

The Role of Talk in Literature Circles

by

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Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

It was my first year as a fourth grade teacher when the other intermediate teachers said to me in a faculty meeting, “So, you are going to do literature circles, right?” After I hesitated to answer, a colleague said, “You have to do literature circles in fourth grade.” Since literature circles are well-researched and proven to be a beneficial literacy practice, I decided I would try them out. With no previous experiences with literature circles, I did some research on how to conduct them. I gathered information on the various jobs the students can complete while they read, and I made a calendar for the students to keep track of nightly assignments. For the first literature circle cycle, the whole class read a novel together, while I modeled how to complete the jobs and carry out conversations. The students took part in guided practice discussions while we read the first novel, so that I could provide feedback and modeling as they learned how to carry out literature circle discussions. Although my students were very capable of answering higher level thinking questions, I soon found that it was difficult for them to carry out these kinds of high-quality conversations without a teacher guiding them.

It was half way through the school year, and my fourth-graders were carrying out their literature circle discussions when I walked over to the first group to listen in on their conversation. The students were going around the circle and sharing their jobs. Instead of back and forth discussions and responding to one another’s sharing, each child was simply waiting until it was his or her turn to share. The students were disengaged from the discussion. I interjected to remind the students on how to actively listen and respond to one another. At the same time, I noticed a student in the next group sitting to the side of his group’s circle and reading his book. He had forgotten his book at school and was now reading the chapters that were assigned for homework. It was at this moment that I wondered how

literature circles were actually benefiting my students, and if I was making the right choice in continuing to use them.

By the end of the school year, we had carried out literature circles a total of five times. Many of the students told me that this was their favorite thing we did in English Language Arts (ELA). They thought it was fun and they liked the books they read. It was hard for me to tell how much literature circles actually improved each child's reading comprehension abilities. All of the students made great progress throughout the school year, but was the progress from guided reading groups, whole group instruction from the basal, literature circles, or a combination of all three?

This experience inspired me to research literature circles to see what is happening when the students talk about books, and how this talk is benefiting them as readers whose ultimate goals are to develop a deep and thorough understanding of the text.

Significance of the Problem

Daniels (2002) defines literature circles as "small, peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story or book" (p. 2). Literature circles are grounded in Vygotsky's social-constructivist theory, which states that cognitive development is socially constructed and shared, meaning that students can deepen their understanding of the text and clarify misunderstandings by conversing with their peers (Sportsman, Certo, Bolt, & Miller, 2011).

There are a variety of models that can be used to conduct literature circles. In my classroom, each student completed an assigned job each night in response to the chapters that were read for homework. The jobs are grounded in reading strategies that promote comprehension, which help students to be continuously engaged with and thinking about the text in various ways. The jobs are also used as a springboard for students to facilitate their own discussions the next day. The jobs I include in

literature circles are illustrator, summarizer, vocabulary enricher, passage master, connector, and discussion leader. There are mixed findings in the field of research on literature circles in regard to the use of roles or jobs in literature circles, and if they help or hinder literature circle conversations (Cassidy & Christie, 2013; Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013). This has also led me to examine how literature circle jobs impact student discussions.

In the past few years, the New York State education system has seen drastic changes in expectations for students, which are outlined in the new Common Core Standards. In terms of literacy, students must be able to “seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews” (Common Core Standards, 2010). With more rigorous standards to meet, teachers must examine their current teaching practices, and assess whether the value in these teaching practices are relevant enough to continue using or whether they need to be modified to ensure students are gaining the deep level understandings of the texts being read. Modifying current teaching practices is a possible solution to meet the new standards, but first I needed to examine what is currently being gained from literature circles. Then I could find ways to model and scaffold learning so that it aligns with the Common Core Standards.

Purpose of the Study

I taught fourth grade for the first time in the 2012-2013 school year, and implemented literature circles without having any previous experiences with them. As the year went on, I could not help but wonder how much my students were actually gaining from these conversations that often times seemed to include concrete details and a round-robin style of sharing.

The ultimate goal of literature circles is to have students lead their own learning, which allows them to be more motivated and engaged learners (Marchiando, 2013; Mills & Jennings, 2011). Students are more accountable in their learning when they have choice in book selection, responsibility to one another, and feel that their opinions are valued. When students discuss a book, they gain new insights into their thinking, which can result in a deeper level understanding of the text. The talking that happens in literature circles should be authentic, and hopefully help students develop a love for and an interest in literature (Marchiando, 2013; Mills & Jennings, 2011).

During my first year of using literature circles, my students would often look to me for guidance and reassurance, when my goal was to have them be confident and engaged readers who could have a back and forth discussion about a book. The students tended to be very concrete in their sharing, and my goal was to have them carrying out conversations that involve deeper level thinking, thinking that involves reading between the lines. I wanted the students to make inferences about the stories, inferences that examine why events were unfolding the way they were, and why characters were making the decisions they made. I wanted the students to have meaningful discussions where they made connections to their own experiences and benefited from the thinking of one another.

When something is not working in my classroom, I reflect on what I need to do differently to allow my students to be successful. I reflected carefully on the issues that were initially present in my class' literature circles, and I made changes in my role in literature circles during this past year. I was hoping that these changes would lead to more conversations that involve deeper-level understanding. The purpose of this study was not only to explore what was happening in literature circles, but for me to get a better grasp on what kinds of instruction, support, and strategies must be provided to the students prior to their independent discussions. Perhaps my students were not always successful reaching the goals of literature circles because I did not model and scaffold enough to allow the students to be

independent in their discussions. Maybe the students needed more tools or feedback to guide their thinking in the discussions.

Through this study, I learned more about what I can do to allow for success in literature circles. By looking more closely into what was happening during literature circles and how my students profited from these discussions, I discovered the benefits that can come from properly implemented literature circles. My goal was to gain insight into what was happening to my students' understanding of literature as they discussed their books, as well as make it clear to myself as to the best ways to get the students to reach the goal of deep understanding.

This led me to the following research questions:

- 1) What kinds of talk and interactions take place during students' literature circle discussions?
- 2) How do student talk and interactions in literature circles seem to impact student comprehension?
- 3) How do the reading roles used in literature circles seem to impact how students participate in literature circles?

Study Approach

This study was a qualitative study. The participants in the study were my fourth grade students and the fourth grade students from another homeroom. There were 14 students in my class and 17 students in the other class. During each book cycle, I randomly selected one group of students as my focal group. During each cycle, the focal group was made up of five students.

The data I examined during this study were the conversations that the students carried out during literature circles and the work samples (job journals and exit tickets) that were completed as part

of literature circles. I used audio-recording to capture these conversations, so that they could be analyzed and coded to assess the nature and quality of the conversations, as well as look for trends among data. I also used observations and field notes while literature circles were being conducted, to capture my on-the-spot thinking. These field notes were recorded in a teacher journal. I also used student work samples to capture student thinking. Student journals and exit tickets allowed the students and me to reflect on the quality of their literature circles and student understanding. These written components of literature circles allowed the students to self-monitor their own understanding, as well as assess the quality of the literature circles. Student journals consisted of the jobs that were completed independently as the students read the chapters that were assigned as homework. Exit tickets were completed after discussions took place. I used the two work samples to assess how a student's understanding changed after discussions.

Rationale

Based on my previous experiences with literature circles, I wanted to look more closely into what was happening when students discussed literature, to allow me, as a teacher, to improve the quality of my scaffolding and modeling. This allowed my students to carry out conversations that promote higher level thinking and understanding of the text. The goals of my study were to learn about what kinds of talk students are using in literature circles and how the talk impacts student comprehension. I also examined how reading roles or jobs impacted student conversation, and in turn, student understanding.

In a society that values collaborative learning and working, it is important for students to learn how to work with one another to become better thinkers and learners. Talking about our learning and thinking is an authentic learning practice, because it mirrors real-world experiences. If I can improve the

quality of literature circles based on the information I gathered from this study, I can help prepare my students for real-world experiences.

I collected work samples from my students before and after their literature circle discussions. This allowed me to examine how students' understandings of the text changed from before conversing with their peers to after. I also observed and audio recorded conversations, to allow for analysis of how meaning was constructed through conversations and how these discussions impacted students' understanding.

