math or literacy development was secondary to ensuring that they simply felt secure and safe each day.

This type of teaching is tiring and draining, yet many teachers persist and work successfully in an urban or culturally and linguistically diverse school setting (Nieto, 2003). Research shows the importance of supporting teachers in this type of school setting (Nieto, 2003; Schultz, Jones-Walker, & Chikkatur, 2008). The descriptors ‘urban’ and ‘culturally and linguistically diverse’ students are closely related and often used
 interchangeably. ‘Urban student’ is commonly used to describe a student whose life experiences differ from a white, middle or upper class orientation of schooling that has traditionally been reflected in schools. This is particularly evident in teacher, administrator, and designers of curricula’s expectations of the knowledge and experiences students should have when they come to school (Au & Raphael, 2000; Schultz, Jones-Walker, & Chikkatur, 2008; Sleeter, 2008). This mismatch of expectations may cause a disconnect between students’ home and school experiences and has lead to marked differences in urban students’ achievement when compared to middle and upper class students (Au & Raphael, 2000; Gee, 2008; Sleeter, 2008). Similarly, the construct ‘culturally and linguistically diverse’ (CLD) encompasses students whose families speak a language other than English and/or are from economically stressed households in which resources do not allow the same kinds of materials or opportunities as their middle and upper class counterparts (Schultz, Jones-Walker, & Chikkatur, 2008). English Language Learners (ELLs) are one type of CLD student. ELLs are students who are in the process of learning English as a second or additional language. These students may have been born outside of the United States and have been exposed to a language other than English (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008). ELLs are becoming increasingly prevalent in K-12 schools and this trend is increasing in states that have not traditionally had high numbers of ELLs, such as Nevada, North Carolina, Georgia, Nebraska, Arkansas, Arizona, and South Dakota (Garcia, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010).

Often, a school or school system with a high population of CLD students may be labeled as urban to describe the economic, linguistic, or cultural marginalization faced by residents of these urban or CLD communities. Instead of simply being a geographic
definition, urban or CLD schools are characterized by their demographics. Demographic
trends suggest that most CLD or urban students attend schools with other students of this
designation. Instead of schools becoming more heterogeneous, schools and communities
are actually more segregated by socioeconomic status and race than ever before (Wells,
construct, ‘Inner Ring Suburbs’ describes the demographic shift of areas located just
outside of major metropolitan cities that are becoming more culturally and linguistically
diverse as many white and Asian residents of higher economic statuses move back into
gentrified areas of cities or to far-reaching suburbs away from these traditionally middle
class areas (Wells, 2009). As a result of this concentration of culturally and linguistically
diverse residents, school systems and home values have changed in Inner Ring Suburbs
(Wells, 2009). Schools in these areas often lack teachers qualified to work with students
such as English Language Learners (Garcia et al., 2010; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008).
According to Lucas and Grinberg (2008), “74 percent of teachers in 2000 have had no
recent professional development for working with ELLs and most teachers who have
participated in relevant professional development activities have spent only a few hours
in those activities”(p. 609).
Students defined as CLD or urban are becoming more and more prevalent in
schools, thus, teacher preparation programs must adequately prepare teachers for the
realities facing urban or culturally and linguistically diverse schools and teachers.
teacher education programs is to prepare prospective teachers to learn and enact practices
that enable them to teach successfully in under-resourced districts that offer both
opportunities and constraints” (p. 155). Preparation programs must introduce teachers to the challenges that they will face in urban schools, such as a lack of resources, increased policing of instruction, and more pressure placed on the results of high stakes exams (Gerstl-Pepin & Woodside-Jiron, 2005; Scott & Mumford, 2007; Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009). Failure to address these issues with preservice teachers hurts both the experiences of novice teachers encountering challenging situations and the schooling opportunities of CLD students.

Some teacher preparation programs are specifically designed to prepare teachers to work with this population of students as part of their program’s mission. One such alternative teacher preparation program, located at a large urban public university in the Southeast, is designed around a Social Justice framework for teaching elementary students. According to Sensoy and DiAngelo (2009):

Social justice-oriented approaches in education refer to standpoints and scholarly traditions that actively address the dynamics of oppression, privilege, and isms, recognizing that society is the product of historically rooted, institutionally sanctioned stratification along socially constructed group lines that include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. (p. 350)

In social justice-focused preparation programs, all coursework, field experiences, and faculty are dedicated to issues of diversity and preparing teachers to work in CLD schools. However, there is a lack of research on the outcomes of these social justice-focused programs.

This framework also reflects a culturally responsive stance of teaching, an effective pedagogy for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2001). The AERA Panel on preparing teachers for diverse learners (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond,
Duffy, & MacDonald, 2005) suggests that culturally relevant pedagogy, an instructional theory that promotes the understanding and use of students’ cultural heritage and knowledge is the best way to reach success with CLD students (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001). The panel suggested that there is not enough research examining how teacher preparation coursework on culturally relevant pedagogy is taken and applied by teachers in practice. As Gay (2000) states, “Good intentions and awareness are not enough to bring about the changes needed in educational programs and procedures to prevent academic inequities among diverse students” (p. 13). Teacher preparation programs need to specifically address this issue to help their graduates become culturally responsive teachers in increasingly diverse schools, both because this trend is continuing and because, more than ever, schools and teachers are under the influence of numerous forces that impact the curriculum and instruction they offer students. These mandates often challenge literacy instruction that is culturally relevant (Gay, 2000; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008).

In the area of literacy education, teachers and schools today are under the influence of federal and state mandates and policies that impact literacy instruction. As a result of reports such as Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Health and Human Development, 2000), literacy curriculum and assessments that espouse scientifically based teaching practices have been adopted by schools and school systems (Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1999; Grossen, 1997; Woodside-Jiron, 2003). The impact of these reports is even more profound in schools with high populations of students from lower
socioeconomic households. Urban or culturally and linguistically diverse students have historically performed low on measures of academic success, particularly in the area of reading and writing (Au & Raphael, 2000; Banks et al., 2005). To receive federal funding as a result of No Child Left Behind, these schools are required to follow strict mandates about the types of curriculum or programs they utilize (Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009). According to Barone and Morrell (2007), “Simply put, U.S. teachers are being asked to do more with respect to literacy education, and a quality literacy education matters more now than it has in any time in the history of U.S. public schools” (p. 168). Given the current economic climate, the population of students of lower socioeconomic status promises to only increase, and teachers in these schools will be asked to do even more and with more restrictions and challenges.

Preparing excellent literacy educators for urban and culturally and linguistically diverse students is important because researchers have found that a teacher who has the knowledge and experience to reach all students can make a positive impact on a student’s achievement, even when difficult factors such as poverty are part of the student’s life (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2004; Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005). Thus, it is essential that high quality teachers are able to meet the needs of this growing population of students so that they are as prepared and successful as their middle and upper class counterparts. The National Commission on Excellence in Elementary Teacher Education Preparation for Reading Instruction said, “Without a major investment in quality teaching, the gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ may continue to widen—a disturbing trend for a nation founded on the principle of opportunity for all” (International Reading Association, 2003, p. 1). Literacy scholars agree that there needs
to be a better understanding of how preparation programs can best prepare graduates to teach literacy to culturally and linguistically diverse students (Bergeron, 2008; Lenski, Mack, & Brown, 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008).

Exploring the experiences of recent graduates teaching literacy in culturally and linguistically diverse schools can inform those who prepare preservice teachers and support inservice teachers. This study was a qualitative, interpretive inquiry guided by the question; What are the experiences of beginning teachers, graduates of an alternative preparation program, who teach at a culturally and linguistically diverse, Professional Development School? Within this main question, there are two specific strands of the inquiry: (a) What instructional decisions, resources, and strategies do alternatively certified beginning teachers enact when teaching CLD students? (b) What are the contextual factors that influence beginning teachers’ literacy pedagogy?

Significance and Overview of the Study

Schools are becoming increasingly diverse, while the teaching force continues to be predominantly white, female, and middle class (Garcia et al., 2010; Lenski, Mack, & Brown, 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). According to the National Council of Teachers of English (2008), there was a 14 million increase in the immigrant population in the United States between 2000 and 2010. Preparing and supporting all teachers, both preservice and in-service, to work with culturally and linguistically diverse populations, particularly ELLs, is a concern for all in education. According to Mann, McMann, and Musanti (2005), one in eight teachers are prepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students. The majority of classroom teachers who have ELLs in their class do not hold certification or have any additional training in this area (Garcia et al., 2010; Lucas &
Grinberg, 2008; Truscott & Watts-Taffe, 2003). Garcia et al. (2010) maintains that there has been a shortage of teachers specifically prepared to teach English Language Learners for at least twenty years.

This increasing culturally and linguistically diverse population is essential for teacher preparation programs and inservice professional development to address. There are important and unique concepts that teachers who work with these diverse students must know. Garcia et al. (2010) suggest that in addition to general knowledge about curriculum, learning, and pedagogy, teachers must understand how first and second languages are acquired, English linguistics, and observe teachers working effectively with ELLs in classrooms. Many teacher education programs do not currently include this information unless there is an English as a Second Language (ESOL) emphasis, which requires additional courses on top of what are often packed programs of study for education students (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). Additionally, teachers that work with CLD or urban students find that they need to support the students in areas beyond academics, in emotional and social needs. Pearrow & Sanchez (2008) surveyed a number of urban teachers and suggest:

Given the complexities in the lives of many children in urban elementary schools, this can create very complicated circumstances that challenge the harmony and authority sought by teachers, especially as they engage in the social lessons in the school environment. (p. 227)

Thus, it is not only the unique teaching challenges that teachers may face when students speak limited English or struggle by traditional measures of achievement, but the pressures placed upon schools in CLD communities adds a new layer of complexity for what teachers encounter every day.

**Literacy Teacher Preparation**
Until recently, the field of literacy instruction has suffered from a lack of research on teacher preparation (Richardson & Anders, 2006). There is not a consensus on what knowledge and dispositions literacy preparation courses should foster (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2006). Associated with this issue are tensions between reports such as *Teaching Children to Read* (National Reading Panel, 2000), *Put Reading First: The research building blocks for teaching children to read* (Armbruser, Lehr, & Osborn, 2002), and the impact of No Child Left Behind on the types of curricula and assessments that teachers are expected to use as they enter the profession. The diverse views associated with what literacy is and how schools should teach students are explored further in Chapter 2.

The National Commission on Excellence in Elementary Teacher Preparation for Reading Instruction examined beginning teachers who graduated from what they deemed successful literacy preparation programs and found that these graduates were successful in their beginning practice (Maloch, Flint, Eldrige, Harmon, Loven, Fine, Bryant-Shanklin, & Martinez, 2003). However, this research did not focus on how these graduates worked with culturally and linguistically diverse students in the context of the recent political and economic shifts affecting literacy education. The field of literacy and language education has not adequately addressed how teachers are prepared to work with English Language Learners, one type of CLD student (Garcia et al., 2010; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). According to Garcia et al. (2010) and Lucas and Grinberg (2008), the particular linguistic needs of students learning English as a second or additional language, has not been a part of most teacher education programs. This lack of knowledge about second language acquisition and linguistics is problematic
because teachers will experience growth in their ELL student population (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008).

**Alternative Teacher Preparation**

Now more than ever, it is important to examine how teachers can best teach students from diverse populations that have been historically underserved in schools. This population is increasing and the current economic climate means that more children may be living at or below the poverty line (Banks et al., 2005; Richardson & Anders, 2006). At the same time, increasing numbers of teachers are prepared through alternative routes of certification, including post-baccalaureate programs (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Alternative preparation or post- baccalaureate programs are pathways to teaching that differ from a traditional four-year degree in education. Some alternative programs place teachers who are not yet certified immediately into a classroom and train them as they teach. There are also many university-based programs designed for those who hold bachelor’s degrees in other fields to become certified. The program studied follows the second definition: a path where students who hold degrees in fields other than education can become certified by attending courses and having field experiences in elementary schools before holding a teaching position. Sometimes, these programs are labeled as *post-baccalaureate*, and this term is also used interchangeably throughout the paper to describe a teacher preparation program that differs from a traditional four-year model. There are many types of alternative preparation, from university-based Masters programs, to Teach for America, to county sponsored programs that place people in high needs classrooms quickly (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002).
The diversity of the length and content of alternative preparation courses makes it difficult to compare them to traditional preparation pathways (Maloch et al., 2003). However, a review of research comparing alternative to traditional certification programs found that alternatively certified teachers were just as effective as their traditionally trained counterparts (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005). Zeichner and Conklin (2005) suggest that there remains a need for research specifically focused on alternative modes of teacher preparation, specifically in terms of coursework and how it may relate to future teaching.

**Professional Development Schools**

Increasing the practical application and experiences for both preservice and in-service teachers to impact student achievement was the impetus for the creation of Professional Development Schools (PDS), a partnership between K-12 schools and colleges or universities. According to Harris & van Tassell (2005), “The resulting organization focuses simultaneously on the learning of school students and of preservice and in-service teachers” (p. 179). In 1986, The Holmes Group, comprised of university deans, was inspired by the National Commission on Excellence in Education’s 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. The Holmes Group suggested that Professional Development Schools were the best chance at combating the low achievement and inability to compete with other countries reported in *A Nation At Risk*. The organization focused their attention on the importance of training teachers as other professional organizations do, with sustained practical experience for the benefit of K-12 students in schools (Harris & van Tassell, 2005). This partnership was seen as a way to improve the achievement of struggling students, issues of teacher shortages, and
teacher retention (Harris & van Tassell, 2005). Common activities in Professional Development Schools include university courses taught at K-12 schools, practicum opportunities for preservice teachers, collaborative research between school and university faculty, and professional development provided to K-12 faculty by university personnel.

In 1996, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future suggested that teacher education programs needed to provide more opportunities for preservice teachers to apply skills and strategies so that they are prepared to work with diverse groups of students and counteract the historic disparity between minority groups’ achievement and white and middle or upper class students (Burton & Greher, 2007). This report recommended that professional development should be a part of “the daily work of teachers through joint planning, peer coaching, study groups, and research” (Burton & Greher, 2007, p. 14). Professional Development Schools are becoming increasingly popular to raise both achievement levels for students of all backgrounds, as well as support and promote teacher retention and professional knowledge. However, more research is needed on the impact of Professional Development Schools on inservice teachers’ practice and how these partnerships impact the achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The question of how teachers are educated in teacher preparation programs and how this impacts their teaching is a large, complex topic. The scope of this research study is narrower, looking specifically at a select group of graduates of an alternative preparation program and their literacy teaching practices in their second or third years of teaching. The scale and scope of this study carries limitations because it does not address
their teaching of all content areas. However, the defined focus allowed the study to be carried out with the highest possible standards of research design and methodology, while also providing the ability to work with the participants closely in their beginning years of teaching. Addressing the relationship teacher preparation programs have on teachers’ practice is particularly important at the beginning of a teacher’s career, when one may be the most vulnerable, since some research indicates that it may take five to seven years to become a competent teacher (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald, Zeichner, 2005).

Over the course of one school year at Eastside Elementary, I sought to understand the experiences of three graduates of the same post baccalaureate preparation program at a large, urban, public university. These teachers were in their second or third years of teaching at a CLD PDS elementary school. All three teachers completed the second year Masters program, so that the impact of the entire program, first and second year, may be shared. Sources of data included interviews, observations, teacher debriefs, and a questionnaire. Data was analyzed using a constant comparative approach (Merriam, 1998) and through the lens of Luke and Freebody’s Four Resources Model (1999) to examine the literacy practices that were offered to the CLD students in these classrooms.

**Background to the Study**

An examination of the current issues and research in teacher education demonstrates that there is a need for more inquiry into the experiences of beginning teachers in CLD classrooms. This study examined the literacy teaching experiences of three recent graduates of an alternative preparation program who now teach at a CLD Professional Development School. In this alternative preparation program, preservice
teachers spend one full academic year completing coursework and field experiences in urban elementary classrooms. This first year includes three courses, or nine credit hours of literacy methods coursework. All preservice teachers complete the same courses in a cohort method that continues through the year, beginning in May and ending the following May. After this, there is an option of completing a Masters degree while teaching full time in an urban elementary school. All three of the teachers in this study completed this Masters degree during their first year of teaching. The only literacy-focused course during the second year of the program is a three-hour Masters level course on integrated Social Studies and Literacy methods. All required courses within the program are focused on the theme of preparing teachers to work successfully in CLD classrooms.

As a teacher educator, I found this inquiry extremely personal. I am a former urban elementary school teacher and current teacher educator who at one time taught literacy courses in this alternative program. Because much of my time as a literacy instructor in a university setting is spent reading, planning, and thinking about the best ways to help students understand the theories that underlie literacy learning and the ways that these theories may be enacted through culturally relevant approaches to teaching literacy, I want to know what truly impacts graduates’ teaching as they encounter the myriad of challenges that teaching in an urban setting brings. As these teachers’ past course instructor, I obviously have a personal connection to the students and the courses I teach, which had to be addressed throughout the study. I further describe how I minimized this bias in Chapter Three.
Theoretical Framework

There are several perspectives on teaching and learning that influence my view of research, specifically in the ways in which I worked with my participants, examined the literacy pedagogical practices in each classroom, and analyzed data. Constructivism, sociocultural, and critical theory are views of learning that undergird my beliefs about how people learn, and in this particular study, how graduates of a teacher preparation program grow and develop over their lifetimes as professionals. Sociocultural views about literacy and literacy learning also inform the ways I thought about the curriculum, assessments, and pedagogical practices each teacher used with their CLD students. Luke and Freebody’s (1999) Four Resources Model is the framework I used in analysis of the literacy teaching practices in each classroom.

The Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) is appropriate when studying the influence of a preparation program centered on developing culturally relevant educators because it urges literacy teachers to utilize students’ unique experiences, meet their individual needs as learners, and empower them to understand issues of power and bias in curriculum and their world. Using The Four Resources Model as typology in research is a method that others have found to be helpful when looking at data to focus on specific constructs to answer research questions (Short, 1999; Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006). The Four Resources Model is informed by the theories of learning informing this research; constructivism, sociocultural, and critical theories.

Constructivism

At the broadest level, this study is guided by a constructivist view of learning. Consistent with constructivist philosophy, Smith (2006) said, “Learning is not an
occasional event, to be stimulated, provoked, or reinforced. Learning is what the brain
does naturally, continually” (p. 6). According to constructivists, learning is a growth
process for the individual that is affected by the environment and instruction offered
(Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Savery and Duffy (2001) outline several principles of
constructivism: “Understanding is in our interactions with the environment, cognitive
conflict is the stimulus for learning, and knowledge evolves from social negotiation”
(Savery & Duffy, 2001, pp. 1-2).

The idea that learning takes place when one is challenged by new ideas and by the
environment around a learner emphasizes the role of the teacher to be a facilitator in
students’ learning. In this study, this construct was essential when considering the role of
teacher preparation and inservice teacher development; not all preservice teachers or
inservice teachers take the same understandings from a learning event or demonstrate
learning in the same way. Each member of a classroom brings unique experiences,
understandings, and cultural perspectives to the learning event, therefore no single class
or instructor will impact a teacher in the same way during teacher preparation or
professional development. Using a constructivist view of research meant honoring the
unique process each participant, a beginning teacher, was a part of, recognizing that
learning develops at different times and through different modes (Glesne, 1998). In this
research, the ways in which the teachers displayed their learning from the preparation
program looked different in each teacher’s classroom. It was important as a researcher to
remember that the participants’ learning was not evidenced in only one way or data
source. Using multiple data sources and collecting data over an entire school year helped
to ensure that I was able to see the unique ways each teacher enacted literacy practices and made decisions throughout the year.

The “social negotiation” that Savery and Duffy (2001, pp. 1-2) discuss is key in a constructivist view of how learning happens and was an important element in this study. John Dewey proposed that learning is not simply a result of stimulus and response between two organisms, but it is greatly influenced by the environment of this transaction (Vanderstraeten, 2002). This view takes into account the social nature of learning because Dewey believed that each person creates a different understanding or knowledge within a transaction, depending on the individual (Vanderstraeten, 2002). From their experiences in the preparation program to the current environment of a CLD elementary school, the teachers’ experiences in the program were eclipsed by the challenging context of their school environment, which is not unlike the experiences of other teachers in CLD schools (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Schultz, Jones-Walker, & Chikkatur, 2008). The pedagogical practices each teacher enacted were influenced greatly by the national, system, and school mandates that the teachers felt they had to follow (Gerstl-Pepin & Woodside-Jiron, 2005; Grossman & Thompson, 2007). While they acknowledged that the curriculum and assessments they enacted did not always match their beliefs about literacy, the message of the school environment about the importance of adhering to the prescriptive curriculum so that the CLD students would be successful, was very strong. Savery and Duffy (2001) also say that “Cognitive conflict is the stimulus for learning,” and in this way, the conflicting values and pedagogy the teachers were presented with forced each of them to make decisions each day about what they felt was right for their students (Savery & Duffy, 2001, pp. 1-2).
Using a constructivist lens in this inquiry guided the way that I sought to learn from each participant and share each individual teacher’s learning process. Knowing that everyone learns differently and then acts distinctly on what they have learned, I saw the development of each teacher’s literacy teaching practices as unique, individual processes as a result of many factors such as their culture, schooling experience, philosophy of literacy, and feelings about the school environment. These variances are key in culturally relevant pedagogy, as this theory states that teachers must adapt and design learning opportunities for their individual student’s needs (Gay, 2000). A constructivist view of research meant that I, as the researcher, needed to collect a variety of data over time, so that I could see the many sides and facets of each teacher’s practices including how they shift or develop over time.

**Sociocultural Theory**

Sociocultural theories of learning maintain that language, culture, and social practices are always linked. This belief challenges dominant views that there is a common ‘literacy’ valued by everyone (Gee, 2008; Rogers, 2002; Street, 1993). There are two tenants of sociocultural theories that I adopted in this study to examine the unique experiences of three teachers and the literacy activities offered to culturally and linguistically diverse students. These are: (1) A learning event is always influenced by one’s culture and experiences, and (2) There is no one definition of literacy because literate practices are valued differently depending on a particular cultural context. According to Hall (2003), sociocultural theories of literacy align with culturally responsive beliefs about teaching because they maintain that, “ownership of literacy as well as the acquisition of meaning-making strategies and skills of literacy are important,”
and, “higher levels of literacy follow if literacy teaching happens in a culturally responsive manner” (p. 146). Following these beliefs of ownership over literate practices, the value of an individual’s culture, and the importance of meaning-making strategies, I used sociocultural theory in this study to examine and then challenge the literacy teaching practices and prescriptive curriculum used in three classrooms.

From a sociocultural stance, students learn to become literate from birth, as they experience literacy in a variety of modes and learn from their families and community experiences. This view is not valued by current literacy policy and curriculum, which promotes an autonomous model of literacy, a view that there is a body of discrete skills everyone needs to be literate (Street, 1993). In contrast, an ideological model of literacy reflects a sociocultural view of learning. Street (1993) explains that this view of literacy values multiple modes of reading, writing, speaking, and listening reflective of particular cultural, social, and academic needs. Literacy learning is most salient when students learn from each other and are invited to use their linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the classroom. While this may not mirror a dominant ideology of literacy reflected in current curricula, Larson (2006) cautions that,

> If schools continue a singular focus on traditional conceptions of literacy as autonomous skills (e.g., viewing language and literacy as “parts” that can be used independent of context, audience, and purpose; Street, 1995), they will be in danger of becoming irrelevant to the construction of meaningful life pathways. (p. 319)

In this study, it was important to use sociocultural theory to analyze the literacy curriculum and assessments promoted at the school, county, and national level because this assisted me in understanding how these mandates and practices met the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.
Literacy researchers such as Heath (1983), Purcell-Gates (1995; 2005), and Gee (2004; 2008) use sociocultural theories of learning to understand the ways that culturally and linguistically diverse students who come to schools speaking another language or Non-Standard English are marginalized. These students’ interpretations of the literacy experiences in the classroom may vary from other students because of their differences in language and culture. The discourse of a classroom and curricula is often based in middle and upper class ideology, which conflicts with the experiences of these students (Gee, 2004; Jiminez, 2004). Gee (2008) suggests that current literacy instruction, materials, and assessments perpetuates,

…the pervasive culture of inequality that deskills poor and minority children and its implications for different types of assessments, interventions, and instruction. When students from culturally and linguistically diverse homes are not provided with the tools needed to access this dominant set of knowledge, inequalities will persist in our society. (p. 39)

A sociocultural view of literacy maintains that it is essential to prepare CLD students with the necessary literacy skills to be successful by traditional means, while also acknowledging and using their unique cultural backgrounds and experiences in literacy activities.

Much like a constructivist view of learning and research, honoring the unique experiences and knowledge of learners is a tenant of sociocultural theory. Any experience is difficult to separate from the culture and life experiences of the learner (Purcell-Gates, 2005). This belief guided me when thinking about the ways each teacher negotiated the curricular mandates with practices learned in their preparation program. A sociocultural view of classrooms and literacy says that, “Texts, readers, and contexts, each inseparable from each other, are also inseparable from the larger contexts in which they are enacted”
(Galda & Beach, 2004, p. 856). Working with the participants in this study over an entire school year allowed me to learn about the larger school context that was shaping their decision-making about their literacy pedagogical practices.

**Critical Theory**

A sociocultural perspective informs one model of learning where students’ social, cultural, and personal resources are all taken into account. All literacy practices exist within the larger political and social landscape that reflects various ideologies. A critical literacy view of learning literacy suggests that teaching and learning cannot be separated from the social experiences and histories of its participants. Critical literacy asks students and teachers to unpack the beliefs and sociopolitical forces that underlie everything written (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). This perspective is also based in the idea that literacy does not exist in one mode, such as the written word, but is multimodal and evident in symbols, signs, and messages that surround us. Critical literacy theorists Gee (2008) and Street (1993) maintain that traditional literacy reflects the dominant culture, which perpetuates the status quo and leaves other groups out. They advocate for a wider definition of literacy, where the academic and political world honors the many different forms of literacy that exist around the world, such as local languages and writing systems (Street, 1993). This is a key construct, as global societies become more interconnected and groups may lose their cultural heritage if not valued and honored. Similarly, critical literacy practices offer students that are diverse in their socioeconomic status, language, or culture to experience texts and curriculum that honor multiple modes of learning.

As a scholar in the South African movement to promote literacy in a post-apartheid community, Janks (2000) proposed four dimensions of critical literacy that
must be addressed in any critical teaching and learning activity. This framework includes consideration of “Dominance, Access, Diversity, and Design.” Addressing “Dominance” involves teaching students to look for the messages of the group in power who use a text to maintain this status. “Access” means preparing and promoting students’ abilities to negotiate different discourses as they navigate the world around them. “Diversity” specifies the inclusion of multiple perspectives and modes of literacy. “Design” asks students to be able to go between different modes to transform the power structure and then to make changes that address the problems they see (Janks, 2000, pp. 176-177).

Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002) reflect Janks’ curricular framework in their synthesis of scholarship on critical literacy. Their “Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy” model states that critical literacy means students are guided to question what is considered normal, incorporate the sociopolitical context in a literate event, examine different ways of looking at an issue, and use this information to take action on problems in their world (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, pp. 382-384).

The first two dimensions, “Questioning the norm” and “Focusing on the sociopolitical,” say that critical literacy practices purposefully disturb the standard curriculum and epistemology of school practices. Unpacking and questioning who is in power and making decisions about what is taught and valued in schools is important to explore with students. According to Rogers (2002), critical literacy must be focused on shifting what is considered normal and questioning power structures through reading and writing activities. In any literacy event, a sociopolitical component is involved when one looks at the historical and systemic practices that have silenced or left out certain voices in a text. A multimodal and inclusive view of literacy must also be included in terms of
what schools value and promote. This perspective includes the ways that signs, symbols, and images are read as their own particular genres. Kress (2001) supports this view of critical literacy; “An education in which creativity in different domains and at different levels of representation is well understood, in which difference is seen as normal and as productive” (Kress, p. 66). Critical literacy practices also value the many literate practices that students are involved in and outside of the classroom, such as popular music, movies, comic books, video games, and online resources (Bell, 2001). Shannon (1995) maintains that critical literacy should always come from the interests and lives of students. Popular culture and the different genres or formats of text should be used to teach students additional ways to be actively engaged in the literacy they encounter in their daily lives.

Gee’s theory of Discourses, a way of communicating that is unique to the social practices of a particular community, says that individuals engage in and are part of different Discourse communities in their lives. The capital D in Discourse is used to denote a particular group that maintains its own practices around discourse, or language. A Discourse community has its own rules and the practices that contribute to a person’s “identity kit” (Gee, 2004, p. 124). This theory of language use is important to critical literacy practices because research has shown that a white, middle class Discourse is the dominant view valued by schools. When students do not know the rules of this dominant, school-valued Discourse, they are not able to negotiate the texts and curriculum of school and may be labeled as not successful (Gee, 2008). Critical literacy curriculum exposes and explores rules of the dominant Discourse in schools, but also values the Discourse communities CLD students are a part of, both in and out of school.
The final dimensions of Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002)’s model are, “Including diverse perspectives” and “Taking action.” These constructs maintain that incorporating different viewpoints into curriculum and encouraging students to take action to solve problems are key to critical literacy practices. Shannon (1995) defines critical literacy as expanding what a normal literacy lesson may be, where students will read and use multiple types of texts to uncover how they are being positioned through the processes of question-asking and problem-posing. Looking at an issue from multiple perspectives involves using texts or resources from different sources so that students are able to hear different perspectives on a topic. Students may look at the perspective the book is being written from and then approach the issue from another viewpoint not seen in the text (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008).

**Four Resources Model**

The Four Resources Model, created by Luke and Freebody (1999) is a way to think about critical literacy instruction that prepares all students to be critical readers and writers in this dynamic and multimodal world:

> Literacy education is *not* about skill development, not about deep competence. It *is* about the institutional shaping of social practices and cultural resources, about inducting successive generations into particular cultural, normative ways of handling texts, and about access to technologies and artifacts (e.g., writing, the Internet) and to the social institutions where these tools and artifacts are used. (e.g., workplaces, civic institutions) (Luke & Freebody, n.p.)

This model helps teachers consider how they may offer students opportunities to engage in what Luke and Freebody propose are essential skills for today’s students, where literacy is not static, but always changing, multimodal, and global. The model asks teachers to utilize the backgrounds, unique knowledge, and life experiences of their
students to develop rich learning opportunities. Critical theory undergirds this framework and is one of the four components of the model, Critical Practices.

According to The Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999), Critical Practices invite students to ask questions and engage with texts that offer differing viewpoints on issues, including challenging the author, the text, and the curriculum itself. Critiquing and problematizing what is written and presented to students is an essential part of preparing students to be globally literate citizens and part of a practice known as Critical Literacy (Flint, 2008; Luke & Freebody, 1999).

**Code Breakers, Text Users, and Text Participants.** In addition to Critical Practices, the other three components of The Four Resources Model are “Code Breaking, Text User, and Text Participant” (Luke & Freebody, 1999). When students are Code Breakers, they understand how to “recognize and use the alphabet; recognize letter/sound relationships and patterns in words; spell accurately; and recognize and use grammar and vocabulary” (Flint, 2008, p. 105). Literacy practices and activities that focus on this aspect of the Four Resources Model include spelling activities, letter recognition, phonemic awareness instruction to help students identify sounds in words, and phonics practice that teaches students the sound-symbol patterns within words. While these understandings are important, it is essential that students understand the words that they are decoding and connect these understandings to their purposes for reading and critique the messages they are presented with.

Teaching students to be a ‘Text Participant’ means valuing the student as one who brings their own schema and knowledge to a literacy event and can respond personally to what they read before, during, and after the reading event. Whether it is making
connections to other texts they have read, real-world events, or with events in other texts that they have experienced, it is essential that readers are able to find their own interpretation of the text. Students may use writing to make these connections or use what they have learned in other texts in their own writing. From a sociocultural perspective, it is important that students do make these connections naturally and meaningfully as they read and write.

A Text User is a reader and writer who can navigate different types of texts for multiple purposes and understand what the author is trying to say (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Luke, 2000). Students should be encouraged to read different genres and modes of texts for different purposes. The subtle and overt ways that different genres are organized and written is important for readers to understand and then be able to use in their own writing. The different types of language presented in different books is important to help students of all linguistic and cultural backgrounds to understand, so that they are aware of the particular discourse valued in different contexts and cultures.

**Culturally Relevant Literacy Instruction**

Luke and Freebody’s Four Resources Model (1999) can be viewed as a natural compliment to culturally relevant instruction, both in teacher education and in K-12 classrooms. Many teachers currently utilize this model (Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006), but a strong correlation has not been made with culturally relevant instruction as defined by scholars writing and researching about this practice (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2001). According to Gay (2000) culturally relevant pedagogy “teaches to and through the strengths of students” (p. 29). Teachers employing culturally relevant pedagogy include the knowledge, background, and understandings that students bring
into their classrooms when they plan their curriculum (Gay, 2000). This philosophy also asks teachers to work with the whole child. It urges educators to expose students to multiple viewpoints and perspectives within a curriculum (Gay, 2000). Students are urged to question standard and traditional norms in culturally responsive teaching. These traits of culturally relevant pedagogy are very similar to what is included in the Four Resources Model (Flint, 2008; Luke & Freebody, 1999). By teaching and learning within the four components of this model, teachers work with students’ individual understandings, knowledge, and experiences in curriculum. In this research, I utilized this model as a guideline for examining the literacy practices that teachers use when teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students. I elaborate more on how I used this model as a tool in data analysis in Chapter Three.

Conclusion

In this study, reflective of constructivist, sociocultural, and critical views of learning, I closely examined the experiences of three novice teachers working at a CLD, Professional Development School, in the hopes of contributing an unique perspective on how the current context of schools impacts the experiences of new teachers and the literacy instruction for CLD students, particularly ELLs. The Four Resources Model was appropriate for examining teachers’ practices with culturally and linguistically diverse students because this model addresses many of the dimensions that Gay (2000) describes when defining culturally relevant pedagogy. Therefore, using this framework in data collection and analysis, allowed me to explore the connections between the teachers’ use of culturally relevant literacy instruction and suggest implications that current instruction has on the opportunities for CLD students in schools today. The findings also have important
implications for the ways that inservice teachers should be supported during their induction years and beyond.

In the following chapter, I examine research on the key constructs of this study and highlight the need for this study that examines the intersection of these factors: (1) teacher preparation, (2) alternative routes of teacher preparation, (3) literacy teacher education and literacy policy, (4) teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners, (5) professional development schools, and (6) studying beginning teachers’ practice.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The current economic climate, educational policy, and changing demographics of schools make teaching today a dynamic and challenging profession. This is particularly true in urban or culturally and linguistically diverse schools. Thus, educating prospective teachers and inservice teachers is an evolving landscape in response to these current needs (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Recent research has illuminated the tensions novice teachers face as they enter urban classrooms, given the current climate of testing and prescriptive curriculum that places pressure upon teachers and students to perform on inauthentic, narrow measures of what students know (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Bergeron, 2008; Grossman & Thompson, 2007; Schultz, Jones-Walker, & Chikkatur, 2008). Current calls for research suggest that teacher preparation programs must examine how well they are preparing graduates to teach language and literacy to diverse students, given the rapid increase in this population (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, & MacDonald, 2005; Garcia, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Lenski, Mack, & Brown, 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). This construct is also important because CLD students may experience challenges in schooling because their values, experiences, and knowledge do not align with autonomous models of literacy that currently dominate curriculum.

My own experience teaching in CLD elementary schools was the motivation for this inquiry on beginning teachers’ experiences working in a CLD school. Because this study specifically examined beginning teachers’ practices when teaching literacy to CLD students, it is important to discuss research in each of the constructs involved in the
questions. These areas informed the two guiding research questions; (1) What instructional decisions, resources, and strategies do alternatively certified beginning teachers enact when teaching CLD students? and (2) What are the contextual factors that influence beginning teachers’ literacy pedagogy?

This literature review focuses on teacher education, pedagogical practices in teacher preparation, alternative teacher preparation, literacy teacher preparation and policy, culturally and linguistically diverse students, beginning teachers’ practice, and Professional Development Schools. In this review of research, I include studies located from electronic and hand searches of peer-reviewed journals and books on these topics. This literature review is not designed to be inclusive of all available literature on the topics, but will offer an overall understanding of the main constructs. First, it is key to unpack the concept of teacher education and what research has influenced the current state of teacher preparation in Colleges of Education today.

**What is Teacher Preparation?**

**A Vision for Teacher Education**

Exactly what teachers should know and be able to do is a focus of much research in teacher education and teacher preparation programs. Cochran-Smith (2003) advocates for programs that allow preservice teachers to truly understand the complexities of teaching and learning and that learning to teach is a life-long endeavor that requires continued professional development through a career. Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2005) developed a framework that synthesizes previous research on successful teacher education programs. “A Framework for Understanding Teaching and Learning” describes the knowledge, dispositions, and skills that preparation programs should foster.
The three main areas of focus are “Knowledge of Teaching, Knowledge of Subject Matter and Curriculum, and Knowledge of Learners” (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005, p. 11). Knowledge of Teaching includes the goals of ensuring that graduates understand how to teach subject matter to diverse learners, conduct assessment, and utilize classroom management. Knowledge of Subject Matter and Curriculum includes understanding the educational goals and outcomes of what is taught. Included in Knowledge of Learners, Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage (2005) maintain that teacher candidates must understand human development and how language and learning are informed by shared traits of human development, as well as social and cultural influences. Each of these areas highlight the importance of working with students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, suggesting that this should be an important goal of all preparation programs to develop in each area of the model.

Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, and Shulman (2005) found in their synthesis of effective programs that a common trait was long-term, dedicated faculty who worked together frequently to frame goals and develop a common vision for the program. These programs also made a clear connection between clinical experiences in school placements and the content of program coursework, so that students saw what they were learning in action and could apply it in their own teaching practice. This finding is important because the alternative preparation program in this study is comprised of long-term faculty that meet often to plan and organize the program’s goals and structure around a common theme of Social Justice, a belief that learning must follow with action on the inequities that exist in society. Long-term faculty are those that have been working and teaching within a program for some time.
A review by the AERA Panel on Teacher Education states that “Adaptive Experts,” teachers that are both efficient and innovative even with constraints placed upon them, is what teacher preparation programs should strive to produce. This is especially important in today’s educational climate of high stakes testing and teacher accountability, particularly in urban schools (Hammerness et al., 2005, p. 360). According to the authors, teacher education courses that focus on, “linking broad principles to concrete applications helps teachers understand more deeply and transfer what they are learning” (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005, p. 29). While these broad reviews of teacher preparation are helpful to examine, it is also important to look specifically at alternative preparation programs and how they prepare teachers for today’s school because these are increasingly common modes of teacher preparation (National Center for Alternative Certification, n.d.).

**Alternative Routes for Teaching Certification**

Alternative certification programs offer teaching credentials to those interested in becoming teachers who have not gone through a traditional undergraduate education program. This mode of preparation had gained increased popularity over the years. At the same time, these programs represent a wide variety of course requirements, length of time, and field experiences required. Currently, there are several program models for alternative routes of certification operating in one southeastern state: Teach For America, Troops to Teachers, and a number of post-baccalaureate certification programs offered at colleges or universities (National Center for Alternative Certification, n.d.).

Post-baccalaureate programs are designed for those who have completed an undergraduate degree in a field outside of education and wish to teach. These routes are
labeled alternative because they prepare and certify teachers at a faster rate than a traditional four-year undergraduate program, often in a one or two-year period. Some models of alternative certification place their students immediately in full-time teaching positions and students take courses as they are teaching. Other programs, such as the one being studied in this inquiry, requires full-time coursework and field placements for one year before students work alone in a classroom. The organization, coursework, and instruction offered within an alternative or post baccalaureate preparation program varies widely. Many universities are offering pathways into teaching for those with bachelor’s degrees in other disciplines. In previous years, these programs were created in response to teacher shortages or high levels of attrition in a school district (Xu, Gelfer, & Filler, 2003). However, because of the current economic climate, many people are choosing to return to school and enter these programs as an outlet to enter a new professional field. Alternative teacher preparation programs are growing as a result of these economic shifts.