Summary

Literature circles are a common ELA practice that can be used to deepen students' understanding of texts, as well as allow teachers to modify their teaching practices to meet the Common Core Standards. In my study, I investigated what kinds of talk were taking place in literature circles, and how these conversations and interactions impacted student comprehension. I also examined how assigned reading roles impacted student conversation, and in turn, student understanding. This study helped me learn how talk in literature circles is beneficial for my students and what I can do to ensure the literature circle experience is providing students with the best possible learning opportunity.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This literature review explores the research on the purpose and role of literature circles in student development in reading comprehension, as well as how literature circles impact student feelings toward reading and social development. Literature circles revolve around theories that state talk is extremely beneficial in allowing students to reshape and deepen their understandings of a text. I have explored the research that explains the benefits of literature circles, and how to conduct literature circles in a way that yields positive results for student understanding. The teacher's role in providing modeling and scaffolding in literature circles is a critical component in student success. One commonly used scaffold in literature circles are the use of student jobs or reading roles, which will be explored as a scaffold that can have positive or hindering results. This literature review will also explore the various kinds of talk that students use in discussions and the function of each type of talk. Overall, literature circles can have a positive impact on student achievement if they are carried out in a way that fosters meaningful discussions among students.

History & Background of Literature Circles

Book clubs have been a common practice for centuries, but Daniels (2002) describes the literature circle "boom" as occurring in the 1990's when the Internet opened up a new way of communicating about literature, and Oprah Winfrey used her influential persona and talk show to begin book clubs across the country. Although book clubs were already developed at this time, these progressions made the fact that people enjoy discussing meaningful literature with others very apparent in our society (Daniels, 2002).

It was in the 1980's when collaborative learning began growing popular in the classroom. It was at this time when Karen Smith and Gloria Kaufman coined the term "literature circles" (Ferguson & Kern, 2012). Daniels (2002) defines literature circles as "small, peer-led discussion groups whose members

have chosen to read the same story or book” (p. 2). Literature circles are typically made up of 4-6 students who read the same text (Cameron, Murray, Hull, & Cameron, 2012). Ideally, students have choice in the text they are reading. When students have the opportunity to select a text that looks interesting to them, they are more likely to participate and make connections to the novel (Cameron et al., 2012). Since literature circles are peer-led, they allow students to take on more responsibility and accountability in their learning. Student-centered discussions allow students to feel that their thoughts and opinions are valued by not only the teacher, but their classmates (Avci & Yuksel, 2011; Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013).

Over the years, many teachers and researchers have conducted research on the benefits of literature circles, which include increased volume of reading, increased motivation and love of reading, improved comprehension and critical thinking, and an overall boost in achievement scores (Avci & Yuksel, 2011; Daniels, 2002; Marchiando, 2013; Mills & Jennings, 2011). Although there are vast amounts of evidence supporting the benefits of student learning in literature circles, literature circles have to be set up in a way that facilitates meaningful discussions. Students have to be taught how to think about and discuss the books in ways that will allow themselves to think more deeply about and critically analyze the text while also helping classmates further their thinking. If literature circles are not set up and taught to students in a way that will foster meaningful learning, the benefits will not be present and literature circles will become time not well spent (Simpson, Mercer, & Majors, 2010).

There are a variety of models that can be used to conduct literature circles. In my classroom, I have the students make a schedule before they begin reading to decide what chapters will be read each night. In addition to reading the chapters, each student must complete an assigned job. The jobs are grounded in reading strategies that promote comprehension, which help the students be continuously engaged with and thinking about the text in various ways. The jobs also make it easier for students to

facilitate their own discussions the next day (Mills & Jennings, 2011; Marchiando, 2013). The jobs I include in literature circles are illustrator, summarizer, vocabulary enricher, passage master, connector, and discussion leader. One job is assigned to each student on the first day, and then students rotate through the jobs, completing a different one each night. Students read the assigned chapters at home and complete their jobs independently. The next day, the students meet with their group to discuss the chapters that were read. Students use their jobs to help facilitate discussions and respond to the thinking of one another. At the end of their discussion, each student completes an “exit ticket” that requires the students to reflect on their understanding after discussing the chapters.

Literature Circle Roles/Jobs

I use reading roles in literature circles, which serve as a “job” for each student to complete with the assigned nightly reading. The jobs integrate reading skills that are used by advanced readers, such as summarizing, making connections, visualizing, and asking questions. The purpose of the jobs is to remind students to continually use these reading skills as they read texts (Marchiando, 2013; Mills & Jennings, 2011). The following literature circles roles will be used in my study to ensure students are continually carrying out reading practices that promote comprehension.

Readers picture or visualize what they read. The role of the illustrator is to draw and color one part of the reading that is important to the story. He or she also includes 2-3 well written sentences to explain the picture (Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013).

Readers can summarize what is happening in the story. The role of the summarizer is to write a summary on the chapters that were read. He or she should include only the most important details, characters, and events (Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013).

Readers develop new vocabulary as they read. The role of the vocabulary enricher is to look for unfamiliar, unusual, interesting, or puzzling words. He or she must then copy down the page number, sentence it is used in, dictionary definition, and place the word in a sentence of his or her own (Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013).

Readers make connections between important ideas in the story and their own lives, the lives of others, or another story. The role of the connector is to make connections to the story. He or she must include the part in the story the connection is being made to and a descriptive explanation of the connected person or story. Connections can be text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world (Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013).

Readers show insight about what they have read and reflect on the story. The role of passage master is to find thought-provoking ideas, phrases, or paragraphs. The passage master must write down the passage in his or her journal and then explain why this passage was interesting or important to the story (Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013).

Reading for meaning is a collaborative process. As readers discuss with others, they deepen their own understanding of the story. The role of discussion leader is to write 2-3 open-ended questions to lead the group in a discussion of what they read (Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013).

These jobs can be a beneficial tool to guide students in their thinking and facilitate discussions. When students are asked to record their thinking, it can be used as a springboard to start conversations. The jobs that were presented here reflect what advanced readers seamlessly and simultaneously do as they read. When students are asked to write their thinking in relation to one reading comprehension strategy, it ensures that students are staying tuned in to the reading while also reading for a purpose. Writing down their ideas helps students to further think about how each job helps them understand the story better. In order for jobs to be useful, students must understand how the job helps them

understand the story better so that there is a purposeful reason for carrying out the job (Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013). Although jobs or reading roles are a commonly used tool in literature circles, it has also been found that jobs can sometimes hinder student thinking and conversations, which will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter.

Teaching Literature Circles: Modeling and Scaffolding

Many students are very capable of carrying out higher level thinking, such as making connections and inferences that relate to character motivations and themes in the story, but a common challenge is teaching students how to carry out these conversations without the teacher leading the discussions. Teachers need to provide plenty of modeling and guided practice, as well as appropriate amounts of scaffolding that guide the students in their learning and discussions. If too much scaffolding is provided, students may feel stifled in their learning and conversations, becoming unable to think outside the box. If too little scaffolding is provided, students will not know how to think about the text and discuss it in meaningful ways, and they will retract into discussing the text using primarily surface level thinking that involves using only concrete details (Cassidy & Christie, 2013; Demeny, 2012; Park 2012; Pearson, 2010).

Self-Monitoring

Mills and Jennings (2011) used a self-monitoring strategy by inviting their students to reflect on their own discussions by watching a video recording of their discussions and comparing it to Daniels (2001) video, *Looking Into Literature Circles*. The students were able to have an open discussion with their teacher about what they thought was working and not working in literature circles. The students made suggestions, and the teacher changed literature sharing techniques based on the students' feelings. This showed the students that their opinions were valued, and resulted in more genuine and free flowing conversations (Mills & Jennings, 2011).

A tool that can be used with students to help scaffold their self-monitoring on a day-to-day basis are exit tickets. Exit tickets are written tasks that ask students to reflect on the discussions they had in literature circles. In my classroom, the students are given prompts where they are asked to write about how the discussion changed their thinking, including discussion highlights, misunderstandings, and questions that still remain. They are also asked to reflect on their job, and record relevant information that could have been added to their jobs based on feedback from their classmates (Demeny, 2012; Ferguson & Kern, 2012).

Talking Models

In order for students to have authentic conversations, they need to be taught how to carry out conversations in a respectful way that involves taking turns and giving constructive feedback. Some talking models that can be used in literature circles are fist and fingers, tally marks, speaking into silence, and job sharing (Mills & Jennings, 2011).

Fist and fingers is a method where students put up one finger after they have spoken and then they call on a person who has the least number of fingers in the air. This method promotes equity in conversations, but it is difficult for students to build a genuine conversation, because genuine conversations involve connecting to and building on the thinking of one another (Mills & Jennings, 2011). Tally marks are similar, but one student is in charge of marking when each person speaks. This helps the students monitor to make sure everyone is having about the same number of turns to talk. Similar to fist and fingers, this method may inhibit genuine conversations from happening because students cannot speak when they have relevant information, unless it is their turn (Mills & Jennings, 2011).

Speaking into silence is a natural turn-taking conversational strategy. Students watch and listen for natural openings in conversations by “reading” eye contact, gestures, and intonation. If two students

speak at the same time, one student pulls back knowing that he or she will speak next. This conversational model matches most closely with what authentic conversations look and sound like. Although this kind of talk is most authentic, it takes a great deal of modeling and practice to achieve this (Mills & Jennings, 2011).

Literature circle jobs or reading roles can be used first as a written response to the text, and then as a talking model. There are mixed findings in the field of research on literature circles in regard to the use of roles or jobs, and if they help or hinder literature circle conversations (Cassidy & Christie, 2013; Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013; Sportsman et al., 2011). When students complete literature circle jobs, it is easy for the students to take part in a round robin type of sharing that results in each student waiting for his or her turn to speak, instead of students conversing back and forth in an authentic way (Sportsman et al., 2011). Also, students may become too focused on completing their jobs only, which can result in the students not employing the other comprehension strategies or not looking at the big picture that is being presented in the story (Ferguson & Kern, 2012). However, the literature circle roles can be a necessary tool for some students, in order for them to organize their thoughts. Expert readers negotiate between many reading strategies without making a conscious effort to do so. But young readers need to focus on learning and mastering one reading strategy at a time. Students can then add new strategies into their repertoire as they practice and become more comfortable with their use of the strategies (Cassidy & Christie, 2013; Ferguson & Kern, 2012).

Pearson (2010) describes the delicate balance between providing structure in literature circles, but not so much that it inhibits discussions. Students had better experiences in achieving exploratory talk, which is talk that involves students thinking aloud to work through their developing thoughts, when they were taught ground rules for discussions that were then practiced in “thinking together” lessons. Scaffolds are designed to be taken away eventually when students no longer need the scaffold to

perform the skill. Therefore, scaffolding is a delicate process and must constantly be re-assessed by the teacher and students to make sure the scaffolds are helping students achieve deeper level conversations, not inhibiting them (Cassidy & Christie, 2013; Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013; Pearson, 2010; Sportsman et al., 2011).

Kinds of Talk

When students are discussing literature, they use various types of talk, which include cumulative, anecdotal, performing voice, exploratory, and presentational. Different types of talk serve different purposes for students. Each kind of talk is valuable when used to fulfill a student need in his or her process of understanding a text more deeply.

Cumulative talk involves students all sharing in a mutually supportive, uncritical way. This kind of talk is all agreement, which creates an accepting and encouraging atmosphere. A drawback to this kind of talk is students do not take part in debate and critical argument. Cumulative talk is often interpreted as being respectful to one another, but it does not allow students to critically analyze the information, question one another, and share differing insights (Pearson, 2010). This kind of talk may stem from teacher-led discussions where the teacher states the correct answer and students agree. It must be taught to students that there is not one correct answer or way of thinking in relation to literature (Barnes & Todd, 1995).

Anecdotal talk involves the students making connections to their personal lives and experiences. This can sometimes be seen by teachers as a distraction, but can also be seen as a way for the students to form deep, personal connections to the text. For anecdotal talk to be most beneficial, students need to bring the book into their personal experiences and think about the two as one conversational topic. The goal is for the book to become as relevant in making their point as their personal experiences (Pearson, 2010).

Performing voice takes place when students move past just talking about a book; they act it out through the use of voices. This kind of talk can be miscalculated by teachers as students “acting out” to gain attention and put on a show for classmates, but Pearson (2010) found that the performing voice or mimicry actually allowed the children to make the characters their own. By becoming the character, it allowed the students to open up their minds to why the characters may have said or did the things they did (Pearson, 2010).

Exploratory talk takes place in small groups when students think aloud and then reconstruct their thinking about a topic. Exploration involves an initial searching through information in relation to what the students already know and understand. The small group atmosphere supports risk-taking because students can discuss their uncertainties about the text without the pressure of being in front of the whole class. Small groups can make great progress in their understanding because they can make the exploratory talk fit their own needs (Barnes & Todd, 1995). Exploratory talk involves using the words ‘because’, ‘if’, and ‘why’. When students share their insights, they will often make inferences, but inferences that are backed by explicit information from the text (Barnes, 2010; Gilles, 2010; Pearson, 2010).

Presentational talk is “students talking in order to present well-shaped ideas in a confident and public manner” (Barnes & Todd, 1995, p. 15). Teacher-led discussions often lead to presentational talk. The teacher leads the discussion, and the questions that are asked of the students will often lead to one word answers or answers that are viewed as being right or wrong. Presentational talk can be valuable for students to use after they have had significant time to use exploratory talk. After exploration, the student must be able to objectify their understanding by reflecting on where their discussions have led them and summarize what they understand. This form of talk is important because students must be able to summarize what the group talked about using explicit and important details (Barnes & Todd,

1995; Gilles, 2010). When students present the most crucial aspects of their discussions, “teachers can ask carefully chosen questions, underline crucial points, bring out evidence or arguments that have been omitted, and aid students in further reordering their thoughts” (Barnes & Todd, 1995, p. 86).

Presentational talk allows the teacher to monitor student understanding and provide on the spot feedback, which can provide the teacher with the opportunity to use one group to model for other students something that was done effectively (Barnes & Todd, 1995; Gilles, 2010).

Meaning Construction

Reader Response Theory

Rosenblatt’s Reader Response Theory states that when students read a text, meaning is constructed first through personal response that is linked to experiences. Meaning then changes as it is discussed with peers. The student’s original thoughts that are framed within personal experiences are reformed as others introduce new ideas and information (Connell, 1996; Demeny, 2012). Demeny (2012) states that meaning is the dynamic interaction between language and reality, thus it is relative, as the individual interprets the world through his/her own experiences.

Rosenblatt describes the relationship a reader has with a text as dialogue. The reader first develops a tentative framework in response to the cues of the text. Then, the reader forms expectations that influence selection and synthesis of further responses. The reader then experiences fulfillment or frustration with those expectations. If needed, the reader adjusts expectations further, and can finally synthesize meaning from the text (Connell, 1996). Rosenblatt’s point here is that the meaning of a text is not within the text itself, but rather the meaning lies differently within each person in relation to the text. Meaning changes as readers share their responses with one another over time. Students can form new experiences by reading texts, and each new experience with a text or with a conversation with peers can bring a multitude of new responses and new meanings to each student (Connell, 1996).

Barnes (2010) states that there is a point when each student must relate new ways of thinking to already existing understandings in order to form a new synthesis. This closely aligns with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, where students need support to further their development and reach a higher level understanding, which can come in the form of insights from peers.

Social-Constructivist Theory

Reunamo and Nurmilaakso (2007) describe the Vygotskian perspective of language as a continuum between interpsychological and intrapsychological, which means students must discuss their thinking with others before they can fully internalize it. Vygotsky's social-constructivist theory states that cognitive development is socially constructed and shared (Sportsman et al., 2011).

The zone of proximal development has been defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Literature circles allow students to work within their zone of proximal development because students who are more advanced can help other students throughout the meaning making process. This concept is displayed in the studies of Sportsman et al. (2011) and Park (2012) which are discussed more fully in the next section of this chapter.

Vygotsky's social-constructivist theory is also closely related to the collaborative learning theory, where the learner actively reconstructs knowledge and ideas through dialogue with peers, discussion, commenting, sharing, and reconceptualizing (Sportsman et al., 2011). Barnes (2010) explains the importance of how talking helps one re-shape what he or she already "knows". When students talk with one another they may see connections that were not already apparent or realize that there is other information that needs to be considered when forming a thought or opinion. Working collaboratively

allows students to make choices that are supported with evidence, problem solve, and apply their thinking in complex ways (Barnes, 2010).

Effects of Literature Circles on Student Learning

It has been found that literature circles can have a significant positive impact on student comprehension, as well as participation, confidence, and attitudes toward reading. Students involved in literature circles are also aware of their own use of comprehension strategies and can self-monitor their understanding.