There is some variability in the results of research available on alternative certification program outcomes. Zeichner and Conklin (2005) suggest that there remains a need for research specifically focused on alternative modes of teacher preparation, specifically in terms of coursework and how it may relate to future teaching. A review of the literature on alternative preparation programs by Bergeron (2006) concluded that in areas such as teacher retention, teacher knowledge, student achievement, and teacher performance traditional certification programs had more positive outcomes. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) also found that when compared to traditionally prepared teachers, alternatively prepared teachers have lower levels of student achievement in math and reading. However, Kane, Rockoff, and Staiger (2008) examined six years of data in New
York City Public Schools and compared achievement tests in classrooms taught by traditionally certified teachers to teachers prepared through alternative modes. They found very little difference in these achievement tests. Kane, Rockoff, and Staiger (2008) suggest that individual factors in teachers’ performance predict the teachers’ future and effectiveness in their career.

Other studies found positive results of an alternative model of teacher preparation. Xu, Gelfer, and Filler (2003) studied an alternative preparation program designed to train students to be early childhood educators of students with diverse learning needs. This program was created to address the teacher shortage in the area and findings showed that graduates were better prepared than traditionally prepared students because of the high number of diverse field experiences. However, this study is focused on a program for preschool, rather than elementary teacher education. At the University of California at Berkeley, there is an alternative certification program called MUSE, which stands for Multicultural Urban Secondary English. This is a program that offers a secondary teaching credential and a Masters degree after the first year of teaching. The MUSE program is specially focused on preparing high quality secondary teachers for underserved, urban schools and to promote retention of teachers in these environments, as attrition has been found to hurt both school morale and student achievement (Freedman & Appleman, 2008). The retention rate of teachers from this program is 96% after the first year teaching, compared to 76% nationally (Freedman & Appleman, 2008). The researchers posit that this retention was a result of rigorous admission requirements within the small program, which looked for commitment and passion for working in high needs schools.
Teach for America (TFA) is another model of alternative teacher preparation under the umbrella of AmeriCorps, a federally funded agency that supports service initiatives. This organization recruits students from universities, trains them in a five week summer course, and places them in high needs urban or rural schools with a two year commitment. As an incentive, TFA members receive additional financial grants upon completing the program that they can apply towards graduate school (Veltri, 2008). One study found that 74% of principals polled felt that these teachers were more effective than other first year teachers and 63% said TFA teachers had better student achievement (Allen, 2006). In a different poll, 95% of principals felt that TFA teachers were at least as well or better prepared compared to other first year teachers from traditional programs (Veltri, 2008).

However, when comparing student achievement in classrooms where the teacher is a TFA member to certified teachers, Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, and Heilig (2005) controlled for variables that they argue have lead to improper claims by other research comparing TFA teachers to certified teachers. They compared teachers with similar years of experience and controlled for variables such as the school setting, students’ prior achievement, and student demographic information. This study found that TFA and other uncertified teachers produced lower student achievement in reading, math, or language arts when compared to certified teachers working with similar populations of students.

One concern often raised about the TFA program is that some of these teachers are not prepared for the many challenges they will face in urban schools and do not fulfill the two year commitment. One study found that in the 2004-2005 school year, 12% of
TFA teachers left before their first school year was complete (Allen, 2006). TFA teachers who become fully certified are about as effective as certified teachers and stay in the field longer, but most TFA teachers leave after three years (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). MacIver and Vaughn (2007) found that TFA members left at higher rates after three years of teaching when compared to other alternatively certified teachers in Baltimore City Schools. In the same study, they found that teachers from other alternative programs remained in urban Baltimore City Schools longer than traditionally certified teachers (MacIver & Vaughn, 2007). Attrition of teachers is an area of concern particularly in urban schools because it takes a toll on the financial and the personal elements of a school or school system (Freeman & Appleman, 2008).

Other criticisms of the Teach for America program remain. In a narrative account of her experience as a professor working closely with a Teach for America program for eight years, Veltri (2008) highlighted the personal and professional challenges that many of these teachers, who come from middle or upper class backgrounds, face and how it impacts their relationships with their students. Veltri (2008) maintains that there are many subtle, but important skills that a teacher needs to know particularly to work with CPD students in urban public schools that are not taught in Teach for America’s five-week preparation course. While this is important for all preservice teachers to understand, it is essential particularly for Teach For America members because they are most often placed in culturally and linguistically diverse, high needs schools and must understand the many factors that are at play in their students’ lives. Veltri (2008) reports that Teach For America members felt their diversity training was not as intensive as it should be. She also takes issue with the fact that emergency-credentialed teachers (such as Teach for
America members) are teaching in the most underserved and under-resourced areas, when No Child Left Behind states that all teachers should be highly qualified. Veltri (2008) suggests that TFA increase the length of training and hold courses at the specific schools where teachers will be working, so that they learn more about the school environment, context, and expectations early on in their teaching.

**Literacy Teacher Education**

There are very few studies that examine what takes place in literacy methods courses in the various alternative preparation programs currently offered. Bergeron (2006) maintains that alternative preparation programs look very different depending on the specific coursework and length of time spent preparing the teacher and that there is a range from high quality to very low quality. One of the reasons for this is that there is simply so much to learn when training a teacher and when information is compacted into a short time period, students will not be able to process it all and then enact what they have learned in their teaching practice. Bergeron (2006) believes that better teachers are prepared through high quality programs that include many field experience programs, clear goals and expectations of teaching, and individualized instruction within coursework. The reasons that alternative preparation programs do not reflect these goals is due to, “Inconsistencies in alternative route program coursework, varied practice teaching experience among alternative route programs, and the effect of alternative route programs on educational policy” (Bergeron, 2006, p. 84).

In the last decade, there have been several reports designed to share how literacy teachers are prepared in an effort to establish a common curricula for literacy preparation courses. Scholars such as Barone and Morell (2007) and Bransford, Darling-Hammond,
and LePage (2005) explain that there is not a consensus about what teachers should know about teaching literacy to students when they graduate. There are a variety of political, social, and ideological factors at play in determining what is taught in literacy preparation courses, including those who believe that colleges of education are not even necessary to prepare teachers (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2006). The content of literacy teacher preparation courses is related to current literacy policy and practice at the K-12 level.

**Literacy policy and perspectives.** Within Colleges of Education and literacy instructors, there are those that advocate for teaching the elements of the National Reading Panel’s (2000) findings of the key components (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency) as the core of what should be taught to preservice teachers in literacy methods coursework (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005). Those who promote this belief maintain that colleges of education are doing their graduates and their future students a disservice when they do not provide explicit instruction on how to teach these five components of reading (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2006). Snow, Griffin, and Burns (2005) contend that literacy teacher preparation must instruct preservice teachers to teach these skills to culturally and linguistically diverse students to combat what they call “negative influences” of poverty (p. 143). While these authors urge literacy teacher preparation programs to prepare preservice teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse populations, their approach to how this should be done is somewhat limited by focusing only on the five components of the National Reading Panel’s recommendations.
“Balanced Literacy” is a term often used to describe the importance of teaching each of the five components within the National Reading Panel’s (2000) recommendations. The balanced literacy movement is a by-product of federally funded reports such as 30 Years of Research: What we now know about how children learn to read (Grossen, 1997), which maintains that ‘Scientifically Based Reading Research’, or methods proven to produce positive results from a limited review of quasi-experimental research on literacy instruction, should be the focus of literacy instruction for children. These reports recommended that phonics and phonemic awareness are key concepts that must be taught to young children in an explicit fashion.

While highly criticized by many literacy researchers (see Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1999; Gee, 2008), these reports contributed to a boom in scripted, prescriptive, and scientifically research-based programs for school systems to purchase. Some literacy researchers believe that these national reports and subsequent packaged literacy curricula are closely related to financial gain for researchers and publishers interested on capitalizing on these recommendations (Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1999; Wolfe & Poynor, 2005). Many maintain that most of these seemingly ‘balanced’ literacy curriculums are in fact not equal in their treatment of the time and focus on concepts outside of decoding and the reading material is not authentic or reflective of the culture and experiences of students (Short, 1999; Wilson, 2002; Gerstl-Pepin & Woodside-Jiron, 2005). However, in many schools, particularly Title 1 schools, these prescriptive literacy programs and myriad of assessments must be used to receive federal funding (Gerstl-Pepin & Woodside-Jiron, 2005).
In contrast to these autonomous views of literacy promoted through prescriptive literacy curricula is the belief that literacy is a broader notion, situated within the social and cultural lives of students (Au & Raphael, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2006; Hoffman, Roller, Maloch, Sailors, Duffy, & Beretvas, 2005; Lenski, Mack, & Brown, 2008). One framework that aligns with this sociocultural view of learning is The Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999). This model incorporates the recommendations of the National Reading Panel’s (2000) components of reading: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. However, reflective of a sociocultural view of literacy, these skills do not fall within a prescribed method or schedule that fits all students at the same time (Au & Raphael, 2000). Rather, according to Luke (2000), the ways in which each of the four components of the Four Resources Model should be used depends strongly on the individual student’s background and needs. The background knowledge, culture, experiences, and personal agency that a student brings should be encouraged to use when engaging in literacy activities (Luke, 2000). Those who align with this perspective are interested in the different modes and opportunities for literacy that students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds might engage in (Flint, 2008).

**Literacy methods courses.** “Methods” courses in teacher education programs that link content knowledge of reading and writing to pedagogical practices have been criticized by some who believe that teachers need only to know content and not pedagogy (e.g. National Council on Teacher Quality, 2006). However, research has found that methods courses are effective when teacher candidates actually practice and experience
methods to teach content knowledge while also learning the content (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005).

In 2003, The International Reading Association’s National Commission on Excellence in Elementary Teacher Preparation for Reading Instruction published elements of eight highly effective reading preparation programs. Graduates of these programs, followed in their first to third years of teaching, were “more successful and confident than other beginning teachers in making the transition into the teaching profession” (International Reading Association, 2003, p. 1). These eight programs had eight essential components of their reading preparation programs in common: “Content, Apprenticeship, Vision, Resources and Mission, Personalized Teaching, Autonomy, Community, and Assessment” (International Reading Association, 2003, p. 11). One of their findings was that instructors in these reading courses modeled the kind of teaching that they expected of their students (International Reading Association, 2003).

Farnan and Grisham (2006) interviewed hundreds of new teachers to see what a novice literacy teacher should know and what literacy preparation courses should encompass. They found that teacher education programs graduate “Highly qualified novices” (Farnan & Grisham, 2006, p. 106), teachers that have limited experience, but who are still able to promote student learning better than those teachers who are not certified. They conclude that an initial teacher preparation program is just the beginning of what should be a career-long process of learning for teachers of literacy, fostered by continuous professional development. Similarly, a synthesis of literature on the topic of preparing teachers to teach literacy concluded that, “Preservice teachers learn what they
are taught, and the literature on teacher education in reading is beginning to suggest some potentially positive trends” (Richardson & Anders, 2005, p. 218).

Richardson and Anders (2005) shared some potentially promising practices in literacy methods courses with preservice teachers, such as journals, dialogue with classmates, and practice making instructional decisions based on case studies and samples of student work. In another study, L’Allier and Elish-Piper (2007) were instructors in the literacy methods courses they studied, which focused on the pedagogical devices that they modeled. The authors described how they used tools such as alpha boxes, text coding, double-entry journals, making connections, and the Teachers as Readers strategy to model activities for teaching literacy to young students, while also aiding preservice students in making meaning out of what they read for class (L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2007). While these studies specifically describe useful pedagogical activities in-depth, it would be beneficial to learn which of these devices was helpful to these students as they began teaching. Additionally, these studies do not describe if and how they are used with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Discussion and reflection are tools often utilized by teacher educators, however, studies by Heydon, Hibbet, and Iannacci (2005), Stockinger (2007) and Lesley (2005) describe the ways in which instructors used activities to promote discussion on teaching literacy from a critical perspective. Heydon et al. (2005) were instructors in the course that they researched, and attempted to help their preservice teachers understand the term ‘Balanced Literacy’ by offering a variety of perspectives about how literacy is learned and taught in classrooms. The instructors brought in a variety of materials from prescriptive literacy programs and asked preservice students to think critically about the
learning opportunities within the programs. They found that they were able to help calm their students’ fears about negotiating the many mandates and expectations they would encounter when teaching.

Lesley (2005) also initiated thoughtful discussion about critical literacy topics with her content-area literacy course by connecting issues that were affecting the students in the class locally and utilizing a Writing Workshop method of instruction to foster a sense of community in the class. Stockinger (2007) examined the reflection of students in their literacy autobiographies that they wrote as part of their writer’s notebooks for the literacy methods course she taught. This study was a case study and a self-study of two students in this class as well as Stockinger as the course instructor. Stockinger (2007) examined the ways in which the students changed in how they saw their role as a writing teacher and found that both preservice teachers had an epiphanic moment of themselves as capable writing teachers. All three articles are very detailed in the description of their research; however, like the other studies, they do not include their students’ voices to share what they found to be helpful or how they impacted their future literacy teaching practice. The results of the research are measured by the instructors’ beliefs about the efficacy of the course.

When preservice teachers are exposed to field based instruction and internships that provide them with opportunities to try out what they are learning in teacher preparation courses, this assists them in becoming an adaptive teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Mallette, Kile, Smith, McKinney, and Readence (2000) required preservice teachers in their literacy methods course to work with a struggling reader throughout the semester. Preservice teachers had to document their learning and reflect
about students with reading difficulties. Through this assignment, researchers found that preservice teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about struggling readers had shifted towards the realization that each student had a different experience based on their background (Mallette et al., 2000).

While this work is helpful as guidelines and are a valuable synthesis of initial outcomes from preparation programs, they do not specifically address preparation for teachers who teach CLD students. There are also a lack of studies that specifically focus on alternative or post baccalaureate certification programs and literacy coursework within these programs. Most of the available literature does not connect these approaches to the strategies that their students may use when teaching literacy to diverse students and none of this research was conducted on graduates of an alternative certification program.

**Teaching Diverse Learners**

As anyone who works in schools today knows, the demographics of K-12 schools are changing and continue to become more diverse, particularly with the increase of the English Language Learner population. Garcia et al. (2010) state that, “Currently, at least one in five children ages 5 to 17 in the United States has a foreign-born parent” (p. 133). Students who are exposed to a language other than English at home make up 16% of the school population (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Rumberger, 2008). Trends suggest that by the year 2035, the school population will be made up primarily of students of color (Banks et al., 2005). Banks et al. (2004) use the term “The Demographic Imperative” to explain why high quality instruction is needed now for all learners (p. 236). This construct says that because of the historic oppression and unequal life choices for students of color and students who live in poverty, current movements in education must
promote reversing and repairing this long held inequality in U.S. schools. It is essential to problematize the lower funding of schools in high poverty areas, the different type of instruction offered to students in these schools that does not prepare them for college level learning, and lower quality facilities and resources within the school (Banks et al., 2005; Books, 2004). Using this critical stance to unpack these inequalities is part of being a culturally relevant educator.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

There is a growing trend in literature related to teacher education for diverse learners to utilize an instructional stance known as culturally relevant pedagogy. Influenced by the work of scholars such as Gay (2000), Ladson-Billings (1994; 2001) and Nieto (2001), this approach to teaching focuses on recognizing students’ cultural knowledge and strengths to inform curriculum, activities, and instructional techniques that highlight diverse ways of learning and demonstrating knowledge (Lazar, 2004). This type of teaching is in direct opposition to a deficit view of students, which assumes that teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students in urban environments is undesirable (Schultz, Jones-Walker, & Chikkatur, 2008). In a culturally relevant view of teaching and learning, standardized curricula and assessment does not adequately capture the particular assets students come to school with. According to Gay (2000), the commonly held belief that ‘good teaching’ is appropriate for everyone and that it is unnecessary to understand the particular backgrounds of students, makes it impossible for teachers to actually use best practices because one must be able to work with individual student’s strengths.
Gay (2000) outlines key principles of culturally responsive teaching, a view of teaching guided by culturally relevant pedagogy that “teaches to and through the strengths of students” (p. 24):

- Culturally responsive teaching is validating;
- Culturally responsive teaching is comprehensive;
- Culturally responsive teaching is multidimensional;
- Culturally responsive teaching is empowering;
- Culturally responsive teaching is transformative;
- Culturally responsive teaching is emancipatory (pp. 29-35).

This perspective on teaching is validating because it encourages teachers to use aspects of each student’s culture and introduce them to different perspectives in the curriculum and texts offered within the classroom. Comprehensive teaching means that the particular social, emotional, and academic needs of each student are considered in instruction. The teacher understands that these needs must all be met to lead to learning and a classroom should be set up as a community where students support and benefit from each other. The “multidimensional” component of culturally responsive teaching values learning tasks that are authentic and utilizing multiple modes that students can make meaning with in a variety of ways. The tenants of “Empowering,” “Transformative,” and “Emancipatory” encourages education for all students to have access to the necessary tools to understand and challenge the injustices they are faced with, realize that truth and knowledge is culturally situated, and then to feel that they can be successful on their terms (Gay, 2000, p. 29).

Culturally relevant pedagogy promotes the perspective that issues and inequality of race, class, and language continue to prevail in society and that teachers must be aware of these when working with their students to change the injustices in their worlds (Schultz, Jones-Walker, & Chikkatur, 2008). Transforming preservice teachers’ ideas about working with CLD students and moving them towards a more culturally relevant
view of teaching was the focus of research by Mueller (2006), who looked at the effect of a program designed to prepare teachers for CLD populations. She examined eight elementary education preservice students’ understandings of working with diverse students throughout a school year, focusing on the aspects of their Social Foundations of Education course and how this affected their learning. Mueller’s findings maintain that programs must make an effort to have students understand the social and cultural foundations of education to teach in diverse, urban settings and more should be done with preservice teachers to examine their learning process.

**Teaching Literacy to CLD Learners**

Some instructors of literacy courses have begun to use a culturally relevant framework in the courses that they teach. Lazar (2004; 2007), an instructor at a private college in an urban area who teaches mostly white, middle class females, seeks to prepare “Culturally Sensitive Literacy Teachers” through her literacy courses (Lazar, 2004, p. 42). Her teaching methods include writing a cultural autobiography, tutoring culturally and linguistically diverse students in a literacy clinic, conducting readings and discussions that look at the historical and systemic inequalities for culturally and linguistically diverse students, and focusing on methods utilized by successful literacy teachers in diverse, urban schools.

Rogers, Marshall, and Tyson, (2006) also taught a course focused on literacy and diversity. The course included a community-based internship, regular class meetings, and readings on literacy and diversity. The preservice teachers in their course kept journals and were interviewed throughout the year. The researchers examined these journals to see what kinds of stories the students created to make sense of what they had experienced.
While the different preservice teachers had very different narratives based on their own life experiences, the researchers argued that preservice programs should include space for preservice teachers to examine the issue of diversity outside of a school setting because they allowed these beginning teachers to actively construct and reflect on their ongoing learning (Rogers et al., 2006). According to an examination of literacy research on teacher education for diverse settings, Richardson and Anders (2005) found that many literacy instructors have seen positive effects through the use of reflective journaling, engaged observations in classrooms, and engaging in dialogue with those of different perspectives than their own. There is no doubt that these practices are certainly promising, however, Richardson and Anders (2005), Lazar (2004; 2007) and Rogers et al. (2006) do not demonstrate how these practices influence the preservice teachers’ future teaching with diverse learners.

In their recommendations for literacy preparation programs for urban, diverse learners, Lenski, Mack, and Wood (2008), state that students in urban environments have a different experience with literacy and learning that must be taught within teacher preparation programs. Important factors that must be considered within a program are the differences in possible language development and use, students’ use and understanding of environmental print in their urban surroundings, and the role that socioeconomic status has on a child’s development and learning (Lenski, Mack, & Wood, 2008). These factors are not to be viewed as a deficit, but instead as information about the multiple forms of literacy that students with these experiences have and that teachers can build upon. They state that it is key that preservice teachers understand the diverse, yet rich, experiences of urban students so that preservice teachers do not see their students through a deficit
model where their role is to detract from the knowledge students come to school with and fix what school-like literacy skills the students may not have (Lenski, Mack, & Wood, 2008).

**Professional Development Schools**

Much of the research on Professional Development Schools highlights the challenges university and K-12 personnel have when establishing a Professional Development School partnership. A theme that emerges from many of these studies is that it takes time for a relationship that is mutually beneficially and productive to be established. University personnel must be open and willing to get to know and work within the particular school environment and the professional needs of the school (Flint et al., 2010). This type of partnership takes time and energy on the part of the university personnel to learn about the unique strengths and needs of the teachers and school and should be built based on mutual respect and trust (Flint et al., 2010). This investment may take several years to establish, and both university and school faculty need must be given the time to develop these mutual goals and establish the work they will accomplish together.

Jett-Simpson, Pugach, and Whipp (1992) were university faculty who were interested in supporting the literacy teaching at a PDS school. They discuss the process of developing a scaffolding partnership with teachers at an urban school. The main goal was to shift the autonomous literacy paradigm at the school. They created a scale to determine the types of changes the teachers made in their beliefs and practices in their literacy teaching. The highest number of teachers were in the middle of their scale of teacher change, although some scored in the highest two categories. One of the main indicators of
change was the teachers’ dependence on or adherence to the literacy basal curriculum. The research also uncovered school-wide change as a result of the PDS partnership. This was evident in an increased focus on authentic student learning and increased student enthusiasm around literacy (Jett-Simpson, Pugach, & Whipp, 1992).

Hollingsworth and Gallego (2004) explored the topic of multiple literacies with junior high school teachers at a Professional Development School. They found that teachers needed the space to speak out and openly on issues of diversity in language and literacy and teaching in a challenging urban environment. The researchers saw a transition of appreciation and use of students’ multiple literacies in classrooms with teachers they worked with at this Professional Development School.

One important goal of Professional Development Schools is to increase the quality of preservice teachers’ experiences and preparation. Linek, Fleezer, Fazio, Raine, Dugan, Bolton, and Williams (2001) examined how field experiences in Professional Development Schools impact preservice teachers’ beliefs and student achievement. The study was of a comprehensive partnership in Texas that integrated professional development courses and university preparation coursework. Teachers and preservice teachers were asked to work collaboratively. One teacher said, “Public school is no longer just the responsibility of the classroom teacher” (Linek et al., 2001, p. 6). Their findings focused on the dispositions of both teachers and interns, who both reacted positively with this type of collaboration.

Inservice teacher learning supported by university faculty, a key component to many Professional Development School models, may be a promising source of support for teachers in regards to teaching diverse populations. A study by Mahn, McMunn, and
Musanti (2005) focused on supporting new and veteran teachers in a diverse elementary school setting who felt they needed assistance working with their growing population of linguistically and culturally diverse students. They describe the creation of a Teaching and Learning Center, which was a classroom within the school designed as a center for teachers to learn by watching each other (Mahn et al., 2005, p. 379). An ESOL teacher, a resource teacher, and classroom teachers rotated teaching elementary students each week. The researchers found that classroom teachers appreciated the opportunity for continued support and learning, and the authentic, hands-on environment of a real classroom was successful. It is important to learn from a study such as this in considering a Professional Development School partnership because there are many possibilities for both preservice teachers and inservice teachers to learn from each other through field-based courses.

**Studying Beginning Teachers’ Practices**

Research on beginning teachers can inform how preparation programs may be improved and the kinds of support that inservice teachers may benefit from. D’Aniello (2008) conducted a review of studies on teacher preparation programs and their impact on preparing teachers to work with students with exceptional needs. She found that graduates of what the author terms effective programs, where students have multiple field placements and courses that connect the content area to relevant pedagogical approaches, feel well prepared to teach diverse learners (D’Aniello, 2008).

In the area of beginning literacy teachers, there have been some studies that examine the specific outcomes of a literacy preparation program on its graduates’ practice. Using data from the National Commission on Excellence in Elementary Teacher Preparation for Reading Instruction’s study of eight highly effective reading preparation
programs, researchers followed graduates of these eight programs as they entered their first years to third years of teaching in separate studies (Hoffman et al., 2005; Maloch, Flint, Eldrige, Harmon, Loven, Fine, Bryant-Shanklin, & Martinez, 2003). Maloch et al. (2003) studied 101 students in these eight programs in their initial preservice program and followed up with the students in their first year of teaching through three phone interviews. Using an interpretive lens to analyze what they found about the beginning teachers’ reading instruction, the researchers found that graduates were able to speak about their students’ individual needs based on a solid understanding of assessment and an interest in ongoing learning; characteristics that were valued in many of their reading preparation programs (Maloch et al., 2003). One particular teacher in this study used this individualized decision-making to meet the individual needs of her culturally and linguistically diverse students (Maloch, Fine & Flint, 2003).

Following up on Maloch et al.’s (2003) work, Hoffman et al. (2005) studied the same teachers, focusing heavily on the literacy environment the teachers created in the classroom. The researchers used the TEX-IN3 protocol in addition to classroom observations to analyze the “social practice” of the classrooms (Hoffman et al., 2005, p. 273). This instrument analyzes the texts used in the classroom, the text or message that the overall classroom environment sends, and the value placed upon the texts. (Hoffman et al., 2005, p. 273). They found that graduates of the eight excellent reading preparation programs had more text-rich classrooms and more engagement with these texts when compared to teachers who did not graduate from these programs (Hoffman et al., 2005). These studies are incredibly important to the field of literacy teacher preparation programs, however they do not include graduates of alternative preparation programs or
how they work specifically with English Language Learners, both constructs that are becoming increasingly common.

Achinstein and Ogawa (2006) describe the experiences of two first-year teachers in California who taught in schools that were culturally and linguistically diverse and adopted highly prescriptive literacy curriculums. Each teacher resisted following the Code Breaking focused programs and instead created units centered around student interest and authentic reading and writing activities. The teachers encountered policing by county level personnel whose job it was to ensure teachers were remaining true to the curriculum. At the end of the two years, one teacher was released from her contract after being recognized by teachers, students, and the administrator as a strong teacher, but not willing to follow the prescriptive program. Although she was considered a successful teacher, the county personnel regarded her “infidelity” to the basal curriculum grounds for termination. The other teacher dejectedly chose to leave his school to teach in a nearby, wealthier school district where they were not asked to use a prescriptive curriculum. The researchers suggest that a major issue new teachers in CLD schools face is a limited control about the curriculum they use, and teacher education programs must consider the ways in which preservice teachers are encouraged to push back against these mandates given the serious repercussions that may incur. Ogawa, Sandholtz, Martinez-Flores, and Scribner (2003) believe the trend of oppressive curricula and assessment is something teacher education programs must understand that in:

Many schools and districts where the curriculum once was only loosely organized, standards now offer to students, teachers, and principals a consistent and coherent guide. By specifying which knowledge and skills students must demonstrate, standards imply the instructional practices that teachers should employ (p. 147).
These studies suggest that it is important for teacher preparation programs to be aware of the context novice teachers will encounter when they begin teaching and have implications for the kind of support inservice teachers need to negotiate these mandates and requirements.

**Conclusion**

Based on a review of the research, previous work has not examined the experiences of graduates of an alternative preparation program to see the kinds of literate teaching they enact, and what kinds of support they still need as inservice teachers. This research seeks to fill that gap, examining the connection between teachers’ preparation and their practice. The impact of a Professional Development School model on the teachers’ initial years to possibly support their practice is another layer of this study. This naturalistic study explored the relationship of these factors, so that this information may be shared with other programs to improve their preparation of teachers in alternative or post baccalaureate programs. In the following chapter, I describe in detail my methods for examining the literacy teaching practices and experiences of three graduates of one alternative elementary certification program.
CHAPTER 3

METHODODOLOGY

Overview of Study

Qualitative research pursues questions that examine people, places, and phenomenon by looking at, “how they [the participants] make sense of the world” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). This study focused on how beginning teachers teach literacy to diverse students after completing a post-baccalaureate preparation program, to examine how they “make sense” of their preparation given the contextual factors in a CLD school and teach literacy in their classrooms.

On a personal level, it is my passion to understand the experiences of novice teachers to inform how my work as a teacher educator may be improved, because helping to prepare future educators to work with a similar population of elementary students that I also once taught is the reason that I now work as a teacher educator. When I completed my program and began teaching, I did not feel completely prepared or always successful when teaching a diverse classroom of students. I was compelled to find out how a post-baccalaureate program with its specific focus on preparing its teachers to work with diverse populations has affected teachers’ practice. Part of the development of a beginning teacher is having the support and encouragement of others to brainstorm, reflect, and gain ideas from each other. This study offers some support to these teachers, as debriefing sessions after lessons can be an effective way to provide time and space for continued professional development (Flint et al., 2010). In addition, teaching in a Professional Development School may be a source of continued learning and support for
the graduates of the program, as it has been for other inservice teachers (Flint et al., 2010).

This type of personal attention and space for learning from and with others is what made this study appropriate for a qualitative method of inquiry. Qualitative studies utilize close observation, stories from its participants, and a personal focus on its participants and their unique ways of knowing and being (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln, 2010; Merriam, 1998). Influenced by the theoretical perspectives of the sociocultural nature of learning, constructivism, critical theory, and the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999), this qualitative inquiry examined beginning teachers’ unique processes of taking what they have learned from their preparation program and how they use it to teach literacy to culturally and linguistically diverse students.

**Procedures**

To examine the literacy teaching experiences of three graduates of a post-baccalaureate program early in their teaching careers, I engaged in a naturalistic, qualitative study. The following sub-questions guided this inquiry:

A. What instructional decisions, resources, and strategies do alternatively certified beginning teachers enact when teaching CLD students?

B. What are the contextual factors that influence novice teachers’ literacy pedagogy?

This study took place from August 2009 to May 2010 at Eastside Elementary, an elementary school located in a large city in the southeast and classified as Title One, with a high number of students of low socioeconomic background (United States Department of Education, 2004). Eastside was in its second year as a Professional Development School (PDS) with the large, southeastern public university from which these teachers graduated.
To explore these research questions, multiple data sources in the form of interviews, observations, teacher debriefs, and a questionnaire were gathered to give detailed descriptions of the teachers’ literacy practices and to understand the contextual factors that shaped these teachers’ experiences. The long-term nature of this inquiry allowed for in depth understandings of these teachers’ experiences and the larger context that they were negotiating.

**Participants**

The participants in this study were graduates of a post-baccalaureate elementary education program in which students with bachelor’s degrees in non-education related disciplines may become certified to teach elementary school after one year of full-time coursework and field experiences. In the optional second year of the program, the participants take on full-time teaching positions and continue coursework at the university to complete a Master of Arts degree in Elementary Education. To participate in the second year of the program, a student must take a teaching position at a Title One elementary school in the metro area close to the southeastern university that serves a high population of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The sampling of these participants was purposeful (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998) in that all of the participants completed the same preparation program and were in their second or third years of teaching. It was also important that each participant completed the second, optional Masters year of the program and worked at one of the Professional Development Schools affiliated with the university and particular alternative preparation program. Researching graduates who completed both the certification and Masters years of the preparation program and taught at one of the Professional
Development Schools allowed me to study the entire certification program to inform this program’s work and to examine the experiences these beginning teachers had when working at a PDS.

At the time of recruitment for this study in May 2009, there were five participants that were eligible according to these requirements. All of these teachers were in their second or third year of teaching at one of two PDS schools affiliated with the post baccalaureate program at the university. Using these parameters, there were four teachers at Eastside Elementary and one at another local PDS. After meeting with the four teachers at Eastside and informing them of what participation would entail, every teacher agreed to participate. The lone teacher at the other PDS declined to participate because she would be taking the role as Grade Chair and felt she would be too busy to fully commit. In late July 2009, just before the school year began, one of the four participants at Eastside resigned from Eastside to take a position at a private school and therefore, was not eligible to participate. At this point, the number of participants became three. While four participants was my original target, I believe that having three participants all at the same school allowed for rich, yet focused, data collection over the nine-month period. The participants taught in different grade levels: kindergarten, first, and third, which allowed for an understanding of experiences across grade levels. Additionally, having three participants meant that the amount of data I collected was manageable.

The participants who agreed to join the study group completed a consent form, created and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the school system and university level. This consent form outlined the parameters of the research, asked for their honest feedback to help inform the research, ensured that their real names and
schools were not revealed, and reminded them that they may leave the study at any time. It was not necessary to have students in the teachers’ classrooms to sign IRB consent forms because no student data was collected. Both student and teacher identities were protected throughout the study by the use of pseudonyms. I asked the teachers to choose their own pseudonyms at the beginning of the project to identify them in all data collection. I used these pseudonyms in all my audio-recorded reflections, written reflection, memos, and transcription throughout the project.

**Post-Baccalaureate Program**

The early childhood post-baccalaureate program these teachers completed is housed at a large, public university in the Southeast. This alternative certification program certifies teachers to teach grades Pre-Kindergarten through Fifth grades, with an emphasis on teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. In the first year of the program, students complete a full year of coursework and three semesters of successful student teaching placements to complete certification. The program begins in summer and continues for three semesters until the following spring. During each of the three semesters, students complete student teaching assignments. Students are mentored extensively during these student teaching placements at four different CLD schools throughout the year. This first year includes three required Literacy courses to prepare them to teach reading, writing, speaking, and listening to CLD students.

After this initial certification, students may opt to pursue the Masters year of the program to receive a Masters of Arts in Teaching degree. To do this, they must teach in a culturally and linguistically diverse elementary school and complete another year of coursework and supervision of their teaching, culminating in a capstone project that
requires them to design and carry out an action research project in their classroom or school. When students complete the Masters year of the program, they take a three credit hour Literacy and Social Studies integrated course, which asks them to look deeper into the issues above, with an emphasis on integrating literacy with Social Studies.

This post-baccalaureate program is based on a Social Justice framework, which serves to prepare future teachers to be change agents when teaching students that have been historically underserved (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Based on this goal, all courses are encouraged to include methods and theories for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. As highlighted in the literature on successful teacher preparation programs, particularly in the area of teacher preparation for diverse populations, this post-baccalaureate program also consists of a core group of instructors who teach the courses and supervise the students throughout the program (Darling-Hammond, 2006). This faculty, led by a coordinator who is also an instructor, meets monthly to collaborate and share ideas on course activities, assignments, and the overall goals of the program. Program decisions and issues that arise are addressed in these collaborative meetings between the faculty members.

Within the three literacy methods courses the students complete in their initial certification year, some concepts addressed are language and literacy development, multicultural children’s literature, and Reader/Writer Workshop approaches to teaching literacy (Flint, 2008). Supporting students’ comprehension of text, phonemic awareness, phonics knowledge, vocabulary development, and fluent reading are all covered within course reading and activities. Additionally, the courses introduce critical literacy, an approach promoting social justice through reading, writing, and questioning issues of
power and privilege (Flint, 2008; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). In literacy courses, pedagogical approaches include use of multicultural texts, case studies, double-entry journals, book clubs, modeling of reading and writing workshop practices, and teaching simulations. Many of these have been effective based on previous research on pedagogical practices and successful teacher preparation programs (Hammerness et al., 2005).

**Setting**

All data collection in this study took place at Eastside Elementary, which has a Professional Development School (PDS) partnership with the university that these teachers graduated from. The population of the Eastside Elementary is culturally and linguistically diverse and labeled Title One by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, a designation created to improve schools labeled disadvantaged (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The descriptor Title One is often used to describe a school that receives this support because of its high population of students of low socioeconomic status. This area is home to many new immigrant populations with residents from various Asian and African countries, but the majority of the student population is currently African American. There are approximately 800 students at Eastside Elementary, at least 10% of who are English Language Learners. Eastside Elementary has hired a high number of graduates from the alternative preparation program because many students are assigned there for their student teaching experiences as a result of the partnership with the university. During the year of the study, there were several activities taking place as part of the Professional Development School partnership, which are described in detail in Chapter 4.
Role of the Researcher

A constructivist view of research asks that the researcher be clear about her or his role and influence on the research. My position is particularly unique in this study because I was an instructor in the alternative preparation program each teacher completed. I taught all three of the required literacy methods courses that these teachers took in their first year of the program. I did not teach the Literacy and Social Studies integrated course in the Masters year. Therefore, this position afforded me access to the participants because I established relationships with each of them while I was their instructor.

I was an instructor in this program from 2006-2008, as part of a Doctoral Teaching Fellowship I began at the start of my graduate program. I taught each of the three literacy courses in the first year of the post-baccalaureate program and supervised a small group of students throughout their student teaching placements. I was selected to work with this particular program because of my own teaching experience in CLD elementary schools and focus on literacy instruction for diverse learners. When I began this appointment, I was informed about the Social Justice focus of the program and given several examples of syllabi that past instructors used in the literacy courses. At that point, the content and assignments within the course were largely up to me. I designed the courses using a combination of activities, readings, and assignments from the past syllabi, successful literacy courses I had taken in my undergraduate and graduate programs, and ideas and I found through a search of other syllabi on courses focused on literacy instruction for CLD learners. As I began teaching in this program one month after leaving
the elementary classroom, I was also very conscious of creating assignments and readings that I felt would be beneficial for the students in their practice with CLD students.

The course content and assigned readings changed from the first year to the second and final year I taught the course, as I tried to adapt and include new ideas I developed. Within the first and second years of teaching in the program, I was also taking upper level doctoral courses in language and literacy that were introducing me to new and different ways of thinking about literacy instruction in schools for CLD learners. One of these, the Four Resources Model of literacy (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Luke, 2000), became very salient to me in the ways I began to think about the possibilities of literacy instruction for diverse learners. I introduced students to the components of the model and offered readings and activities about how these areas could be included within a literacy classroom (Flint, 2008). Through course activities and readings, I hoped to show students how they could think organize their own literacy instruction around this model, which I believe is a viable framework for supporting all learners to be critically literate in this multimodal world.

In this study, I worked with graduates of this program that I taught during my two years of the program. Although it had been one or two years since we last worked together, I was eager to reconnect with these past students, who were now second or third year teachers. It was my hope that the process of working together in a different context as teacher and researcher would be beneficial for the participants, as well as myself. Through previous research in my doctoral program with inservice teachers at a Professional Development School, I learned that these conversations between teachers and university researchers could provide a supportive space for teachers to discuss issues
on their mind and positively impact their teaching (Flint et al., 2010). However, because I was these participants’ former instructor, there was a possibility that they may have felt uncomfortable being honest and open about their experiences in their literacy methods courses or the post-baccalaureate program, particularly if they had negative experiences in one or more of these courses. Throughout the study, I tried to minimize any possible pressures the participants may have felt to participate by framing interview questions and all communication to emphasize that I was interested in learning their honest opinion, and that I planned to use this information to guide future literacy courses in the alternative preparation program. Continually, I shared my experiences as a beginning teacher, and in doing so, the teachers became more comfortable sharing their own struggles and challenges throughout the year.

To make this study mutually beneficial, I wanted to provide a space to give back to the participants, since they were sharing their valuable time. At the beginning of the year I told each teacher that if they desired, I would like to facilitate a book club or study group around a particular text or concept that they chose. I offered this stating that it would be optional for any of the three teachers who were interested. Each teacher expressed interest and named several topics that they would be interested in, all of which centered on the topic of working with ELLs. I subsequently brought several books to Eastside and distributed them among the teachers, asking them to pass them around to one another and think about what they may want to read together. Over several months in the fall, it seemed that the teachers felt too busy and overwhelmed and all admitted they simply had not taken the time to look through the books. By December, Maggie told me she would not be interested in doing a book club this year because she did not feel she
had the time. Although I mentioned the book club again to Annemarie and Winona, they did not follow through, so I decided to let the issue go. Because each teacher has expressed interest in working together again next year, I am hopeful that we might begin the book club next year. This experience was interesting for me as a researcher and teacher educator because I had to realize that if they were not interested, then it was not appropriate to push them into this activity.