Avci and Yuksel (2011) found that literature circles improved reading comprehension skills of students who had low level reading comprehension. Students also liked performing the different tasks, and discussing and cooperating with peers on a regular basis. Students stated that they remembered the books for longer periods of time due to the discussions that included many details from the texts. The students were able to clear up misunderstandings in their discussions. The researchers stated that because the books were discussed in a detailed way, the students learned information from peers that would have otherwise remained unclear or unknown to them. Not only did literature circles produce higher levels of reading performance, but it was also reported that social interactions among students improved (Avci & Yuksel, 2011).

Certo, Moxley, Reffitt, and Miller (2010) found that students in grades 1-5 had positive attitudes toward literature circles and positive perceptions of themselves as readers due to literature circles. Most students generally found literature circles to be a very enjoyable and a “favorite” ELA activity. Students believed that writing before and after literature circles enhanced their discussions. The participants were also aware of themselves and others using comprehension strategies within literature circles. This means the students were able to successfully self-monitor their comprehension of the texts that were being read (Certo et al., 2010). Ferguson and Kern (2012) yielded similar results with students

in grades 7-8 because the students had deeper level understanding when literature circles were carried out in meaningful ways. The students stated that literature circles helped them think better and work harder. The students said that the feedback they received from their peers helped their work become better. This shows that students were more accountable when they felt they had a responsibility to their peers, and they worked more diligently when they knew they had a leading role in their own meaning making process (Ferguson & Kern, 2012).

Sportsman et al. (2011) found that students had significant growth in social and leadership skills due to literature circles. This study focused on academically at-risk students who needed an academic intervention that could also promote social-emotional development. Not only did the at-risk students show significant growth in social and leadership development, but average-achieving and high-achieving students also made gains in their social and leadership development. The heterogeneous grouping that was used in literature circles is one aspect that is strongly believed to benefit all students, especially the students who are considered at-risk. Heterogeneous grouping allows all students to feel valued, because the at-risk or low achieving students are not being categorized by their weaknesses (Sportsman et al., 2011). Park (2012) had similar results with a group of urban middle-school girls who were also labeled as at-risk or low achieving compared to their counterparts. The girls became fond of meeting together after school to discuss books. They found it easier to understand the book when they talked about it. The girls stated that they found new ways of looking at the book when it was discussed with one another. They attributed their better understanding of the book to the fact that they had fun while talking about the book.

Literature circles have all the components that can allow for successful ELA development. If meaningful texts are used and students are able to carry out rich discussions, literature circles have the potential to rejuvenate excitement for students to read. When students talk about a text, they tend to

like it more, recognize that they understand it more deeply, and remember the book more fully (Certo et al., 2010; Park 2012).

Students are more likely to share in literature circle discussions because they are able to choose what they want to read and there is a higher comfort level within a small group setting. Students are more accountable for their work because they have peers to work with. They enjoy the responsibility and independence of literature circles (Barnes & Todd, 1995; Cameron et al., 2012). Literature circles allow students to work together to use comprehension strategies and deepen their understanding of a text. This can also result in students being able to enhance their written responses to literature (Certo et al., 2010).

Literature circles are also a way to differentiate learning for students who are at different academic levels. Students who are lower achieving can develop new and deeper understandings by conversing with their peers (Sportsman et al., 2011). Many researchers support the notion that literature circles are enjoyable for the students. This enjoyment leads to students having more motivation and participation, which ultimately leads to deeper understanding of the text (Barnes & Todd, 1995; Cameron et al., 2012; Certo et al., 2010; Park 2012; Sportsman et al., 2011).

Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

As a fourth grade teacher, it is important for me to provide my students with optimal opportunities for meaningful learning. Although literature circles are a commonly used and praised literacy practice for helping students attain deeper-level understanding of a text, I had difficulty seeing the benefits among my past students. I conducted a six-week study to further explore what the impact of literature circles was for my students. I did this by focusing on the following three research questions:

- 1) What kinds of talk and interactions take place during students' literature circle discussions?
- 2) How do student talk and interactions in literature circles seem to impact student comprehension?
- 3) How do the reading roles used in literature circles seem to impact how students participate in literature circles?

Context of Study

I conducted this study in the school where I teach fourth grade. It is a private Catholic school located in a suburban community, adjacent to a mid-size city in Western New York. The school is located in a middle-class community where the median income was \$57,833 in 2011. According to Movoto Real Estate (2011), 93% of the community is white, 3% African American, 2% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 2% mixed races or other.

According to the school district webpage, the school district population is 83% white, 9% African American, 4% Hispanic, and 4% Asian/Other. The district is made up of 27 schools, including elementary to high schools. The school is made up of about 200 students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The demographics of the students in the school are 94% white, 3% Asian, 2% Hispanic, and 1% African American.

When the fourth grade was conducting literature circles, the students sat on the floor in circles with their groups. One group sat in the front of the room near the Smartboard. One group sat in the back right corner of the room near the sink, and one group sat in the back left corner of the room near the classroom door. Literature circles generally took place in the afternoon, shortly after lunch. My fourth grade class combined with the other fourth grade class to make literature circle groups. During the two 40 minute blocks scheduled for ELA, at least one was dedicated to literature circles for at least 3-4 weeks each quarter. When we were conducting literature circles, we had two additional teachers who were overseeing groups. The school's Academic Intervention Services (AIS) teacher was with us at that time, as well as a Special Education teacher who provided ELA services to a student in my class. Each of these teachers worked with a group that was not my focal group.

Participants

My fourth grade class was made up of seven girls and seven boys. The other fourth grade class was made up of nine girls and eight boys. According to the district demographic data, the average household income in the district area is \$58,344 a year as compared to the U.S. average of \$63,301, meaning that many students in my school are from families who would be considered to be of the middle class socioeconomic status. The school is a Catholic private school, therefore many families are religious. Of my fourteen students, 12 were white and 2 were Asian (one female and one male). In the other fourth grade class, all 17 students were white.

I randomly selected one literature circle group to focus on during each book cycle. I only chose from groups made up of students for whom parents gave informed consent. Since one literature circle cycle takes about 2-3 weeks, I observed two groups (one during each cycle) during the course of this study. Each group was made up of 5 students; therefore I had a total of 10 participants in the study. The

literature circle groups were heterogeneous, meaning that the students had a range of reading levels and skills.

The first book cycle took place from January 8, 2014 – January 17, 2014. There were five students in the focal group, and they were reading the text, *Best School Year Ever* (Robinson, 1994). The group was made up of two boys and three girls whose pseudonyms are: Jeremy, Chris, Ann, Adrianna, and Abby. These students all read at or above grade level, except for Jeremy, who was one Fountas and Pinnell level behind grade level during the time of the study (Fountas & Portsmouth, 2010).

The second book cycle took place from February 25, 2014 – March 10, 2014. There were five students in the focal group, and they were reading the text, *Strider* (Cleary & Zelinsky, 1991). The group was made up of two boys and three girls whose pseudonyms are: Tom, Jared, Samantha, Brittany, and Madison. These five students all read at or above grade level.

Researcher Positionality

I am a 26 year old female, and this was my third year being a full-time classroom teacher. I taught second grade for one year, and was then moved to fourth grade, where I have taught for the past two years. The year before I taught second grade, I was an Academic Intervention Services (AIS) assistant teacher, working three days a week to provide students will additional support in ELA and Mathematics. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Literacy at the College at Brockport. I graduated from St. John Fisher College in 2010 with degrees in Childhood Education and Special Education.

I was raised in the city of Rochester, New York, and attended Catholic schools for the majority of my life. My family is a white, middle-class family that values hard work and the importance of a good

education. In my four years of working at my school and talking with parents, I can see that many families at my school also value hard work and the importance of a Catholic education.

I value a balanced literacy program. In my classroom I use read-alouds, guided reading, literature circles, whole group reading, independent reading, shared writing, and writer's workshop to encompass a wide variety of literacy practices. In a balanced literacy program, it is most beneficial for the students if the literacy practices primarily focus on students' creating meaning from text and on supporting meaningful talk in classroom interactions (Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, & Socias, 2009). The variety of literacy practices I use allows me to accommodate the needs of diverse learners. Students have varying learning styles, and a balanced literacy approach allows me to use the students' multiple intelligences to build upon the strengths of each student while addressing the needs of each learner (Gardner, 2004). During literature circles, the students work independently at home, with peers in class, and with me during modeling, mini-lessons, whole group discussions, and teacher feedback. The heterogeneous and flexible grouping method, along with careful book choice, allows me to consistently modify instruction to meet the current and changing needs of the students. Literature circles provide authentic learning experiences that foster a love of reading in the children, and instill positive life-long reading habits (Mills & Jennings, 2011).

Data Collection and Tools

This qualitative study explored the value of the talk that took place during literature circle discussions, as well as how the defined reading roles impacted student participation and comprehension. I gathered data using audio recording, observations, a teacher research journal, and student work samples.

Audio recording

I audio recorded the literature circle discussions of my focus groups. After audio recording the discussions, I transcribed the conversations, which allowed me to code and further analyze the conversations. I sat the focus group in the front of the classroom, because it provided the most distance between the other two groups, which best prevented background noise. I placed the audio recording device in the center of the circle. I audio recorded the literature circles discussions each day the two groups met, which was five days a week for 2-3 weeks each, over the course of the six-week study. The audio recorded conversations allowed me to critically listen to and analyze the interactions and kinds of talk that took place, after the school day was over, when I could devote my full attention to all parts of the conversations.

Observations

I observed my focus group when they were carrying out literature circle discussions. During observations, I could not only listen to the conversations that were happening, but I could also read student body language. I could see how the students reacted to the statements of one another, and examine the indicators of the emotions they were feeling. On-the-spot observations were an important tool to capture students nonverbal and verbal interactions, which allowed me to see how students were developing social etiquette and listening/responding to one another. Some of the nonverbal interactions included eye contact, gesturing (nodding), body position, posture, and facial expressions. Verbal interactions included affirming or disagreeing with one another, staying on topic, answering a question that was provided, etc. I took observational field notes each day the literature circle groups met, which was five days a week, two weeks for each group, over the course of the six-week study. The observations were recorded in a double-sided journal that was used to record observations along with my insights.

Research Journal

I completed a research journal as I observed my students, listened to their audio recorded conversations, and examined their written work samples. The research journal allowed me to organize the collected data into themes. I looked for commonalities among data, and reflected on additional questions or gaps that I needed to address. The research journal provided one place for me to record all my thoughts about my research, goals, and reasoning behind my decisions (Borg, 2011).

Student Work Samples

Job Journals

The students completed their literature circle job each night in their journal. Jobs rotated every night so that students were always thinking in a different way and reading for a variety of purposes. These journals captured the thinking of the student as they read. The journals provided data about how the jobs were impacting student understanding. The job journals were a way to collect data about student understanding prior to discussing the book. Job journals were photocopied each day literature circles were conducted. After I made photocopies of the student work samples, the original work was returned to the students. I removed the participants' names and replaced them with pseudonyms.

Exit Tickets

The exit tickets were completed by the students after they completed their literature circle discussions for the day. The exit ticket provided data about how students thought their understanding of the text changed after discussing the book. Exit tickets allowed students to share what they thought went well during their discussions, how their understanding of the text changed, and questions they still had. Exit tickets were photocopied each day literature circles were conducted. After I made photocopies

of the student work samples, the original work was returned to the students. I removed the participants' names and replaced them with pseudonyms.

Procedures

Weeks 1-2: The first cycle of literature circle groups took place. I randomly selected a group to study. I audio recorded discussions each day, as well as observed the group for some time each day. I collected job journals on Fridays, and exit tickets daily.

Week 3: I began coding and analyzing the data from the first focal group in order to identify themes. I assessed the data thus far to make decisions about possible changes for the second focal group.

Weeks 4-5: The second cycle of literature circle groups began. I once again selected a group at random. I audio recorded discussions each day, as well as observed the group for some time each day. I collected job journals on Fridays, and exit tickets daily.

Week 6: The second cycle of literature circle groups went into the sixth week of the study. I continued collecting data, and began coding and analyzing it for themes.

Data Analysis

Audio recording

I listened to the audio recorded conversations of the students multiple times. I transcribed the conversations. After I transcribed a week's worth of conversations, I began coding the data. I looked at the various kinds of talk that took place, and color coded each kind of talk. Some kinds of talk that I examined were presentational talk, cumulative talk, exploratory talk, performing voice talk, and anecdotal talk. These categories of talk provided me with a base line as I began to analyze data. They were further adapted or changed as analysis took place, as I began developing sub-categories.

Presentational talk included statements that provided concrete details from text, or a child simply sharing his or her job without any further conversation. Cumulative talk included statements where students were in agreement with one another. Exploratory talk included statements that involved making inferences in regard to character motivations, emotions, connections among parts of the story, etc. Performing voice included statements where students used the voice of a character or action to demonstrate a point. Anecdotal talk included statements where the students shared their own story in relation to the text.

I used a constant comparison method to analyze the data in this qualitative study. I examined patterns in the data, and then derived categories from the data over the course of the study. I then used the data within the categories to guide me in developing my findings and building theory (Hubbard & Power, 1999).

Observations

When watching the students participate in literature circles, I looked for changes in student thinking or reactions to one another. I coded my observation notes into emerging themes, including but not limited to the kinds of talk: presentational talk, cumulative talk, exploratory talk, performing voice talk, and anecdotal talk. I also examined and coded the patterns of student physical behavior in relation to what was said, such as eye contact, gesturing (nodding), body position, posture, and facial expressions. By analyzing and coding this type of data I could see how student nonverbal communication aided in student conversation and understanding of the text.

Research Journal

My research journal was used to link data from the various sources together to find commonalities among the analyzed data. Coding strategies, emerging themes, and additional questions

were documented here to guide my data analysis. I used the research journal to document patterns and themes from the audio recording, observations, and student work samples.

Student Work Samples

Job Journals

Job journals provided a basis for student understanding before discussing the text. Jobs were completed at home each night, when the books were read independently. I coded students' written understanding into the categories of presentational, exploratory, performing voice, anecdotal, etc. I examined the students' written understanding in relation to how the jobs impacted their conversations within literature circles and understanding of the text.

Exit Tickets

Exit tickets provided data about how the students' thinking and understanding changed after discussing the text with classmates. I compared a student's exit ticket to his or her job journal and group conversation to analyze changes in the quality of student talk and understanding. I once again coded the students' thinking into presentational, exploratory, performing voice, anecdotal, etc, and used it to determine how student conversations were impacting understanding of the text.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

It was important for me as a researcher to make sure the study was carried out in a credible fashion. To ensure credibility in my study, I used the following criteria. All conclusions, reflections, and outcomes were grounded in data that came from audio recordings, observations, and student work samples. My conclusions were supported by the triangulation of my data (multiple sources and examples provided). I had 10 participants who were observed and audio recorded daily. I also collected work samples each day throughout the duration of the literature circle book cycle. This provided variety

in the data to ensure the results were not limited to one child or method of data collection. Finally, my work was peer-reviewed by my research partner, who reviewed my findings in relation to the data that was collected.

Limitations to the Study

There were limitations to this study. The study was conducted with a small group of students. Using my own students means I had been teaching these students for many months before the study was conducted. This could have allowed for bias in my observations due to the relationship I had already established with my students.

Summary

As a teacher and researcher, I was looking to explore the best ways to utilize literature circles in my classroom. The goal of this study was to investigate the types of discussions/interactions that took place in literature circles, as well as how reading roles impacted student conversations and comprehension. Ultimately, I examined what value there was in these discussions/interactions. This study informed my own teaching, so that I could determine what I need to do to further enhance teacher instruction and student learning through the use of literature circles. I used audio recording, observations, student work samples, and a research journal to collect data that was analyzed to see what impact literature circles had on student understanding of a text.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

The purpose of this study was to examine the different kinds of talk that take place in literature circles and how those kinds of talk impact student comprehension. This study also examined how reading roles or jobs in literature circles impact student conversations and comprehension. Literature circles allow students to re-shape and deepen their understanding of a text by socially constructing new meaning during conversations about the text (Daniels, 2002). Throughout this study, the ten student participants conversed in a variety of ways. Some of the talking that took place allowed the students to understand the text more deeply, while other talking did not seem to change their understanding of the text in any way. When the students participated in exploratory talk, they were able to expand their thinking and deepen their understanding of the text in meaningful ways. Reading roles were sometimes a necessary means to focus conversations, while at other times they stifled conversation by allowing students to present their material and move on to the next person. I discovered these findings through the use of audio recordings, observations, and student writing samples (job journals and exit tickets) over the course of the six-week study.