I was aware throughout the study that I needed to constantly look at the data to see the kinds of responses I was getting from the teachers to ensure that they were being open and honest. Using an iterative method of data analysis meant that I examined each piece of data quickly after it was collected and then wrote a memo about what I saw immediately after this. If I suspected that the participants were not being as open or honest as possible, I planned to get a second opinion from an additional researcher to conduct interviews with participants, whose names would be removed from the transcripts before I saw them to ensure that their anonymity was secured. This did not turn out to be necessary in this study, but I did share initial transcripts with peers during formal and informal peer debriefing sessions. Given the data I received from the participants, it seemed that their responses were not limited by fear of judgment because I was their former instructor.

It was also necessary to monitor my role as a researcher with close ties to this topic as the study continued. This research question is quite personal and what I learned in many ways was a reflection of my performance as an instructor. I had to be prepared and open to negative or unflattering views that these former students may have had about the preparation program or the literacy courses. I also had to reconcile my personal
feelings and biases about the instruction that I observed in the teachers’ classrooms and even their expressed beliefs about their CLD students, which were often disheartening and disappointing to me. In many ways, the instruction that I observed in each teachers’ classroom was not what I would have hoped for based on the content of their literacy methods courses and beliefs about CLD students myself and the program promotes.

To find a place for these frustrations and disappointments, it was essential to keep a researcher’s journal throughout the study to document my personal thoughts and reflections about what I was seeing in each teacher’s practice, so that I had a place to bracket the biases I had about these topics. I wrote in my researcher journal at least once a week from August to March and left a wide margin on the right side. Throughout the study, I went through the researcher journal and made comments about connections or questions I had about what I wrote and how they fit into to larger research study as a whole.

As an additional layer of reflection throughout this study, I audio-recorded my thoughts, comments, and reflections on my drive home after each visit to Eastside. These recordings were between five and fifteen minutes each. This was a helpful way to document what I had just observed or discussed and reflect on what was initially on my mind. When I got home, I listened to these recordings and took notes of these thoughts in my researcher journal. I found that thinking through these emerging themes assisted me greatly in my initial analysis of the data and memoing of each data source that would then inform the next direction of the study.
Data Collection

Data collection took place over a nine-month period from August 2009 to March 2010. A timeline of all of the events in this study is attached in Appendix B. Data sources included three semi-structured interviews with each participant, one questionnaire, four debriefs with each teacher following lessons, and eight observations of each teacher’s literacy instruction. This triangulation of diverse sources helped me to refine and confirm what I was finding from multiple sources and contributed to the thick description of each teacher’s experience (Creswell, 1998).

Interviews

In August and early September, I conducted the first semi-structured interview (Merriam, 1998) with each of the teachers individually. In a semi-structured interview, the questions allow participants to share their own interpretation of their experiences (Merriam, 1998). The questions were the same across all three participants for this initial interview. In November and December, I interviewed each teacher again. The final interview with each participant took place in March. Questions for the second and third interviews were individualized based on the findings from each teacher, but were still semi-structured. All interviews took place in the teacher’s classroom, either during the teacher’s planning period during the day or immediately after school on a day and time that was most convenient for them. Because we were often limited by their planning period or after school meetings, each interview lasted between twenty and thirty minutes. In the second interview, we were not able to get through all the questions during the designated time, so these questions were finished in December. I audio recorded every interview and transcribed these myself within two weeks each time.
The questions in this first semi-structured interview in August and September are attached in Appendix C. This interview asked the teachers general descriptive questions about their students, goals and plans for literacy instruction, and beliefs and influences on their literacy instruction. It was my hope to learn how the teachers thought about their students and the diversity of learning abilities early in the year. I tried to glean what students or issues they were concerned about, so that I could track their experiences with these issues throughout the year. While I did not ask questions about the post-baccalaureate program specifically, I thought that by asking, “What or who has contributed to your understanding of teaching literacy,” I would see what influenced their practice. I was also hoping to see any possible connections between their responses about strategies or practices that they felt were helpful with their students and their literacy methods courses.

Based on the results of this interview and what I observed in teacher debriefs and observations in August, September, and October, I developed a second interview protocol for each individual teacher. These questions were more structured than the first interview, but still allowed for flexibility within responses (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Some of the questions were the same across the three teachers, such as reviewing the demographics of the classroom in case these had changed, and checking in with the goals the teachers named earlier in the year. Early on in the study, after observations and debriefs with the teachers, I realized that I wanted to know more about the contextual factors that each referred to in our conversations and might be impacting the literacy practices during observations. As a result, I created questions that asked the teachers to talk more about administration and curriculum at the school and county level. I also added questions that
had them consider what they would include if they were designing a literacy methods course in the post-baccalaureate program to assist graduates in negotiating the contextual factors they faced at Eastside. Finally, I developed a question to find out if there had been any changes in their contact with the PDS as the year continued.

Because the teachers taught different grade levels and experienced the context, curriculum, and different students in their own ways, it was important to dig deeper on the issues that were of particular importance to individual teachers. I also designed these interviews to be different because I used this time to conduct initial member checking of what I had learned from the first interview and initial observations and debriefs with them. In this way, I brought up what they said in the first interview and asked them to add to this if they wished, or to think about how this statement or goal changed as the year went on. For example, in the first interview I asked Winona to describe her definition of literacy. In the second interview, one of my questions was, “In the first interview, I asked you to define literacy in your own words. You said you thought that it was reading, writing, the meanings of words, spelling, phonics that all tie together to make literacy. Does that sound like an accurate description of your definition or would you add to that?” This allowed Winona to reflect on this definition and I did this purposefully. This definition was very focused on the Code Breaking aspects of literacy, and I wished to see if when this was repeated to her, she would add other elements of the Four Resource Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) to this. She did not add anything to the definition, which was an important finding that corroborated the other data I had that suggested a limited, Code Breaking focused view of literacy.
In a different way, this individualized interview allowed me to ask the teachers to think about the goals they had established for their own literacy instruction and students’ literacy learning. I asked Annemarie:

One of the goals that you mentioned was to determine how to work with a class like this that has students on many levels. You felt that literacy centers, like guided reading groups and the other literacy centers, would be a way to meet the diverse needs of the class. You also have talked about wanting students to develop an interest or love for reading. How do you see the progression of these goals at this point in the year?

This gave me the opportunity to see how teachers were viewing their goals, and make connections between what I saw and what they felt was important in their classroom.

The third and final interview took place in March, at the end of the data collection period. These interviews were also different for each participant in some ways, but similar in a few questions. I asked to talk again about the demographics of their students and reflect on their goals about literacy and for each student at this point in the year. In this interview, I wanted to learn a little more about each teachers’ schooling experience, as this was something I realized I needed to know more about if I was going to try to understand their individual learning processes as teachers working with CLD students. I brought up the question of the kind of professional development they would like to see take place as part of a PDS again, which was important because as the year went on, all the teachers spoke about wanting to learn more about working with English Language Learners. For example, in the first and second interviews, Annemarie felt that writing was something that her grade level needed help with and Winona had a difficult time naming anything. When I asked this question again in March, all three teachers said that professional development around English Language Learners would be the most beneficial. I think that the quickly increasing ELL demographic at Eastside made an
impact with each teacher by the end of the school year. This type of shift in teachers’ thinking was possible because of the long-term nature of this study. It allowed me to see the kinds of change that happens throughout a school year.

After each interview was recorded and transcribed, I read through the interview, jotting down notes on the right margins. I purposefully left a wide right-hand margin on all transcribed pieces of data for this purpose. After reading through these notes, I created a memo for the interview, typing out my initial thinking about the themes, issues, and questions that I had about the data or the content of the interview. These memos sometimes addressed methodological issues that I was having at the time and wanted to investigate or keep in mind for future data collected. For example, after the first interview in August with Maggie, I noticed that I was inserting a lot of side comments as Maggie spoke, such as ‘uh uh,’ which I felt was not appropriate and I needed to keep in mind for future interviews. I also used these memos as a place to consider the tone of voice I heard in the recording as I was transcribing. In this memo, I note that I am unsure about Maggie’s tone of voice and wondered if she felt the questions were condescending or if the cold she had was affecting this.

Creating new interview questions for each interview and for different participants was a result of this iterative method of research, which allowed me to see new things in each data source as they were collected and memos written on each. As Bogdan & Biklin (2007) said, “Information in the qualitative interview project is cumulative, each interview building on and connecting to the other” (p. 105). These interviews were a key source of data that allowed me to ask specific, focused questions that came up as a result
of previous interviews, observations, debriefs, and the Four Resource Model questionnaire.

**Classroom Observations**

A key element of this study was to examine the teaching practices these novice teachers used with their CLD students. It was essential to observe the teachers in action during their literacy instructional time. Observations took place once a month in the teachers’ classrooms from August to March, for a total of eight classroom observations for each teacher. In addition to these, there were other times throughout the year that I stopped in to visit with the students and teacher when I was at Eastside to see the other participants. Each scheduled observation lasted between two to three hours, during the time of day the teachers designated as their literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening) instructional time.

During these observations, I took descriptive field notes (Bogdan & Biklin, 2007; Creswell, 1998). I used a spiral ringed notebook and divided each page into two columns; the left column was wider and for what I saw take place in the classroom. I attempted to use Bogdan & Biklin’s (2007) description of what to write, “Fieldnotes should be detailed and descriptive but should not rest on assumptions that the researcher makes about the setting” (p.128). To document my own perspective and bias about what I was observing, I used the right column to note my observer comments. Taking descriptive field notes was often challenging. I was typically surrounded by many children who were interested in what I was doing, but because I had to continually remember to focus back on my research questions and focus on those in the observations. The teacher was the main focus of these observations, but I also documented how the students in the
classroom were experiencing the lessons. As the study went on, the topic of working to meet the needs of English Language Learners came up with each teacher, so I began to pay even more attention to these students and their experiences within the literacy classroom during observations. I also noted any incidences where the contextual factors impacted how they experienced the PDS partnership. For example, during two different observations in Maggie’s classroom, there was a student teacher from the alternative preparation program. I noted the student teachers’ interactions with Maggie and her students to document this contact.

Following each observation, I typed out a memo describing the key themes I noticed during that observation. Sometimes, I added additional observer comments on the observations using a different colored pen and noting the date of these notes. After I read through the field notes, I noted questions I wanted to make sure to ask during teacher debriefs or interviews. Because I read through and memoed each observation before the next month’s observation, I used these emerging thoughts to inform what I would look for or ask in a teacher debrief the following month. For example, I noticed that I was focusing my notes during Annemarie’s Literacy centers mostly on her work with students in the Guided Reading center, so I was unclear about exactly what the students were doing in other centers. This memo reminded me to pay more attention to this in the next observation.

**Teacher Debriefs**

In the months where I did not interview the teacher, I conducted debriefing sessions. These sessions lasted between twenty to thirty minutes and took place in the teacher’s classrooms. The topics of these debriefs were open-ended and were different
with each participant throughout the year. These sessions usually began with a question such as, “What is on your mind about your literacy instruction?” or “How do you think things went today?” A sample of these questions may be found in Appendix F. These teacher debriefs were audio recorded and transcribed by myself within two weeks of each debrief.

The teacher debrief was a more informal method of determining what was on each teachers’ mind, particularly the contextual factors that impacted their practice. I explained the purpose of these debriefs to the teachers at the beginning of the year as a time to reflect and discuss what was on their mind in terms of their literacy instruction. It was interesting to see how each teacher interpreted this and used the debriefing sessions in different ways. At the beginning of the school year, Annemarie and I sat down during her planning period immediately following her literacy instructional time. I noticed that she had a small piece of paper with the words “Good” and “Bad” written down, with a few things jotted under each. This reminded me that I needed to remind Annemarie that I was not there to judge good or bad, and that it did not have to be structured as the observation conferences that took place in the post-baccalaureate program, unless she wanted it that way. This was important to remember with Annemarie as the year went on.

Although I typically began the debrief, each teacher became more and more comfortable taking the lead about the topic of conversation as the year went on. Even though I had general questions to discuss how their literacy instruction was going, I found that it was necessary to step back from these at times and allow the teachers to talk about what was on their mind, even if it was not specifically about literacy. These conversations provided the teachers with a time to reflect about things on their mind and
create a stronger rapport between us. For example, Winona was sometimes visibly frustrated when we sat down for our debriefs during her planning period immediately following her literacy instruction. She regularly spoke about contextual factors, such as testing expectations, administration, or support teachers. Several times, she seemed hesitant to talk and I felt she was holding back, so I turned off the recorder. Following these occurrences, I would reflect in my audio recordings and researcher journal about the content of this conversation.

Each teacher used this debriefing time differently throughout the year. At the beginning of the year, Winona used the time to ask me several questions about advice for her instruction. As the year went on, she did very little questioning of me and the majority of the debriefing time was spent with her speaking about the challenges she was facing or students she was concerned about. Maggie occasionally asked me a question about what I did when I taught kindergarten, but the debrief was balanced with her discussion of what was on her mind. Without prompting from me, she often began speaking about she felt the literacy lesson went or progress she was seeing in students such as her Newcomer ELL, Aliah. Annemarie typically used this debrief as a time to reflect on her instruction and ask me about my experiences and opinions about ELLs she was concerned about.

I constantly tried to make sure that the teachers were the ones guiding the conversation during the debriefs. It seemed that each teacher appreciated this time to talk, and Maggie in particular said at the end of the year that it was really nice to have another set of eyes and ears in the classroom to discuss what was going on in a positive manner.
She appreciated the experience and said that it was different than being in the post-baccalaureate program, where she felt she was always being graded.

The teacher debriefs were extremely valuable to the research because it allowed me to interact with the teachers in a natural, comfortable setting and learn what issues or concerns were in the forefront of their minds. In this way, I was able to address my research questions of understanding what contextual factors and experiences these teachers were encountering at a CLD, PDS. After each debrief was transcribed, I read through the transcript and took notes in the right column. Next, I wrote a memo about the key themes and issues I noticed in these debriefs and also noted the behavior and context of each occasion, which allowed me to understand each teachers’ experiences across the entire school year.

**Four Resources Questionnaire**

In January, I decided to create a questionnaire that I distributed to each teacher to complete over the month before my February visit. The questions for this document can be found in Appendix G. This source of data was not in my original research plan, but it became necessary after reviewing the data I collected from August to January. The impetus for this questionnaire came from initial analysis of the observation and interview data. While I observed practices in my monthly visits and the teachers spoke about some of the practices, resources, and strategies they utilized in their literacy instruction, I decided that it would beneficial to have them take some time on their own to write down what they felt they did. I created questions to address each area of the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) to try to get the teachers’ perspective on these practices. After I collected this questionnaire in February, I read through each and wrote memos
about the themes that emerged and questions I had. Some of these questions contributed to the third interview questions in March and the teacher debrief in February. For example, under the Critical Practices question, Annemarie wrote that her students wrote letters to the principal about things at Eastside that bothered them. I wanted to know if these letters were actually sent, since action on these issues is a critical component of critical literacy. I asked Annemarie to talk about this further in the February debrief.

**Data Organization**

After each set of data was collected, I transcribed it within two weeks and wrote memos for each piece to begin initial analysis of what I learned (Charmaz, 2005). Transcribing all of my own data greatly assisted me in getting to know my data intimately and helped me begin the data analysis, as I was listening to the audio recordings over and over. This recursive analysis is what LeCompte & Schensul (1999, p.11) call “in the field analysis,” because I was taking mental notes and jotting down initial themes, issues, or questions to pursue and inform further data collection.

All written and recorded data used the participants’ and school pseudonyms. Hard copies of data were stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office, and electronic documents contained pseudonyms and were kept on a password protected computer. It was helpful for me to organize the data and corresponding data analysis using color coding. Therefore, each participant was assigned a color, and hard copies of their debriefs, observations, and interviews were kept in labeled file folders of their color. After each piece of data was transcribed and memo was finished, I printed out both documents and kept them together in color coded files divided by observations, debriefs, and interviews for each participant. I used a numbering system for each participant to
label the data. Observations were numbered using 100, 200, or 300. For example, Winona’s observations began with 100 and continued as 101 and 102. Annemarie’s observations started with 200 and Maggie 300. Memos for observations were labeled with the number of the observation followed by M, such as 100M. Interviews were labeled as I1, I2, and I3 for each number, followed by the first initial of the participant. Winona’s first interview was I1W. Memos corresponding to these interviews followed this label with a M, so Winona’s first interview was I1W_M. Debriefs were numbered either 500, 600, or 700, with each participant taking one of these numbers. Memos for debriefs were labeled with a M following. For example, Winona’s first debrief was 500_M.

Data Analysis

This study followed the traditions of naturalistic approaches in literacy research, including prolonged interaction with participants and methods that allow for interaction between the participants and researcher, where each can learn from one other (Purcell-Gates, 2004; Schwandt, 2007). In qualitative research, data collection and analysis is an iterative process where the researcher is always going back to data and refining initial ideas, collecting data that allows for different perspectives in analysis, and using a specific method to analyze what is most appropriate for the research question (Creswell, 2003). I used a constant comparative, iterative approach (Schwandt, 2007) to examine and reflect on the emerging data. As Bogdan & Biklin (2007) explain, constant comparative method of analysis means that, “the formal analysis begins early in the study and is nearly complete by the end of data collection” (p. 72). This meant that I examined
the data again and again throughout the year, to continue to refine and understand the experiences of the teachers.

Borrowing from Grounded Theory traditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I went through several iterations of coding the data throughout the year, using my research questions as the key for the themes and the questions I developed on the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999). Grounded Theory and iterative methods of analysis ask the researcher to constantly look for and refine emerging themes and then establish codes from the data (Creswell, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This methodology seeks to “capture the essence of meaning drawn from various situations or contexts” (Bowen, 2006, p. 2).

This analysis process allowed me to develop understandings from the data, rather than limit my findings by having established codes ahead of time that might limit what I saw (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) was a typology for some of the questions I initially asked of the data, particularly the literacy practices, strategies, and resources I observed in the classrooms. Other literacy researchers have also utilized this model as lens for data analysis (Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006). I developed questions to consider when looking at the teachers’ classroom practices, strategies, and methods to see how these reflected each element of the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999). These questions, included in Appendix H, assisted me in looking at what existed in each teachers’ classroom, what was not present, and then consider how the school context impacted this and what a PDS partnership could offer to develop a more complete literacy program. These questions provided a starting point for some of the initial themes that emerged about the classroom
practices and context at Eastside. Using this model as a typology gave me a starting point when looking at the data as I developed open codes. However, as data collection continued, other categories and codes were created as more themes emerged. In this way, the Four Resources Model was not a limiting structure, but a helpful way to review the literacy instruction offered to culturally and linguistically diverse students.

In the following sections, I describe the stages I went through in data analysis using elements of Grounded Theory for determining open coding, axial coding, and selective coding that allowed me to build a story or idea about these teachers’ experiences to answer my research questions (Creswell, 1998; Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006). While I explain each stage, I also provide a table of my monthly analysis procedures throughout the project in Appendix I, because my data analysis was ongoing.

**Open Coding**

Open coding began early in the study, as I examined the data after the first round of data collection. I wrote observer comments during observations, wrote in my researcher journal following time with the teachers, and audio-recorded my thinking during my drive home. I was taking part “in the field data analysis” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p.11) through these methods. After conducting two classroom observations of each teacher in August and September and one interview and debrief with each participant and writing memos on all of these pieces, I began to read through each piece of data and consider the kinds of classroom practices and experiences the teachers were having. To begin to make sense of this initial data, I created a running list of the strategies I saw each teacher use during the classroom observations and compared this list to their discussion of pedagogy in the interviews and debriefs. Using color-coded
highlighting in these documents for each participant, I compared what they named and what they enacted. I created similar charts of what I saw in observations as the focus or content of lessons and a list of the materials or approaches they enacted and spoke about in our conversations.

Creating these comparison charts allowed me to start to see some differences between what the teachers said they did and what I saw in my observations. Because I was only in their classrooms one day a month, I knew that I could not observe them using all the strategies they might use, so their perspective was important to examine. However, I went back to this list as the study went on and continued to compare these named practices compared to enacted practices, which allowed me to see some mismatch between what they said they included in their practice and what they enacted given the testing and curriculum mandates at the school. For example, Winona spoke about using trade books as read-alouds instead of always using the stories from the basal literacy curriculum to teach the required skills. However, I saw little evidence of this in my observations throughout the year. Instead, Winona primarily read texts found in the basal program. This was an important piece of information to note, that if Winona was in fact pulling in other texts to supplement the program, this was not taking place on days that I happened to be there. The last list I began to create was words or phrases I heard them use in their discourse around students, which I labeled as “Beliefs about students.” These beliefs were important to determine so that I could come back to these as the year went on and compare how these expressed beliefs manifested themselves in their teaching.

Next, after the October observations and debriefs were transcribed and memos written, I read through these new pieces of data and compared them to the lists I began in
September using the themes that had emerged about their practices and beliefs. I found myself reviewing my research questions at this point and wanted to start to think about the data in relation to these specific questions. Using large pieces of chart paper and small sticky notes, I wrote each of the three research sub-questions on individual pieces of chart paper and posted them on the walls of my home office. Using the lists I created in September of strategies and beliefs, I wrote down the different literacy strategies, practices, and resources enacted and using a different color of sticky note, these practices that the teachers spoke about. I noted at the bottom of each note where I saw evidence of these so that I could go back to the data to review this. I realized after looking over these strategies that many of them seemed to come from the county selected basal program, so I wrote this question on a different colored sticky note above the strategies enacted to keep in mind. While I hoped to see a connection to the strategies the students enacted to what they had learned in the alternative preparation program, I realized that these were very hard to see. I also wrote this thought on a separate sticky note because this concept was on my mind at this point in the study. On another piece of chart paper, I looked for any evidence or mention of a connection to the PDS partnership and noted these on several sticky notes.

I began to realize as I looked at these questions, that there were still salient themes that had emerged from what I had been reading and re-reading so far in the data collection process. I created another paper labeled “? But Important,” signaling that at this point, I did not yet know what these things meant, but I knew that they were important. I wrote themes that I was seeing and knew that I needed to keep these in mind
as the project continued. Under each concept, I wrote the data source number of where I saw evidence of these themes. These sticky notes said:

- How do grade level differences impact the expectations at Eastside?
- They are feeling pressure from administration and this impacts their teaching.
- They are worried about meeting the needs of ELLs in particular.
- They seem to have a narrow definition of literacy that values Code Breaking.
- Maggie is the only one who speaks about wanting students to make connections to the outside world in literacy.

These concepts assisted me as I crafted topics to discuss in the upcoming teacher debriefs and second interviews in November. I wanted to continue to focus on my research questions, but knew that these themes were important and impacting their literacy practice and experiences at Eastside. During this time, I also created running lists of individual traits and themes that I was seeing in each teacher. What I wrote down were statements and questions that came up from the data I had collected so far. I wrote down several quotes from each teacher that stood out to me. For example, on Winona’s pages, I wrote the quote, “I follow the [county selected basal program], but not to a T,” because I thought that seemed important in the way she viewed her practice and negotiated the expectations of the school. Looking back on this list later on in the project helped me to compare these kinds of statements to what I saw her do throughout the year, which was actually to use the program quite rigidly.
In November, I used the transcribed data and memos from all observations, debriefs, and interviews thus far to start to develop some general open codes. These codes may be found in the Coding Process chart in Appendix I. I referred back to the questions I created on the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999), to consider the strategies teachers were using and discussing in light of this framework. I also used the lists created in September and October to develop ten broad open codes that summarized the themes that were emerging so far in the project. These codes spanned several categories of codes according to Bogdan & Biklin (2007)’s descriptors for codes. Several of these codes were “Strategy codes,” which described the methods or techniques the teachers used with students. One of these strategy codes focused on one element of the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999), Code Breaking, that I saw as influencing much of the practices in each teachers’ classroom. At this point, I decided to focus on only this element of the model because it was so salient in what I was observing and hearing from the teachers. The code ‘Expectations’ was a “Setting/Context” code because it described what was happening at Eastside that was impacting teachers’ literacy instruction. The types of professional development and interaction with the PDS partnership were coded as ‘Professional Development,’ which Bogdan & Biklin (2007) call an “Activity Code.” Lastly, there were several general codes that described “Perspectives Held by Subjects,” which looked at the teachers’ goals for students and evidence of deficit perspectives about learners.

I went through all the data using these ten broad codes and coded the data with these broad themes. Then, I took individual pieces of paper and labeled each with the ten codes I used. Using three different colored pens representing each participant, I wrote
down the key themes in each of these categories from each participant with the number of
the data source next to these. When something was evident in more than one participant, I
use the different ink to note the sources of data these came from. For example, under the
‗Differentiation’ category, I wrote ‘Putting ELLs on Starfall.com,’ and wrote the two
pieces of data where this was evident in Winona’s classroom, and one piece of data from
Annemarie.

In December, I reviewed all of the data and memos I had collected so far, coding
using the general codes. I decided to try to develop a narrative to describe what I was
seeing in each of the teachers’ classroom practices as another layer of open coding. Each
of these portraits were between five and eight pages, and were an attempt to give a
synthesis of the teachers’ literacy instruction, challenges, and interactions with contextual
factors at Eastside. In January, I held a peer debriefing meeting with two colleagues. I
provided clean copies of debrief and interview data for each participant and created a
chart with my research questions for them to take notes on as they read the data for
individual teachers. After they created their own notes about themes they noticed, I
shared the portraits I wrote on each teacher and asked for their thoughts about these. We
had a lengthy conversation, which I audio-recorded, about what they saw in each
teachers’ beliefs about their students, beliefs about literacy, and contextual factors that
were emerging in their discourse. This peer debrief helped me tremendously in thinking
about developing these initial codes into axial codes.

**Axial Coding**

In January, I began to take these existing themes and refined the categories into
eight concepts in which particular codes would fall under. These new broad themes were:
Testing, Support, Beliefs/Visions, Instructional Practices Enacted, Instructional Practices related to preparation program, Requirements, and PDS. Because I was seeing so much evidence of the contextual factors impacting the teachers’ instruction, I was sure to create new categories and codes within this to examine these experiences. I used what Creswell (2003) calls “chunking” data pieces into groups that are associated with each other, such as sentences, phrases, or themes that have constantly come up in the analysis (Creswell, 2003, p. 192). As an example of one of these categories, the theme of ‘Beliefs/Visions’ had the codes: Beliefs about students, Beliefs about literacy, Visions of what teaching would be, Reality of teaching contrasting to vision, Goals for students’ literacy, and Concerns about students. Using the code I created for each of these constructs, I coded all of the data with examples of these. I began to create an electronic spreadsheet during this time to organize each of these codes, provide key examples of this code, and document other evidence of the code. While I was finding examples of these codes throughout the data, I also kept in mind that these codes would need to be made more selective as I developed a grounded theory based on my research questions. However, what I was seeing from coding assisted me in developing questions for the final interviews and debriefs.

As I continued to collect more data and code this using the axial codes I created, I began to struggle with the way in which I was going through the coding process. I knew that these codes needed to be flexible enough to develop into selective codes at the end of this process, and using a spreadsheet was not helpful in looking across all the codes and data to develop a clear picture of what I was learning. I spoke to several colleagues and members of my committee who gave me insight about playing around with the data in a
new way, and determined that this may be a helpful way to refine these axial codes into selective codes.

Selective Coding

As I completed the data collection process in March, I attempted a new way to organize the data to assist me in selective coding. First, I continued to code all data using the axial codes. I then made additional one-sided copies of all the data and took each individual code and wrote these on individual pieces of 8x11 paper. On the top of each piece of paper, I wrote the code, such as ‘TCHGOAL,’ for the teachers’ goals about their teaching. I then went through every piece of data and found every example of this code and cut it out on the clean, one sided copy. All of these examples of the code went on the piece of paper, which I attached loosely with removable tape. I went through this process with every individual code. After this process, I sat down and examined the examples from each code. I re-read the different pieces of data and considered if this code best reflected these examples, and if these needed to be refined or even taken away. If there was a quote or example that the code did not best describe, I began to develop new codes on new pieces of paper and moved the data to these new codes. I went through all of the codes in this way, which caused me to narrow and create new, more selective codes that more clearly described what was happening in the examples. For example, in the code ‘Beliefs about Students,’ I found that there were four constructs that the data in this area was exhibiting and needed to be separated from one another to get a better understanding of the teachers’ thinking. These codes became new categories and individual codes developed under these. Within ‘Beliefs about students,’ I created the codes; Positive progress, Leveling, and Lacking/Not fitting into mold, to describe the ways in which
these teachers were talking and thinking about the individual progress and knowledge of their students.

From this, I took these selective codes and created large index cards for each individual new code. Examples of these index cards are included in Appendix J. I revised my code book and determined that my codes fell into three major categories that explained what was happening in these teachers’ practice; In the classroom, Personal beliefs and attributes, and Outside the classroom factors. I used three different colors of note cards to distinguish the codes in each of these categories. Next, I labeled each card, or in some cases several cards, with the code using a raised tab. Lastly, I mounted the individual quotes and lines of data to the note cards. If the data took up more than one card, I fastened these together with paper clips. This method helped me tremendously in thinking about the major themes, and looking clearly at actual pieces of data as I began to develop a grounded theory about these teachers’ instructional practices, negotiation of contextual factors of curriculum and testing, and relationship with the PDS partnership. I shared these emerging findings in a member check with each teacher at the end of the school year in May, who validated the findings I shared as I result of this analysis.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Reflective of naturalistic, qualitative research, in this study I sought to establish ‘trustworthiness’, rather than the traditional notion of ‘rigor,’ which, according to Lincoln & Guba (1985) reflects the nature of interpretive studies that do not seek the same kinds of definitive, quantifiable answers as quantitative research. According to Lincoln (2010), naturalistic, phenomenological researchers must embrace the differences that exist
between the nature of their work and use different language to accurately describe the
dynamic, personal nature of qualitative research. Lincoln (2010) states:

It [quantitative, positivistic research] is knowledge of a different sort. Phenomenological inquiry has as its goal deep understanding of some phenomenon, with no mandate for prediction or control. Furthermore, we amass and store such knowledge in a different way from the way we accrete theorems, both in our texts and, more importantly, in our minds. Theorems and theories—at least the “scientific method” variety—are logical and somewhat formal structures, extractive, reductive, and characterized by the mathematical rule of parsimony. They are what we might call thin structures: gaunt, bony propositions stripped of the flesh of experience, narratives, warm, rich language, evocative nuances, emotion, or grace. (p. 6)

In light of the personal nature of this study which sought to understand how the participants experience teaching in a CLD school, I use Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) alternative terms for qualitative, naturalistic research; “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability,” and “confirmability” to describe how this study met high standards for qualitative research.

Credibility

Credibility ensures that the statements made about the data reflect what really happened as closely as possible. To ensure credibility, I used triangulation to ensure that there were many data sources supporting or disconfirm my findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Sources of data were interviews, teacher debriefs, observations, and a questionnaire. The first three data pieces had many examples for each participant, so there were multiple examples per participant to refer to throughout the year. As described earlier in the chapter, each source of data was collected and initially analyzed to inform the future directions of the study.

A major strength of this study was the prolonged interaction with participants and long-term observation at Eastside. I believe that I met what Lincoln & Guba (1985)
define as prolonged engagement; “The investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the ‘culture,’ testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or the respondents, and building trust” (p. 301). I had an existing relationship with each participant, which needed to be addressed in light of possible bias. However, I believe that these possible issues overrode the benefits of knowing the participants as I did. While it had been one or two years since I had taught the participants in the alternative preparation program, we still had a rapport and I was able to use what I knew about the teachers to build trust with them early in the study. Additionally, the prolonged engagement allowed me to learn much about the environment and culture of Eastside through observations, debriefs, and interviews, that informed my understandings of what each participant was encountering and speaking of throughout the year.

Coupled with a long-term data collection period, persistent observation meant that I observed similar situations throughout the year, which allowed me to compare and contrast instruction and experiences throughout the year and gain a broader perspective on the contextual factors at Eastside that shaped teachers’ practice. This also allowed me to learn from the data and each participant in particular, so I did not come into the classrooms with a set perspective of what would happen, but could instead allow what I was seeing each month shape and guide the future directions each month. The data collection schedule afforded me time in between each observation, debrief, and interview every month so that I could transcribe and memo each source and still have time to consider the themes and issues that I observed. This method allowed me to engage in ongoing analysis throughout the study. I feel that this was important because I did not
feel the need throughout the year to rush the analysis and come to any final conclusions until I had time to go through many iterations of analysis and allow the emerging finds to marinate awhile.

Merriam (1998) said, “What is being observed are people’s constructions of reality—how they understand the world” (p. 203). I am just one person with my own perspective and biases, so these constructs surely shaped the ways in which I saw the events in the classrooms. However, I attempted to bracket my own biases in several ways. Two of these methods were to engage in member checks and peer debriefing sessions, which helped assure that the statements I made about the participants’ experiences were simply my interpretation of the events. Throughout the study, I presented emerging findings to the participants during interviews and in a final member check meeting in May 2010. During the second and third interviews, I shaped questions to include repetitions of previous responses and asked the participants to confirm or change these to help me understand their experiences. At the end of the study, I shared written analysis of my key findings and asked for their feedback about these to ensure that they were being accurately represented. I held several informal peer debriefing sessions with two fellow doctoral students to talk through initial thoughts, challenges, and themes I was noticing. In January, I held a peer debriefing session at my house where I presented initial findings and coding. These peers helped to give me new perspectives on the data and clarify my coding to ensure that these findings were clear and appropriate given the data and descriptions.
Dependability

Because this study and particularly the data analysis was carried out by myself, rather than an instrument, it was subject to faults that lie within human’s imperfections. This study of three participants would not be replicable in the sense that even if one used the same methods with different participants at the same point in their careers working in similar schools, the results would not be the same because each of the participants’ experiences are unique given the particular time, context, and personal attributes. However, the methods I used could also be adapted by others to explore this issue, and would be important additions to the body of literature on beginning teachers working in diverse schools. Therefore, in this study, the term ‘dependability’ is more appropriate than ‘reliability,’ to describe the ways in which I believe this study was conducted and described so that it could be informative for others interested in investigating similar constructs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To ensure dependability in this study, there was triangulation of various data sources collected over a long period of time. The data sources, specifically the classroom observations, included thick description (Merriam, 1998) so that a reader could follow the events taking place in each teachers’ classrooms and believe that the findings I propose are supported by this data. My detailed description of my ongoing data analysis throughout the study should also support the understanding and trust that the findings I propose are built on substantial time and energy dedicated to uncovering multiple perspectives and events in these teachers’ classrooms. An additional resource, my researcher’s journal, also allowed me to bracket my position as the researcher and focus as closely as possible on my researcher questions, allowing me a space to reflect on what
I was not seeing and make connections to my own experiences. Peer debriefing sessions with colleagues and member checking throughout the study also provided a space for others to, “examine the product- the records- from the point of view of their accuracy” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 318). Inviting others to give feedback on my thinking and challenge assumptions or conclusions I was making throughout the study helped to ensure that the findings were not simply a product of my own individual beliefs.

Transferability

The sample number of three participants does not suggest that these findings are transferable to all populations. However, that was not the goal of this research, reflective of a qualitative, naturalistic perspective on research. This study examined three teachers working at the same, CLD, PDS elementary school, to explore their individual experiences in the hopes of sharing how their experiences can inform teacher preparation programs and inservice support for new teachers. Eastside Elementary is experiencing many of the same challenges and shifts as other diverse schools around the country and there are an increasing number of post-baccalureate programs preparing new teachers for urban schools. This “typicality” is what Merriam (1998, p. 211) suggests can make naturalistic studies transferable because the context and participants in this study are not unlike others in similar situations. In this way, there are implications from these findings of three teachers. Thus, it is appropriate to consider that their experiences may align in some ways with other beginning teachers. Thick description of each participants’ experiences and the context at Eastside Elementary should inform others interested in understanding how these experiences may inform the constructs intersecting in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because of the long-term nature of the data collection and
multiple data sources, these findings have a place in the literature and can inform researchers interested in uncovering other new teachers’ experiences in CLD schools.

**Confirmability**

I used three methods within this study to support that the findings I propose are appropriate and not simply a product of my own beliefs; a researcher journal, researcher memos, and triangulation. The researcher journal was a place to describe the events that took place in the study, so that others could read and understand the process, methods, and modes of analysis. Researcher memos also provided a space for my own interpretations, emerging thoughts, and documentation of the events at each stage of the study. Triangulation of data sources, as described earlier, meant that there was a variety of data, collected consistently over a long range of time, so that I was not making conclusions about events or themes based on narrow set of data.

**Limitations of the Design and Issues of Bias**

Using the elements of trustworthiness outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1995), the findings of this study may be used to inform teacher education programs and inservice professional development. However, as with any naturalistic, qualitative study, the experiences of these three teachers are not meant to describe every beginning teacher in CLD schools. While there are many things to be learned through this long-term, in-depth study, the small number of participants and context of one particular school, does not suggest that each teacher or school’s experiences are the same. Through this study, my aim was not to make broad, generalizable statements about beginning teachers’ literacy instruction in CLD. Instead, I hope that the results of this study contribute to a growing body of literature on this topic that urges teacher educators, schools, and policy makers to
consider the ways in which teachers are prepared for the quickly changing demographics of schools.

While any research study involves issues of bias, this was particularly important because of my previous connection to these teachers and the alternative preparation program. My role as a researcher who also taught these beginning teachers in their literacy methods courses offered me a unique perspective, but one that had to constantly be aware of and bracket what I knew were my biases (Creswell, 2003). It was important to me that the participants in this study be graduates of the program I worked with and specifically took the courses I taught, because I believe as the International Reading Association (2007) suggested, that literacy teacher educators need to be reflective and critical of their teaching. I attempted to maintain my biases through the standards to establish trustworthiness for qualitative research outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985); credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability, as outlined in the above sections. To address my own biases, I kept a researcher’s journal throughout the study as noted in Appendix A and B, and attempted to separate my observations from my personal interpretation or feelings about on each piece of data. I employed two outside colleagues to help read the data and check the analysis I was conducting to help me address these biases. These colleagues were doctoral students and recent graduates who are also interested and knowledgeable on issues surrounding teaching literacy to diverse populations and closely involved with teacher education. Member checking throughout the project was another way that I invited the participants to help guide me so that my own interpretations allowed for their voices to come through.
Throughout the study, I sought to maintain the most ethical standards of research. Each piece of data collected was stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office. All participants were assigned a pseudonym and any writing used this pseudonym. As a researcher, I attempted to continuously maintain a high level of professionalism and organization in my interactions with students, teachers, and within the school. This included always speaking and acting in a professional manner. Being on time, coming to scheduled observations and interviews prepared, and being mindful of the participants’ other duties and responsibilities was essential because they were giving me so much by being a part of this research study. I hope, that as they all expressed, that the process of working together throughout this year, not only benefited me as a researcher learning about their experiences, but also provided them some time for reflection and continued learning.

**Conclusion**

This research sought to fill a need in the literature to understand what graduates of a post-baccalaureate program experience when teaching literacy to CLD students at a PDS. Exploring what impacts beginning teachers that are prepared in a post baccalaureate preparation program to teach diverse students is timely and necessary to address the current needs in education. It is extremely important for instructors and programs to be aware of what is helpful to teachers, so that they can make the most of the courses that they teach and understand the kinds of professional development inservice teachers could benefit from. In the following chapter, I describe the context of the study, including the community, school, and classroom environments at Eastside. I also provide specific
information about Winona’s, Annemarie’s, and Maggie’s classrooms, students, and literacy instruction.
CHAPTER 4
SETTING AND CONTEXT OF STUDY

Inner Ring Suburb

Eastside Elementary, the setting for this study, is experiencing the changes and challenges that schools in many areas of the country are facing. Located just off a busy four-lane highway that travels through several counties and runs from downtown to the northeast suburbs of a large Southeastern city, changing economic and cultural demographics impact the school and local community. The pressure of testing and curricular requirements, along with a myriad of issues in the school system affected the experiences of both the teachers and students at Eastside. This is not unlike other beginning teachers’ experiences in CLD schools (Grossman & Thompson, 2004; Ogawa et al., 2003).