Research Results

There were many different kinds of talk and interactions that took place during literature circles. Different types of talk serve different purposes for students. Each kind of talk is valuable when used to fulfill a student need in his or her process of understanding a text more deeply (Pearson, 2010). When I coded the data, five forms of talk took place. The kinds of talk that took place were presentational talk, cumulative talk, exploratory talk, performing voice, and anecdotal talk.

The first two research questions will be simultaneously addressed. All student conversations were analyzed and coded to fit into one of the five kinds of talk that took place during literature circles. After coding the conversations into the five kinds of talk, I began analyzing the conversations to

determine how well the students' comprehension improved during each conversation. I came to the conclusion that each kind of talk was associated with a different level of comprehension or understanding. The presentational talk examples tended to have the lowest level of increased comprehension, while exploratory conversations had the highest level of increased comprehension. Cumulative talk examples were somewhat helpful in increasing student comprehension, while anecdotal talk and performing voice had different levels of increased comprehension depending on how the students participated within the conversations. The following two research questions will be addressed in this section:

Research Question #1: What kinds of talk and interactions take place during students' literature circle discussions?

Research Question #2: How do student talk and interactions in literature circles seem to impact student comprehension?

The kind of talk that took place in literature circles will be the basis for how the excerpts in this section are organized. The conversations are then analyzed within their "talk" categories for how student comprehension was impacted. This will be demonstrated through the use of student conversations and exit tickets reflections.

Presentational Talk

One kind of talk is presentational talk. Presentational talk is "students talking in order to present well-shaped ideas in a confident and public manner" (Barnes & Todd, 1995, p. 15). Presentational talk often came from the students' sharing their jobs. The following examples display excerpts from conversations where one student shared his or her job, and without conversation afterward, the next student began sharing his or her job. In these examples, the jobs that were shared included incorrect or

incomplete thinking about the events or characters in the story. These examples display instances where deeper level thinking was not verbalized and most likely not achieved. There were missed opportunities after these presentational talk examples for students to further their thinking and conversations, and move to exploratory talk.

The level of comprehension that was achieved in presentational talk was the lowest in comparison to the other kinds of talk. In presentational talk, the students are sharing the thinking they have already done about the story. The thinking of the presenter does not change after sharing his or her job. There is no evidence that the thinking of the students listening to the presenter changes. This shows that most students' comprehension benefitted little from presentational talk. When the students reflected on their discussions in their exit tickets, they rarely cited anything that was said during presentational talk as "*something they understand better*".

In the first example, both Jeremy and Chris are missing major events and/or details from a chapter in the book, *Best School Year Ever* (Robinson, 1994). The lack of character names in Chris' summary makes it difficult to follow. In both jobs, the students could have benefitted from discussing how they felt or reacted to these events in the story. They also could have benefitted from discussing these details in a more specific way.

1/8/14- *Best School Year Ever*

Jeremy (sharing illustrator job): *Howard goes missing from his stroller outside the store while Luella is babysitting. Luella meets Charlie who tells her that the Herdmans stole Howard. The Herdmans painted Howard's head and were charging money to see the tattooed baby.*

Chris immediately moved on to share his job.

Chris (sharing summarizer job): *In chapter one, the narrator said the first day of school was not so bad. In class there were a group of bad kids that did bad things. Also, the class year project would be to study each other. Next, a bad guy stole the baby brother and it turned out to be Herdman and told children it cost 25 cents to look at the bald baby's head and put marker on it. So when they got home and tried to wash it off and they did and the mother did not get mad.*

Ann immediately moved on to share her job.

In the previous excerpt, Chris' job was difficult to follow. He jumped from idea to idea without being clear about each event in the chapter. There were also some details that were not fully correct. For example, the Herdmans were charging 25 cents to look at the "amazing tattooed baby", but they were not allowing people to add marker onto his head like Chris had stated. The students did not take the opportunity to clarify any details in Chris' summary, which shows they were either not paying attention or did not comprehend that part of the story.

In the following example, Adrianna shared her question and answer. However, her answer did not capture the true essence of the Herdman's actions. The Herdmans thrived on creating chaos, which was the reason why they put frogs into the drinking fountains. If the students used text-based evidence, they would have been able to more accurately infer the answer to the question.

1/9/14- Best School Year Ever

Adrianna (sharing discussion leader job): *Why do you think they put the frogs into the fountain?*

They put them in there because they wanted them to swim.

The group immediately retrieved exit tickets, which shows the students did not answer or discuss Adrianna's questions.

The students accepted Adrianna's answer as fact, even though the text never explicitly stated why the Herdmans put the frogs into the drinking fountain. However, if the students discussed this part of the story and used their books to help them infer the answer, the students would have concluded that the Herdmans did not put the frogs into the drinking fountain to allow them to swim. Rather, the Herdmans wanted to create trouble within the courthouse.

The next example displays a summary of the chapter that was incomplete and difficult to follow. The other students in the group provided no feedback, when they could have discussed Jeremy's misunderstandings and important events from the chapter that were missing.

1/15/14- Best School Year Ever

Jeremy (sharing summarizer job): *Lester was so worried that she could only say L from M or X from K because she was scared and one of the Herdmans only did the eye test, and come on Alice I said if you think the school bus is warm and comfortable you must be out of your mind.*

Adrianna: *You should have added more. It was really short.*

Abby immediately moved on to share her job.

Jeremy's summary only included two specific details from the beginning of the chapter. The two details did not make sense the way they were taken out of the context of the story. Although Adrianna pointed out that the summary was not quite right, the students did not offer suggestions or additional details to clarify what had happened in the chapter.

In the following excerpt, Samantha's summary provides an overview of a chapter from the book, *Strider* (Cleary & Zelinsky, 1991). However, Samantha's summary does not include the characters' feelings or motivations for their actions. The students could have benefitted from talking about these events from the story in greater detail.

2/28/14- Strider

Samantha (sharing summarizer job): *Lee bought a shirt from the thrift store. Barry came back from LA and laughed at the shirt. Lee went with his Dad to work and he asked Lee about his Mom. Kevin chased Lee when he saw that he wore his old shirt.*

Madison immediately moved on to share her job.

The students did not take the opportunity after Samantha shared her summary to discuss why Lee's Dad wanted to know about Lee's Mother, which was to find out she was single or seeing someone. Also, Kevin did not know his Mother donated his shirt to the thrift store, which is why Kevin was upset with Lee and chased him, in order to get back his shirt.

The next example displays a very well thought out connection to a passage from the story. In addition to making a connection to the text, Tom made inferences based on what happened in the chapter. Even though Tom had strong thinking about the passage, the other students did not seem to benefit from it because they did not talk about what Tom shared.

2/28/14- Strider

Tom (sharing passage master job): *"I tensed up waiting to see if Strider would place his paw when Barry showed up, and he kept all 4 feet on the sidewalk". I am surprised that Barry was forgotten, because I had a dog I gave away but he still remembered me. This is important because whenever Barry and Lee stop, Strider puts his foot on Barry's foot. Barry was sad that he went on the trip to see his real Mom in LA. Now that Barry had returned, summer is going fast. I think Barry and Lee feel that summer is going fast and they don't want to. They don't want to give up Strider when they return to school.*

Jared immediately moved on to share his job.

Jared had meaningful and complex ideas about the text, and the students could have used this opportunity to discuss how Strider reacted when Barry came home and how Lee felt about sharing Strider again. The students could have also discussed why Barry and Lee feel that they will have to give Strider up when they return to school in the fall.

The following example is similar to the previous example. Madison made deep connections to the text, but the students carried out no additional discussion after she shared. This could have been a great opportunity for discussion about Lee's family dynamic, and how he feels about it.

3/4/14- Strider

Madison (sharing passage master job): *"She is worried about you but don't forgot you are my kid too". This shows his Dad still loves him. I think this is interesting because my parents are together, so I don't know how it feels.*

"This also made me wish that I had a sister or two of my own". This was interesting because maybe Lee is lonely. I don't like my sister sometimes, so I wonder if Lee would really like having a sister.

Samantha immediately moved on to share his job.

Madison related these two parts of the story to her own life with her parents and sisters. This could have been an opportunity for the other students to discuss how Lee feels about having divorced parents and being an only child. The students in this group could have discussed Lee's family, and related his feelings to their own family dynamics.