Schools that are labeled urban have a high population of students from low socioeconomic households and often experience more accountability and policing measures that dictate the kinds of curricula and testing that take place at a school (Books, 2004; Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009). However, the changing demographics and definition of urban areas in particular led to a redistribution of these same issues, as residents displaced from urban areas move outside the city limits, due to gentrification and urban revitalization (Wells, Holmes, Revilla, & Atanda, 2009). Communities once considered to be urban, with a high population of African American or Latino residents of lower socioeconomic status, are now attracting residents of higher incomes in many cities, as urban revitalization becomes the trend. Seeking lower cost housing or better schooling opportunities for their children, many minority groups have flocked to Inner
Ring Suburbs, which Wells et al. (2009) define as an area just outside a major metropolitan area bordering on what is considered the suburbs, historically populated largely by mostly white, middle to upper class residents. These Inner Ring Suburbs now experience many of the same trends previously found in urban areas, such as a diverse ethnic or racial population that slowly becomes homogenous over time, as Caucasian and Asian residents move out of these areas and to further reaching suburban areas.

The community surrounding Eastside Elementary is an example of this trend that makes it an appropriate place to examine the experiences of three beginning teachers who graduated from a program designed to prepare them for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Until approximately twenty years ago, the community was predominately white and middle class. The population shifted, as Wells et al. (2009) describes often happens, as many African Americans moved into this area. Over time, some of the Caucasian residents left this area to northern suburbs, creating an Inner Ring Suburb of African Americans in the community around Eastside. This county, along with neighboring communities, has gone from majority Caucasian, to majority minority according to the most recent initial Census data. The student body of Eastside Elementary is majority African American. Some of these students are second or third generation African, whose parents or grandparents moved from African counties such as Ethiopia, Sudan, and Nigeria. There is also a growing number of recent immigrants or second-generation students of Caribbean, Vietnamese, Thai, Iranian, Indian, and Burmese heritage.

In *Amazing grace*, journalist Jonathan Kozol took the New York City Subway from one end of town to the other and writes:
The Number 6 train from Manhattan to the South Bronx makes nine stops in the 18-minute ride between East 59th Street and Brook Avenue. When you enter the train, you are in the seventh richest congressional district in the nation. When you leave, you are in the poorest (Kozol, 1995, p. 3).

While not as marked as the disparities Kozol describes, driving the thirteen miles on the four-lane highway beginning in the central, downtown area of this city to the Inner Ring suburb where Eastside is located, one cannot help but notice how the surroundings and environmental print change. Beginning downtown, which is experiencing an ongoing urban revitalization described by Wells et al. (2009) and others, includes many new apartment homes and condominiums. Continuing on this road on the outskirts of town, one drives past several historic neighborhoods considered highly desirable to live in and whose schools are well regarded based on high test scores and the real estate values in these areas. Even with the recent economic downturn, where many areas in this city have seen home values plummet, these neighborhoods have held their value or in one neighborhood’s case, home values rose. One of the two school systems encompassing these communities shares a school system with Eastside Elementary.

As one continues driving further into this county and crosses over the Interstate that is the unofficial border of the city limits and suburbs, the landscape starts to change from less residential to commercial. Businesses like restaurants and auto repair shops are housed in older buildings. Homes in this community are primarily ranch style houses built between the 1950s and 1970s. In 2007, over half of the residents of this community were Caucasian, the average income was just above the average for this large county, and the median age was slightly above the county average at 42.7. However, there is evidence of the change in demographics in this area. Turning off the main highway onto the street where Eastside is located, one drives past several neighborhoods of modest ranch-style
homes with signs advertising homes for rent, as well as older apartment complexes between these neighborhoods. Going past the school to the East and intersecting another large road that extends for many miles, there are also several new home communities, as well as more apartment complexes.

Most of the students at Eastside Elementary live in the older apartment complexes or rent homes in the surrounding neighborhood. Some of these surrounding apartment complexes experienced high levels of crime during this study. One teacher reported that several of her students’ families chose to leave the community because they had been robbed or assaulted in their homes. A kindergarten student who was a recent immigrant from the Sudan reported that the landlords of her apartment complex refused to come in a timely manner to fix the door to her family’s apartment and some of their belongings were stolen.

The school system that incorporates Eastside Elementary is one of largest in this Southeastern state and has garnered much local and national attention over the years for a variety of troubles with budget, leadership, and administration. The county has had two Superintendents in the past five years, and the most recent Superintendent and others in the county office were involved in a financial scandal that led to the Superintendent being placed on administrative leave. As with many school systems in this state and nation, there have been many layoffs of teachers and administrative staff, furloughs to cut salaries, and program cuts that impact the support staff at schools in this district. Earlier in the school year, the now-dismissed Superintendent received a pay raise at the same time as salary cuts for teachers were proposed for the following school year. A protest by teachers in the county began. One course of action was to wear black on a designated day
each week to show their disapproval for the salary increase for the Superintendent. At some schools in the county, teachers were reprimanded for these actions by administration.

**Eastside Elementary: A Closer Look Inside**

Walking into Eastside Elementary, which opened in 1967, one immediately feels the age of the building and how a population of almost 800 students strains the physical space and staff’s workload. Many times as I entered the school to sign in, I was briefly or not at all greeted by one of the two office staff, who would momentarily raise their eyes in the midst of what they were doing. In the first month of the school year, one of these school secretaries told me that it was the craziest beginning of the year she had ever experienced, as several new attendance and data programs were introduced and subsequently experienced technical difficulties to which she said there was no support from the county. There were many instances during the school year where there would be three to four parents in the office, needing to talk to someone and seemingly waiting for quite a time. One of the office staff spoke Spanish, but because most of the English Language Learners’ families were not native Spanish speaking, it appeared that there parents who sometimes struggled to communicate with the office staff.

According to Eastside Elementary data, in the 2000-2001 school year 95% of the student body was African American. This demographic seems to include the many students who are first or second generation African, from countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan. The demographics of this area have been slowly shifting over the past ten years to include more immigrant families, from a diverse number of countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. In fact, a neighboring community in the same county has gained national
attention for their diverse immigrant and refugee population. By the 2005-2006 school year, 5.5% of the student population received English as a Second Language (ESOL) services. According to the most recent data available, in the 2008-2009 school year, the population of English Language Learners rose to 9.1%, and this number was quickly increasing in the 2009-2010 school year. Many of the newly enrolled students during the year of the study were English Language Learners (ELLs), and in all three classrooms in this study, the teachers reported having the highest numbers of ELLs thus far in their careers. The impact of this rapid immigrant population impacted every facet of Eastside Elementary. To support these students, there was one full time and several part-time ESOL teachers.

The school environment at Eastside does not reflect this wide diversity of student backgrounds. Entry hallways are lined with information in English about the school rules and important dates, as well as information about the Book of Month, a loosely organized district initiative where a copy of the same children’s book is given to each classroom teacher each month, who is expected to read and incorporate this book into their literacy instruction in some way throughout this month.

The literacy curriculum at Eastside centered on the basal curriculum adopted by the county. There was literacy assessment that teachers in grades first through fifth were required to give to students at the beginning and end of each six-week unit of the basal program. Pre and post test data from these ‘benchmark tests’ were submitted at the beginning and end of a unit to the Instructional Coach at Eastside and then the county.

The materials from the program available to teachers included teacher manuals for each six week unit of study, workbooks and textbooks for each student, big books for
primary grades, large charts of poems, Compact Discs of poems and stories from the program, small decodable readers for use in small reading groups, and magnetic letters and boards for student use. The content of the basal program aligned closely with the literacy standards for this particular state, and emphasized the tenants of reading as recommended by reports by groups such as the National Reading Panel: comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and vocabulary. The teacher manual cited these reports and referenced examples of activities in weekly plans that addressed each of these areas. Daily lessons in the teacher manual were comprised of individual thirty-minute lessons and included the specific language and questions the teacher should use when teaching these skills. Each six-week unit of study was organized around a set of skills and lessons outlined in the teacher’s manual emphasized these throughout the week. These lessons were designed to address each of the five areas of reading, but were represented through individual lessons on different concepts. The students’ reading textbooks were comprised of stories that the students were to read throughout the week. The vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency concepts included in the lessons from the teacher’s manual were tied to these stories. These were often abridged or adapted versions of trade books by well-known children’s book authors across a range of genres.

Much like the student demographics of this school, the school system’s requirements have changed quite drastically in the last few years. In this particular county, there were many new curricula and assessment requirements placed upon the schools, in addition to pressure to perform on tests and make Adequate Yearly Progress. To meet these goals, the county was trying out different curricula, technology, and
created additional assessments such as the Benchmark Exam designed to raise student achievement.

In addition to these changes, Eastside received a new principal the year before the study began. Many of the teachers have been at Eastside much of their careers, and the previous principal had a lengthy career at this school before retiring. Having served a lengthy tenure at this school, the teachers felt that the relationships she had built over time with teachers made her extremely successful. The current principal was in her second year during this research study and was in the process of developing relationships with teachers and understanding the school culture. It was unclear if this was this principal’s first appointment as principal. In addition to the newness of the principal, other administrative members such as the Assistant Principal and Instructional Coach had changed in the last two years. In one of the teacher’s words, “He [the Assistant Principal that left] was the last voice of the old administration. So, anything that was before that… is gone.” Thus, Eastside was encountering several new changes all at the same time, from the new principal to the addition of new requirements by the county. These changes impacted the teachers greatly.

According to the teachers, the change in administration was a difficult transition for many Eastside teachers, according to the three teachers. Teachers remarked that leadership styles were very different and the expectations from administration were not always clear to them. There were many new requirements coming from the county office school system, such as a new computerized grade book and attendance system that experienced technical issues or the new curriculum. The teachers wished for more assistance with these changes. How the principal negotiated and reported these various
requirements from the county seemed to be understood by the teachers as not providing the kinds of support they needed to understand and implement these changes. According to one teacher,

The environment here is very different [than with the last principal]. It’s always something else, or this has changed to that. And it does affect everything else.

Based on their experience with the previous principal, the teachers seemed to expect more assistance with these new requirements. There was a general consensus that the county as a whole was not providing the kind of instructional or professional support that the teachers needed, especially in the wake of layoffs and budget cuts for programs. These many requirements and job uncertainty took their toll on the teachers and were often a topic of our debrief meetings. One teacher reported that at Eastside, “I think that in general, the morale is extremely low.”

Just like any entity, Eastside Elementary is reflective of, and impacted by, all the dynamic pieces that work within it and around it. This ever-changing community and county context is not unlike many around the nation that are experiencing a rising English Language Learner population and a new and different kind of White Flight, as these Inner Ring Suburbs become the new frontier for diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups. The school system was dealing with these many changes and attempting to raise student achievement by implementing new curricula and assessments that placed additional pressures on the administration and teachers. The expectations and challenges presented to schools and thus teachers who work with students who traditionally struggle on standardized tests often creates a challenging atmosphere. As the local community’s current population shifts from middle class, older residents to immigrant and lower socioeconomic residents living in the surrounding apartment communities and renting the
homes in the neighborhood, Eastside is continuing the feel these growing pains and challenges. Learning about the experiences of beginning teachers who work in diverse school communities can inform all the stakeholders involved in K-12 schools, diverse communities, and teacher preparation programs.

**Eastside Elementary: A Professional Development School**

As described in previous chapters, a Professional Development School is an affiliation between a university and a K-12 school. According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Standards for Professional Development Schools (NCATE); “They [PDS] are learning environments that supports candidate and faculty development within the context of meeting all children’s needs” (NCATE, 2001). The activities within a Professional Development School may include university courses taught on site at the K-12 school, student teaching and internship experiences for preservice teachers, professional development provided to inservice teachers, grants provided for teacher development and instructional endeavors, research conducted on and with the school, and support offered to students by university personnel.

There are four levels that NCATE created to describe the process of establishing PDS partnerships. These levels are; “Beginning,” “Developing,” “At Standard,” and “Leading” (NCATE, 2001, p. 7). In the Beginning level, plans are created to develop the goals and activities within a PDS partnership. At the Developing level, some of these activities are in place, but all key stakeholders and institutions may not be fully involved with the mission of the PDS. During the At Standard level, all collaborating institutions are on board and involved with the goals of the PDS and change is taking place that impacts student learning. Finally, the Leading stage describes a fully sustainable
partnership in which all personnel and institutions enact the mission of the PDS relationship, creating broader impact outside the initial institutions.

The PDS partnership at Eastside began in 2008 as part of a large national grant focused on improving teacher preparation and instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Partnered with a large, public university and alternative preparation program in Early Childhood Education for this grant, the local school system chose the schools that would be a part of the PDS relationship. The year that this study took place was this school’s second year of the partnership. According to NCATE’s stages of PDS partnerships (2001), Eastside Elementary was between the ‘Beginning’ and ‘Developing’ levels. Because interactions with Professional Development School initiatives were limited to only some school and university personnel at this point in the partnership, it seems that the school could be categorized as somewhere in between these stages, with future plans for the following school year taking the school into the Development phase fully.

In the first and second year of the PDS partnership, there were several partnership activities taking place at Eastside; however two of the three teachers in this study were not aware of or strongly involved with these. It seemed that the PDS partnership was not part of the administration’s discourse with teachers, and what teachers knew about these activities came from word of mouth. These activities included hosting student teachers in classrooms, holding field-based university courses at Eastside, and mini-grants available to teachers. When asked about the PDS partnership, both Winona and Annemarie knew little about what this might mean to them as teachers. At the beginning and at the end of the school year, Winona expressed that she knew “nothing” about the PDS opportunities
at Eastside other than having a student teacher. Early in the school year, Annemarie said it was not often mentioned around the school, but hoped that it would offer professional development opportunities, “I really don’t know a whole lot about it. I guess I was kind of under the impression that maybe we would be getting more staff development you know from [the university], which I think everybody here could benefit from.”

One of the most visible PDS activities was hosting student teachers from the alternative preparation program at Eastside. Years prior to the formal PDS partnership, Eastside Elementary regularly hosted student teachers from this program and this practice continued during the year of this study. As a result, there were a number of teachers currently at Eastside that completed the alternative preparation program, some who did their student teaching at Eastside. It is interesting to note that neither Annemarie or Winona had any student teaching experiences at Eastside, but were interested in teaching there based on what they had heard from classmates in the program who had. There were a number of student teachers placed in classrooms during the year of the study.

Winona, the first grade teacher, hosted a student teacher in the fall semester of 2009. This student teacher was originally slated to work with the teacher who resigned at the end of the summer to work at a private school, so Winona was quickly asked if she would be a cooperating teacher, without the opportunity to participate in the cooperating teacher training that took place in the summer as part of the PDS partnership. Early on, Winona seemed hopeful that having an extra set of hands would help with the many needs of her diverse class. However, as the semester continued it seemed that having the student teacher was not a positive experience, as she spoke about the time and energy it was taking to guide the student teacher and her hesitancy in allowing the student teacher
to take over for two weeks. This role reversal process meant that the student teacher would be responsible for all instructional and classroom responsibilities for two weeks, while Winona observed and assisted when necessary. There seemed to be some communication and possibly personality conflicts between the two. Winona believed that the student teacher felt that she was asking her to do extra work that other student teachers did not have to do, while Winona felt that she was trying to help prepare her and wanted to make sure that her students were learning what she felt they needed to know.

The other two teachers, Maggie and Annemarie, were eager to have what they considered an extra set of hands that could benefit student learning. Both teachers were slated to have student teachers in the fall of the following school year and planned to take part in the cooperating teacher training that would take place over the summer as part of the PDS partnership.

There were several field-based university courses offered in the two years of the PDS partnership. Annemarie and Maggie had some contact with current students in these courses. Annemarie spoke positively about student teachers from one of these courses who came in several times to observe her teaching Math and help her students during the first year of the partnership. Maggie had individual student teachers come in periodically during the spring of this study to observe and assist students. Throughout the year, she also had contact with different student teachers, which she would talk to informally about the program and give advice. Annemarie had also been invited to speak to a field-based university class, along with other graduates of the program during the first year of the PDS partnership, to answer questions and give advice about being a beginning teacher.
Maggie, a second year kindergarten teacher, had the most knowledge and frequent contact with the opportunities teaching at a PDS could offer. She attributed this to being the newest graduate of the alternative preparation and staying in contact with several of her professors from the program. Maggie knew that there was tutoring by the university as part of a field-based course taking place with fifth graders at Eastside, but said, “I don’t know if people that weren’t involved with [the university] would know about it, you know what I mean?” She also expressed a hope that more opportunities like this tutoring could benefit her students, as she worked with her class of twenty kindergarten students with no paraprofessional and said “It’s always great to have volunteers in the classroom.”

As part of the PDS partnership, mini-grants were offered to teachers and assistance was provided in writing and receiving these. In the first year of the partnership, Maggie and another Kindergarten teacher took the initiative to write and subsequently receive a mini-grant to support the ‘Awesome Outdoors Club’ that they led. The grant supported planting a garden and building a fence, which the club used in their activities. Maggie was invited to a one-day retreat for PDS personnel that had received the mini-grants, where she returned from with more ideas about ways that mini-grants could help the school. She appreciated the time at the retreat and said, “That was fun to have a day to be with adults and talk about stuff and get refreshed.” She and another teacher who was a graduate of the alternative preparation program decided to write another mini-grant for a girls’ mentoring club they wanted to start at Eastside.
Introduction of Eastside Teachers

Maggie

There is no doubt walking into Maggie’s kindergarten classroom that her kindergarteners are encouraged to participate in everything around them. Students are talking, dancing, or working busily and their teacher is constantly moving around, trying to work with many students throughout any lesson. The classroom is set up with a large carpet and easel as the focal point, where much of the instruction takes place. On the wall next to the carpet, there is a large calendar, which is used to teach math concepts. To the side of the carpet area are three rectangular shaped tables, where students work independently in literacy centers and a kidney shaped table near the door where Maggie works with students in groups or individually. To the right is a small computer area, with four computers and a wall of hangers where students store their coats and book bags. On the other side of the room is a reading corner, with many pillows and beanbag chairs and a bookshelf with a selection of books that Maggie rotates. There are a set of cubbies that hold individual book boxes, filled with a variety of books that Maggie has chosen for each student. There is also a dramatic play area, with a kitchen and stage in which students ‘play house’ or create puppet shows. Near this area is also the home of the class pet, a guinea pig named Betty.

In the year of this study, Maggie was in her second year of teaching kindergarten at Eastside Elementary. Born and raised in a small town in Pennsylvania, Maggie went to a small private school until entering a small public high school. The community where she was raised was majority Caucasian like herself, with a small African American population. After graduating with a business degree, Maggie decided to move to the city
because she wanted to live in a bigger city. Before beginning the alternative preparation program, she was a nanny and then a preschool teacher for two and three year olds and knew when she began the program that she wanted to teach kindergarten. As a student in the program, Maggie referred to her previous preschool teaching experience often and was an engaged and motivated student who performed well.

Maggie completed her first semester of student teaching in kindergarten at Eastside. Early in the final semester of the program, she was offered a full time teaching position at Eastside Elementary before she was slated to complete her certification requirements that May. In this alternative preparation program, students who wish to take a full time teaching position while they are completing the program must be approved by faculty, who use performance in coursework and field placements to make their decisions. Maggie was unanimously allowed to take a third grade position at Eastside. Although third grade was not her preferred grade level, she was told by the principal that she would move her into kindergarten the following year, which she did. I was her university supervisor during this semester and came to observe her several times during those months as a third grade teacher. Maggie took on this new responsibility along with being a full time student tremendously well, and was one of the most confident novice teachers I had ever worked with.

**Maggie’s kindergarten classroom.** The demographics of Maggie’s kindergarten classroom were primarily African American, but included five African born or second-generation African students, one girl from Vietnam, and one Caucasian boy. Two of these students received ESOL support. Maggie’s class experienced a lot of transition, and by the end of the school year, eleven out of the original twenty students remained. She was
concerned that the crime in the area contributed to this transience and named it as one of the hardest parts of the year, because she felt that it made it difficult to have a strong classroom community with so many changes. Maggie felt that her students were very ‘grown up’ and knew much more about life’s challenges than any five or six year old should.

Now, in her second full year of teaching in her preferred grade level, Maggie seemed to truly enjoy teaching kindergarten and was generally confident, yet reflective about her practice. At the beginning of the year she said, “I’m developing [as a teacher]. You know, you learn every day what you need to improve on. Some days are better than others.” She spoke often about loving her energetic and diverse students, despite being the only teacher in a room with twenty students. When asked to describe the students in her class at the beginning of the year, Maggie acknowledged that she it would be a busy year with her majority male and active class, but repeated that they were “awesome” and “really smart.”

Maggie had general goals for her whole class, which were to help students make progress from where they started at the beginning of the year. When talking about her goals for the students’ literacy learning, she said she wanted students to, “feel empowered and think of themselves as readers and writers, and have fun while doing it.” Classroom community was a concern throughout the year, and Maggie felt that activities such as Morning Meetings, Daily News and Announcements, and sharing in the Author’s Chair, helped to build community and allowed students, in her words to “show what they know,” by taking part in these whole class shared reading and writing activities.
Within these broad goals for students, Maggie also frequently spoke about hopes she had for individual students that she was worried about, or felt that she could push to do even more. Maggie had two ELLs in her classroom, including one girl who had recently moved from the Sudan and had trouble adapting to her new school environment in the first month. The student, Aliah, would frequently walk out of the classroom without asking for permission, go to a table and lay her head down during instruction, or try in vain to communicate with other students, resulting in frustration by both parties. During this time, Maggie was patient and confident Aliah would be fine given some time, and sought out information from a variety of parties on ways to work with her. A few months after Aliah entered the classroom Maggie said:

So, if I could just get to where she should be. My goal for her is to be on Level A on the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment), which is just able to point out words. Then I would feel very successful with her. (Maggie, Interview, 12/9/2009)

Towards the end of the school year she was pleased, yet apprehensive, about Aliah’s progress:

I mean, she’s speaking in full sentences, which is good, according to the ESOL standards, she’s doing exactly what she should be doing, but I just have, like higher standards. We have six or seven weeks of school left and I’d still like to push her a bit more (Maggie, Interview, 3/23/2010).

Another student that was a frequent concern for Maggie was Kevin, an African American male who was repeating kindergarten and had also been in Maggie’s class the year before. Maggie was concerned that Kevin had special needs that prevented him from retaining information, specifically in the area of reading and writing. She had referred him to be tested the previous year, but the process was moving along slower than she hoped. After holding several meetings with parents and other support staff, Maggie was disappointed when December of his second year in kindergarten came and he had not
been tested, which she said “should be illegal.” These kinds of individual goals for students were frequently a topic of conversation for Maggie, both with students she was concerned about and students that were excelling in the classroom.

**Daily schedule.** Maggie felt that she centered her curriculum on her students’ needs and interests. She worked closely with the other kindergarten teachers on lessons that were thematic and integrated content areas. These thematic units used Science and Social Studies concepts, such as Weather, Plants, or Presidents, and incorporated reading and writing activities on these topics. Most units went across one to two weeks, and often mimicked a holiday or event that aligned with this theme. For example, in February near President’s Day, the theme was Presidents and voting. Maggie read aloud a different book each day, such as a book about presidents’ pets and a non-fiction book that explained the role of the presidency. Shared writing and independent literacy activities often corresponded with this theme and in this week, students were asked to write about who they thought should be president.

Early in the year, the Kindergarten teachers were asked to create a curriculum map to address how they would cover the state standards that year, which Maggie said she used as a guideline, but changed her instruction when she saw students having difficulty with a particular concept. She particularly worked closely with another kindergarten teacher, who was her cooperating teacher as a student teacher, and referenced her as one of her primary sources for the activities and resources she used, such as the sight word songs created by the teacher. These songs were chants spelling each sight word to a certain rhythm and putting them into a sentence.
The focus of literacy instruction throughout the year was to introduce students to the sounds letters make, letter names, and how letters are used to write words and tell stories. Maggie used Daily News and Announcements every day as a centerpiece of the daily literacy instruction, a letter written on chart paper to students talking about what they would be studying in literacy that day. This letter was created in front of the students, who assisted her and gave her input as she wrote. She felt that Daily News helped with not only seeing how letters and sounds create words, but that print carries a message. Maggie read big books and trade books aloud daily, along with small reading groups to focus on comprehension, which was something she wanted to work on; “I didn’t do as much comprehension as I should have. So I want to focus more on not just the reading, but the comprehension part of it.”

The collaborative grade level lesson plans centered on a ‘Letter of the Week’ approach to teaching letters and sounds. Each teacher was to work on the same letter, as dictated by the pacing chart the grade level created early in the year. Maggie used elements of the ‘Alphafriends’ program, which was a published program made up of animals correlating to the sounds of each letter (i.e. ‘Sammy Snake’) to teach letter sounds and letter names. This was a program she had sought out through online research and purchased a few basic materials herself because she was interested in finding a way to help students match the sounds letters make to something they would remember and be able to manipulate. Each week, Maggie would introduce the individual letters, focusing on the name of the animal and the sound it makes before the name of the letter. She felt that students enjoyed this program, and built up excitement and interest by making a large production of having students guess what Alphafriend they would meet each
Monday, and creating a story around the animal. Students referred to these Alphafriends often and used them as they stretched out to hear the sounds in words to write in their writing journals and in writing activities in whole group, such as Daily News or literacy centers. Sight word instruction was another daily component of Maggie’s whole group instruction, and mostly consisted of songs corresponding to each handful of sight words they were working on.

The schedule of literacy instruction consisted of morning journal writing, sometimes providing a topic or prompt that centered around the theme or thematic unit the class was working on. This took place as students entered the classroom and until just after morning announcements were over; typically around thirty minutes for writing and sharing. After lunch and recess, the afternoon was dedicated to literacy instruction beginning around noon each day until dismissal at 2:30pm. This literacy block always began with a whole group session where students sat on the large carpet area, while Maggie sat in the front of them, with an easel and chart paper next to her. First, the class would start with ‘Daily News and Announcements’ where students might be asked to help correct or find sight words, specific letters, or correct punctuation in the letter. During this activity, Maggie would invite the students to read each individual word and then sentences as a whole, so that they understood how those concepts connected to the overall meaning of the text.

A brief session of letter and sound practice would follow, typically using one of the many CDs Maggie had, usually with contemporary music and changing the lyrics to focus on letter-sound learning (i.e. Who Let the A out, ah ah ah ah). Following this, there
was often a read-aloud connecting to the theme they were studying and a shared writing activity where Maggie scribed a story on chart paper with students’ assistance.

After this whole group time that typically lasted between 30 and 40 minutes, students went to literacy centers. The groups were heterogeneous and rotated daily according to a schedule posted on the board. Some activities consisted of writing in response to a story, handwriting practice, creating a letter or picture related to something they were studying (shaving cream and glue letters, Sammy Snake collages), or finding letters and sight words from magazines and creating a collage or using magnetic letters to create words. Maggie always tried to work with one small group during this time, however, behavior was often an issue and they were frequently interrupted. In January, Maggie began pulling groups for Guided Reading, using trade books or leveled books from the book room at the school. She also tried to rotate to other centers during this time and provide assistance, such as assisting a student by writing the sentence while they told her what they wanted to say. Towards the middle of the year, Maggie created individual book boxes with various books for individual students and had them read independently or buddy read during this time.

Maggie was required by the county to implement the Directed Reading Inventory assessment individually to students three times in the year along with the state mandated/created Kindergarten assessment, which meant conducting ongoing assessment of a variety of literacy skills and keeping student work samples throughout the year. Maggie felt this ongoing assessment was helpful to her and assisted her in understanding students’ progress throughout the year. However, it was often challenging for Maggie to find the time to work one on one to assess the students, particularly at the beginning of
the year when many students had trouble working individually on the activities she
planned. Behavior management was a frequent concern for Maggie, and she felt that the
transition of the student population throughout the year made it challenging to maintain a
strong classroom community. Maggie was concerned about ways to improve this, and
brought out books from her courses in the alternative preparation program and
implemented several ideas from these by the end of the year.

Winona

Winona’s classroom is full-full of the twenty first graders who fill the space, and
full of the many materials used in daily instruction. In the middle of the room, students sit
in desks grouped in sets of five to six and do the majority of their work there unless they
are working on the carpet during literacy centers or whole group literacy instruction. On
one wall in front of the carpet area is an Active Board, a multimedia board that is used to
project, interact, and display information to students. Near the door are two student
computers, and by these is a kidney shaped table where Winona works with small groups
of students. On the wall behind this table are several pieces of large chart paper labeled
such things as, “Good Readers Notice,” “Who We Are As Readers,” and “Why Do We
Read?” These charts were written by Winona or her student teacher who recorded
students’ ideas. In the corner of the classroom is the reading center, comprised of a large
bookshelf with books in baskets labeled such titles as “Plants and Animals,” “Holidays,”
and “Multicultural.” Another set of shelves in this area have individual book boxes
labeled with each student’s name and are filled with books Winona chose for each
student. There are also shelves of literacy games, magnetic letters, and manipulatives.
Along this side of the classroom are several rugs where students use these games,
manipulatives, or read independently or with partners. On the other side of the room in the corner is Winona’s desk and bookshelves, which are usually piled high with many papers, books, and materials. On the walls are areas divided by descriptors such as “Writer’s Workshop” and “Math Work,” where individual student work samples are hung, some with post-it notes of comments such as, “You met the standard by capitalizing all of your words,” an expectation from the county that teachers must write this kind of commentary on student work.

As a student in the alternative preparation program, Winona was often quite sarcastic and honest in expressing her opinions and feelings. As a teacher, many of these personality traits are also evident in her classroom. Teaching this diverse group of twenty students often appeared to be frustrating, tiring, and exhausting and Winona sometimes did not attempt to cover up these feelings to her students or those adults around her. Both Winona and her students came down with the Swine Flu and other illnesses throughout the year and because many of the students did not have access to healthcare, students were frequently sick at school. These types of issues impacted Winona’s feelings about her teaching and her ability to meet the needs of the diverse group of students.

Winona, a Caucasian female, was born and raised in suburban Virginia, where she went to schools that were “not very diverse” and very different, according to her, than Eastside Elementary because,

> You know, we didn’t have the kind of test pressure so it was very, it wasn’t like this. Kindergarten was you know, play time and centers and show and tell. And you know, Math was not taught this way, it was like worksheets and you know, like simple little activities and stuff.

She moved to this Southeastern city after college and worked in business for several years before beginning the alternative teacher preparation program. Winona did not
complete any of her student teaching experiences at Eastside, but became interested in teaching here because of the positive experiences her friends had while student teaching.

The year she was hired at Eastside, four other classmates from her program also accepted positions there. During the year of the study, only one of these classmates remained at Eastside. Two moved because their husbands were relocated, and the other left to teach at a private school in the area. The latter seemed to be a surprise and a disappointment for Winona, with whom she had been roommates and worked closely. The two had collaborated closely on lesson plans in their first two years and Winona said she was thankful for the work they had done together, but commented often how much she missed having someone to collaborate with.

Now in her third year teaching first grade at Eastside Elementary, Winona had the role of Grade Chair, a role that she did not volunteer for and would continually come up as a stressor for her. In addition, she was hosting a student teacher in that fall. Her first grade colleagues, made up of one first year teacher from the alternative preparation program and five veteran teachers, were not a collaborative or supportive group, and she felt that they often gossiped or criticized her work as Grade Chair. An issue arose towards the end of the year when each grade level was given money and allowed to decide what they would purchase with it. Winona felt that using the whole sum of money to buy something that the whole grade level could use would be more beneficial than having each teacher buy individual materials. She maintained that she was the only one researching and offering suggestions, and was interested in buying Leap Pad materials to use in Literacy Centers and rotate from classroom to classroom each week. After not hearing anything back from the other teachers, Winona presented this idea in a faculty
meeting and was then criticized publicly by her teammates who said that they were not aware that they could spend the money on their own classrooms and accused her of trying to dominate the decision making for her own benefit. Winona was hurt and confused by this sequence of events, and at the end of the year summed up her experience as Grade Chair by saying:

I feel that it was an added stress for me. You know I don’t feel that the actual job of it, I mean I try to be as organized as I can, let them know what’s going on, go to all these extra meeting, get everything done on time that needs to get done. It’s just more work, and when your team doesn’t work well together and appreciate all the extra work you’re doing . . . It’s just overwhelming (Winona, Interview, 3/23/2010).

Near the end of the school year, the principal asked Winona to move to third grade the following school year. Winona was torn with this prospect for several reasons. Since the beginning of the year, Winona expressed a desire to teach in a different school system closer to where she lived on the opposite side of town and one that she felt did not have as many issues as the county Eastside was in. Because of the lack of job opportunities in all of the local school systems, Winona became less and less hopeful about being able to move to another county and seemed resigned to teach at Eastside the following year. She knew that she would enjoy teaching and collaborating with another friend and alternative preparation program graduate in third grade (Annemarie) and the idea of not being Grade Chair in a new grade level appealed to her. However, she felt that she had begun to find her rhythm teaching first grade and switching to a whole new grade level would be like starting her first year teaching all over again. Nervously, she told her principal that she preferred to stay in first grade and that she felt one of the veteran teachers would be more effective as Grade Chair. She seemed amazed and relieved when her principal respected her wishes on both counts.
Winona’s first grade classroom. Mirroring the demographics of the school, over half of Winona’s class was African American. The rest of her students were first or second generation immigrants from different African countries, such as Sudan, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. There were two students from Burma, one from Vietnam, and one from Laos. For the first time in her career, Winona had four English Language Learners in her classroom, three of whom were considered Newcomers, or students with very low levels of English proficiency. One of these students, a boy from Ethiopia named Einku, also had severe epilepsy and suffered from seizures daily for several months until he stopped coming to school almost completely because of his medical issues. When he was at school, Einku was a source of frustration for Winona to try to understand how she might meet the needs of this student who has had no prior school experience, was not yet receiving support services for his exceptionality, and had difficulty holding a pencil. Two Newcomer Burmese boys, Win and Arun, also had little formal schooling experience. These English Language Learners were one of the reasons that Winona said early on in the year about her teaching, “I thought [I was improving] until (laugh) this year and I’m actually not confident at all. Um, you know, I’m just going to do the best I can.”

At the beginning of the year, the goals Winona had for students were that:

Not only that they can begin to read at the level they need to at by the end of the this year, but also that they can read fluently, that they can comprehend what they’re reading, that they learn a good base of sight words that help them when they are reading. (Winona, Interview, 9/1/2009)

The main assessment Winona used and referred to when determining the reading levels students “should be at” at the end of the year was the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). Winona felt that she included a lot of variety in her literacy instruction and this helped students practice the skills they needed to know in multiple
ways. She also spoke at the beginning of the year about wanting students to enjoy reading and the ways she tried to promote that; “So whether it’s through an author’s study or read-alouds of books that I happen to love or books that they bring in and want me to read to the class, just emphasizing how important it is and how great it is to re-read books.”

When describing what skills were most important for students in first grade and how she determined students she was worried about, Winona defined “the basic foundation of literacy” as “recognizing letters and connecting those letters to sounds.” She was concerned about many of the students throughout the year that were “lacking the foundation,” and described her class as “very low this year” and said that at least nine of the twenty two students were “below first grade level.” Early on in the year, she seemed defeated in some ways about the progress that she would be able to make with these students:

I think the kids that are you know on level and where they need to be are going to be successful and hopefully reading on the level that they need to. And then I realize that there are some kids that come in lower and then all of the sudden second semester they shoot by everyone and they don’t even realize they’re like reading everything and it just all connected and came together, so I realize that too. And that could very well be Win and Arun, so . . . (Winona, Interview, 9/1/2009)

Winona also had a female student, Taaj, who had been diagnosed with special needs at the end of Kindergarten and who received Special Education services for one period each day. Winona often spoke about her difficulty working with these students, who she did not feel she could meet the needs of as one teacher in a classroom of twenty two students. At the end of the year, Winona acknowledged that, “They’ve made a lot of progress. I mean, the fact that Win asks questions now and you know, they’re sounding out words, to me that’s fantastic. Taaj is writing her name and spelling words and making great
progress.” But, the feeling that these students were not reading according to grade level or would not be successful on the high-stakes exam they took in the spring seemed to weigh on Winona.

**Curriculum and daily schedule.** Literacy instruction in Winona’s classroom began as soon as students arrived in the morning by 8:00 am and lasted until when students went to Specials at 10:40 am, with ‘Morning Work’ that students completed quietly at their desks as they arrived and listened to Morning Announcements while Winona took care of a variety of tasks such as attendance and lunch count. Morning Work was always some kind of worksheet, usually one Math and one Literacy worksheet. The Literacy worksheet at the beginning of the year was letter and sound recognition or sight words focused. Towards the end of the year, this worksheet became grammar driven or designed as a preparation for the high stakes exam the students would take, with multiple concepts presented on one sheet. If students finished this with time left before announcements were over, they could read from their basal textbook or write a story in their writing notebooks at their desks.

Following the morning announcements, students gathered on the carpet area where Winona led a Morning Meeting, which included a song to greet each other and some kind of sharing activity, where one or two students were chosen from a “Go-Round Cup,” a container filled with sticks with each students’ name. Winona then used the Active Board to show “News and Announcements” on the large screen in front of the students, which told the students what they would be doing that day. One day in October, the News and Announcements read:

*Dear First Graders,*
Good Morning!

How are you?

today is ____, October 21, 2009

Today we will be authors and write to inform the reader as we finish our informational story about frogs!

Let's make it a positive, GREEN day!

Thank you,

Ms. W

Students then corrected the errors on the Daily News, often identifying a concept or skill the class was working on that week. Following the News and Announcements, Winona moved to another slide using the Active Board on another topic such as Sight Words, with a long list of sight words that students were supposed to be practicing at home each night. Winona pointed to and asked individual students to say the word or had the whole class read together. Sometimes, students played a game with the sight words. One game was where the class sat in a circle and one student at a time sat in the middle. The student in the middle competed with a student sitting in front of them, as Winona held up one word at a time. Whoever said the word first won, and either moved into the middle or continued to the next student to compete with them.

After a short time on this activity, Winona moved to a new slide with a different topic. This was typically a phonics based concept, such as the ō sound and the /–ot/ word family. The slide contained a list of words with this phonics rule with the key letters highlighted in a different color. Winona often had students read these words in unison as she pointed to them. Towards the middle of the school year, Winona asked students to
use small white boards and erasable markers to write, practicing this skill individually. In
the case of /ɔ/ sound and /–ot/ word family, students were told to write as many words
that rhyme with “got” on their boards. Approximately five minutes was spent on each of
these concepts before moving onto the next slide.

A new slide consisted of a different topic, such as ‘Telling Sentences,’ and students worked on differentiating types of sentences. Along with a brief definition of a
telling sentence that Winona would read aloud, there was a practice component that
students used their whiteboards to respond to. Following this, there were more individual
slides with different concepts, such as plural words or opposite words that students
practiced on their white boards. On average, Winona went through seven individual
Active Board slides with seven different concepts in thirty to forty minutes.

Each week, Winona used a different poem or song from the basal literacy
program adopted by the school. The phonics skill addressed in one of the slides, such as
the /ɔ/ sound would be the central theme of the poem. For example, many of the words in
the poem would have this /ɔ/ sound and rhyme. These poems were on a large flip chart
that Winona would place on a table to the side of the carpet and play an accompanying
CD from the basal program that sang the words along with music. Winona had the
students listen to the music and point to the words at the same time. Then, she played the
track that did not have the words and students would attempt to sing this along with the
music while Winona pointed to the words. This recording was often very fast and
difficult for students to keep up with.

This portion of the morning typically took around one hour and was what Winona
called the ‘Skills Block.’ Following the Skills Block, around 9am, Winona used the
Active Board to show a new concept that was typically a reading comprehension concept, such as identifying the author’s purpose in a story. Winona sometimes read a trade book aloud or had students read from their basal reading program textbook by having students take turns reading aloud or by playing the accompanying CD that read the story aloud. After a brief conversation about this concept, students moved to Literacy Centers.