The examples of presentational talk in this section displayed instances where the students did not further their thinking about the text. There were opportunities for the students to clarify misunderstandings or misconceptions, discuss the feelings and motivations of the characters, and make

connections to their own lives. If the students discussed after the jobs were shared, they would have been able to deepen their understanding of the text. When the students completed their exit tickets after literature circle discussions, presentational talk examples were not cited as parts of the story they understood better.

Cumulative Talk

Another kind of talk is cumulative talk, which involves students all sharing in a mutually supportive, uncritical way. The students would support or compliment one another, even if the information presented was not entirely accurate. This kind of talk mainly consisted of the children being polite to one another. Cumulative talk was characterized by the students nodding in agreement, saying things like “yeah”, re-stating a similar belief in their own words, and not correcting or questioning one another (Pearson, 2010).

In cumulative talk, the student sharing often had strong comprehension of the part of the text being presented. However, the students who were listening were not always engaged in what was being said, which led them to comprehend little of the information and respond with statements like “I agree” or “nice job”. In some cases of cumulative talk, the students would say similar information, but put it in their own words. This kind of cumulative talk was helpful with student comprehension, because the students were taking the idea of someone else, re-shaping it while talking, in order to mold the idea to make sense to them. This also allowed the students to internalize and remember what happened, as well as make inferences. The following excerpts provide examples of cumulative talk.

In this first example, the students all agreed that Ann fully summarized the chapter. However, the students could have responded by adding more details or explaining their feelings and/or reactions to the events in the chapter. This example shows the students did not expand their thinking and deepen their comprehension.

1/14/14- Best School Year Ever

Ann (sharing summarizer job): *Imogene told Charlie that kids would get locked in the teachers' lounge on the 3rd floor if they went in without permission. Imogene told everyone in her class that Kenneth was locked in the teachers' lounge and could never come out again. The kids in her class did not believe her. Most of the kids said he had the mumps and would be back in a few days, but he wasn't. The teacher told the class that she was going to miss Kenneth. So Charlie got scared and would not go near the teachers' lounge again.*

Adrianna: *You included all the parts of the chapter and not only one part.*

Jeremy: *Good job.*

Abby: *I am with Adrianna. You did a really great job with everything.*

Although Ann did have a clear and complete summary of the text, the students' responses do not demonstrate they were actively listening to Ann or understood this chapter of the text. The students could have responded with their own reactions to this part of the story, as it was full of humor. They also could have discussed what actually happened to Kenneth, as it was revealed in this chapter.

During the following conversation, many students contributed. They re-stated the same idea using their own words. All students agreed with what was said by each student. This discussion may have allowed the students to understand this part of the story better, because of the re-stating of the general idea.

1/17/14- Best School Year Ever

Adrianna (sharing discussion leader job): *Why would you get killed at recess if you didn't hand over your lunch money?*

Ann: Because the Herdmans would come over and attack you because they want your lunch money.

Abby: Because the Herdmans would take it.

Adrianna: I said because the older kids would hurt you.

Even though the students' responses did not provide any new information, the fact that they answered the question using their own words shows that they understood what Adrianna was asking. It also shows they understood that the children in the school were afraid of the Herdmans and would give them their lunch money.

In the next example, the students all agreed on generally the same answer. However, instead of just saying "I agree", they re-stated the answer again in their own words. This kind of talking led the students to comprehend more deeply, especially because the students had to make inferences to this answer, because it was never stated outright in the chapter.

2/25/14- Strider

Madison (sharing discussion leader job): Why do you think Strider finally came when Lee and Strider acted out a movie?

Samantha: Because they were playing in the water. They were running and trying to get the dog to chase them.

Tom: And dogs like water. Barry and Lee's feet were cold.

Madison: I think Strider came because they were playing on the beach, so Strider wanted to play with them.

It was evident through my observations and the way the students responded and built off the ideas of their classmates, that they were listening to one another and using clues from the text to make accurate inferences about why Strider finally came to the boys when they were playing on the beach.

In the following example, the students elaborated on Madison's comment by asking a question and building up the conversation by sharing additional details and their thinking. The students were all agreeing with one another, but were sharing how they reacted to this part of the story, which allows them to deepen their understanding of the text.

3/3/14- Strider

Madison: I think this book has a lot of surprises. Like, I didn't see Kevin and Lee coming.

Samantha: The fight?

Madison: Yeah, I didn't see that coming.

Jared: Yeah, I didn't see Barry coming in that quick.

Although the students did not go into deep analysis of this part of the text, the fact that Samantha asked a question to ensure she understood what Madison said showed that the students were listening to one another and actively participating within the conversation.

In the following excerpt, the students agreed that Mrs. Smerling would end up liking Strider. They made slightly different predictions as to why Mrs. Smerling may like Strider, but overall they agreed with what one another said, which was evident through the students nodding in agreement and sharing similar ideas.

3/6/14- Strider

Madison (sharing discussion leader job): *Do you think Mrs. Smerling is going to end up liking Strider?*

Samantha: *Yes, because she will end up liking Lee, so she will end up liking Strider.*

Brittany: *She will like Strider because she will get used to him. Maybe she will watch him and play with him and have fun.*

Madison: *I think yes because she will get used to Strider, like seeing him every day, and she will like him.*

This excerpt showed the students were able to make predictions that were detailed and based on information that was already presented within the text. Instead of just replying with a “yes” or “no” answer, the students used the fact that Mrs. Smerling sees Strider on a daily basis and had watched him play as clues to support why they think Mrs. Smerling will end up liking Strider.

The cumulative talk examples that were presented in this section show how the students can demonstrate their listening skills and actively contribute to conversations even if they agree with what the original person said. When the students replied only with the words “I agree” or “good job” without explaining further, it was not evident that they gained a deeper or new understanding of the text. However, when they replied with complete sentences that explained why they agreed with the thinking of their classmates, it was clear that they comprehended the story more deeply.

Exploratory Talk

Another kind of talk is exploratory talk, which takes place in small groups when students think aloud and then reconstruct their thinking about a topic. This includes the students making inferences,

building up ideas through conversation, and clarifying misunderstandings (Barnes, 2010; Gilles, 2010; Pearson, 2010).

Exploratory talk allowed for rich discussions that helped deepen the students' comprehension of the text. In exploratory talk, students asked questions, made inferences, built on the thinking of others, and clarified misunderstandings. Exploratory talk was the most beneficial kind of talk to strengthen student comprehension. This was evident not only through the student conversations, but also through the reflections that took place during exit tickets.

When the students completed exit tickets, they reflected on key ideas that were discussed, what they understand better, how well they completed their job, and questions they still have. The first question that was asked of the students in their exit tickets was, "*A discussion highlight was...*". The second question was, "*Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because...*". The third question on the exit ticket was, "*Something I would add to my literature circle job is...*". The last question was, "*A question I want to address tomorrow is...*". The students almost always wrote about something that was talked about during exploratory talk.

These exit ticket questions gave the students an opportunity to reflect on how the discussion allowed them to better understand the story. When answering question #2, many students wrote about a misunderstanding that was clarified for them or something they know better because they talked about it. Exit tickets allowed the students to think metacognitively about their learning, and it was clear that exploratory talk led the students to a deeper understanding of the story more frequently than any other kind of talk.

I further classified the exploratory talk examples into the following categories: building of ideas, clarifying misunderstandings, and building ideas/clarifying misunderstandings. In addition to excerpts

from student conversations within literature circles, I also included exit ticket conversation and exit ticket written responses to show how well exploratory talk impacted and improved student comprehension.

Building of Ideas

The first kind of talk that exploratory talk was further categorized into was the building of ideas. These examples of exploratory talk all show how the students built up ideas through conversation, which sometimes included the students making inferences. When the students built up ideas, they added onto the thinking of the person who spoke before them, adding significant and new information that had not yet been shared.

In the following two discussion excerpts, the students were able to share additional details that were not initially shared in the students' jobs. This group (group A) was hesitant to share additional details or further the conversation without teacher prompting. Once prompted by a teacher question, they were able to share additional details about the event in the story. These additional details allowed the students to think more deeply about this part of the story, because they were able to piece together all of the important details from the event in the story. The students recognized how this conversation helped them understand the story better, as evidenced in their exit tickets.

1/10/14- Best School Year Ever

Adrianna (sharing summarizer job): In Chapter 3, Leroy left his snake tied up to the string on the light in the janitor's closet. The principal was looking for the snake, but it was in Leroy's pocket. So, he stuck the tail first in the pencil sharpener. No one went near the pencil sharpener again.