Literacy Centers maintained the same overall, but the activities within each center changed slightly throughout the year. There were centers in Spelling, Writing, Computer center, Phonics, Independent Reading, and Guided Reading. A large chart maintained by Winona determined the centers students went to each day. Each group of students, organized homogeneously from their reading levels, went to two centers each day Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, students were allowed to choose the centers they visited. In Guided Reading, students met with Winona to read a predictable book that was leveled according to the Developmental Reading Assessment that Winona conducted one on one with each student three times a year. These Guided Reading groups changed only slightly as the year went on. In the Spelling center, students practiced the weekly spelling list or sight words through a packet of worksheets or an activity such as spelling each word with magnetic letters. In the Writing center, students typically had a prompt or choice of prompts to write a story sometimes connected to the story from their reading textbook or a trade book the class had read. At the Computer center, students had a small choice of websites they could visit and usually had to work in groups of two on a computer, because there were only two computers in the classroom. These websites were usually phonics driven, such as www.Starfall.com, or a game-based website that had students playing games against each other on a variety of skills. For the Phonics Center,
students practiced finding words within the one or two word families that the class was studying at the time. They would write these on white boards, or use worksheets that had them fill in the blanks with missing vowels or vowel patterns on a particular phonics rule. In the Independent Reading center, students had to read books from their personal book bin that contained books of their reading level and could choose to read these or from the Reading textbook with a partner or independently.

Students rotated through two centers daily before ending by coming to the carpet as a whole group and several students sharing what they did or learned in centers, often with Winona choosing one student who had been at the Guided Reading center to read the book aloud that they had just practiced. When this was over, the writing portion of the morning began, anywhere from 10:15 to 10:30am, which sometimes only left ten minutes before the literacy block was finished and students went to Specials classes. For writing, students were usually guided by Winona about the topic and genre they were writing, typically working on a piece for about a week. The genres of writing cycled throughout the year and the class covered one genre a month. The topic or prompt was often something connected to the Book of Month that the whole school read or the Science or Social Studies topic the class was working on. Often, Winona used the Active Board to display a sample piece of writing, a brainstorming web or outline, or had a prompt for the beginning of the story for the students to complete, such as “I am special because_____."

Winona administered the Developmental Reading Assessment to each student three times a year. There were also a number of externally driven standardized exams that Winona’s students took in the fall and spring. Every six weeks, Winona was required to give a short exam called the ‘Benchmark’ at the beginning and end of the units from the
basal reading program. These tests were created and distributed by the county, and
teachers at every grade level from first through fifth had to turn in their scores to the
county and were asked to analyze the pre and post test results in both Reading and Math.
Winona also used informal assessments to determine student progress, such as using
flashcards to quiz students on letters, letter sounds, sight words, and color words.

**Annemarie**

On first glance in her third grade classroom, Annemarie, a Caucasian female in
her early thirties, seems to be a fairly serious teacher, who is always busy moving around
the classroom and keeping one eye on the class to make sure students are staying on task
with their class work. However, over time one notices that she has a very obvious
affection for her students and is genuinely interested in learning about them, evidenced
through many moments in the classroom where students are encouraged to talk about
themselves, their experiences, and make connections to what they are learning. A
professed animal lover who is also very environmentally conscious, Annemarie brings in
her passion for these topics at times in the classroom and it seems to have impacted her
students. They are serious recyclers, even though the school does not have a recycling
program and Annemarie takes it home to recycle.

Towards the middle of the school year, Annemarie had an Active Board installed
in her classroom after mentioning to the principal the summer before that she would like
to have one. Pleasantly surprised that her request was heard, Annemarie used the new
Active Board daily and was excited about the possibilities it could bring, feeling that it
helped to keep her students engaged. The classroom was re-organized in a way that
allowed students to see the Active Board and come to the carpet area in front of it at
times during the day. In the center of the classroom were groups of five to six desks
grouped together, where students sat much of the day. On one side of the classroom was a
long white board, which Annemarie used to write the state standards and concepts out
that they were studying one a given day and to display homework, key vocabulary, or the
daily schedule. To one side of the long white board was the writing center, a small area
with a desk and chair topped with a basket of writing materials and folders with different
writing prompts. There were also shelves of games and activities next to this. On the
other side of the white board was the Reading Center, which had several bookshelves
with texts of many genres, a cassette tape player, and books on tape. In another corner of
the room held a long rectangular shaped table where Annemarie met her Guided Reading
groups and used when she was assessing or conferring with individual students. Next to
this were two student computers and chairs, the Active Board on the wall, and a small
carpet in front of this. Finally, there was Annemarie’s desk and chair in the corner near
the door.

As an instructor in the alternative preparation program, I knew Annemarie to be a
fairly quiet and introverted student, but one who was extremely conscientious and
focused on doing her work well. Observing her now in her third year of teaching, I saw
many of these same traits. Annemarie’s early schooling background demonstrates the
way she saw herself as a young student and the lessons she learned about the differences
that exist between different types of schools:

I spent most of my elementary school in [the southernmost, rural part of
the state], so it was really um, as far as race and ethnicity it was about half
Black, half White . . . a few Hispanic children. That’s what I remember it.
I always liked school, I mean I always did what I was told, I was a quiet
kid. I didn’t want to make anyone mad, get in trouble you know? I was a
pretty good student, I was not exceptional, you know, but a decent student,
pretty good student. Then, in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, I moved to [suburban area of this capital city] and that was very different compared to the school I had been in before, I mean it was all white children. Um, all wealthy, much wealthier than my family, you know. And, I did well there, but I do remember, uh in my first elementary school I was in, I think it was called Probe, the gifted program at that time. And then, when I moved to [the new school] and they tested me, I didn’t make it. And I just remember being like, ah, ok. It didn’t devastate me too bad but it was a little bit like, alright, you know? (Annemarie, Interview, 3/24/2010)

After completing junior college and then transferring to a large state university, Annemarie worked various jobs before starting the post baccalaureate program. Although she did not complete any student teaching experiences at Eastside, she like Winona, was interested because of the positive things she heard from classmates and she eagerly took a position in her desired grade level, third grade.

Annemarie had the most diverse class so far in her career, with the highest number of English Language Learners, with eight out of the twenty-two students. Several of these students were Newcomers, with very little English proficiency and limited schooling experiences in their home countries. Two other English Language Learners had already been retained and Annemarie was concerned with them throughout the year, even beginning the referral process for Special Education testing. One other male African American student received Special Education services for an intellectual disability. Over half the class was African American, one student was Iraqi, another was second generation Mexican, and the rest of the class were first to third generation African, from Northern African countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan.

The large number of English Language Learners was a concern and source of much conversation and discussion between Annemarie and I, especially at the beginning of the school year. As the year went on, Annemarie seemed increasingly positive about the progress most of the ELLs were making. In December, she stated that she felt that it
was important that she was ESOL endorsed and was looking into beginning the ESOL endorsement courses offered by the school system.

Annemarie’s third grade classroom. Annemarie will be the first to admit that she is not a passionate reader or writer and often struggles with teaching literacy, particularly writing. Her favorite subjects to teach are Science and Social Studies, and she enjoys using her undergraduate major in Environmental Sciences. However, she stated that she felt more confident this year than in past years about teaching reading. Writing was the area that throughout the year, Annemarie expressed the most uncertainty teaching and says that other third grade teachers and perhaps the entire school could really use some professional development in writing instruction. In September, she said, “That’s [writing] has always been the hardest because I don’t really feel very good at teaching it and you know, it’s just sort of the age group where you know, a lot more is expected I guess with their writing.” In fact, the topic of conversation during the first months of the school year was largely about writing and questions that Annemarie wanted to discuss with centered on things I did when I was teaching or suggestions I may have. As the year continued, Annemarie stated that she felt that the students were getting better at writing, however there was the lingering feeling that some kind of program or more professional development would be beneficial to her practice. One aspect of teaching writing that Annemarie wished to get better with was her conferencing, most specifically, how often she made sure she met with all her students.

At the beginning of the year, Annemarie defined literacy as, “Being able to read, being able to understand what you’re reading, being able to write. And…the different activities that go along with that when teaching a student to read and write. You know,
that also includes phonics.” Phonics was an area that Annemarie was concerned about when it came to the English Language Learners in the class, and felt that this was an essential skill that they needed to know in order to be successful. Annemarie’s goals for the entire class through the school year were to:

Show them all the places they can go, all the different things they can learn. So, just to try to enjoy reading. I mean, a lot of them probably don’t have books at home, you know? They may not have someone who ever reads to them at home. So they see it as something like, ugh, I have to do this instead of it being enjoyable. (Annemarie, Interview, 11/5/2009)

She felt that students would need to enjoy reading to be successful on the high stakes exam that they took at the end of the school year: “If they don’t enjoy reading, then how are they going to be able to answer questions well and understand what they’re reading?”

Annemarie saw at the beginning of the year that her students had a diverse range of literacy needs and one of her main goals was to try to meet the needs of the different students. She felt that partnering or grouping students in different activities was an important strategy;

I feel like I have a pretty good mix of kids who are reading, right about where they should be, end of second grade you know, and then I definitely have some who I think are around first grade possibly even Kindergarten, you know end of Kindergarten. And then, I’ve got some kind of in the middle. (Annemarie, Interview, 8/27/2009)

She hoped that using a variety of methods in her literacy instruction would assist students in growing in their literacy from the beginning of the year. In September, Annemarie described her hopes for her students:

As far as reading goes, just be able to move up from wherever they started. As long as I can see some growth, you know and I can tell that they’ve been practicing at home, and that they just have just a real interest in. You know I’ve noticed when I ask some of them what book are you reading right now some of them don’t really have an answer for you. And we just went to the library last week, they all checked out a book. You know, so I just want to get the kids that aren’t already doing it, just always having a
book in their desk, always having something to read. So I guess, I’ve been reading to them a lot this year already. I do a lot more read-alouds with this group than any other year, just kind of promoting that love of reading. (Annemarie, Interview, 8/27/2009)

**Curriculum and daily schedule.** The formal assessments required in third grade impacted daily instruction in Annemarie’s classroom. The fact that the county-wide writing portfolio was a large writing assessment in this grade seems to place quite a bit of pressure on the timing, content, and focus of the writing instruction. Because the portfolio is divided into examples of students’ work in four genres (narrative, persuasive, informational, and response to literature), Annemarie organized her instruction in this same way, covering about one different genre per month.

The rest of the literacy block was also somewhat impacted by other formal assessments required at both the county and state level. At the beginning of the year, the daily schedule was rearranged for almost a month due to testing every morning. Annemarie sometimes swapped Math and Literacy instruction on these days when the normal literacy block was taken up by testing. There were several assessments that took place on many Fridays, such as the Benchmark test that teachers were asked to give every six weeks as a pre and post test in Math and Language Arts. Annemarie shifted her instruction in November when she received an Active Board. Using this technology allowed her to do different kinds of activities within the literacy that took place from the time students arrived in the morning and until they went to Specials at 10:40 am.

When students arrived in the morning, they completed ‘Morning Work’, which often required them to read and complete activities from Scholastic News, a Math problem projected on the Active Board, or to finish homework from the night before. Following the morning announcements on the intercom, Annemarie used the Active
Board to display “News and Announcements” to the class. One student was chosen from the “Go-round cup” to read this message aloud to the class. In January, this message read:

Welcome back! I missed you all!

Today is Tuesday, January 19, 2010.

Write your new spelling words for Thundercake in your agenda and read the story.

We have Music today.

We will be making a short stop to the library after lunch. I hear that they have free books for you.

Sharing are: Nyla and Aleah.

Try to solve: Write three and three quarters inch; five and a half centimeters

The two students selected shared an oral story, often something they had done the night before or an event in the family, such as a new baby. Another student came to the board and worked out the Math problems, which Annemarie and the students then discussed together.

Following this, Annemarie either led the whole class in a short grammar focused activity, or beginning in January, an activity from the test preparation book for the high stakes exam in the spring. The next part of the morning was centered on the Reading skill, typically a reading comprehension skill from the basal reading program. Annemarie sometimes read a trade book aloud as part of a mini-lesson on this skill or had the students follow along to a story from the basal reading textbook from an audio CD. Using the teacher guide provided, Annemarie highlighted vocabulary words from the story to preview and review as the story was read, along with the reading comprehension skill, such as ‘Making Predictions.’ Following the story, Annemarie again reviewed these concepts as a whole class and then students moved to Literacy Centers around 9:00 am.
Literacy Centers remained similar in content throughout the year. Centers were labeled: Words, Guided Reading, Games, Reading, Skills, and Writing. Annemarie determined what centers students went to each day, using a chart on an easel board.

Students rotated through two centers each day in heterogeneous groups. There was a Reading center, where students could go to the library to check out books, read and listen to books on tape in the small reading center, or go to the classroom computers and take an Accelerated Reader test. In the Games center, students chose from a handful of board games Annemarie rotated throughout the year such as Scrabble or ‘Who, What, When, Where, How’, where students worked in partners to read a short passage to one another and quizzed each other on these parts of the story. Games on various websites were also allowed during this center, and students often chose the site, “Iknowthat.com” which allowed students to create and take various quizzes on everything from popular television show trivia to geography skills. Another center met for Guided Reading with Annemarie, who pulled students out of other centers into a homogeneous group according to their Development Reading Assessment (DRA) levels. Students took turns reading parts of the common text aloud, which was usually published by the county mandated basal program.

Another literacy center was the Writing Center, where students could use various paper and pens to write something of their choosing or follow a one of the prompts included in the writing area of the classroom. A popular activity during this time was to write a letter to someone, such as another classmate and exchange letters. In the Words Center, students chose from a list of activities to complete to practice their Spelling words for the week. These activities included putting each word in a sentence, alphabetizing the list, and creating personal flash cards using paper and markers. In the
Skills center, students chose from several worksheets that were usually taken from the basal reading program on a variety of skills from past weeks or the current week’s focus on grammar or reading comprehension. Students were required to complete two of these sheets while in this center. Every day, students rotated centers two times before Annemarie called the whole class back together and typically had several students share what they worked on that day.

It was at this time that writing began, typically just after 10:00am and lasted anywhere between twenty and forty minutes before students went to Specials. Annemarie typically began with a brief mini-lesson, which either included a read aloud from a text on writing such as *Live Writing* (Fletcher, 1999) or by sharing an example of her writing using the required genre or aspect of writing craft. She gave students guidelines about what genre their writing should be in and often a prompt of what to write about. The schedule for writing instruction typically consisted of a Monday to Friday brainstorm to publish format, so on Monday students were introduced to a new topic within the set genre and they were required to proceed throughout the week in creating a published piece by the end of the week. Several times during my observations, Annemarie asked the students to work in partners during the writing time to edit each other’s pieces and get ideas to improve their writing. Annemarie either moved around the classroom, stopping to talk to and assist students who asked for help, or sat at the back table and conferenced for longer periods of time with each student.

As the year went on, the writing instruction focused more and more on completing the required number of writing samples that were needed in the county third grade writing portfolio. Annemarie conferenced with individual students to assist them in
editing or selecting pieces to revise and add to their portfolio before these had to be assessed in March. In addition to these assessments, Annemarie completed the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) three times a year with each student, which she often did during Literacy Centers instead of pulling Guided Reading groups until they were complete.

**Conclusion**

Each of these teachers went through the same teacher preparation program, however, their experiences teaching literacy at the same diverse school were unique in some ways. The individual grade level, beliefs about literacy, confidence towards working with culturally and linguistically diverse students, and willingness to negotiate the curricula expectations at Eastside impacted the ways in which they took up what was taught in the post baccalaureate program. In the following chapter, I describe findings that emerged from an examination of these teachers’ pedagogical practices in literacy and the contextual factors that shaped the experiences of both the teachers and CLD students in their classrooms.
“Teaching is political” is a statement that challenges educators to think deeply about the many decisions and pressures presented to them every day. More specifically, through this study, the idea that teaching literacy is political, influenced by a multitude of forces became even more obvious to me as a teacher educator interested in what happens to novice teachers as they work in the current educational climate. In this increasingly global and multimodal world, teaching students to read and write means also teaching them how to navigate the world around them. Paulo Freire said, “The act of learning to read and write has to start from a very comprehensive understanding of the act of reading the world, something human beings do before reading the words,” so all readers bring their own cultural knowledge, schema, and experience to a reading event (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. xvii). Teaching reading and writing must be more than helping students to decode words on a page and even more than comprehending these words, but a means for students to problematize issues in their world. Literacy, in this way, is an outlet for the possibilities of positive change for students of all backgrounds and resources. As Shannon (1995) states, “If we acknowledge the savage inequalities in schools and our lives, our point is to engage the world actively in order to change it” (p. 35). The Four Resources Model, envisioned by Luke and Freebody (1999) maintains that there are four areas necessary to develop with students to truly prepare them to be critically literate; Code Breaker, Text User, Text Participant, and Critical Practices.

Writing about the movement in the last decade towards using the Four Resources Model as a common literacy curriculum in Australia, Luke (2000) cautions that this
framework is not a, “method in the sense understood by basal reader developers and many teacher educators” (p. 453). There is not one area of the Four Resources Model that is more important than the other (Luke, 2000). Aligning with a culturally relevant view of teaching literacy, the Four Resources Model suggests that it is crucial for teachers to create opportunities for readers and writers to utilize all four resources to develop readers and writers who can navigate many types of texts to determine issues of bias and take action against injustice. These decisions are made from students’ individual needs and strengths in each area and include texts, modes, and practices that are authentic and meaningful to students’ lives and prepare them for the global society they are a part of every day. These practices reflect many of the tenets of culturally responsive teaching, according to Gay (2000)’s framework:

   Culturally responsive teaching is validating; Culturally responsive teaching is comprehensive; Culturally responsive teaching is multidimensional; Culturally responsive teaching is empowering; Culturally responsive teaching is transformative; Culturally responsive teaching is emancipator. (pp. 29-35)

A key construct in this theory is that teachers must be responsive to the individual needs of students and that success is not determined by one set factor, such as the results of a standardized test or performance on an isolated skills activity prescribed by curriculum

In this inquiry, I planned to use the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) as a culturally relevant literacy framework to explore the literacy pedagogical practices beginning teachers used with their CLD students. Early on in the study, I realized that I could answer this question on a somewhat surface level, but that the answers would not be sufficient. After speaking to the teachers and observing their instruction, it was clear that this view was much too simple. When we sat down to debrief following a lesson, the first topic of conversation was always related to the
administration, tests, or school or county expectations. I realized that I could not understand fully what was happening inside these beginning teachers’ classrooms without acknowledging what additional factors were impacting their practice. The literacy pedagogical practices they enacted were influenced not only by what they learned in their preparation program or beliefs about literacy, but even greater, the outside political and structural forces that are present in schools today. Therefore, I utilized the Four Resources Model to not only explore the practices and opportunities that arose in these classrooms to provide a culturally relevant literacy classroom, but also which of these were constrained due to the context and expectations of the school and county. The following question guided this study; What are the experiences of beginning teachers, graduates of an alternative preparation program, who teach at a culturally and linguistically diverse, Professional Development School? Within this main question, there were two specific strands of the inquiry; (1) What instructional decisions, resources, and strategies do alternatively certified beginning teachers enact when teaching CLD students? and (2) What are the contextual factors that influence beginning teachers’ literacy pedagogy?

In the following sections, the pedagogical practices in each teachers’ classrooms and the contextual factors that influenced these are examined using the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999). Activities designed to promote Code Breaking knowledge were the most prevalent across all three classrooms, particularly for English Language Learners. The use of Text User and Text Participant-focused practices were simplistic and did not assist students in understanding how they could use these in everyday reading and writing. Critical Practices were almost nonexistent with these
teachers’ work with students. The county, state, and school level mandates and messages
guided the first and third grade teachers’ practices, while the kindergarten teacher had
more flexibility because this grade level was not subject to high stakes assessments. The
culturally relevant literacy practices promoted by the alternative preparation courses were
not reflected in the first and third grade classrooms, because these values did not follow
the dominant literacy message of the school and curriculum.

The Four Resources Model in Classrooms

**Code Breaking Dominating the Literacy Curriculum and Discourse**

According to Luke and Freebody (1999), being a Code Breaker is when one can,
“break the code of written texts by recognizing and using fundamental features and
architecture, including alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, and structural conventions
and patterns” (Luke & Freebody, 1999, n.p.). Understanding how phonemes, or sounds,
are used in speech and then how these phonemes are manipulated and translated into
written language to spell and read words, is undoubtedly an important part of literacy.
When one is able to understand the different sounds and patterns within a word and use
this to gain meaning from text, the code of text has been cracked. Understanding how
alphabetic symbols are used to represent sounds and create words is part of the
graphophonic cueing system of reading and writing (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). The
current climate of literacy policy has given much weight to Code Breaking skills as the
foundation for many literacy programs particularly focused to teach students phonics, the
term for understanding the letter-sound connection and how that translates to spelling
patterns in writing.
Code Breaking practices dominated the literacy instruction in the three teachers’ classrooms. These practices echoed the beliefs about literacy promoted at the county and school level, mirroring national conversations and prescriptive literacy programs that emphasize the importance of Code Breaking skills, particularly for low socioeconomic and culturally and linguistically diverse children (Paugh, Carey, King-Jackson, & Russell, 2007). While contradictory to the curriculum presented in the alternative preparation program, the belief that Code Breaking was the most important area to develop before any further literacy learning could occur permeated the teachers’ beliefs and pedagogical practices. In Maggie and Winona’s classrooms, there were many activities designed to promote Code Breaking taking place each day. These practices appeared to be very similar in content, even though Maggie taught kindergarten and Winona first grade. Annemarie included less Code Breaking practice in her literacy instruction, focusing on spelling skills in literacy centers. However, for English Language Learners who experienced difficulties in literacy, Annemarie created different learning opportunities to build upon their Code Breaking abilities.

Explaining her definition of literacy, Maggie said, “It’s learning what the letters and the sounds do when they work together. How to manipulate sounds, like that song [‘Millaby Mollaby,’ which had students substitute beginning sounds to create a nonsense song] we did today. Reading, writing, it’s everywhere…just seeing it everywhere.” While this definition places high value on students having Code Breaking skills, Maggie also recognized the importance of students understanding that there are many different types of texts they will encounter in their lives, touching on the Text User and Text Participant areas of the Four Resources Model (Luke, 2000).
Winona named “the foundation of literacy” as “recognizing letters and connecting those letters to sounds.” When she spoke about students that concerned her, their areas of weakness were primarily issues within the graphophonic system of language, such as letter recognition and phonological awareness. She felt at a loss for how to assist them and struggled with this throughout the year. Winona said in November about the students she felt early in the year were struggling in literacy, “I think they are improving….most of them are improving. Some of them are in exactly the same place because they haven’t mastered letters and sounds, so they can’t, you know… participate in the other activities.” This idea that students were not capable of being a part of other literate activities, such as listening to and responding to texts, writing using invented spelling and pictures, or working with others if they are not reading independently, did not allow for students to develop literacy skills that may be used in authentic contexts and ultimately often left them out of the classroom community.

Winona felt strongly that while these Code Breaking skills were essential for her students to know, she was not prepared adequately in the teacher preparation program to teach them. Even in her third year of teaching, she said, “I need to know more about where to begin at the very beginning of learning how to read.” She said in response to what skills she felt teachers needed to know to teach first grade:

Um, understand the process of how kids, like learn how to read. I really don’t feel like I understood that. I had no clue about phonics. I didn’t know any phonics rules. I didn’t know anything about phonics. (Winona, Interview, 12/9/2009)

Winona’s statement connects to this pervasive idea that Code Breaking skills are necessary before any ‘real reading’ may take place. It also demonstrates a limited understanding about developing Code Breaking as a dynamic and long-term skill. This
feeling of uncertainty about teaching what she felt were essential graphophonic skills contributed to Winona’s reliance on following the basal program and accompanying phonics and phonemic awareness activities. Winona said about the county selected program,

Do I follow [the basal program] to a T? No. I pick and choose things, I tweak them, you know? Basically, I follow the [basal] curriculum in that it’ll say this week we’re talking about main idea and we’re talking about nouns and we’re talking about the sound of a. So that will be my base for the week and I’ll pull activities from that and I’ll center the literacy centers around those activities and the reading groups around that. But I don’t follow it exactly—I might pull my own trade books and um, have my own activities for nouns that they’re going to do. (Winona, Interview, 9/1/2009)

While Winona said that she negotiates the basal program, she did stay very close to the scope and sequence for the prescriptive program each week. This example of the “skills” that Winona would cover during one week demonstrates the disconnected nature of the Code Breaking concepts the county selected basal program addressed in a week.

One particular item from the basal program that Winona followed closely had an explicit phonics instructional focus. A small teacher guide published by Reading First came with the teacher manual for the basal program. Reading First is a federally funded initiative that came out of the National Reading Panel’s (2000) report that touts phonics and phonemic awareness as key elements of reading that must be taught through explicit instruction (Wolfe & Poynor, 2005). The insert consisted of short, daily, scripted lessons that focused on one phonics concept each day and included the specific language a teacher should use when demonstrating examples of words that used this rule and how to encourage students to notice the patterns, often including a repetitive, call and response portion between Winona and the students during whole group instruction. This Reading
First insert was helpful to Winona in teaching what she felt were important phonics concepts for students and ones that she was not fully confident teaching:

There’s a thing in the front of [the basal program]. It breaks down phonics and I’ve found that incorporating phonics into the daily routine really helps to see patterns, to see letter combinations and have them say it with me, breaking it down, blending it back together. I found that when I started using that little booklet and incorporating that into the skills block, um, that they need that extra support in here and that started to help. (Winona, Interview, 9/1/2009)

I observed very little discussion of why and how these skills could be used to read in authentic contexts because they were presented in isolated sessions, on the individual Active Board slides and not within the read-alouds or even when reading the basal reading textbook. A call and response pattern of practicing these skills did not allow Winona to see what individual students were struggling with or what students did not need this practice. Instead of using individualized assessment to determine which students needed practice in these skills, many of them were presented in a whole group manner with little differentiation.

Classroom observations indicated that Maggie’s Code Breaking instruction emphasized the graphophonic skills of letter recognition, phonemic awareness activities such as rhyming and breaking apart words, and phonics understanding. Within these activities, Maggie often included discussion of the meaning of these words, sounds, and the use of these in reading and writing in the students’ lives. Maggie used shared writing often with her students, which allowed her to show her students what they said out loud could be written as a letters and words to create a story, even if they were not able to do this independently. Instead of using a program or standards to tell her what to teach each day, Maggie felt that she, “saw each day where they are. If I see that they can’t do something, that would change my instruction for the next day.” Activities within literacy
centers were chosen often based on what concepts students were having trouble with, and activities changed for different needs of the groups. Maggie worked one on one with students who needed additional assistance often, and in small reading groups that often targeted the skills she saw were needed based on ongoing informal and formal assessments. These practices mirrored her goals for students to progress from where they began, rather than feeling that the students must follow a specific trajectory of skills dictated by an outside source.

**Literacy centers.** In each of the three classrooms, thirty to forty minutes a day was devoted to Literacy Centers, where students worked in small groups in various activities. Each teacher reported that they were expected by the administration to do literacy centers in some way, but that there were no specific requirements about the content of these. Annemarie said, “They just want to see kids working in centers.” While the content of these literacy center activities and accompanying Guided Reading practices were very similar and dominated by a Code Breaking focus, Winona and Annemarie’s choice of materials and activities reflected an adherence to the basal literacy program. The contents of Maggie’s centers were adapted to the individual needs of students, and many of the activities were flexibly designed so that students with different literacy needs and abilities could be successful in each. There were also more connections between these center activities to the greater classroom practice, because Maggie used a thematic method of instruction. Students were able to practice these Code Breaking skills within the context of what they were studying in a science or social studies-based theme.

Maggie’s Literacy Centers always included activities designed to develop graphophonics knowledge, or the understanding of the sound and symbol correspondence
between written letters and sounds. Students would create and practice individual letters in formats such as shaving cream, clay, or worksheets. The worksheets used in these centers came from a variety of sources, including teacher websites and resource books. For example, one of these worksheets had students trace and practice handwriting the letter ‘s’ many times and then color pictures that began with the ‘s’ sound. In other centers, students created collages using letters found in magazines, form sight words or words of their choice using magnetic letters, and use the Alphafriends that Maggie introduced each week to sound out and write the sounds they heard in words when writing. Maggie shared resources and ideas for these literacy centers with the other Kindergarten teachers on her team, particularly her former mentor teacher who she named as her “number one resource for teaching literacy.”

The literacy centers in both Maggie and Winona’s classrooms had similar content, focused mainly on Code Breaking skills. However, a key difference between the two was that the materials and content of what skills were covered came mainly from the basal program in Winona’s classroom. The Spelling Center required students to complete a group of worksheets or spell words with magnetic letters, usually on the sight words and weekly spelling words that came from the county selected basal program. The Phonics Center also contained magnetic letters, white boards and markers, and puzzles or games where students practiced the phonics concept of the week from the basal program, such as the –ot word family or ō words. In the Computer Center, students chose from a small list of websites to visit. Many of these websites were mostly Code Breaking focused, such as www.starfall.com, which included letter recognition and phonics practice emphasizing the beginning sounds of each letter.
In Annemarie’s classroom, Code Breaking activities took place in one of the Literacy Centers, the “Words Center,” where students practiced their weekly spelling word list that came from the basal program by choosing to write the words repeatedly, create flashcards of the words, alphabetize, or create sentences using the words. During Literacy centers, students often appeared somewhat disengaged with these activities. At the beginning of the year, I observed many students in this and other centers who did not understand the directions for the center and they often asked me for assistance reading and interpreting the directions.

Maggie, Annemarie, and Winona each pulled Guided Reading or small reading groups each day, while the other students worked in Literacy Centers. Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), an instructional practice where a teacher works with students at similar reading levels who read the same text together at one time, is designed to support a student’s graphophonic knowledge as well as their use of the pragmatic, syntactic, and semantic systems of language. Using this common text, teachers teach a graphophonic concept found in the book, such as a blend or two letters that work together to make a new sound such as /bl/. Teachers might identify a word from this book with this blend before or after reading the book and ask students to come up with new words with the /bl/ blend, making these words with letters or writing these down. The other systems of language are addressed throughout the book, as students and teachers discuss individual sentences, vocabulary found in the book, and discuss the events of the book.

The teachers used Guided Reading or small reading groups as a time to work with small groups of students who were at the same reading levels according to the county mandated reading assessment, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). While
other groups of students were working at the Literacy Centers, the teachers would pull one group at a time to read a book together. All teachers focused on the graphophonic aspects of the text, but in Annemarie and Winona’s groups this differed depending on the individual groups they were working with. When working with one of their designated ‘lower’ level reading groups, the teachers used the time to teach and have students practice a phonics skill. At the beginning of the year, both Winona and Maggie did phonics-based activities solely with these groups before beginning to use the small, predictable books for Guided Reading. Higher-level reading groups usually did not include a graphophonics lesson, but instead the teacher would move right into comprehension and actual reading of the text with these students. This decontextualization of the skills involved in reading, taken out of an authentic reading event, is a criticism of practices such as Guided Reading, which may not allow for flexible teaching of strategies or skills that students need in the moment (Short, 1999).

**Whole group literacy instruction.** Whole group instruction also focused heavily on Code Breaking concepts in both Maggie and Winona’s classrooms, but less in Annemarie’s. As a third grade teacher, Annemarie used Code Breaking activities that focused more on spelling and conventions of print, such as capitalization and punctuation. These concepts were not major components of whole group instruction, and instead took up fifteen minutes in the morning instruction or the focus of homework practice in the form of worksheets from the basal reading program.

During the daily Morning Meeting, when Annemarie presented the News and Announcements on the Active Board, students sometimes corrected capitalization or punctuation errors. Maggie also used the similar practice of Daily News as an anchor
activity to teach a variety of literacy concepts each day. This predictable routine of writing a message to students on large chart paper that was read together at the beginning of the Literacy block, allowed students to understand early in the year that print carries a message. The Daily News message had a predictable structure that included messages that were meaningful to students, such as whose birthday it was that day or where they would be going on a field trip the following day. Maggie emphasized many Code Breaking concepts such as sight words and phonics through this familiar, authentic context. She also taught students chants that went along with each sight word. These brief chants spelled out the word and usually made some connection to the meaning using a gesture, such as “m-y, m-y, spells my my my,” while pointing to oneself. In whole group instruction using the Daily News, Maggie might leave out words from various sight words and have students come up and fill in these letters, or leave the entire word out and draw a shape to visualize the size of the letters in the word for students to guess. When completing these activities, the entire sentence was always re-read so that students understood the meaning of this word in context, an essential concept that moves students from simply calling out decoded words to understand what they are reading and writing.

Maggie used the Alphafriends program materials she purchased with her own money for short periods of time each day during this whole group instruction time alongside Daily News, songs and chants, and read-alouds. Maggie began introducing individual Alphafriends, which were an animal shaped like a particular letter. She and the students created stories about these Alphafriends, using their bodies to make the shapes of these letters. Maggie felt it was important to learn the sound the letter makes first, rather than its name, so she would introduce the letter S, in Alphafriends as “Sammy
Snake,” saying the ‘s’ sound for Sammy Snake. These Alphafriends were displayed along the wall in the classroom, and students referred back to these often while they were writing independently. Maggie encouraged students to “stretch it out” when trying to spell a word. Students were observed saying a word to themselves out loud when writing, looking up at the Alphafriends displayed and saying, “Sammy Snake,” writing an ‘s’ for that sound. Encouraging young students to recognize and manipulate sounds in words first before emphasizing letter names is recommended to develop phonemic awareness, or the understanding that language is made up of sounds used to create words. However, due to reports such as Reading First, emphasizing the letter and sound connection in print has been given more recognition and emphasized rather than building on this phonemic awareness first (Freeman & Freeman, 2004).

Winona’s whole group literacy instruction centered around her use of the Active Board, the electronic white board where she would project power point or multiple Word documents to display different concepts to students. In a typical lesson, Winona began with the News and Announcements, a message to the students, which told them about skills they would be working on and what would be happening that day. After reading the announcement, Winona asked students to make corrections to the message using the digital pen that allowed them to write directly on the Active Board. There were always mistakes with capitalization, punctuation, or spelling of a high frequency word. When students corrected these errors, there was little discussion or re-reading of the sentence to talk about why these mistakes interfered with the message of the News and Announcements. Sometimes, when students asked a question about the meaning of a
word or seemed to misunderstand the meaning or concept, Winona continued on with little acknowledgement of the student’s misunderstanding, as if pressured by time.

Following News and Announcements, there was a sequence of many slides with different concepts presented back to back with little discussion of how these different skills helped one another, or were useful in students’ own reading or writing. Winona presented a slide with a list of sight words that changed periodically. She sent these lists of sight words home each week and expected students to memorize these to be used in automatic recall. There was very little, if any, discussion about the meanings of these words or their usage in sentences. She expressed frustration during an interview in November that parents were not involved as they should be in helping their children succeed in school; “I do feel like the ones that are reading at home, practicing their sight words, doing their reading here. You can tell the ones that are um, putting a lot in because they are just improving.” This expectation of what parents should be doing and willingness to blame students’ home lives when they do not reflect the values typically held by a middle class orientation to schooling is what Darling-Hammond (2001) calls “the sins of the parents,” a construct that is perpetuated in many CLD schools (p. 72).

Next, vocabulary words from the basal program were always included in a different slide, followed with slides addressing the phonics skills from the basal program. These words were usually found in the story in the basal reading textbook that the class would read throughout the week. Students were asked to write these words in sentences, using individual white boards that Winona handed out. When students shared their sentences, there was very little discussion about these and if there was an error made, why the particular word did not fit into the sentence was not discussed. Winona
emphasized correcting the students’ punctuation or capitalization of the words in these sentences, rather than a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word.

For the phonics skill from the basal program that week, Winona presented a list of words of the same spelling or sound pattern. In January, the phonics concept was “/ã/ and /ā/,” with a list of words with the /ã/ sound on the left side and /ā/ on the right. Winona read the /ā/ words aloud, asking students to repeat these words after her. She asked the students, “What sound do you hear in these words?” guiding them until one student could say “the /ā/ sound.” This same pattern occurred for the /ã/ words. There was little conversation about the meanings of these words or other words that fit into this pattern so that students may be able to better transfer this phonics concept into their own writing or reading.

This phonics concept was also part of the large chart of poems that Winona utilized each week. The class listened to this poem on CD read aloud with music and then read or sung along with the music the second time through. The poems were often read very fast on the CD to follow appropriately along with the music, and most of the time many of the students did not keep up with the music or appear to know the words, even as Winona pointed to the chart as it was read. There was no review of the content of the poem, which usually did not connect to the story they were reading that week or vocabulary they had just discussed. These poems were contrived to use the particular phonics skill, so that using words that rhymed were more of the focus rather than allowing students to make personal or other connections to the poem. This was an example of an instructional practice that did not emphasize the meaning or connection
between these Code Breaking skills, so that students understood how these would help them in their everyday reading and writing.

Each teacher included many Code Breaking activities as part of their daily literacy instruction and upon first glance, the enacted practices do seem very similar. However, there were some clear differences in the way these activities and instruction allowed students to connect these somewhat isolated skills as presented in instruction to understand how individual skills assist them in understanding what they are reading and writing. These differences can be attributed to the differences in beliefs and understandings about literacy and diverse learners, grade level expectations and requirements, and each teacher’s ability to negotiate these expectations. These Code Breaking practices were emphasized with all students in Winona and Maggie’s classroom, but even more heavily with students who were English Language Learners. Annemarie’s practices with English Language Learners also emphasized these skills above all else.

**Code Breaking practices with English Language Learners.** In all the teachers’ classrooms, Code Breaking was the area of concern and instructional focus when it came to English Language Learners. All the teachers had the highest number of newcomer English Language Learners so far in their teaching experience. These newcomer students recently immigrated to the United States, spoke little English, and were often the topic of our conversations because all the teachers felt that they needed more support to work with the students. Code Breaking skills were what the teachers felt that their ELLs needed to have first. A narrow understanding of the literacy development of English
Language Learners led to an overemphasis of this area of the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999).

When Annemarie spoke about concerns about her English Language Learner students, the skills these students seem to be struggling with were graphophonic in nature. She said in November that she was having difficulty deciphering ELLs’ writing, and spoke often about one student in particular,

He just tries and tries. We’ll go over phonics instruction and then two days later I’ll ask him some of the same things because I’m like he knows this, we’ve gone over this so many times. But he just can’t seem to get it. (Annemarie, Interview, 3/24/2010)

When Annemarie met with her Guided Reading group comprised of three English Language Learners and one student with Special Needs, she typically included a brief lesson on a phonics concept that was found in the shared text they would read together. In other, more proficient groups, the discussion focused mostly on comprehension of the text unless a student had difficulty reading a word aloud, in which case she would briefly go over this concept.

All three teachers created separate activities or assignments for the English Language Learners that they could do in substitution for one of the other Literacy Centers or for homework. In whole group instruction, the ELLs often appeared disengaged or off task. Winona frequently had her two newcomer ELLs work on the computer, using a website such as Starfall.com, while the rest of the class read a book or participated in her lessons on the Active Board. Maggie created an “Aliah basket,” filled with activities that Aliah could do when she became frustrated or felt that another activity was too challenging for her. Annemarie created packets of worksheets in substitution for the typical homework she reproduced from the county selected basal program. She also had
students work on computer-based literacy programs early in the morning when they entered the classroom, create personal bilingual dictionaries, and practice phonics skills through activities she borrowed from first or second grade teachers.

While differentiation of instruction is certainly a valuable instructional practice and an important part of culturally relevant instruction, there is a difference between creating specific learning opportunities for individual students and relegating students to only working on decoding and spelling practices. Using a computer program as the main source of differentiation, with little discussion or follow up by other activities is problematic. To develop into critical readers and writers, learners of all abilities need to understand how to use all four resources in the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) interchangeably. The teachers’ emphasis on Code Breaking skills for their culturally and linguistically diverse students, specifically the English Language Learners, suggests a mismatch between what they learned in the alternative preparation program and what they were being told by the county, school, and curricula as important concepts for young students.

**Code Breaking practices within the alternative preparation program.** The content of the literacy methods courses in the alternative preparation program included practices that allowed students to make connections within texts, respond in a variety of modes and ways, and create reading and writing activities that allow students to use their own knowledge and experiences to develop as literate learners. From the beginning of data collection, there was little evidence of Winona and Annemarie in particular enacting practices from their literacy methods courses. Each teacher was able to define activities or practices they had learned in the program, but Winona in particular seemed to believe
that it was not possible to use these with her students in the context of the Code Breaking expectations of school.

Winona expressed that she did not learn what she needed in order to teach first grade students because the literacy message at the school and county was that Code Breaking was essential to learn before anything else. This led to a dependence on the county selected basal program:

But for me at least, I need a structure. I need to know that I’m covering everything I need to cover. I mean it would be great to you know, not have unit tests and do things in the order I want to do them in and have author studies and literature circles and you know, like themes we are working on, instead of “this week is ě.” (Winona, Interview, 12/9/2009)

Winona mentioned this often throughout the year, and it seemed to be a large reason that she felt it was so necessary to use the basal program, particularly the prescriptive Reading First insert provided.

I really don’t feel like I understood the process of how kids learn to read. Like, understanding . . . I had no clue about phonics. I didn’t know any phonics rules. I didn’t know, you know, anything about phonics. I knew about Guided Reading. And I uh, felt prepared about that but I really didn’t know about the basics. (Winona, Interview, 12/9/2009)

Because Winona believed that the “basics,” or foundation of students’ literate learning, meant developing Code Breaking skills, she did not understand that practices such as Guided Reading, thematic units, author studies, and literature circles that she learned about in the post-baccalaureate program actually contribute to developing all areas of a reader and writer repertoire. It did not seem that these literacy methods courses made a salient connection to how these individual practices contribute to developing Text Participant, critical users, or Text Users while also allowing students to practice Code Breaking skills in the context of authentic reading and writing activities. Maggie suggested this as needing to be included in literacy methods courses:
I think it would be nice to have people learn how to do what you’re supposed to do, but be able to do the fun literacy activities and um, kind of get away teaching reader and writers workshop um, how it should be taught. I also think it’s important for people to really understand how reader and writers workshop works, rather than just reading the same boring book all week from your reading curriculum and then taking a test on Friday. (Maggie, Interview, 12/9/2009)

This quote illuminates Maggie’s belief that teachers could and should subtly negotiate the curriculum they are presented with, and that teacher education should help preservice teachers think about how they might do this in a way that would lead to more culturally responsive literacy instruction. It did not seem that Winona or Annemarie felt this was as important or possible at Eastside. This could be a result of teaching in high stakes grade levels, first and third, or not understanding the importance of including these other elements to develop successful readers and writers.

**Text User Practices Constrained by Curriculum**

According to the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999), an essential component of being adaptive and skilled readers and writers is to be a Text User. A Text User is one who understands the different modes of texts, and for what purposes one reads and writes in these various genres. Being able to deconstruct the different choices authors make when reading others’ work allows students to become more purposeful in using these strategies in their own writing. Text User practices were evident in Annemarie, Winona, and Maggie’s classrooms, however, the decision making around what and when various texts were used was guided mainly by the basal program and test preparation rather than for the purpose of developing authentic reading and writing strategies or from students’ own interests or experiences, tenants of culturally relevant literacy instruction.
When asked about their goals for students in interviews, each teacher acknowledged the importance of students reading and writing widely. However, their practices were limited according to the Four Resources Model, which recommends teaching students to, “use texts functionally by traversing and negotiating the labor and social relations around them – that is, by knowing about and acting on the different cultural and social functions that various texts perform inside and outside school” (Luke & Freebody, 1999, n.p.). Most of the literate activities in these classrooms were focused on students completing an isolated task or preparing for an assessment, rather understanding how crucial it is that they can decode and deconstruct the messages they are presented with in texts. So, while there was evidence of what could be described as Text User activities, these were constrained by the expectations and restrictions placed upon the teachers.

In today’s digital world, it is important that students understand how to read, interpret, and analyze digital text. While exposing students to technology as reading and writing material is important, it is also essential that students are able to deconstruct these texts as well as create their own using multiple digital formats. In many classrooms, particularly those with culturally and linguistically diverse students, teachers promote low-level skills that relegate these students to simply being passive observers of this information, created by someone else. Instead, students should be actively interacting with technology, creating their own multimodal texts, and making choices about their reading and writing practice.

For both Winona and Annemarie, the most common text used in literacy instruction was the basal program’s textbook, which was a collection of stories. These
stories ranged in genre and many were abbreviated versions of trade books by well-known authors. Winona and Annemarie used these textbooks in whole group instruction and when students were given independent reading time. The county created Benchmark exams covered questions from these stories found in the basal program.

Trade books, or published texts available to all, were another format that each teacher used in different ways. Maggie used trade books as her primary source of texts, in read-alouds and when students were given time to read independently. Annemarie relied on trade books for read-alouds occasionally to conduct a short mini lesson on a reading comprehension or writing strategy. Each teacher read aloud the Book of the Month trade book at least once a month. Outside of the Book of the Month, I observed Winona reading a trade book aloud during the first week of school and not again until January on the school wide “Jump Into Reading Day”, which was a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) sponsored event in which teachers were asked to create literacy activities throughout the day and guest readers from the community came into classrooms to read aloud.

All three teachers felt that it was essential to expose students to many genres, or types of texts, throughout the year. In Guided Reading or small reading groups, all three teachers talked about making conscious efforts to expose students to both non-fiction and fiction texts. Maggie used teacher-created, short texts that connected to the theme the class was studying in small reading groups, as well as some trade books that she had multiple copies of. Annemarie and Winona both used books borrowed from the book room at Eastside, which housed a high number of different types of texts leveled using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) system. Many of these books were
published by the county selected basal program and were highly predictable or synthetic phonics based. Synthetic phonics books have highly decodable words, often focusing on one or two phonics patterns throughout one book. Students did not have any choice over these Guided Reading texts or trade books read aloud during instruction. Across each teacher, there was no discussion with students about the purposes or organization of the different types of texts, which is essential according to the Text User area of the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999).

Each teacher felt that it was important to use non-fiction texts to connect to what the class was studying in Science or Social Studies. During writing instruction, the topics or prompts Annemarie would often give students were focused on the Science of Social Studies concept the class was working on. Part of this decision was the pressure that Annemarie and Winona both spoke about often- the lack of time they felt they had to teach everything they were supposed to. Annemarie said, “I’ve been trying to really be good this year with tying in Science and Social studies with our reading and writing. Because we always seem to run out of time with that stuff.” Maggie taught thematically, as the other Kindergarten teachers did. These interdisciplinary themes typically changed each week, and Maggie used trade books almost exclusively in read-alouds to introduce and teach about this theme. Often, she would read both non-fiction and fiction texts during the week about this Science or Social Studies theme. For example, in the month of March, the class was studying mammals and one week focused on bears. Maggie read an informational book about Bears and referred back to Goldilocks and the Three Bears (Brett, 1997), which they had read the day before. Students also wrote during Literacy Centers about this interdisciplinary theme and sometimes also during their morning
journal writing time. Maggie alternated between choosing prompts for students to write from and allowing for student choice of topics. However, the use of these non-fiction and fiction texts was not discussed with students. Teachers seemed to feel that their inclusion of these different texts was important to help students understand different genres, but did not realize that explicitly teaching students how and why different modes of texts are used in reading and writing is critical so that they can apply it in their own authentic use.

Annamarie said that one of her goals for the year was, “encouraging a love of reading” with her students. She allowed students to go to the library several times each week to check out books as well as magazines. She included Scholastic News, a monthly newspaper that was purchased by the school as part of her morning work on some occasions. This short, monthly publication had articles of a variety of topics, from current events in the news to global events to popular culture articles. Students completed comprehension questions that accompanied the Scholastic News as the assignment they completed when they first entered in the morning. During observations, there was no discussion on the different genres or content used.

Throughout the year, Annemarie expressed concern that students did not seem interested in reading. A program that she used, and felt that was a school requirement to use, was Accelerated Reader (AR), a computerized reading assessment system that asks students questions about individual books they have read. Trade books are assigned levels and labeled in this way in the school library, and students complete an assessment to determine what reading level they may take tests on. Annemarie described her understanding of Accelerated Reader:

We have to do Accelerated Reader where they check out AR books and take the quizzes. And, some students really love that and some really rush
through it and I think they almost look at it as a chore. But that we have to do. So, I try to make it exciting for them so they see when they’re moving up in their levels and they get to different colors, you know try to make it something good for them. (Annemarie, Interview, 8/27/2009)

As the year went on, Annemarie spoke often about her frustration that students were not taking more Accelerated Reading exams or passing these when they did. She took their quiz averages as a test grade, and some students failed this portion of their literacy grade consistently. At the end of the year, Annemarie said about students’ participation in this program:

It makes me feel like I’m not getting them interested in reading. It’s like I’m just not inspiring them to read. Although I do read-alouds with them. I do read a chapter book aloud to them. I read short, picture books with them. I really don’t know. A lot of them and I don’t know if it’s just their age, but a lot of them just want to be done, you know, they want to be done with something in five minutes. So, I don’t know if it’s that sort of thing, like oh, this is an extra thing hanging over my head, then I’m not going to do it. A lot of them, I mean, they have books out, it’s not like they refuse to read. (Annemarie, 3/24/2010)

Rather than consider the Accelerated Reader program as problematic because students are only allowed to read and take short quizzes that ask a small number of low level questions (Biggers, 2001), Annemarie felt that she had not motivated students to read, even though she admits that students did read when given time in class to read. This hesitation to question the prescribed program as the issue, but instead blame herself or the students, is concerning when thinking about the willingness or ability to think critically about what one is being asked to teach.

In each grade level, writing instruction was divided into genre studies, in which each month the class focused on a particular type of writing, such as informational writing. These writing genres sometimes, but not always, correlated to the genre that the class was studying in reading. The genres to study were dictated by the scope and
sequence of standards. Annemarie, as a Third grade teacher, had to assess her students’ writing using the third grade writing portfolio, whose results were turned into the county in the spring. The portfolio requirements meant that Annemarie had to cover a certain list of genres to allow students to write in each of these before submitting this portfolio for grading in March. There was little time for flexibility of the type of genre the students would write or how long the class might work on this. Winona spoke about this when describing her plans for the month at the beginning of the year, “Well, right now we’re doing response to literature and trying to just hit those standards of making connections and what they like about the stories. And their writing is focusing on that too.” Within the genre the class was studying in writing, there was often a specific prompt or question that the students had to write about in Annemarie and Winona’s classrooms. Winona was often very directive in her writing instruction. In December, the genre study was on informational writing. After reading aloud a short informational book about frogs to the class, Winona informed the students that they would be writing their own informational story about an animal independently. She passed out non fiction texts on various animals to each student and their task was to write about this particular animal that was assigned to them. So, while listening to texts of different genres and practicing writing in a genre are examples of Text User practices, a lack of choice in exactly how students could apply these devices and no discussion about the purposes of these genres does not reflect the ultimate goal of the Four Resources Model, which is to develop critical readers and writers of these various texts.

According to the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999), Text User practices should help students see the many different modes literacy occurs and
understand how to use these resources critically. The use of technology in classrooms can help students see the ways that texts may be read and created using digital formats. Winona and Annemarie had Active Boards, a type of digital chalkboard, and used these daily. They felt that it allowed students to experience reading and writing in a new format. The way these teachers used this technology was directed by the state standards pacing chart and basal curriculum. The simplistic use of the technology did not allow students to interact with this mode of text, and acted as an overhead projector.

Many of the activities associated with the Active Board were focused on Code Breaking skills. Both teachers had students come up to the board during lessons and complete tasks such as correct spelling, capitalization, or punctuation errors. The use of the Active Board was teacher directed, and students did not guide the use of this. Winona acknowledged that she could “definitely make it a lot more interactive,” but because this was her first year with an Active Board, she only had some introductory training provided by the company and wished for more. Annemarie also used the Active Board in this way when she received one in November, changing her Daily News and Announcements from the overhead projector to the Active Board. Maggie did not yet have an Active Board, although she hoped for one soon. She spoke about asking the principal for one the previous summer, when Annemarie also requested hers. It seemed that the fact that Annemarie and other upper grade teachers received the newest batch of Active Boards was a point of contention for Maggie. She felt that to have one teacher in kindergarten with an Active Board was not fair when there were at least two to three Active Boards in each other grade level.
In addition to this limited, teacher-directed use of technology, students used the computers both in the classroom and in the school’s computer lab, which each class visited once a week. The activities in each of these interactions were also teacher directed, and students interacted more passively through the use of online games, rather than to create and communicate using technology based texts. Students rarely used technology for writing or creating stories in any of the classrooms. Annemarie reported that she occasionally checked out the laptop cart from the computer lab and used these so that students could research items for projects online. In many cases, students were paired on one computer to play games or follow test preparation programs designed to get them ready for the high stakes exam in the spring. Annemarie reported in January that the third grade teachers were asked to use a state level computer program to create online quizzes and mock tests for the high stakes exam in spring:

You go online and create practice tests, they are actually from a bank of test questions. And then, the students can log on and answer them or whatever. But I think I’m gonna kind of hold off on that for a little bit. ‘Cause I really hate to do that to them for you know, two months straight before the real thing, it’s just kind of a lot. (Annemarie, Debrief, 1/19/2010)

Maggie used songs and books read on Compact Disc (CD) that went along with trade books or by children’s artists that Maggie felt the students enjoyed. Annemarie and Winona both utilized the CD that accompanied the basal program to play stories in the textbook aloud as students listed along or to listen to the poems that emphasized a phonics skill. In Literacy Centers, Annemarie allowed students to listen to books on tape from a small selection of her own collection. These digital texts were again not discussed or analyzed, so students were not encouraged to understand how they could themselves
interact with texts through a variety of modes in their own reading and writing. As with other technology, these activities were teacher-directed and simplistic.

Many of the teachers’ practices could have been helpful in developing students’ repertories and understandings about the different ways that authors use these genres and modes to communicate. However, an important part of Luke and Freebody’s Four Resources Model (1999) is that students have some choice about these texts that they interact with, because these authentic experiences can help students understand how to use traits of each type of text in their own writing and to more deeply comprehend what they are reading. The genres and modes of literacy that the students were exposed to allowed for little creativity and interaction on their part, so they were not able to understand how to use this information in real-world contexts.

**Text Participant Practices Constrained by Curriculum**

Building from research on reading response theory (Rosenblatt, 1994) that highlights the importance of readers making their own unique connections with different types of texts for different purposes, the Text Participant area of the Four Resource Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) encourages literacy practices that have students interact with texts to create more authentic reading and writing experiences. This model maintains that the ways that we interact with texts are influenced by our cultural backgrounds, experiences, and purposes for reading.

There were many examples of opportunities for students to respond to the various forms of texts in each teacher’s classroom. However, the text and mode that students could respond with was teacher and curriculum-driven, so the space for students to make connections to events and topics that were meaningful to them was greatly restricted. In
all three classrooms, student had little choice in their reading material. In Winona’s classroom, students had almost no say throughout the day of what texts they read. In the independent reading center, students were allowed to select from a personal basket of containing a small number of books that Winona chose for them based on their Developmental Reading Assessment reading levels. These books were leveled readers published by the basal program, predictable texts found in the book room, or the basal textbook. On Fridays, students could read books from the class library that contained a wide variety of trade books. Other than that, this classroom library was not used in my observations. Students in Maggie’s classroom also had few choices in the types of books that they read. She rarely allowed them to choose books and read in the classroom library or, like Winona, selected books ahead of time that students could read. These books were typically trade books that Maggie read aloud to the class previously. In the writing center, students chose from a list of prompts or activities rather than writing about topics and in genres that they wished.

In Annemarie’s classroom, students also did not have choice about the texts used in Guided Reading or whole class reading instruction, but they could select books to read independently or with a partner from the classroom or school library during Literacy Centers. Students were highly encouraged to select books from the library that were in the Accelerated Reader system so that they could take an exam and receive points upon passing the accompanying quiz. Almost all of the books in the school library were labeled using this system.

Annemarie’s writing instruction included little choice in the topics students wrote about. If the genre according to the state standards was response to literature, the prompt
or text to respond to was created from this. The writing center in literacy centers provided some options for writing; students could choose from a list of prompts or write in any genre or topic they wished. Maggie allowed students to select the topic of their writing during morning journal writing, but provided a specific prompt for students to respond to in their writing in the writing center.

Using interdisciplinary units allowed Maggie’s students to make connections between different kinds of texts and concepts because she introduced students to these topics over a period of time and in different modes. For example, Maggie read aloud a variety of texts such as *Growing Vegetable Soup* (Elhert, 1991) and *Stone Soup* (McGovern, 1986) for a unit on vegetables. She discussed her thinking when planning the week’s activities that included reading several books, coming up with their own recipe for soup, and making a stone soup using the recipe from the book; “I thought they’d really enjoy that. And tomorrow, we’re making stone soup. I just tried to make those connections between *Stone Soup* (McGovern, 1986) and *Growing Vegetable Soup* (Elhert, 1991) so hopefully, they can make those text to text connections.” These types of activities allowed for more complex meaning making that Luke (2000) discusses should occur to build a Text Participant. While both Annemarie and Winona expressed a desire to have students make personal connections to texts and allow students to interpret and understand similarities and differences between the different texts read throughout the year, the prescriptive nature of the basal curriculum and the scope and sequence outlined by the county greatly limited the connections students could make. The stories and books provided in the basal program did not reflect many of the experiences and cultures of the CLD students, so this component of personal connections was limited by the curriculum.
At Eastside, each grade level was assigned an Author Study unit, which had been written at the county level. There was one author per grade level, and Winona used the Author study on Mem Fox as her first unit of the year. The lesson plans in this unit were written explicitly and Winona followed these closely with little questioning of how they met the needs of her individual students. When discussing students’ responses to one of Mem Fox’s texts, *Koala Lou* (Fox, 1988), Winona said that students were having difficulty understanding the events of the story because they had “no background knowledge on the Olympics.” When questioned, Winona and Annemarie were not sure why each grade level only did one author study or grade levels and did not seem to think about if they could share their author studies with other grades.

One school-wide program that had promise for students to make connections to a variety of texts was the ‘Book of the Month’ program, in which someone at the county level chose a text that each teacher would receive a copy of and read during the month. These books were mostly fictional texts with a character education message, such as friendship or being unique. I observed a few instances of the teachers using these texts, and these were all in Winona’s classroom. These ‘Book of the Month’ texts were some of the only trade books I observed Winona use in read-alouds. In Maggie and Annemarie’s classrooms, these books were visible sitting on the board and in some of the writing responses displayed in the classroom or in the students’ journals. Winona read aloud *Strawberry Freckleface* (Moore, 1997) and *I Like Myself* (Beaumont, 2004) as a segue into writing on two separate occasions during the literacy block I was observing. In the book, *Strawberry Freckleface* (Moore, 1997), the main character is teased because of her freckles and then decides at the end that she should embrace them. There was very little
discussion of the events in the story during or after the read aloud. Following both of these read-alouds, Winona guided the students in a writing activity to respond to the story. After reading *Strawberry freckleface* (Moore, 1997), Winona displayed the words, “I am special because_______”, on the Active Board, with students expected to fill in this blank in response. Winona provided several examples and tried to elicit ideas from students for a few minutes, but many of the students had a difficult time thinking about what special meant in the particular way the book was discussing. One of the student’s responses was, “I am special because I have a family,” to which Winona tried to guide the student to think about what exactly was special about her family. Many of the students copied from the examples Winona gave and she seemed frustrated that they had difficulty with this. She said following the lesson:

> And even the thing about what’s special about you today. One person said something and then they all say things that don’t even make sense. I don’t know how to make them, to like . . . They don’t even understand that. I would think that would be something they could relate to. (Winona, Debrief, 1/14/2010)

This is another example of an opportunity for students to read and respond to text, but both the exact book and type of response was dictated by the program. It was as though students were being told that they should have a response or connection to a book, but it should fit into what the curriculum dictates is the appropriate response

**Limited Use of Critical Practices**

It is well known that different schools receive different levels of funding and resources, thus impacting the students who attend these schools. Even when educational opportunities are adequate, the realities of the current global economy and systemic racism affect life opportunities of poor and minority students (Gee, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2001). It is imperative for all students to understand the ways that
current practices and policies position certain groups and maintain inequities between these groups, particularly students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Thus, students today need to be prepared to critically navigate the global society that they are a part of, both in and outside of school. These activities also fall in line with a culturally relevant view of teaching literacy, because students’ experiences, backgrounds, and unique abilities are recognized and valued.

In the context of Eastside Elementary, including Critical Practices as part of the literacy curriculum would be a challenging negotiation of Code Breaking-dominated curriculum and testing expectations. In Winona, Annemarie, and Maggie’s classrooms, there were very few instances of critical practice work. When thinking about what culturally relevant pedagogy meant for their teaching, the teachers did not make a connection to how these beliefs were reflected in their literacy instruction. Annemarie said:

I try to, you know, learn a little bit about each of them. And kind of know what their family life is like and where they’re from. And talk a lot, because I do have so many kids from different countries, you know we talk and share a lot about places they’ve been and things they’ve seen, where they travel to visit their family and stuff like that, to get the other children to be like, wow, to get the other kids to see how exciting that is (Annemarie, Interview, 11/5/2009).

While sharing is a practice that allows students to feel that their culture is valued in literacy, there were few instances in my observations of Annemarie’s classroom where students were allowed to use these experiences in reading and writing activities because of the prescriptive nature of the literacy program. One instance where I observed the strongest connection to the students’ backgrounds occurred in March. Eastside was having Culture Day’ the following week, where students and their parents were invited to come to school dressed in traditional dress from their culture and each country
represented would walk together in a parade-like fashion down the hallways of the school while students lined up outside their classroom. Each grade level was assigned a continent to decorate the halls to represent, and each classroom took a country within that continent. Annemarie shared with the students that she had chosen Eritrea because she knew that it was close to, but not representative of, several countries where students’ families were from. Using the Active Board, she introduced them to pictures of the country, as well as photos from her own trip to South Africa. Annemarie shared several games she had from South Africa and told them that later that day, the class was going to try their hand at customary games played in Eritrea and throughout Africa. This was one instance when I observed students extremely engaged and talkative as they looked at each of Annemarie’s photos and pointed out where ‘my country’ was on a map of Africa displayed on the Active Board.

Valuing these backgrounds and first languages in oral sharing or conversation with other students is important, but the literacy activities in Winona’s classroom were also limited in the capacity that students were actually invited to bring in their home backgrounds and experiences. For example, students were allowed to speak in their home language, but not authorized to write or read in it. Winona said about her students, “And they share a lot, they share a lot about you know their experiences, things they know. Um, where they’re from. I want them to be OK talking in their language.” Maggie’s beliefs about her students also respected their backgrounds, but were not included in the literacy instruction. Maggie spoke often about wanting to appeal to students’ interests in planning instruction and because of the more flexible nature of the thematic units.
kindergarten teachers, she was able to do this by choosing texts, songs, and activities that her students enjoyed.

Thinking about the kinds of Critical Practices included in her literacy instruction, Maggie had difficulty naming practices outside of choosing read-alouds that incorporated students’ cultures or experiences and discussing challenging issues presented in a text.

During the month of February, in conjunction with Black History Month, Maggie read aloud *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995) and invited the students to think about how Ruby Bridges must have felt and to think about why the other people involved in the situation might feel the way they do. Annemarie and Winona also spoke about choosing texts such as these to use in read-alouds to help students see different perspectives and how authors may position different characters in a story.

In observations, there were few examples of texts with these kinds of issues or topics presented. When there was an opportunity for a critical discussion that arose in the book, these were often not taken up by the teachers. For example, in October, Annemarie lead a Guided Reading group using a non-fiction text published by the basal reading program whose topic was an oil spill and how it harmed the animals living in the ocean near the spill. While students were given opportunity to share how they felt about this unfortunate event and Annemarie guided them to think about some of the environmental implications of this, there was no mention in the book or discussion prompted by Annemarie to think about who had spilled this oil or what those responsible should do. There were certainly many real-world connections to make with this text, but the opportunity was missed.
Another practice that teachers felt allowed students to challenge and take action on events in their lives or the world was to write in the persuasive genre. Annemarie felt that having them take a side of an issue in history and write a persuasive statement taking one side or the other allowed them to think critically. Students also wrote speeches and presented these when the class studied the Civil Rights movement. Winona and Maggie included persuasive writing assignments that they felt allowed students to challenge or talk about things that were meaningful to them, such as writing a letter to a parent trying to convince them of something they wanted. While these types of activities certainly introduce thinking strategies that are part of Critical Practices, they were directed in content and mode by the curriculum. Students were not given the opportunity to choose the exact issues that impacted their communities or lives, or the mode through which they could express themselves. It is also important to note that the letters or action taken on these issues never went further than the individual classrooms, and an important part of critical literacy is allowing students to see that their critical responses can make a difference (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2007). In order for teachers to plan literacy instruction that invites students to challenge the norm, they must also be willing to critique the curricula, assessments, and power structures they are faced with.

Maggie was the most critical of the requirements placed upon the other grades:

What they wanted you to do in third grade was so awful. And teachers were going along with it! Using the worksheets and doing all that stuff. . . . I was like Monday. Mondays I’ll read the story [from the basal textbook]. There you go! The rest of the week we’ll do readers and writers workshop! (Maggie, Debrief, 10/20/2009)

Just like the young students in these classrooms were not given the opportunity to critically examine the texts they were presented with, Winona and Annemarie seemed to recognize that the curriculum they were following so closely was not the most
appropriate for their students, but did not challenge these requirements. There was a tension between what they felt they ‘would do’ if there were no requirements such as the basal program, standards, or testing. Winona said:

Well, I’m sure there that could be so much better stuff and the kids are reading about things they want to write about, you know that type of thing is probably how it would be organized instead of around like ‘well because [county selected basal program] said we’re working on compound words this week, we’re going to work on compound words this week’. You know? It would be cool to be like ‘yeah kids, we’re just going to read and we’re to talk.’ Like it would be cool to have literature circles, you know themes we were working on instead of like ‘this week is ě . . . If I didn’t have any accountability for anything. (Winona, Interview, 12/9/2009)

Annemarie said; “I guess in an ideal world, I would be pulling my own read-alouds each week and covering the skills that way, or at least sometimes. But they really do want to see that [using the basal program].” These outside pressures and mandates from the school, county, and national level constrained each teacher’s practices, from their views of literacy learning to their enacted practice.

**Contextual Factors Constraining Literacy Practices at Eastside**

Early on in the study, it was apparent from the teachers’ discourse that contextual factors present at Eastside influenced their experiences as beginning teachers and the literacy pedagogy they enacted. When we sat down for teacher debriefs following literacy lessons, the first words out of the teachers’ mouths were almost always something about a school or county expectation, support teacher, administration, or assessment. The larger financial and organizational issues at this particular county were also frequently on the teachers’ mind and surely impacted their everyday feelings about their jobs. There were few professional development opportunities that provided the kinds of support these
teachers felt they needed, particularly to meet the needs of their English Language Learners.

Throughout the year, it was a challenge to understand what role the leadership at Eastside had in setting curricular expectations or providing support in literacy. Much of the language around literacy instruction seemed to be messages repeated from the county office. These requirements, in the form of assessments and curricula, were dominated by a view of literacy that valued Code Breaking practices over other resources. There were several programs and initiatives that prevailed in Annemarie and Winona’s discourse on teaching literacy and practice. Although it seemed that there were mixed messages given to the teachers, both Annemarie and Winona felt that it was the expectation of administration that the county selected basal program should be used as the main literacy curriculum. This would ensure that students were prepared and successful for the county-level Benchmark assessment that had to be administered every six weeks and the high stakes exam in the spring. While the basal program included elements valuing all four resources, the activities used from this were primarily focused on Code Breaking skills, particularly in Winona’s classroom. The main contextual influences on the teachers’ practice are illuminated in the following sections; the county selected basal program, assessment, and the particular grade level each teacher worked within.

**Basal Literacy Program**

When asked what guides their decision making in teaching literacy, Annemarie and Winona both referred to the state standards in literacy and secondarily, the county selected basal program. They referred often to the ‘scope and sequence,’ a weekly plan for what state standards should be taught throughout the year, and both this sequence and
the layout of the basal program determined when individual skills would be taught. Maggie also acknowledged that she was asked to follow the scope and sequence of the literacy state standards that her grade level created early in the year, but she admitted often to deviating from these plans or even introducing skills that were not expected in kindergarten because she noticed students were ready for them or in need of them based on her observation of their work.

Both Annemarie and Winona were critical of the county selected basal program, but interestingly, not because they felt that it restricted their decision-making or ability to meet students’ individual needs. Annemarie found issue with the fact that the basal program was so old that it aligned with the previous iteration of the state standards, so in this way it did not line up with the state standards of the current county pacing chart outlined. Winona also believed that it was essential to address state standards following the pacing chart, so she also followed the units outlined in the basal program. She described the expectations at the school as:

Yeah, I mean, we’re required to use the curriculum, you know, like when they come in if you’re not using- I mean last year it was very clear, you will use [the basal program] I mean, you can supplement stuff. But if they come in to observe you and you’re doing your own thing without using the curriculum . . . Yeah, it’s a requirement. (Winona, Interview, 11/18/2009)

While she does not explicitly say what would happen if one was not following the program, there seemed to be a feeling of not wanting to get in ‘trouble’ by the teachers. Although Maggie was vocal about her dislike for the program, she admitted she set out some of the materials to give the appearance she used them and felt that if she were reprimanded, she would try to incorporate them into her instruction. Given the layoffs due to budget troubles that were taking place the year of the study, bringing any attention
to oneself did not seem desirable and in informal conversation, each teacher mentioned this.

While Winona was somewhat negative about the prescriptive nature of the basal program, Annemarie was more openly critical of it, calling it “boring.” Early in the year, she spoke about wishing that she could move away from relying on the basal program and instead design interdisciplinary units that integrated subject areas. She started talking to another third grade teacher about co-creating these units together in October.

Annemarie felt that she adapted the weekly plans outlined in the teacher manual of the program by pulling other texts, resources, and lesson ideas from outside sources such as the internet. But, because lesson plans were due to the principal every Friday, she often ran out of time to have the lessons planned and ready and admitted that sometimes it was just “easier” to use what were outlined in the teacher guide of the basal program. Thus, she admitted that she ended up relying on the basal curriculum lesson plans because of the many other things such as paperwork and analyzing test data that she was asked to do each week. She summed up her mixed feelings about the program:

So, it’s easier to give them a story each week and my tests are already there for me to copy and you know I can give them worksheets, stuff like that, you know all that stuff is pre-made for me. . . . But the stories aren’t all that interesting. (Annemarie, Interview, 9/28/2009)

This quote demonstrates the tension that Annemarie felt between the pressures of time that each teacher spoke about often, and instruction she felt would be more engaging and appropriate for her students. For several weeks in November and December, the third grade teachers did work together to create several week-long units on topics such as Holiday and Family that addressed the state standards and skills addressed in the basal program, but used trade books and resources pulled from teacher resource books instead
of the basal reader. Annemarie reported that this had gone well, and that it was a nice change of pace to work collaboratively with her grade level and read texts outside the reading program.

While each teacher tried to expose students to different types of reading and writing and incorporated multiple genres in their instruction, the choice and even schedule of when these were used were determined by the scope and sequence of the state standards, required assessments, and county selected basal curriculum. The use of these school and county programs restricted the choice, variety, and timing of students’ Text User experiences in the classrooms.

In these classrooms, students’ opportunities to respond to these texts did not allow them to “participate in understanding and composing meaningful written, visual, and spoken texts, taking into account each text’s interior meaning systems in relation to their available knowledge and their experiences of other cultural discourses, texts, and meaning systems” (Luke & Freebody, 1999, n.p.). Using a prescriptive program that outlines when and how students should respond to text does not allow for the many types of connections students may make, or to relate these experiences to individual students’ cultures and backgrounds because the authors of a published program do not know each of these students’ unique knowledge.

The words “required” or “have to” came up again and again in Winona and Annemarie’s discourse throughout the year as they spoke about their literacy pedagogy. They believed that these guidelines must be followed, but did not question how these standards or curriculum did or did not allow for flexibility or their ability to meet the needs of individual students. However, Maggie, like the other Kindergarten teachers at
Eastside, taught using thematic units that lasted one to two weeks and covered the state standards in this way. Maggie was not shy about her dislike for the county selected basal program and admitted she had never looked in the teacher manual when she taught Kindergarten. She did occasionally use some of the supplemental materials to assist in teaching Code Breaking skills, such as the magnetic letters, small white wipe off boards, poems on chart paper, big books, and leveled readers. While Maggie felt that administration might like to see her using basal program materials in her instruction, she thought that administration left Kindergarten alone because they did not understand the curriculum of that grade level and because it was not impacted by the results of the high stakes standardized test. Because of this, Maggie was left with much more curricular freedom to make decisions about what types of activities would help her students learn Code Breaking skills and create different learning opportunities. This was evident in her literacy centers, where the content and materials were pulled from different sources based on what Maggie felt students needed. Although not always individualized for particular students, as they year went on, Maggie reconfigured the groupings of her students so that she could have different groups of students with various needs practice a particular concept.

Assessments

Integrated with talk of expectations about the basal program was the ‘benchmark test’, a county created assessment given in Literacy and Math every six weeks. These exams covered the state literacy standards covered in each six-week unit of the basal program and state standards. Teachers in grades first through fifth had to give these tests as pre and post tests at the beginning and end of the six-week units. Until this year, only
the post test was required. Beginning this year, the teachers were told that they must also give the pre test. While teachers were critical of these tests and did not seem clear who wrote them or if all schools in the county had to give these, Annemarie and Winona did administer them and seemed to place some weight in the results, even though as Annemarie said, they did not believe they were appropriate assessments:

They aren’t very comprehensive. There are only 5 questions, so I mean, if you get one wrong . . . So, now this year, we have to do the pre and post test and turn that data in. And it’s the exact same test. So it’s kind of weird because you give them the pretests and see what they don’t understand, but you can’t go over the wrong answers with them. Then, we give them the same thing six weeks later (Annemarie, Interview, 12/10/2009).

Teachers were told to analyze test scores, and weekly grade level meetings were often dedicated to analyzing the results of these tests, which Annemarie called “a waste of time.” This types of testing tasks were what she often said took her away from planning lessons for students or finding resources that could benefit her students:

…You feel like, ok, now I have to give this pre-test, now I have do this post-test. These little things that they want you to do. Sometimes you feel like, alright, this is one more thing, where’s the time that I’m just supposed to teach them and teach them the way that I think is good? (Annemarie, Interview, 11/5/2009)

Because of the pressure to perform on county and national assessments, Winona and Annemarie felt they had much less flexibility to deviate from the basal program and specifically the Code Breaking skills that are so dominant on these assessments. Winona talked about this pressure often and said that she had a “much higher class” the year before and that they all passed the high stakes exam. Now, every time she saw the principal this year, the principal made a comment about having “high expectations” for all the students in Winona’s class to pass again. She did not feel her job worth as a
teacher should be associated with a test score and said, “I don’t want to work for a test score- I want to do the best I can with them and move them along as well as I can.”

**Differences in Grade Level Requirements**

Each teacher acknowledged that differences existed in the requirements between kindergarten and other grades. However, Maggie did feel that upper grade teachers could deviate from following the curriculum as long as they “did their job.” To Maggie, this meant showing the administration that students were successful in their literacy development based on one’s practice and being able to back up these practices with reasoning for why one was doing something. Maggie taught third grade for half a year in her first year at Eastside and referred to this experience often when talking about the expectations for other grade levels. She said:

> When I taught 3rd grade, let me tell you, I did not teach to the test! I took them out to recess even though they told me not to. I did Science experiments. . . . I did not teach to the test! You know? I taught them strategies, but I did not skill and drill. And, all my kids passed. And they [administration] did not bother me! (Maggie, Interview, 12/9/2009)

Maggie was critical of teachers that did strictly follow the program instead of covering skills through the reader and writer workshop she felt was best. When asked if her personality was one to go against the grain, she seemed surprised and admitted that no, she would not like getting in trouble or being seen as a troublemaker. Maggie admitted she would probably be more conscious if she was reprimanded for not following the basal program, but that she would just “close her door more” and try to continue teaching the way she felt was best for her students.

Winona and Annemarie felt pressure to follow the state standards at the prescribed time so that students could be successful on the county unit exams as well as the high stakes exams in the spring. While Maggie had a kindergarten assessment that
required her to collect ongoing samples of students’ work and conduct individual assessments throughout the year, the results of this exam were not used in determining Adequate Yearly Progress, and each teacher felt strongly that this was why kindergarten teachers had more flexibility. Maggie had mixed emotions about this, because she also felt that the administration did not respect or understand the important roles that a kindergarten teacher played; “They just don’t even know what we’re supposed to be doing. They think it’s playtime. I think they think since kindergarten doesn’t test…it’s…not as important. They’ve made us teachers feel that kindergarten just isn’t as important.” Even though Maggie did not appreciate what she felt was a misunderstanding about kindergarten, this seemed to allow her to move beyond the prescriptive, isolated instruction promoted by the basal curriculum.

**Need for Support for English Language Learners**

All three teachers felt that they needed more assistance to work effectively with the English Language Learners in particular in their classrooms. They expressed the desire for support from administration and support teachers at Eastside, such as the ESOL teachers and Instructional Coach. Annemarie and Maggie spoke about their desires to collaborate more with support teachers and seemed eager to learn more about these students. Winona saw these support personnel as those who should assist her in working with the diverse learners in her classroom, because she felt overwhelmed with all the other duties and challenges she felt she had. Her frustration with the support teachers at Eastside was evident throughout the year.

Support services such as ESOL and Special Education took place at Eastside in a ‘pull out’ method, where these teachers take designated students out of the class for a
period of time each day. Throughout the year, Winona was frustrated with the inconsistency that the support teachers came to pick the students up on any day and also not knowing what the teachers do with these students. Winona did not feel that these support teachers had the same amount of accountability or responsibility as she did and said on two occasions; “I can’t do this alone” and “I don’t know what kind of accountability these teachers have, you know what kind of system they have going. I have no idea what they do when they’re with them.”

In addition to a lack of communication and co-planning, there were many days when students were not picked up at their designated times with no notification from the support teachers, thus students remained in the classroom during literacy instruction. These teachers were often pulled to assist with special events such as a holiday lunch or if a teacher was absent and a substitute was not available, these teachers would become the substitute teachers. Winona’s frustration with this inconsistency was evident:

So they [administration] want these kids to get on grade level and succeed and that’s what ESOL, Special Education, is for. But, they’re running a school when they pull those teachers to serve tea at a luncheon. I mean when someone’s absent and didn’t get a sub, I understand those would be the first people they’d go to, but also I mean there’s got to be a better way to organize it so that you, my class isn’t affected every single morning when someone’s pulled (Winona, Interview, 11/18/2009).

When this happened, Winona’s instruction in particular was thrown off because she felt it challenging to plan activities that they could do independently in Literacy Centers while she worked with a Guided Reading group. She referred to word work materials she was given: “In terms of using some of the resources like cut this word out and match it, it’s just really hard unless I’m working one on one with them or in a group.” Winona had difficulty throughout the year coming up with literacy opportunities that these students could participate in and it seemed that the computer or puzzles were the fall back task for
ELLs. In Annemarie and Maggie’s classrooms, when a support teacher did not collect the students, they would continue in the daily routine as the rest of the students with little mention of this from the teachers.

All three teachers acknowledged that the decision-making about the roles of these support teachers was set by administration. They also expressed a desire to provide more guidance from administration when it came to English Language Learners and other struggling students. Annemarie had two English Language Learners who were repeating third grade and towards the middle of the year, she began the process of referral to Special Education, which consisted of a new process called Response to Intervention that begins with teacher created interventions to document areas of concern for a period of time using specified assessments (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Because this was a new process, Annemarie understood very little about what she was supposed to do and was unable to get clear support from any member of the administration, including the Instructional Coach at Eastside. Winona also had several frustrating encounters with administration when she asked for assistance with her Newcomer ELL, Einku, who arrived in October and had severe epilepsy. The testing process for both Special Education and ESOL services moved very slowly and Winona felt at a loss for how to work with this student, even how to address his seizures. The school nurse, Special Education teachers, and ESOL teachers all provided very little information or support to Winona. Maggie also had a student with her for his second year in Kindergarten, who had gone through the Special Education pre-referral process at the beginning of the school year and by the end of the year, had still not been tested.

Professional Development Needs
All three teachers expressed a desire for continued learning when it came to meeting the needs of English Language Learners, especially in understanding, as Winona said, “The process of how an ELL develops. I guess I don’t know where to begin with them.” Annemarie felt that as a school there was a need for continued learning on ELLs:

I mean, when we have professional development here as it pertains to ESOL, it’s really quick and rushed and sort of, it’s like, here’s a folder of information and nobody really looks at it again. You know? So yeah, I think that would be the most helpful. School-wide; not just for me, but I think about school-wide the complaints and concerns I’ve heard (Annemarie, Interview, 3/24/2010).

This kind of support could be beneficial for the teachers in understanding the complex process of how an English Language Learner develops, including the importance of exposing and requiring them to be a part of the various literacy activities in the classroom. While Code Breaking strategies are essential, ELLs also need to understand the multiple modes of reading and writing, how to critique and challenge these, and how to make connections to texts. The teachers’ experiences with English Language Learners and over emphasis on Code Breaking skills may be addressed through a Professional Development School partnership, providing continued professional development on how to meet the needs of these students. This type of support would be necessary to include administration and support teachers in, so that a collaborative entity could work together to meet the needs of these students at Eastside.

Writing was another area that Annemarie felt in particular she felt she could some support in, mentioning a “structure” or “program” to assist her. She seemed to feel grateful that she had “flexibility” in the way she taught writing, but on the other hand, wished for something more to assist in her in meeting her students’ needs in writing for such a high stakes grade level. Throughout the year, she spoke about how beneficial
training in teaching writing would be, especially among the third grade teachers who felt pressure to prepare students for the third grade writing portfolio. In December, Annemarie said:

   We are always talking about that. And I don’t think that any of us feel like, good, strong writing teachers. So, we were just talking about this at our grade level meeting today. You know, sometimes it’s hard to motivate them and to make them see how it is fun. It’s kind of like, how do you make that fun for them? (Annemarie, Interview, 12/10/2009)

While Annemarie recognized that the writing instruction in her classroom was not engaging her students, she looked to a program to help solve this. Although she acknowledged several books used in the literacy methods courses in the alternative preparation program such as *Craft Lessons* (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2008) and *Live Writing* (Fletcher, 1999), she used these in limited amounts because they did not use the same language and genres as the third grade writing assessment.

Professional development opportunities at Eastside offered by both the school and county did not provide the kinds of support needed to help the teachers think about ways that the curriculum could be more Text Participant, Text User, and Critical Practices oriented. They also did not provide the support teachers needed to meet the individual needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, with a myriad of life experiences that could be used in instruction. Until the year of this study, there was a Literacy Coach at Eastside, who all three teachers spoke about as being very helpful to them as beginning teachers and offering much needed instructional support to the school. Each teacher spoke about the support this teacher offered when they began their first year teaching. The Literacy Coach helped Maggie organize her classroom environment, think about how she would set up Literacy Centers, and got her numerous trade books from a variety of sources. Winona and Annemarie both spoke about the Literacy Coach helping them think
about the best way to use Guided Reading in their classrooms and created various labels and signs for their rooms. This teacher retired, and a replacement was not sought. However, there was an Instructional Coach at the school whose connection to supporting literacy instructional practices was unclear to the teachers. In fact, when asked about the Instructional Coach and how she supported her literacy teaching, Winona did not even know which teacher I was referring to until I mentioned the teacher’s name. She said, “You know we’re only coached in Math, we never talk about literacy for some reason. She does things like Book of the Month and tells us when DRA scores are due. But we don’t really have any professional development in literacy.” Annemarie felt that the Instructional Coach was stretched for time and worked almost exclusively with fifth grade when third grade teachers could have used support in writing instruction:

I know the Instructional Coach was with the fifth grade team a whole lot at the beginning of the year getting them ready, you know because they take the written one [writing assessment]. But they [instructional coach or other administrative team] never came to our rooms to see, you know, the way we were doing it or did we want help or how structured it was. And I have no problem listening to someone’s feedback; I would have really liked that. (Annemarie, Interview, 3/24/2010)

There was a Literacy Coach from the county office who came to Eastside periodically. It did not seem that these visits were announced or that teachers felt the professional development offered was helpful for their practice with students. On the same day in February, each grade level was told in the morning that the Literacy Coach would be meeting with individual grade levels during their respective planning periods. There had been no meeting planned for that day, which meant that teachers would have time to work in their classrooms. Both Winona and Maggie were exasperated when they reported later that day what happened during this meeting. Maggie reported:
Do you know what they made us do? We had to bring persuasive writing samples and analyze it with each standard and write post-its with commentary. And I know it might be a beneficial thing in the upper grades, but we had to write ‘You met the standard by’ – not even in kid friendly language, like, “I like how you-” you know? Then, with one of E’s kids [another Kindergarten teacher], wrote this really simple story; very much developing you know, your expectation would be higher, but according to the state framework this child was meeting the standard. It made sense, the letters made sense for what he was trying to say, so according to the framework for persuasive writing he would meet expectations. She [county Literacy coach] was like, well, she was really nasty to us. She was like, I’d have higher standards than that. E teaches an EIP class, this child was not writing anything at the beginning of the year, you know! (Maggie, Debrief, 1/14/2010)

Winona was equally frustrated with the topic of the same session and the fact that it took up valuable planning time:

We had to practice writing commentary on a card to post on a wall. We had to read our commentary to a partner and then tell the partner what standards the writing met. And it was just dragged out until the very last minute and I was like…I really don’t have time for this. I mean, maybe something beneficial but I know how to write commentary on a Post-It note. (Winona, Debrief, 1/14/2010)

Infrequently, the county Literacy Coach would visit classrooms at Eastside to offer feedback. Maggie relayed a story of being reprimanded that she was not working on the correct genre in writing:

When she [County Literacy Coach] came in here, she was like “point me in the direction of your persuasive writing.” But I didn’t have it right then, because I don’t teach like that. I teach them about persuasive writing, but I teach thematically so if it doesn’t fit, then I’m not going to pull it out of nowhere. I want it to make sense for what I’m doing. (Maggie, Debrief, 1/14/2010)

After being reminded of this requirement and told that this writing should be displayed in the classroom, Maggie created a persuasive writing assignment that went along with their theme of presidents for President’s Day, where students were to persuade people to vote for someone they thought should be president.
Rather than helping the teachers develop students as complex readers and writers, this type of professional development did not foster the teachers’ growth as professionals or their students as critical readers and writers. This overall environment at Eastside and the county promoted an autonomous, isolated approach to teaching literacy which emphasized Code Breaking skills and did not allow for the CLD students other opportunities to connect with texts. This dominating view overwhelmed these beginning teachers’ experiences within the alternative preparation program, and they enacted very few of the practices and beliefs that would fall within a culturally relevant view of literacy learning and teaching.

**Tensions around Culturally Relevant Literacy Instruction**

When asked, Annemarie, Maggie, and Winona each acknowledged that they felt that cultural responsiveness was important and spoke in general terms about the importance of, as Winona said, “Making connections to their homes, their country, to their culture.” However, within the context of Eastside, the teachers had difficulties working with the culturally and linguistically diverse students given the other challenges they faced. The ways in which teacher felt they could enact elements of culturally relevant pedagogy were constrained by the narrow definition of literacy at the school, county, and national level. These requirements emphasized standardized assessments as the main descriptor for what students could do. The scope and sequence of standards that did not allow for more or less time given to particular skills and students were expected to practice skills that were the same for all students, regardless of strengths or needs. Thus, these literacy mandates did not reflect culturally responsive teaching.
These values were in contrast to what the teachers learned in the post-baccalaureate program. The literacy courses in the program emphasized the importance of looking at individual students’ strengths and needs in all areas of literacy through multiple modes, using culturally authentic texts and materials, and planning interdisciplinary learning activities that allow students to make connections to what they are learning. Culturally relevant literacy instruction maintains that teachers critically analyze and adapt curriculum, because these packaged programs may not include stories or modes that recognize or reflect the cultural and life experiences of CLD students (Gay, 2000).

The negotiation and individualized nature of Maggie’s use of Code Breaking strategies reflects some of Ladson-Billings’ (2001) indicators of a culturally relevant teacher. Two of these indicators are “The teacher supports a critical consciousness toward the curriculum” and “The teacher encourages academic achievement as a complex conception not amenable to a single, static measurement” (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 76). Maggie did not limit her beliefs about students’ literacy understandings based only on their knowledge of Code Breaking skills, and instead used multiple assessments to determine the skills they needed. While adhering mainly to the pacing chart of the state standards, Maggie detoured off this path at times and included instruction in skills that she felt particular students needed. This unwillingness to explicitly follow the basal curriculum or pacing guide and challenge the basal program is evidence of “critical consciousness,” the act of analyzing policies and materials through a culturally relevant lens (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Although Maggie did not see herself as a particularly resistant teacher, she was willing to negotiate these expectations when she felt it was
important for the particular needs of her students. In literacy instruction, she felt strongly that students needed to understand the meaning and purpose of activities so that students could apply these in their own reading and writing. Maggie used a lot of discussion around the Code Breaking practices she implemented, such as re-reading sentences corrected by students or conducting shared writing with students to write down what they said orally, to help students make the authentic purpose behind learning these skills evident. Annemarie, Winona, and Maggie’s beliefs about literacy all valued Code Breaking skills such as letter recognition, spelling, and phonics knowledge. While Maggie’s decision making around Code Breaking mirrored culturally responsive literacy instruction, Winona and Annemarie’s use Code Breaking activities were most often isolated tasks, with little connection to how they could be used in real reading and writing tasks.

Given the restrictive nature of schools and education today, it is not fair to judge the decisions that these teachers made each day about what and how they would teach literacy. Beginning teachers are in the process of developing as professionals, which is a life-long journey for all teachers. Because the teachers felt that Code Breaking skills were most important for their students, especially ELLs, and they did not feel adequately prepared to help these students with these concepts, it is understandable that they would rely on programs or materials that they feel would do a better job than they. However, the contextual influences on these teachers’ practices and the heavily Code Breaking curriculum offered each year to these children is important to problematize.
**Closing: Unequal Four Resources Practices**

After spending over seventy five hours in Annemarie, Maggie, and Winona’s classrooms, the impact of working within a prescriptive literacy program, compounded by numerous school and county level expectations have on the teachers’ practices has implications for the way teacher educators may understand literacy teaching in the context of today’s schools. As these three beginning teachers’ literacy pedagogical practices demonstrate, there are clear messages coming from the county and school level that places a strong emphasis on the development of Code Breaking strategies. When students are invited to interact with the texts they decode, these are inhibited by the basal curriculum, testing requirements, and state standards that the teachers feel that they must follow with little questioning of if these requirements are appropriate for their individual students and class. In the final chapter, I discuss the findings in light of other studies and propose implications for how these findings can inform teacher preparation, literacy policy, and inservice teacher development.
CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The goal of this inquiry was to learn what instructional strategies and decisions beginning teachers enact within the context of a culturally and linguistically diverse, Professional Development School. Findings from the study revealed (1) Code Breaking practices dominated the literacy instruction in these CLD classrooms; (2) the context of the mandated literacy curriculum and testing constrained opportunities to teach beyond Code Breaking-focused practice; and (3) the limited understandings about and desire for support to work with English Language Learners suggests that more instruction is needed on second language acquisition at both the preservice and inservice teacher education level. These teachers’ literacy instruction and experiences negotiating the contextual factors have many implications for teacher preparation programs, literacy methods courses, and PDS partnerships.

These findings give insight for the ways that teachers in this alternative preparation program are prepared to teach literacy to CLD students, specifically English Language Learners. In the following sections, I discuss these key constructs in relation to current literature and suggest implications for educational stakeholders. Lastly, I highlight the need for future research that further explores these issues and may inform teacher preparation and in-service programs to support teachers’ work with CLD students.

Code Breaking Focused Instruction for CLD Students

As illustrated in Chapter 5, Code Breaking-focused practices were more prevalent than any other element of the Four Resources Model: Text User, Text Participant, and
Critical Practices. Specifically, English Language Learners were relegated to activities that focused on Code Breaking skills. Evidenced by both their discourse around literacy and classroom practices, Winona and Maggie placed high value in students’ understandings of Code Breaking skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling. In Annemarie’s classroom, the instructional focus for students who were English Language Learners also focused on Code Breaking skills, such as phonics, spelling, and phonemic awareness. The emphasis on Code Breaking led to a literacy learning experience that did not allow students to practice becoming Text Users, Text Participants, or critical readers and writers throughout the grade levels at Eastside.

**An Unbalanced Literacy Diet for CLD Students**

Street (1995) explains that there are autonomous views of literacy that believe there is a fixed set of concepts one must know to be literate. A contrasting viewpoint is the ideological model, in which literacy is socially constructed and valued in unique ways in different communities (Gee, 2008; Street, 1995). The ideological model aligns closely with sociocultural views of literacy that value students’ unique knowledge and suggests that teachers and curriculum must build from these assets.

It was clear that an autonomous model of literacy was pervasive across the county mandates, curriculum, and teachers’ instructional decision-making at Eastside. Each of the teachers’ views of literacy placed the highest importance on Code Breaking skills as the “foundation” before students were able to engage in any other literate practice. Students who were performing low on standardized assessments in Winona and Annemarie’s classrooms were often isolated from the classroom activities or engaged in isolated tasks that did not assist them in understanding how they could use these in their
own authentic reading and writing practices. These struggling students were primarily English Language Learners, some of who recently arrived to the United States. Winona had the most difficulty with making these Code Breaking concepts meaningful and relevant to students. Many of her practices, such as the succession of various Active Board slides on different skills, reflected the isolated organization of the basal program. This type of decontextualized literacy instruction limited students’ opportunities to make critical connections between decoding, meaning making, and critically evaluating and analyzing text. Moreover, opportunities to use literacy in authentic and purposeful ways were inhibited by this narrow literacy message.

Although Winona and Maggie emphasized Code Breaking practices, there were key differences in their decision-making. Winona, a first grade teacher, relied primarily on materials from the prescriptive basal curriculum with little adaptation to what her individual students needed. Activities were largely homogeneous for all students, even within literacy centers. When tasks for English Language Learners were differentiated, they were isolated from the whole class instruction by using a Code Breaking focused website or low-level task such as a puzzle. These activities do not reflect a culturally relevant view of literacy learning, as they do not take into account individual students’ strengths or encourage students to understand each element of the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999). On the other hand, Maggie, a kindergarten teacher, used various sources to create learning activities and adapted activities for particular students with different learning needs.

According to the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999), Code Breaking is an essential component of reading and writing, along with practices that teach
students to be Text Users, Text Participants, and Critical readers and writers. If this model helps lead to critically literate students who can participate in reading and writing activities in a democratic society, a predominantly Code Breaking curriculum is not adequate in developing future generations of readers and writers. A literacy curriculum that is Code Breaking heavy, such as the ones found in these classrooms, is of particular concern for those interested in the kinds of literacy instruction that students in lower socioeconomic communities receive. Simply put, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have a much greater chance of becoming passive readers and writers that take in the information presented to them because they receive fewer opportunities to critically think about text. From a critical literacy stance, it is problematic when children are being taught to develop as passive readers and writers who believe it is their role to follow directions. Inequalities in housing, wealth, and schooling particularly impact students living in CLD communities. It is troubling to see that literacy instruction is creating future generations of students who have not been given the tools to challenge and create action on the issues in their lives. In this way, this emphasis on developing low level, decoding focused readers and writers becomes an issue of inequity.

The literacy curriculum at Eastside is similar to many CLD schools. These basal programs, like the one used by Winona and Annemarie, are largely Code Breaking focused and specifically phonics heavy (Wolfe & Poyner, 2005; Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009). The effects of this type of prescriptive literacy instruction Code Breaking are problematic because readers and writers may understand how to decode the text they are presented with, but not to critique and make decisions about it. Strauss (2005) critiques the phonics-driven literacy programs so prevalent in schools:
Are there side effects of too much phonics? The research clearly shows what happens to readers who are toxic on it. They read slowly and laboriously, and ultimately, do not read for meaning - if they are not turned off to reading altogether. (p. 68)

It is possible that the young students in Winona and Maggie’s classrooms may in fact become uninterested or unable to see reading or writing as anything more than decoding or ‘calling’ words from a page, or writing in response and mode dictated by someone else. It seemed that this was already happening in Annemarie’s classroom, as she shared throughout the year that students seemed “unmotivated” or “uninterested” in reading, and a student told me informally that she found literacy centers “boring.”

Annemarie associated reading with Accelerated Reader tests, and did not understand why students did not participate in this activity. Perhaps these students already felt, “turned off reading altogether” (Strauss, 2005, p. 68), after the pervasive literacy message was to decode for the purposes of an isolated literacy task or assessment. Reading or writing for pleasure, in authentic contexts, or in multiple modes, was not part of Winona’s classroom culture, and very little for Maggie and Annemarie. I believe that it was all three teachers’ intention to build this within students, but the types of literacy tasks did not send that message because the time dedicated to decoding skills overwhelmed the literacy instruction.

Some have likened the viewpoint and corresponding curriculum that emphasizes decoding and phonics skills for culturally and linguistically diverse students to a belief that schooling prepares two types of workers for society; workers who abide by rules to accomplish tasks and leaders who are problem solvers (Gee, 2008). Historically, the workers have been from lower income, minority backgrounds, while the white, upper class, dominates leadership and decision making positions. Gee (2008) maintains that a
curriculum limited in its opportunities for students to be problem solvers hinders the
opportunities of students who come from culturally and linguistically diverse households
not acclimated to a white, upper class norm of schooling that dominates the knowledge
valued by standard curriculum and testing. Gee (2008) believes that prescriptive literacy
curricula and assessments uphold these inequities:

Schools have historically failed with non-elite populations and have thereby replicated the social hierarchy. This has ensured that the largest numbers of lower socioeconomic and minority people engage in the lowest-level and least satisfying jobs in society, while being in a position to make a few serious political or economic demands on the elites. (p. 34)

Thus, when CLD students are relegated to Code Breaking activities in early literacy
instruction, Gee (2008) says, “How then, can we help them by increasing their initial skill
level at ‘real reading’ through things like early phonemic awareness and overt instruction
on decoding, as the [National Reading Panel] report recommends?” (p. 39). The Matthew
Effect (Stanovich, 1986) describes what happens when readers who begin as capable and
supported in their abilities continue to read more and more, thus increasing their
strategies and success as schooling continues. Conversely, students labeled ‘low’ readers
at a young age continue to remain behind their higher peers throughout their schooling
years because they are not exposed to as much reading practice. I believe that in
Winona’s classroom in particular, students who are struggling or ‘low’ in their literacy
abilities, will continue to be further and further behind based on the current view of
literacy pervasive in literacy curriculum and policy.

When CLD students are not introduced to and do not have opportunities to
explore the other three dimensions of the Four Resources Model, they may not able to use
These repertoires of capability are variously mixed and variously orchestrated in culturally determined tasks, learners need distinct spaces for acquiring and practicing these domains, as well as ample room to practice their integration in meaningful events. The hope is that they will develop a flexibility of practice along the depth, breadth, and novelty axes that will enable them to respond directly to the expectations of the local community or work subculture (Luke & Freebody, 1999, n.p.)

Duke (2000; 2010) suggests that the instruction in classrooms with high numbers of CLD students lack in authentic reading materials and do not include opportunities to read across various genres, such as non-fiction texts. Instead of practicing reading through the use of real reading tasks, CLD students are taught to use Code Breaking strategies in decodable texts created only for the purpose of students to call words aloud (Wilson, 2002). When presented with real reading tasks, students may not be able to make the transfer unless encouraged in school. This is an issue when students encounter more complex reading material of different genres as they move through upper grades, and leads to older, CLD students who struggle to be successful by standard measures of achievement.

**Experiencing Code Breaking Instruction Across Grades**

The Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) suggests that each component of the framework: Code Breaker, Text Participant, Text User, and Critical Practice, should be taught throughout all ages and grade levels. Culturally relevant pedagogy also reminds educators to work from students’ individual needs to ensure they are successful by multiple measures of achievement (Ladson-Billings, 2001). However, at Eastside, Code Breaking practices for the entire class were dominant in both first grade and kindergarten, and continued in third grade for students deemed to be ‘struggling’ in literacy, particularly ELLs. It is important to consider what this means for the culturally and linguistically diverse students at Eastside and the ways that they experience literacy
throughout their elementary career. When Code Breaking concepts are emphasized continuously from year to year with little connection to other aspects of reading and writing, it seems destined that students will define literacy as discreet skills that are to be completed in school and see little connection to their own lives.

Code Breaking is a sizeable component of the state standards and for literacy standardized exams in both first grade and kindergarten. Because the teachers relied on the pacing chart aligned with state standards, these Code Breaking practices were what the students experienced throughout each grade level. Code Breaking skills, such as phonics and phonemic awareness, are often touted as particularly important in primary grades because of the value of federally funded reports such as “Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read” (National Reading Panel, 2000). This report suggested that, “Systematic and explicit phonics instruction significantly improves kindergarten and first grade children’s word recognition and spelling” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 13). Other literacy researchers argue that it is essential to expose young students to opportunities to make meaning from texts, so that they are motivated and understand how to use reading and writing in everyday life (Gee, 2008; Luke, 2000; Short, 1999; Wilson, 2002). The Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) reminds teachers that Code Breaking skills are important, but other areas of this model should be addressed concurrently.

The other three components of the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999); Text User, Text Participant, and Critical Practices were less present in each teachers’ practice, and when they were used, they were guided by the school literacy curriculum and state standards. First graders in Winona’s classroom did not experience
choosing and reading books that interested them, writing about topics that were meaningful and exciting, or critiquing important events happening in their community and the world. In Annemarie’s classroom, students had some opportunities to read authentic materials and choose their literacy engagements, but the influence of testing requirements in third grade overwhelmed these experiences. Accelerated Reader, third grade writing portfolio, and their performance on the high stakes exam determined if they moved on to fourth grade. Because these tests valued students’ ability to decode texts and complete tasks on isolated skills, this narrow view of literacy is what students experienced.

There is an important distinction between the instruction found in Winona and Annemarie’s classroom when compared to Maggie’s classroom that lies in the high stakes nature of first and third grades. As Maggie and the other teachers acknowledged, kindergarten was not subject to as many curricular or high stakes testing requirements and therefore, Maggie and her students were able to explore different texts away from the prescriptive literacy curriculum without retribution. This meant that Maggie felt more able to deviate from the basal reading program, because she did not have to administer the benchmark exam and submit these test scores. Administrators did not police Maggie’s literacy instruction and she felt that they, “pretty much left me alone.” While Maggie felt she needed to address the state standards as outlined by the county pacing chart, there were not the same deadlines to introduce these concepts to students before March, when the high stakes exam was given. The formal Kindergarten assessment was administered individually throughout the year, and allowed Maggie to collect student work samples
and note informally throughout the year when students demonstrated understanding of various literacy concepts.

As discussed in the final section of Chapter Five, Maggie demonstrated evidence in two areas of Ladson-Billings’ (2001) descriptors of a culturally relevant educator. Maggie was vocally critical of the prescriptive, county mandated basal curriculum and refused to use it in her daily instruction. She also understood that each student had many strengths and needs in different areas of literacy and did not limit her view of them based on the results of one assessment. Although she previously taught third grade at Eastside for a short time and believed that she negotiated the curriculum, it is difficult to say if some of these differences in her kindergarten instruction that more closely aligned with a culturally relevant view would be as evident today if she was not teaching kindergarten, given the change in administration and increase in testing and curricular policing at Eastside. These differences in grade levels are important to consider, particularly when looking at the experiences of beginning teachers placed in high stakes grades such as first and third. While Annemarie had a more positive feeling about her ability to work with the needs of her class and tried not to let the pressure impact her, she admitted at the end of the school year that many of her students had not passed the high stakes exam and this bothered her. She admitted that she wasn’t quite ready to “give up” teaching third grade, but that she was interested in teaching ESOL or another, less high stakes grade in the future, because she felt it would lessen those pressures on her. Winona admittedly allowed much of the pressure to affect her; the stress clearly impacted both her teaching and feelings about teaching at a CLD school, as she sought out teaching opportunities in other, less CLD school systems.
These experiences beg the question of why administrators would place beginning teachers in these high stakes grades, instead of more seasoned teachers who may be able to balance the many challenges for teachers in these grade levels. How does this impact the ways in which teachers are prepared at the university level, if they are going to be placed in high stakes and high stress situations in diverse schools that expect teachers to follow a prescriptive literacy curriculum that emphasizes Code Breaking knowledge?

**Contextual Challenges for Beginning Teachers**

What happens to graduates of teacher preparation programs as they enter the classroom should be of concern to all in teacher education. Winona, Maggie, and Annemarie had numerous contextual factors affecting their literacy teaching practices, and all felt in some way that they did not know how to negotiate these coming out of their preparation program. Their experiences suggest that more preparation is needed at the preservice level and support for inservice teachers as they encounter these challenges. A PDS model should work to meet these inservice, beginning teachers’ needs. Winona summed up these challenges at the end of the school year:

I mean honestly, I feel like the stuff that just keeps getting thrown at us is out of control and this is by far my hardest year in the three years I’ve taught. And if this had been my first year, I don’t know if I could have handled it. That being said, I just think that things have changed so much just from the first year I got a job and became a teacher. So yeah, I think that the expectation should be that things are crazy right now, and there’s going to be a lot of things just being dumped on you and expected of you and people are losing jobs and it’s high stakes everywhere. I don’t know if you can really be prepared for that. Morale is down, and if you don’t have a good administrative team, the school can fall apart and I think that’s happening here. And I just think that you know it’s different at every place you go, and I don’t know exactly how to prepare someone for that, but just to know there’s a lot more politics involved than I thought (Winona, Interview, 3/23/2010).
While many teacher educators work closely with CLD schools such as Eastside, the complexities of teaching within these environments have become even more magnified in recent years due to the economic crisis and increasing diversity in schools. It is essential that teacher educators and professional development personnel understand these current challenges faced by teachers in CLD schools. This feeling of being overwhelmed is very important to acknowledge. If beginning teachers in their induction years feel that they are not able to negotiate these many factors, they may go into ‘survival mode,’ which means that they are more likely to turn to any available means to get through each day. In this case, it was the basal program that Winona and Annemarie felt was easiest to use when they did not have the time, energy, or in some cases, the knowledge to plan what they acknowledged might be better lessons that met the needs of individual students.

Schools within culturally and linguistically diverse communities are hit with the “Diversity Penalty,” termed by journalist Paul Socolar (2004). Woodside-Jiron and Gehsmann (2009) explain this experience as what occurs in schools with perhaps the most challenges in terms of students new to the United States, learning English for the first time, or who do not have access to the ‘cultural toolkit’ of the knowledge valued by traditional modes of schooling. Although they have many social, emotional, and academic needs to address with these students, these schools are also often assigned the most testing and curricular requirements that take time and energy away from teachers and administration. In literacy instruction, this often means requiring a prescriptive or scripted reading curriculum and the policing of fidelity to the program and its accompanying assessments (Gerstl-Pepin & Woodside-Jiron, 2005; Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009). This was the case at Eastside, which was required to implement a
prescriptive basal literacy program, give inauthentic assessments such as the ‘benchmark,’ and emphasize students’ success on the high stakes exam in the spring. All of these practices took time and energy away from the type of culturally relevant instruction Winona and Annemarie acknowledged might be better for their students. When thinking about what she would change if she did not have any requirements, Winona said, “You know I could incorporate things that interest the students more I guess, is how I probably would organize the class instead of like, you have to be on Unit 1 right now and you have to be on Unit 2.”

Seminal work by researchers such as Britzman (2003) examine the very personal process through which each new teacher enacts pedagogy as a result of their preparation program. As constructivist and sociocultural views recognize, learning to teach is a long-term process that will look different with each teacher. In this study in particular, the ways in which the teachers felt comfortable negotiating the challenges and constraints of the school and county, were different. Maggie and in some cases Annemarie, were willing to negotiate the curriculum in some ways. Annemarie sought to learn about her students’ backgrounds and cultures, and felt that she tried to incorporate what she learned into the curriculum. Maggie spoke out against the curricular mandates placed upon teachers at Eastside and believed it was important to create learning opportunities unique to the needs of her students. Winona acknowledged the tensions she felt from the requirements, but did little to push back on these. Annemarie and Winona had more pressure placed upon them from administration in regards to students’ success on standardized exams.
From a constructivist stance, the various ways each teacher internalized and reacted to these outside pressures and expectations is to be expected; “Understanding is in our interactions with the environment” and “knowledge evolves from social negotiation” (Savery & Duffy, 2001, pp. 1-2). Using these tenants, it makes sense that while the three teachers maintained understandings about literacy they experienced in the post baccalaureate program, these were often drowned out by the oppressive literacy messages they received from the administration, county, and state. Teaching literacy was not only about what they believed to be best for students, but what they felt they ‘had’ to do. Annemarie did not seem to like the Accelerated Reader program, but still encouraged her students to use it, because as she stated, “…That [Accelerated Reader] we have to do.” Similarly, a study of urban teachers’ instructional decision making found that, “how teachers perceive their own capacity and that of their students’ shapes teachers’ responses to standards and their strategies for improving the academic performance of their students” (Ogawa, Sandholtz, Martinez-Flores, Scribner, 2003, p. 150). Winona, in particular, expressed the belief that she did not know everything she needed to know to meet the needs of her culturally and linguistically diverse students, so she felt more comfortable adhering to a prescriptive literacy program. A combination of the teachers’ beliefs about their students and feelings about what they could do influenced their pedagogical practices. Annemarie and Winona felt constrained within the state standards and basal literacy curriculum, even though they acknowledged these were not the most appropriate activities.

The findings of this study mirror other examinations of the highly unique and challenging experiences of teaching literacy in Title One, culturally and linguistically
diverse schools (Bergeron, 2008; Grossman & Thompson, 2004; Nieto, 2001; Ogawa et al., 2003). Annemarie, Winona, and Maggie adhered mostly to the required curriculum dictated by their administration and county. Fear of not addressing these requirements was a reality at Eastside. Winona told me in informal conversation that her principal alluded in faculty meetings that teachers “wouldn’t want to end up on a list” when it came time to cut teacher positions, as the county’s budget crisis became quite serious and layoffs were announced. Towards the middle of the school year, when the county superintendent was given a large pay raise (before being placed on leave for a financial mismanagement investigation), some teachers in the county started a movement to protest this pay increase by wearing black on a certain day each week. Winona told me that on that first day she happened to be wearing a black top not knowing about the protest and noticed the principal walking the halls with a clipboard and peering in classroom windows. The principal stopped in Winona’s classroom as she was in the middle of a lesson and pulled her aside to ask her if there was a reason that she was wearing black. Confused, Winona replied that there was not and was informed by the principal about the protest and told that it would be best not to participate in the future. Winona took this as a sign that any kind of disagreement or infidelity to county or school mandates would be noticed in the current financial and political climate.

Achinstein & Ogawa (2006), in their examination of teachers impacted by restrictive curricula and assessment, posed the idea that, “Schools and districts like those in our study may be creating conditions in which teachers cannot enact principles of the profession” (p. 56). This limited nature of literacy instruction is problematic and does not align with what teacher educators understand about literacy learning and teaching, but it
is essential to consider their role in preparing beginning teachers for these environments. In Achinstein & Ogawa’s (2006) study, the two beginning teachers who refused to follow the prescriptive literacy program were fired at the end of the year. While teacher educators may wish to prepare teachers who would challenge the expectations placed upon them more than Annemarie or Winona did, how responsible is this when a teacher’s job may be at stake? When we consider the experiences of graduates of teacher preparation programs have when teaching at CLD schools, what is the responsibility of programs to prepare, counteract, or challenge these forces that impact beginning teachers’ instruction?

**Supporting and Preparing Teachers to Work with ELLs**

While a culturally relevant stance on teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students regards the various experiences, backgrounds, and unique knowledge of students as a positive experience, these perceived differences may also be challenges for teachers whose own backgrounds are rooted in a white, middle class orientation to school. Given the “Diversity Penalty” (Socolar, 2004) placed upon culturally and linguistically diverse schools such as Eastside, it is not surprising that these beginning teachers were juggling the academic and emotional needs of students, along with the time consuming curricular and testing requirements placed upon them. I believe that these teachers’ experiences were a combination of not being adequately prepared through their post-baccalaureate program, feeling constrained within the oppressive literacy curriculum at Eastside, and receiving limited support on working with ELLs from support teachers and professional development providers. The growing English Language Learner population at Eastside
and in schools around the country adds a new layer of learning that preservice and inservice teachers must understand.

One of the most salient findings of this study was that the content of the literacy preparation courses did not adequately introduce the teachers to theories and concepts of second language learning that would assist them in creating more complex learning opportunities beyond Code Breaking concepts. While they seemed to understand some general practices that would help English Language Learners develop language and literacy, they did not understand how these practices might look different depending on each student’s particular levels of language development. This possible lack of knowledge led to an over-reliance on Code Breaking strategies and skills. Garcia et al. (2010) maintain that teacher education must promote the understanding that, “one size does not fit all. Teachers must understand diversity and be responsive in the pedagogy that they utilize to serve their students” (p. 136). This type of responsive, complex teaching is promoted through the Four Resource Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999), as students’ individual needs and experiences are attended to in planning a literacy curriculum.

All three teachers echoed the sentiment throughout the year that they wished they better understood the processes English Language Learners go through in learning to be literate in English. Winona said that she felt she knew of some activities or practices that were beneficial for ELLs, such as shared writing and read-alouds of trade books. However, she realized that she really did not understand the process of second language acquisition English Language Learners experience. While the literacy methods courses and the post- baccalaureate program as a whole included content designed to help
teachers understand the social and cultural experiences of ELLs along with activities or practices that are supportive of diverse learners, there was very little theory about language acquisition.

The teachers at Eastside were not alone in their feelings that their preparation to work with CLD students was minimal, and inservice support at Eastside was not adequate, as many other teachers and researchers have expressed this need (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Rumberger, 2008; Garcia et al., 2010). The topic of how to best support the varying needs of the ELLs in their classrooms was a frequent one in conversations with all three teachers, and I sometimes offered suggestions based on my own experience as a teacher or practices I covered in the ESOL courses I was teaching at the time. Annemarie, in particular, seemed to appreciate the time we spent in the debriefs discussing these issues and at the end of the year made a connection to a conversation we had during a debrief earlier in the year about several ELLs that were developing in their literacy in different ways:

That’s been interesting because I’ve never had so many ELLs before and then to just see that; how you really can’t compare two kids that come from the same country that I mean, you just can’t compare them. ‘Cause it could be totally different, it could be that dad moved here earlier, so he knows more English so he speaks some English at home and therefore he can read with them. Or, maybe they started school when they were younger, and some of the other ELLs haven’t really had any school experience until they you know, get here in first grade or something. So, that’s really opened my eyes to that, to you know, understanding that (Annemarie, Interview, 3/24/2010).

Each teacher had a need for understanding ELLs that was not met by the school’s professional development opportunities, support teachers, or their own preparation program. These needs reflect what other states around the country are seeing when they compare their increasing linguistic diversity. Gandara et al. (2008) researched the factors
that contribute to “Inadequate schooling experiences for ELLs” in California. Many of these seven factors can be seen in the results of this study, but most specifically, “Inadequate access to appropriately trained teachers” and “Inadequate professional development opportunities to help teachers address their instructional needs” impacted the schooling experiences of ELLs at Eastside (Gandara et al., 2008, p. 3). These teachers were not adequately prepared to meet the linguistic needs of these diverse ELLs and inservice experiences provided by the school or county level did not address their concerns.

I assert that a better understanding of second language acquisition provided by initial teacher preparation would help these teachers think about a more complex literacy curriculum that included more attention to the other three resources of the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999). Instead of relying on the pervasive belief that learners who are new to the English language or do not perform well on standardized assessments need an emphasis on graphophonic or Code Breaking skills, teachers who are introduced to theories of language acquisition would understand the importance of including a varied and individualized curriculum with ELLs. It is not only the phonological and orthographic systems of language that are important to understand as one is learning English. Just as important are helping ELLs making meaning from text and understand when and how to use certain words and language for different purposes (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). In addition, teachers must understand the sociocultural needs of students learning English and have “a deeper understanding of the interaction of a student’s language and culture and the prevailing school language and culture” (Garcia et al., 2010, p. 136). This understanding would help teachers realize the complex process
each ELL goes through, which showed in Annemarie’s quote about how different ELLs with various home backgrounds progressed throughout the year.

All three teachers felt that a Professional Development School partnership would be most beneficial if it focused on helping them understand how to better meet the needs of English Language Learners. Given the quickly changing diversity and increasing ELL population, this is an area of need throughout the Eastside community. This support should include the larger school community at Eastside, including support personnel and administration, to develop a more culturally responsive school where parents were welcomed and home languages and cultures were celebrated and recognized on an ongoing basis, rather than simply a one-shot “Culture Day” at the end of the year that did not allow students or teachers to learn about and incorporate students’ cultures and backgrounds into curriculum throughout the year.

Implications of the Findings

Literacy Methods Courses

When Code Breaking practices, such as phonemic awareness and phonics, are touted as “basic” skills students must know before anything else, literacy teacher educators need to be proactive in coursework to both include these elements in courses, but also help preservice teachers understand how other skills are important to young children’s literacy development. Because Winona did not feel that she knew about phonics and phonemic awareness, but received the message that these were important skills for her first graders, she turned to the county selected basal program that gave explicit instructions for how to teach these concepts. It is understandable that when beginning teachers, like Winona, feel that they do not have the necessary knowledge to
teach what they are told by many forces are important skills for culturally and linguistically diverse students, that they would rely on materials offering explicit methods for teaching these.

The ways that the contextual factors at Eastside impacted the teachers’ literacy instruction has implications for the content of literacy methods courses in particular. These teachers’ feelings of being so overwhelmed and burdened by the paperwork, administration, and county requirements that they found it hard to develop alternate lessons or push back on these requirements, are important for literacy teacher educators to recognize. The AERA Panel on Teacher Education suggests that programs must prepare teachers to be “Adaptive Experts,” who can navigate and work effectively no matter what challenges they are presented with (Hammerness et al., 2005, p. 360). Thus, literacy teacher preparation courses should help preservice teachers understand the various factors that must be negotiate when planning their literacy instruction. If these preservice teachers had a better understanding of what these requirements might be and how one might best plan instruction and still complete other tasks, perhaps they would not be as apt to turn quickly to a prescriptive curriculum when they encounter these constraints.

**Learning about Code Breaking.** It is important that literacy methods courses help teachers understand the role that these concepts play in writing and reading and introduce teaching strategies and activities that teach these in authentic and meaningful ways. If beginning teachers felt more confident about these constructs, they could push back on curricula and materials that promote Code Breaking as the ‘foundation’ before students are exposed to other areas of the Four Resources Model (Luke &
Freebody, 1999). The role of assessment in these areas is important to include because it is important that these skills, along with other concepts, not be taught at the same time to all students. Each student has different needs, and if they are already familiar and using particular concepts of phonics or phonemic awareness, they may not need to be included in these activities. Introducing the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) is a way to help preservice teachers see the complex nature of literacy learning and teaching and the importance of including other elements of literacy while also teaching Code Breaking. This model is currently used by teachers and teacher educators who are interested in developing culturally relevant literacy teachers and could be useful in other teacher education classrooms to prepare teachers to understand how this pedagogy can be enacted in the classroom (Flint, 2008).

In addition to theories and pedagogical activities, preparation programs should include readings and discussion about policy or even offer a separate course on policy. Knowing more about the background and research behind many of the problematic reports such as “Put Reading First” that have led to prescriptive literacy curricula could help teachers unpack the decisions shaping the mandates, testing requirements, and prescriptive programs they are asked to use. Preservice teachers should examine the narrow research contributing to these reports and financial motivation for programs that target schools with high numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1999; Woodside-Jiron, 2009). When they are aware of the nature of standardized curriculum promoted by policy makers working from incomplete research, they may be more likely to move away from these requirements and create literacy opportunities that are culturally relevant to CLD students.
In literacy methods courses, preservice teachers should be exposed to the outside challenges they will face outside of daily teaching practices early on in a preparation program, and given strategies to counteract these. For example, Paugh, Carey, King-Jackson, and Russell (2007) provide examples of two literacy teachers who worked together to reorganize and negotiate the basal literacy curriculum required at their school to provide more Text Participant, Text User, and Critical Practices in a second grade classroom. There are many examples of how teachers adapted the current mandates of curriculum to include Critical Practices in books such as *Creating Critical Classrooms* (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2008). These types of real-world examples could be helpful to help students visualize how these practices can actually be implemented within the current constraints of schools.

**Differentiation in methods courses.** Schultz, Jones-Walker, and Chikkatur (2008) believe that, “The task of urban-focused teacher education programs is to prepare prospective teachers to learn and enact practices that enable them to teach successfully in under- resourced districts that offer both opportunities and constraints.” They maintain that three key constructs influence how a teacher will negotiate these requirements and teach from a culturally relevant stance; “Student [preservice teacher] beliefs, Teacher Education Program, and District and school policies.” Using this idea, a quote from Winona at the end of the school year about what she wished had been taught in the post baccalaureate program is very telling:

> When things are getting dumped on you over and over, how do you handle it all so that your kids are learning and you’re getting what you need to do done . . . And I don’t know how that can be taught. And, if you have a class like that, I’d like to sign up! (Winona, Interview, 3/23/2010).
Using Schultz, Jones-Walker, and Chikkatur (2008)’s framework, it would seem that this particular preparation program failed in preparing Winona to negotiate all of these factors. From a constructivist and sociocultural view of learning, each teacher took different things from their teacher preparation program and balanced these with what they were being asked to do at Eastside. Winona and Annemarie closely followed the curricular mandates, such as the basal program and county scope and sequence, even if this meant not including a more complex view of literacy learning with their students. However, Maggie did push back on these requirements subtly. Although Maggie did not see herself as one to challenge what she was asked to do, she often spoke about “doing what was best” for her students, and used the culturally relevant tenants of looking at individual student needs and using multiple resources to guide how she decided to adapt what she was asked to do by outside forces. However, it seems that teaching a grade level that was not under the same amount of testing pressure contributed to Maggie’s ability to adapt her instruction as she felt was best for her students.

The different ways each teacher followed or negotiated the outside expectations at Eastside suggests that students prepared in the same program leave with different understandings or beliefs that impact their teaching practices. While methods courses talk about differentiation of instruction for different types of learners in grades K-12, this is not as often talked about when working with adult learners training to be teachers. Perhaps if Winona and Annemarie were given more examples of the constraints they would encounter teaching literacy in a CLD school and how they could counteract these, this could have assisted them in thinking more deeply about what they encountered at Eastside. Maggie’s experiences teaching preschool contributed to an understanding of
working with children and student teaching in the same grade level and school at Eastside exposed her to realities of teaching early on. Given that she worked to include more opportunities for her students to make meaning out of text and acknowledged the importance of making literacy relevant to them, her needs while in the post baccalaureate program were different than Annemarie or Winona. Because she had some knowledge about teaching young children and early literacy practices, she could have been pushed to learn more about critical literacy practices, particularly for young children, as she said she sometimes felt it was more challenging to think about these issues with kindergarten students who were still developing in their reading and writing understandings.

**Role of teacher educators.** A Code Breaking-heavy literacy curriculum in CLD schools is important for teacher educators to consider in light of the economic and political tone in schools today. Teachers at Eastside and around the county were reprimanded and threatened when they spoke out against county practices they did not feel were in the best interest of students or teachers. It should not only be teachers that speak out and challenge the numerous literacy policies impacting current instruction in schools. As a teacher educator, I find it difficult to recommend a practice or suggest that teachers put themselves in positions where they could lose their jobs. It is essential that teacher educators, informed about literacy policy and the inappropriateness of many of the mandates and prescriptive curricula, speak out against practices that restrict the decision making capabilities of teachers and curriculum offered to students. Working with local policy makers, county, and state personnel is important to promote literacy practices that are grounded in current research and responsive to the literacy needs of diverse students. Rather than promoting a narrow, Code Breaking definition of literacy,
literacy researchers and teacher educators can help policy makers see the need to develop students who are critically literate and able to read and write across various genres to be competitive members of a global society.

**Preparing Teachers for CLD Spaces**

There are many implications as a result of this inquiry that can inform both teacher preparation programs and continued learning opportunities for inservice teachers. Because Annemarie and Winona did not feel confident about their understandings of how to meet the needs of ELLs in particular, they relied on the prescriptive basal curriculum and isolated Code Breaking tasks. I believe that the limited exposure to theories of second language acquisition and the importance of teaching students to use all four resources at one time contributed to the teachers’ misunderstandings about the importance of their ELL students’ developing Code Breaking skills before allowing them to interact with different types of texts and participate in whole class activities. Freeman & Freeman (2004) suggest that, “The greater a teacher’s understanding of basic language structures, the easier it is for that teacher to make good decisions on tough topics like phonics, spelling, and grammar” (p. x). With more education at the preservice level, these understandings would contribute to a more complex view of the second language learning process and assist teachers in creating Text User, Text Participant, and Critical Practices opportunities for ELLs. This experience may give teachers like Annemarie, Winona, and Maggie, a better knowledge base to draw from that would allow them to challenge and negotiate the curricular and testing requirements they were presented with at Eastside.

Interestingly, in the year following Maggie’s graduating cohort, an ESOL Endorsement was added to the curriculum of the post-baccalaureate program. Preservice
teachers now take an additional two courses that specifically introduce them to theories and concepts of second language acquisition. They also complete an internship with an ESOL teacher to see the role of this teacher in supporting language learning. In addition, in the same department at the large public university where Annemarie, Winona, and Maggie graduated, an ESOL endorsement was added to the traditional bachelor’s preparation program and plans were in place to move this endorsement to graduate level programs as well. As with many states in the United States, this southeastern state is experiencing increasing levels of diversity and ELLs and it is essential that teacher preparation programs respond to this.

Garcia et al. (2010) describe three key elements of what teacher education programs should include to develop responsive teachers for ELLs; “Language related experience, linguistic knowledge, and opportunities to participate in programs that collaboratively prepare teachers across disciplines to instruct ELLs in mainstream classrooms” (p. 135). This linguistic understanding, experience with second language acquisition, and opportunities to see collaborative work between teachers to support teachers, might have helped Annemarie, Maggie, and Winona understand what their ELLs were going through in learning the language, and how they might work effectively with other teachers to develop more complex literate learning experiences that exposed ELLs to other areas of literacy beyond Code Breaking.

Opportunities in Professional Development Schools

Current Professional Development School partnerships should be aware and responsive to the challenges beginning teachers encounter at Eastside. The individual experiences and needs of the teachers at Eastside could be determined if long-term,
personal relationships were established (Flint et al., 2010). It is essential for professional development to acknowledge the tensions the first and third grade teachers felt in particular, and to help them problematize why a heavily Code Breaking curriculum is not responsive to the unique needs and backgrounds of students, even if the prescriptive program is what has been promoted as the ‘answer’ to these students’ challenges. This support may also offer a professional space for teachers to create curricula that are culturally responsive and to push back against the county mandates. This partnership could be extremely beneficial for both preservice teachers currently in the alternative preparation program and inservice teachers, if both were acknowledged as teachers that could learn from and with each other.

The professional development around ELLs at Eastside was extremely limited according Annemarie, “I mean when we have professional development her as it pertains to ESOL, it’s really quick and rushed and sort of it’s like, here’s a folder of information and nobody really looks at it again. You know?” A Professional Development School partnership is an ideal opportunity for teacher development in areas that are particular to the needs of the school. At Eastside, a PDS relationship could support understandings about working with English Language Learners that benefits inservice teachers, preservice teachers, and CLD students. Garcia et al. (2010) highlight “collaborative learning communities” as one of the essential components for teacher preparation for diverse populations. A PDS partnership could support Eastside’s inservice teachers, while at the same time providing internships and field-based learning around ELLs for preservice teachers in the post-baccalaureate program.
At the preservice teacher level, Eastside Elementary offers many occasions for novice teachers to learn about issues and theories of second language acquisition and instruction for ELLs alongside inservice teachers. These practices could help Eastside move beyond what many PDS sites end up being; a place simply to place preservice teachers for their required field experiences. Instead, inservice teachers could be the teachers and learners about issues and practices for supporting CLD students. Site based courses on language and literacy through the post-baccalaureate program held at Eastside could include space for inservice teachers to experience many of the same readings, assignments, or activities that the preservice teachers are learning about in the course. Inservice teachers at Eastside that do have expertise in these areas, such as the ESOL teachers, could share what they know in a supportive and collaborative atmosphere. This location is an ideal space to include opportunities for both groups of teachers to work directly with ELLs at Eastside, and try out what they have learned in the real contexts of schooling. For example, Mahn, McMunn, and Musanti (2005) established a Teaching and Learning Center within a culturally and linguistically diverse PDS, which served as an instructional classroom where preservice and inservice teachers could observe different teachers working with students and learn from each other.

Inservice teachers such as Annemarie, Winona, and Maggie, could engage in continued learning experiences developed from their needs, in the form of study groups, critical friends groups, or book clubs. These opportunities for teachers to explore topics and questions that are personal and timely for their particular students are important and can lead to long-term professional growth and renewal (Birchak, Connor, Crawford, Kahn, Kaser, Turner, & Short, 1998; Carroll, 2005; Flint et al., 2010). Teacher
development is a career-long process, and the need for continued development continues throughout the years, as needs and contexts of classrooms change. Supported by university personnel knowledgeable about the processes English Language Learners go through learning a second language, both academically and emotionally, teachers’ practice may shift to reflect a more complex, individualized view of literacy. Study groups might also help the teachers to think about the policy decisions impacting the prescriptive literacy programs promoted for CLD students, and to think about how curriculum could be planned from a more culturally relevant stance. This type of support would also assist these beginning teachers in their development and hopefully prevent them from feeling overwhelmed and unable to negotiate the challenges they were presented with.

Because they did not feel adequate in their abilities, the teachers wished for, and needed, to work more collaboratively with other teachers, such as the ESOL teachers at Eastside. The Professional Development School partnership could help classroom teachers, support teachers, and administration consider how the resources at the school might best assist classroom teachers’ continued learning and organize the school schedule in ways that recognizes the importance of ESOL teachers working collaboratively with other teachers and with students daily. ESOL teachers have requirements from the county and state to consult with classroom teachers to provide strategies and accommodations to support the English Language Learner in the general classroom. These practices did not take place regularly at Eastside, although each teacher wished for more. A Professional Development School partnership could open up opportunities for this kind of collaboration between teachers and administrators.
These kinds of partnerships offer numerous possibilities to support the ongoing professional growth of inservice teachers who work with CLD students. Because there were already some ESOL internships taking place currently at Eastside between preservice teachers and ESOL teachers, it would be helpful to also include these inservice teachers who also wished to learn more about how ELLs could be supported. A three-way collaborative system through the PDS partnership could be a way to envision new learning from all sides. I believe that this could be organized by grouping a preservice teacher, inservice classroom teacher, and an ESOL teacher together for an entire semester. Classroom teachers who wish to receive an ESOL endorsement would take part in coursework alongside preservice teachers, but the organization of this course would allow for flexibility of their knowledge and experience. ESOL teachers could receive professional learning units, or graduate course credit for their involvement.

All members of this team would take part in the university site based courses, offered in multiple formats. The preservice teacher would take part in all activities of the course, located both at the university and Eastside Elementary level. When course meetings or activities were held at Eastside, ESOL teachers and classroom teachers could attend and take part in hands-on opportunities to work closely with ELLs, perhaps through tutoring activities or classroom observations of teachers successful in their work with ELLs. Online meetings and discussion groups would provide another space for all involved to continue to work on the issues presented in coursework and activities. I also believe that it would be essential for the administrative team to be a part of these activities, so that they are also aware of how they can better support the strengths and needs of ESOL and classroom teachers at Eastside.
Opportunities for Further Research

While the results of this study are helpful in understanding the impact of current mandates and testing on current literacy practices in CLD schools and the kinds of support that would benefit preservice and inservice teachers’ practice, as with any inquiry, there are as many questions that have arisen as answers. I plan to examine the following questions as this study continues into the following school year with Annemarie, Winona, and Maggie. The overarching question that I hope to pursue with them is how can a PDS model support the needs of beginning teachers in their development through the first five years of teacher induction?

Because this study focused on the effects of the oppressive literacy curriculum on these teachers’ beliefs about literacy and classroom practices, I believe that it would be valuable to study the impact of this Code Breaking dominated instruction on the students’ beliefs and attitudes about literacy. Given that the literacy curriculum from Kindergarten to third grade favored activities and practices to develop students’ decoding and spelling abilities, how would these students’ interpret what they are learning in relation to their own lives, cultures, and authentic reading and writing experiences? What would students say about Literacy Centers and other literacy activities that allow for very little choice about the types of texts and modes they read and write? Using Luke & Freebody (1999)’s Four Resource Model, these students’ attitudes and beliefs about their literacy instruction would be salient to examine in relation to this model designed to develop multifaceted readers and writers to determine if, as I believe, their current literacy experience is limiting their opportunities to grow as readers and writers inside and outside school.
Throughout the school year, I wished for a better understanding of the decision making around the curricular and testing requirements at Eastside, since each teacher felt they had little to say about what they taught in literacy. Towards the middle of the school year, I amended my research protocol for permission to interview school administrators at Eastside, such as the Instructional Coach and Principal. After securing approval, I attempted to schedule interviews with each person, but my requests went unanswered. It is my hope that I will be able to conduct interviews with each person in the upcoming school year. In these interviews, I plan to ask questions to learn more about the role of the county office in making curricular decisions and their thoughts about how a Title 1 status impacts the instruction and experiences of students. I am also interested in finding out how each administrator defines literacy and their beliefs about curricular approach to teaching CLD students, particularly ELLs. It would be valuable to discuss the organization and structure of support faculty such as ESOL teachers collaborating with classroom teachers. I would like to know how they feel about the kinds of support offered to classrooms teachers, and the amount of professional development offered to meet the demands of Eastside’s increasing ELL population.

The Professional Development School partnership between the university and Eastside offers many continued lines of research. One of the major findings of this study was that graduates needed more preparation about second language acquisition to meet the needs of ELLs. Because preservice students in the post baccalaureate program are now taking additional ESOL courses and receiving the ESOL endorsement, it would interesting to examine these graduates as they begin teaching alongside Annemarie, Winona, and Maggie’s experiences. Would these teachers feel more adept at negotiating
the curricular and testing mandates for the individual needs of CLD students, and ELLs in particular? I believe that it is necessary to pursue these questions.

Using the suggestions highlighted in this chapter, it would be helpful to research the process that this school and university partnership go through to move beyond the “Developing” level to the “At Standard” level, according to the NCATE Standards for Professional Development Schools (NCATE, 2001). In the “At Standard” stage, professional learning opportunities are integrated throughout the school activities and goals of the school are actively pursued. Eastside Elementary was in its second year of the PDS relationship and the continuation of this process is important to document so that others establishing PDS partnerships may learn from this experience. Because Eastside is in a CLD area of an Inner Ring Suburb, the unique challenges and requirements experienced at schools such as these may resonate with other school-university partnerships. As I continue to work with these teachers at Eastside, I plan to document the professional learning opportunities offered and the teachers’ experiences with these.

**Conclusion**

The experiences of these three teachers shed light on the struggles new teachers face in CLD schools under current economic and policy pressures. The title of this study focuses on what I think is an important concept for teacher educators to understand. Winona said, “And if you have a class like that, I’d like to sign up!,” referring to a question I asked about what she felt preservice teachers currently entering the teaching profession needed to know. She suggested that teachers understand the many dynamic forces teachers face each day, from county mandates, to a lack of support from administration, to paperwork that took time out of her teaching. This quote summarizes
the tensions I observed within each teacher, who felt that the county and school context was negatively impacting their literacy instruction with CLD students. Because these teachers did not feel they were adequately prepared to teach English Language Learners and to understand the role Code Breaking concepts have in literacy learning, the choices they made to rely on prescriptive curriculum that gave them some kind of guidance seems understandable.

Negotiation of these contextual factors is something that seems hard to teach in a teacher preparation course, but is necessary in today’s educational climate. It also illuminates each teachers’ feelings about needing to learn more, specifically at this Eastside, to understand how to better meet the needs of English Language Learners. While this seem to be addressed somewhat in their post baccalaureate program, their practices demonstrated that they still needed continued learning in the areas of second language acquisition to understand the complex process their ELLs were going through. Just as in any profession, it is essential that one continues to learn and this was the case for the teachers at Eastside. The teachers were eager for this support and a Professional Development School offers many possibilities for this opportunity.
REFERENCES


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Demers (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher Education* (pp. 606-636). New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.


APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Data Collection Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Sources Addressing Questions</th>
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| Main: What are the experiences of novice teachers, graduates of an alternative preparation program, who teach at a culturally and linguistically diverse, Professional Development School? | 1. Interviews  
2. Teacher debriefs  
3. Observation field notes  
4. Four Resources questionnaire  
5. Researcher journal |
| (a.) What instructional decisions, resources, and strategies do alternatively certified teachers enact when teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, specifically English Language Learners? | 1. Interviews  
2. Teacher debriefs  
3. Observation field notes  
4. Four Resources questionnaire  
5. Researcher journal |
| (b.) What are the contextual factors that influence novice teachers’ literacy pedagogy? | 1. Interviews  
2. Teacher debriefs  
3. Observation field notes  
4. Researcher journal |
## Appendix B

### Timeline of Research Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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| March-July 2009 | Defend Prospectus successfully  
Seek IRB protocol to University and County and secure approval.  
Seek a meeting with possible participants.  
Explain the purpose of the research and the procedures to all possible participants.  
Distribute IRB consent forms to participants and secure consent  
Finalize all interview, observation, and other research protocols |
| August 2009  | Conducted initial semi-structured interviews with Maggie and Annemarie.  
Wrote in researcher journal  
Conducted classroom observations with each teacher  
Transcribed interviews |
| September 2009 | Conducted initial semi-structured interview with Winona.  
Conducted classroom observations with each teacher  
Conducted teacher debrief sessions with each teacher.  
Wrote in researcher journal  
Transcribed interview  
Transcribed teacher debrief sessions  
Conducted initial data analysis.  
Met with advisor about project. |
| October 2009 | Conducted classroom observations with each teacher  
Conducted teacher debrief sessions with each teacher.  
Wrote in researcher journal  
Transcribed teacher debrief sessions.  
Conducted ongoing data analysis of data  
Met with advisor about project |
| November 2009 | Conducted classroom observations with each teacher  
Conducted teacher debrief sessions with each teachers.  
Wrote in researcher journal  
Transcribed teacher debrief sessions  
Conducted ongoing data analysis.  
Conduct second Semi-Structured Interview with each teacher  
Member check initial findings with three teachers  
Transcribe interviews  
Presented on initial findings at NCTE  
Met with advisor about project |
| December 2009 | Wrote in researcher journal and transcribe collected data.  
Conducted ongoing data analysis.  
Member checked initial findings with three teachers  
Conducted classroom observations with each teacher.  
Completed second Semi-Structured Interview with each teacher  
Transcribed interviews. |
| January 2010 | Conducted classroom observations with each teacher  
Conducted teacher debrief sessions with teachers once each per month.  
Wrote in researcher journal  
Transcribed teacher debrief sessions.  
Conducted ongoing data analysis  
Conducted a Peer-debriefing session on initial findings.  
Met with Advisor about project.  
Distributed Four Resource Model questionnaire to teachers |
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<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>February 2010</td>
<td>Collected Four Resource Model questionnaire from teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted classroom observations with each teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted teacher debrief sessions with teachers once each per month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrote in researcher journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcribed teacher debrief sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted ongoing data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2010</td>
<td>Conducted Final Semi-Structured Interview with each teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcribed Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted classroom observations with each teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted Teacher debrief sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrote in researcher journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcribed teacher debrief sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted ongoing data analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Met with Teri Holbrook about initial findings and data analysis</td>
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<td>April-July</td>
<td>Conducted data analysis</td>
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<td>Final member – checking and sharing of findings with participants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Writing up findings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meet with advisor weekly or bi-monthly</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 2010</td>
<td>Defend Dissertation</td>
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Appendix C

Initial Semi-Structured Interview with teachers; August/September 2009

1. Please describe the students in your classroom.

2. Please tell me about your students as literacy learners from what you know about them now at the beginning of the school year.

3. Can you describe your definition of literacy?

4. Please describe your goals, both short-term and long-term, for your literacy instruction this year.

5. How do you determine what you will teach in literacy each day?

6. How would you describe your approach to teaching literacy with these students?

7. What types of strategies or approaches have been beneficial to your students’ literacy learning in past years of teaching?

8. What or who has contributed to your understanding of teaching literacy?

9. Where do you see yourself at this point in your career in your teaching of literacy?

10. Describe how you been involved with the Professional Development Partnership at this school.
Appendix D

Questions for Second Semi-Structured Interviews; November/December 2009

Annemarie

1. Can you describe the students in now in your classroom- how many students you currently have, how many ELLs, students with special needs, the different ability levels that you have, etc? Also, when you think about students of different literacy abilities, how do you determine this?

2. One of the goals that you mentioned was to determine how to work with a class like this that has students on many levels. You felt that literacy centers- guided reading groups and the other literacy centers would be a way to meet the diverse needs of the class. You also have talked about wanting students to develop an interest or love for reading. How do you see the progression of these goals at this point in the year?

3. Are there any other new short-term and long-term goals for your literacy instruction this year that you have?

4. I’d like to talk about two of the centers in particular-the Skills and Words centers. Can you describe your goals and purpose for these centers? How do these align with your goals for your literacy instruction? How well do you feel that students are doing in these centers?

5. What types of choice would you say that you your students in literacy?

6. How would you say you differentiate literacy instruction for students of different abilities, such as ELLs?

7. In some of the conversations and the first interview, You’ve used words like “expected” or “have to” in relationship to the basal program and Accelerated Reader. Where does this expectation come from, as specifically as possible? What flexibility do you feel that you have? What differences do you think exist for different grade levels to either use or stray from the basal curriculum?

8. There’s been a change in the administration since you began, is that correct? What can you say about this change and how this has impacted your teaching, the expectations, school environment?

9. Please put yourself back to your first semester or two of the [alternative preparation] program. How would you say that your expectations or vision of what your teaching would be like match now what your reality of teaching is?

10. If you could teach a literacy course in a program like [the alternative preparation program], what would you be sure to include? What would you want the teacher candidates to walk away being able to do?

11. If you could hire a Professional Development person for the school—from anywhere and money was no object—who would it be or what would the topic be?
12. One of the main focuses of the [alternative preparation] program, as you know, is culturally relevant pedagogy. How would you define culturally relevant pedagogy in your own words and in what ways do you feel you use any elements of culturally relevant pedagogy in literacy?

Maggie

1. Can you describe the students in now in your classroom—how many students you currently have, how many ELLs, the different ability levels that you have?

2. In the first interview and in other conversations, you talked about managing behavior and getting students acclimated to the classroom especially in centers so that you can work with small groups as a short-term goal and then a long-term goal was to have all the students reading and writing on or beyond grade level. First, can you tell me if this sounds correct? Can talk about how are those goals coming along and what would be other short term goals and long term goals for the end of the year?

3. One of your other goals or wishes that you talked about is that you want the students to feel empowered and to feel like readers and writers. What are some of the strategies, activities, or practices that you do in literacy that you feel develops this in the students?

4. What types of choice would you say that you your students in literacy in this classroom?

5. How would you say you differentiate literacy instruction for students of different abilities, such as ELLs?

6. One of the main focuses of the [alternative preparation] program, as you know, is culturally relevant pedagogy. How would you define culturally relevant pedagogy in your own words and in what ways do you feel you use any elements of culturally relevant pedagogy in literacy?

7. In the last interview you mentioned that some ways you’ve been involved with the PDS school partnership is that you’ve received a mini grant with the help of a professor and may work a little with a student teacher in another classroom. You expressed a desire to have a student teacher at some point. Are there any other wishes or needs you feel that this school and you personally would want or need as part of the PDS partnership?

8. If you could hire a Professional Development person—from anywhere and money was no object—who would it be or what would the topic be? It could be K specific or for the whole school?

9. Put yourself in your first or second semester of the [alternative preparation] program. How would you say that your expectations or vision of what your teaching would be like while you were in the program matched what your reality of teaching is?

10. In some of my conversations with you and other teachers here I’m working with, the issue of using the basal program has been mentioned quite a bit. You talked
last month about when you taught 3rd grade for that part of the year that you felt that you had to at least address those concepts because the students had to take a county assessment every Friday and that you didn’t feel that it was the best way to reach the students, which may be a reason you don’t use the program much. Can you talk a little about who sets the expectations about using this program and doing the assessment? What do you think about the fact that Kindergarten teachers don’t have to use this program or focus on the assessments? Do you think this allows you to have more freedom or that the expectations are different for Kindergarten teachers?

11. Can you talk a little bit about what you know about the change in administration here and what your impressions are about how it’s impacted the school?

12. If you could teach a literacy course in a program like [alternative preparation program], what would you be sure to include? What would you want the preservice teachers to walk away knowing and being able to do?

Winona

1. Please describe the students that you have in your classroom- how many do you currently have? How many of these are ELLs, students with special needs, and generally just the different learning levels. In the first interview you had 21 students of multiple ability levels.

2. What do you use to determine students you feel are ‘below grade level’?

3. In terms of their writing too, you talked about how a lot of them had a hard time with complete sentences and just putting their thoughts in complete sentences. Where do you see them right now?

4. In the first interview, I asked you to define literacy in your own words. You said you thought that it was reading, writing, the meanings of words, spelling, phonics that all tie together to make literacy. Does that sound like an accurate description of your definition or would you add to that?

5. Using that definition, where do you think your students are in terms of their literacy?

6. When we discussed your goals for this school year in the first interview, you discussed working in small groups and trying different things to differentiate for the different needs of students as things you were working on. You wanted to find different resources and activities to use with some of the lower students. How do you think this is going overall?

7. We talked about this before is just, students being pulled out for ESOL and EIP and even students getting special ed services and maybe some frustrations with this. Do you feel that when they’re pulled out for these things, that it’s helpful to them?

8. What you could say about the change in administration since you started here? How has it impacted what you are able to do in the classroom, the expectations, and then the school climate in general?
9. Would you say that [basal program] is a requirement in relationship to the Benchmark tests that you have to give?

10. What experiences exist for different grade levels to maybe use the [basal program] or stray away from it? You’ve mentioned before that maybe Kindergarten doesn’t have to use it or they have less requirements. What do you think about this?

11. If you were to put yourself back in the first semester of the [alternative preparation] program, maybe the first summer. How would you say your expectations of teaching compares to your experiences now?

12. How do you feel that the Active Board helps or supports you in teaching literacy?

13. One thing that you’ve really stressed that you feel that many of your students need to get better at their phonics skills. Other than phonics, what are some other skills or strategies that you think they need to learn and develop?

14. Let’s say you didn’t have anything but the [state standards] to cover. You didn’t have any specific county programs, you didn’t have to do certain assessments or a specific weekly lesson plan. What do you think your literacy instruction might look like?

15. If you could hire a professional development person, this could be an author of a book, an author of a children’s book, it could be someone that you’ve seen or heard or read about in a class. What do you think you would want, even just the topic?

16. If you would teach at literacy course in a teacher prep program like [alternative preparation program], for people who are going to be teachers, what would you want to make sure you include in your course, what would you want the teacher candidates to understand and be able to do?

17. As you know, one of the focuses of the [alternative preparation] program is to develop culturally relevant teachers. How would you define culturally relevant teaching in your own words? What do you feel are ways that you use this or how do you think this comes out in your teaching of literacy?
Appendix E

Questions for Third Semi-Structured Interviews

**Annemarie**

1. Could you tell me a little about your own experiences in schools, PreK-12? What types of schools did you go to, how did you like school, where were they? What did you feel about your teachers?

2. Can you describe the students you have as literacy learners? How many ELLs? Students with special needs?

3. One of the goals that you mentioned at the beginning of the year was to be able to meet the needs of the diverse students in this class. How do you feel you are coming along with that goal now? How have you been differentiating for the different needs of ELLs?

4. You’ve mentioned before that you were interested in getting the ESOL endorsement through the county- Are you still planning to pursue the ESOL endorsement? Why do you feel this is important? What types of things are you hoping to learn from this?

5. Can you describe any of the ways you’ve been involved with the PDS partnership this year?

6. What types of support would you wish for from a PDS partnership? You’ve mentioned before that professional development, particularly in the area of writing, would be helpful. Do you still agree with that, or is there anything else?

7. You’ve mentioned that Accelerated Reader has been a hard program to get some of the kids to use- why do you think that might be?

8. If you could think for a minute about what guides your decision making in terms of what you teach in literacy-What do use/ go by first? Next?

9. When you define a reader or writer as needing to be in the low reading group or struggling, what kinds of knowledge or skills determine this?

10. Referring to the Survey you completed- You mentioned that the class wrote persuasive letters to principal – do these get sent?

11. Given the current context of the school and many of the things you’ve talked about this year- some lack of administrator support, this mismatch between the [basal] program and the [state] standards, etc., is there anything that the [alternative preparation] program could have better prepared to deal with all of these things?

**Maggie**

1. Could you tell me a little about your experiences in schools, PreK-12? What types of schools did you go to, how did you like school, where were they?
2. Can you describe the students as literacy learners in your classroom?
3. Where do you feel you are in terms of your goals for students’ literacy learning this year- having students read on grade level? Have a love for reading and writing?
4. If you could think for a minute about the way you make your decisions about what you teach in literacy- What do use/ go by first? Next?
5. How have you been involved with the PDS partnership this year?
6. What types of support would you like to see at the school as part of a PDS?
7. What strategies or approaches have been beneficial for your students this year; ELLS in particular?
8. What would you still want to know more about relating to teaching literacy at this point in the year?
9. Given the current context of the school/county and many of the things you’ve talked about this year- some lack of administrator support, not really understanding Kindergarten curriculum, etc., is there anything that the [alternative preparation] program could have better prepared to deal with all of these things?
10. When you define a reader or writer as struggling or needing assistance, what kinds of knowledge or skills determine this?

Winona

1. Could you tell me a little about your experiences in schools, PreK-12? What types of schools did you go to, how did you like school, where were they?
2. Can you describe the students you have as literacy learners?
3. How would you define Reader’s Workshop, Writer’s Workshop?
4. You mentioned in the survey that you’ve had students do persuasive writing- What types of persuasive writing activities have you done that had students take action on topics or issues in their lives?
5. What types of strategies or activities have you used with the ELLs in your classroom this year that have worked well?
6. What would you like to know more about in terms of working with ELLs?
7. When you define a reader or writer as struggling or place them in a lower reading group, what kinds of knowledge or skills determine this?
8. What would you hope that a PDS could help you with? What are some PD opportunities you feel you would want or the school would benefit from? Besides a student teacher, have you had any other PDS experiences?
9. Can you describe your experiences as grade chair this year? How do you feel this role impacted your year?
10. Please consider/think about the way you make your decisions about what you teach in literacy - What do use/ go by first? Next?
11. You said in December interview that it seems like a lot of the ‘pressure’ or ‘expectations’ are a lot of talk and that you came to the conclusion that you were just going to do what you feel is best because there’s not a lot of administrator presence in classrooms and you actually do have a lot of freedom as long as you are writing a three part lesson plan and following [state] standards. How do you feel about that?

12. Given the current context of the school and the county and many of the things you’ve talked about this year—some lack of administrator support, lack of support from teachers like ESOL or other support services, etc., is there anything that the [alternative preparation] program could have better prepared to deal with all of these things—particular classes or just concepts?
Appendix F

Open-Ended Questions for Teacher Debrief sessions

1. Please tell me about today’s lesson- what did you have planned and what happened?.

2. How do you feel today’s lesson went?

3. What is going well in your literacy teaching overall?

4. What are you struggling with in your literacy teaching?

5. What activities, practices, or strategies did you use today or have you been using that have been going well?

6. What are your future plans for literacy instruction in the upcoming days; upcoming week; upcoming month?

7. What students are you concerned about in terms of their literacy progress?

8. What are your plans to work on these concerns?
Appendix G

Four Resources Model Questionnaire, Distributed January 2010

Please respond to the following questions by listing activities for each area below or through a narrative response. Don’t worry about complete sentences. Please be as specific as possible. Responses do not have to be only limited to literacy/language arts instruction. Thank you so much for taking the time to do this!

✓ What kinds of activities do you use that help students learn the symbols of letters and sounds to decode and write words? (e.g. spelling activities, phonemic awareness exercises, phonics work)

✓ What kinds of activities do you incorporate that help students to read, write, and understand different genres and modes of texts? (e.g. reading various genres, text sets, reading and writing using technology)

✓ What kinds of activities do you use that have students make connections between literacy and other content areas?

✓ What types of choices do students have about the texts and activities they take part in the classroom?

✓ What kinds of Critical Practices do you have students engage in the classroom (e.g. looking at a topic in a text from multiple perspectives, using writing to take action on an issue that impacts the students’ lives)?
Appendix H

Four Resources Model Framework for Data Analysis

**Code-Breaker**

1. How are students given the opportunity to use the four cueing (semantic, graphophonic, syntactic, and pragmatic) systems when reading and writing?

2. How are students taught to using the four cueing system in their daily literacy practices?

3. How is the teacher planning classroom activities that involve students on the ways and importance of using code-breaking activities as part of reading and writing?

**Text User**

1. How do classroom activities invite students to understand and utilize multiple genres?

2. What forms or modes of literacy are utilized and valued by the teacher and the curriculum in the classroom?

3. What connections are made between literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and other subject areas?

**Text Participant**

1. What types of choices do students have on the texts and literacy activities they take part with in the classroom?

2. How are students’ cultures, funds of knowledge, and experiences used in literacy instruction?

**Critical Practices**

1. How does the literacy curriculum invite students to critique, challenge, or examine issues from multiple perspectives?

2. How are students involved in making their own decisions about curriculum, texts, and their learning?

3. How are students’ cultures, funds of knowledge, and experiences reflected in the curriculum and activities offered to students?
# Appendix I

## Data Analysis Procedures

September 2009- May 2010

### Coding Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Coding</th>
<th>Data Coded</th>
<th>Codes/Themes</th>
<th>Questions/Notes/Results</th>
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</table>
| September 2009 Open Coding | -1<sup>st</sup> interview with all participants -Aug and Sept Observations & Debriefs | 1. Strategies Named  
2. Strategies Enacted in Observations  
3. Content of Lessons  
4. Approaches (to teaching)  
5. Beliefs (about students/-teaching literacy)  
6. Materials/resources used | Many of the strategies they named were what was enacted, Not a close connection to program, Content of lessons were heavily Code Breaking, Approaches used are mostly or influenced by basal, Some talk about empowering/wanting students to enjoy writing or see themselves as readers/writers |
<p>| October 2009 Open Coding | -1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; interview -Aug, Sept, and Oct Observations &amp; debriefs | Took the 3 research sub-questions and looked for evidence of these. Did not code on documents, but collected evidence on large chart paper using post-it notes on pages divided by questions. | When coding using these 3 questions, I came up with a ? category that included things that kept coming up and seemed important In the category I labeled “? But Important,” I found evidence of being worried about meeting the needs of ELLs, A narrow definition of literacy focused on Code Breaking, Feeling pressure from administration that impacted teaching, and Defining literacy as connected to outside school. |
| October 2009 Open Coding | -1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; interview -Aug, Sept, Oct Observations &amp; debriefs | Used 3 separate pieces of paper divided by each teacher. Went through all documents for that teacher and made a running list of things that stood out to me, and noted when I saw these things more than once. | Found similarities and differences when comparing the teachers to each other, especially in terms of their attitudes/beliefs/feelings about working with ELLs and the pressure of the admin/school/county. These findings lead me to think about how to look at these individual differences in teachers and to formulate 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; interview questions for each individual. Used these lists to start to create codes used in November (see below) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Codes/Themes</th>
<th>Questions/Notes/Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 2009</td>
<td>Open Coding- Refining</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; interview-Aug, Sept, Oct., Nov. Observations &amp; debriefs</td>
<td>Using the coding from October, I created 10 broad open codes to use in all data collected and coded this data using these codes-&lt;br&gt;- <strong>PT</strong>: Prepare for Test&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Deficit</strong>: Viewing students from deficit model&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Support</strong>: Interaction/feelings about support teachers such as ESOL&lt;br&gt;- <strong>SF</strong>: basal program&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Diff</strong>: Differentiating instruction&lt;br&gt;- <strong>CB</strong>: Code Breaking practices&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Goals</strong>: (for students)&lt;br&gt;- <strong>NG</strong>: Negotiation of curriculum/mandates&lt;br&gt;- <strong>Expect</strong>: (Expectations/pressures/mandates)&lt;br&gt;- <strong>PD</strong>: Professional Development&lt;br&gt;- I really need to refine these now to create more specific codes under each category but also need to get at some of the other important information that is coming up-Impact of the county, admin pressures, testing, issues with support staff, etc.&lt;br&gt;- This is my next step for late Dec/early Jan. Also need to incorporate new data (interview from Nov &amp; Dec and Observations from Dec)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 2009 &amp; Jan. 2010</td>
<td>All Data from Aug-Dec</td>
<td>Wrote “Portraits” of each teacher based on themes I gathered by reading back through all data on each teacher. Did this individually for each teacher on different days. Trying to create a ‘portrait’, thinking about how I may introduce them and provide thick description possibly in Chapter 4.</td>
<td>No real codes, just using themes I jotted as I read through data from each person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of Coding</td>
<td>Data Coded</td>
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<td>Jan. 2010</td>
<td>Portraits of each teacher, Debrief, and Interview 1 &amp; 2 for all teachers</td>
<td>Shared this data with 2 peers for peer debriefing. Shared my research questions and asked peers to read through data on individual participants (Each peer had 1 participant). They jotted notes and then read my portrait. We discussed their thoughts and comments compared to my portrait. This discussion helped me to develop axial codes that addressed the specific aspects of each of the open codes. Began working on a code book using Excel.</td>
<td>This discussion helped me to create research questions for 3rd interviews and discussion with Amy helped me think about adding another form of data, the Four Resources Model questionnaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. &amp; March 2010</td>
<td>All observations and debriefs; Interviews 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Continued to work on a code book using Excel.</td>
<td>I am having a very hard time using this spreadsheet to organize my thinking. It’s really not working for me. Talked to Teri H. about some way to manipulative data physically on paper; Got idea from Laura M. about using index cards and organizing pieces of data on those</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April &amp; May 2010</td>
<td>All observations, debriefs, Interviews, and Four resources questionnaire</td>
<td>Took axial codes I had begun on spread sheet, and cut out evidence of each of these codes. I took individual pieces of chart paper or index cards for each code and sorted them into those codes. I found that sometimes these codes were appropriate, but some needed to be narrowed further to describe the exact experiences going on. There were also codes I eliminated based on this, if I only saw evidence of this once or twice. They may need to go into another code.</td>
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Appendix J

Photos of Selective Coding on Index Cards

Example of one code- BELIEFST- ILD (Beliefs about students- Instructional Literacy Decisions) and data describing the code
Example of code- Text User: Reading/Writing Multimodality