Ann: Your summary was good, but you kept it on one part of the book, and you should have written about the whole chapter.

Teacher: What were some of the other details she could have included?

Abby: *Wrote more about the snake and how he needed the special thing.*

Adrianna: *The teacher saw the snake and screamed when she went into the closet.*

Ann: *She went to get the principal. Leroy put it in his pocket and no one found it.*

Adrianna: *And no one checked Leroy's pockets, so they didn't know.*

Ann: *She went in with her little helpers and the paint spilled on them.*

Abby (sharing illustrator job): *Guess what you think I drew.*

Jeremy: *I think it is the closet.*

Adrianna: *I think it was the closet with all the paint when it was spilling.*

Chris: *All the paints in the closet.*

Abby: *The picture was the snake is in the closet. Leroy put him in there on the light.*

Exit Ticket from 1/10/14

Question #1: Jeremy/Ann/Chris/Abby/Adrianna: A discussion highlight was when the snake was in the closet.

Question #4: Adrianna: A question I want to talk about tomorrow is: Did he (Leroy) get into trouble?

The students needed some prompting, but were eventually able to put together the full story of what happened when Leroy hung his snake to the light in the janitor's closet. The students were able to recognize how integral this part of the story was to the chapter being discussed.

During the following conversation, the students were able to answer a question proposed by Ann by taking turns to build up the conversation and add on additional details to the person who spoke before. This kind of talking allowed the students to put the pieces of information together and come to the complete and correct answer to the question.

1/13/14- Best School Year Ever

Ann (sharing discussion leader job): *Why didn't Alice win the talent show?*

Jeremy: *Eugene was smashing walnuts on his head.*

Chris: *She didn't win the talent show because of the walnuts. The audience cheered for Eugene.*

Adrianna: *Alice had to keep stopping because the walnuts were in the piano.*

Exit Ticket from 1/13/14

Question #1: Adrianna/Chris/Jeremy/Ann: A discussion highlight was Eugene was smashing walnuts on his head and they got into the piano keys.

Ann proposed a question, and as each student added new information onto the conversation, Adrianna was finally able to put the pieces of information together. The reason Alice could not play the piano well was because Eugene's walnuts became stuck under the piano keys, causing Alice to mess up her song. The students also recognized how important the actions of Eugene were to the outcome of the talent show. They recognized the importance of this as they cited it in their exit tickets as a highlight from the chapter.

During the following conversation, I took part in asking the students about the talent show. The students had previously demonstrated some confusion about what had happened during this part of the

story. The students worked together and shared their knowledge to accurately describe what happened at the talent show.

1/13/14- Best School Year Ever

Teacher: *Were the Herdmans at the talent show?*

Adrianna: *Gladys was there.*

Teacher: *What did she do at the talent show?*

Abby: *She stole the refreshments at the talent show. That was the only reason she went.*

Ann: *I didn't know Gladys was going to steal the refreshments.*

Teacher: *How did Gladys steal the refreshments?*

Ann: *Gladys lied and said Eugene was trying to kill himself on stage. The parents left and she took all the refreshments.*

Exit Ticket from 1/13/14

Question #2: Jeremy/Ann/Adrianna: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because I did not know Gladys stole the refreshments.

In this excerpt, the students were displaying some confusion about what role the Herdmans took at the talent show. I prompted them with questions to allow them to practice using their texts to clarify their thinking and find new information. As the students looked for answers in their books, they were able to add onto the ideas of one another to accurately make sense of what happened in the chapter.

The following conversation allowed the students to explore additional details about an event in the story after the passage master only shared minimal details about the event. Ann was able to make an inference when she connected this part of the story to why it happened (Imogene likes causing trouble). This conversation was brought to a higher level when Ann connected the event to another character's motive.

1/15/14- Best School Year Ever

Abby (sharing passage master job): *"Lester doesn't have braces. But when she looked in his mouth, she nearly died. What do you got in there, she yelled. It looks like paper clips". I thought this was important because he put paper clips in his mouth and his mother almost died.*

Adrianna: *It's important because it is bad for your teeth. The nurse was involved, and she thought it was a problem because they were paper clips and not braces.*

Ann: *Imogene always causes trouble and she put it on his teeth. It could really damage his teeth from putting paper clips on there.*

Conversation for Exit Ticket: Question #2

Ann: *Today's discussion helped me better understand the story better because...*

Chris: *I didn't know that the braces were fake.*

Abby: *On the bus, they put turtles down people's shirts.*

Chris: *We never knew the effect of the turtles.*

Teacher: *What was the effect of the turtles?*

Ann: *They got kicked off the bus.*

Teacher: *What happened to Lester's teeth because of the paper clips?*

Chris: *His teeth all fell out and came in crooked.*

Adrianna: *Who pulled the braces off?*

Ann: *His mom.*

Exit Ticket from 1/15/14

Question #2: Adrianna: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because I thought that Lester put the paper clips on his teeth but Imogene did it.

Question #2: Abby: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because I did not know that they put turtles down people's shirts.

The two conversations (job sharing and exit ticket discussions) allowed the students to build on the ideas of one another and clarify their understanding about what happened with Lester's "braces" and the turtles being brought onto the bus. This conversation was integral in improving the comprehension of the students, as the students cited in their exit tickets.

The following conversation allowed the students to explore their thinking about a significant quote and part of the story. The girls made appropriate inferences based on the information and clues that were evident in the text.

2/27/14- Strider

Brittany (sharing passage master job): *The passage I picked was, "I wonder if Strider forgot about me". Barry said that when he was on vacation.*

Samantha: *I think he wrote that because Barry misses Strider, and he wants to know if Strider misses him back.*

Madison: *He probably wants to know if Strider misses him because they are sharing the dog and he doesn't want him to only like Lee and not Barry. Maybe Strider has forgotten about Barry so when he gets back he might be sad.*

Brittany: *It makes me think that Barry really misses Strider.*

This conversation, where the students built on the ideas of one another, showed how well the students understood the story, and could apply the information they know to accurately make inferences about what Barry is feeling.

The next conversation displays a building up of information that was presented as Jared shared his summarizer job. The students were able to further explain the importance of Lee going to the thrift store to get a book. This group (Group B) did not often need teacher prompting, but sometimes needed the prompting as a reminder to always think about and discuss additional important details or thoughts.

2/27/14- Strider

Jared (sharing summarizer job): *The summary of the chapter is that Barry is going to leave for LA. Lee has to keep Strider away from Mrs. Smerling. Lee went to the thrift store to get a book to occupy them.*

Teacher: *Are there any other important details that Jared could include in the summary?*

Brittany: *I think you should of added why he got the book.*

Teacher: *Why did Lee get the book?*

Jared: *So he could stop and read it on their long runs.*

Conversation for Exit Ticket: Question #2

Tom: *Lee carries a book around.*

Madison: *I thought Strider missed Lee not Barry. Brittany helped me understand it.*

Jared: *Brittany clarified that Barry missed Lee.*

Exit Ticket from 2/27/14

Question #2: Samantha/Brittany/Tom: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because now I know why Lee carries a book around.

This conversation helped improve the students' understanding of the text because Jared knew that the book at the thrift store was an important part of the story, but he did not explain why it was important in his summary. The other students were able to use their books and talk to one another to discover why Lee wanted to carry a book with him.

The following conversation allowed the students change and develop their thinking about what the word valuable means. Their conversation allowed them to correctly arrive at the true meaning of valuable.

3/3/14- Strider

Tom: Shared the word "valuable" for vocabulary enricher job.

Jared: *It means one of a kind.*

Brittany: *It is worth a lot.*

Samantha: *Like if you have a water bottle that is one of a kind.*

Madison: *Water bottles aren't valuable though because they are not worth a lot of money.*

Tom: *So, it means made of a great deal of money. So, if there was a necklace worth a lot of money, it would be valuable.*

The way the students shared and built on their ideas in this conversation allowed them to correctly define what the word valuable means. Otherwise, the students could have possibly misunderstood “valuable” as something that is only unique or special.

The next example of exploratory talk allowed the children to build an argument for why they believe Lee is better friends with Barry than Kevin. In addition to building on the ideas of others, they used details from the text to support their thinking, which shows a deep level of comprehension.

3/6/14- Strider

Madison (sharing discussion leader job): *Do you think Lee is closer friends with Kevin than Barry?*

Samantha: *He has been friends with Barry his whole life, and he just met Kevin at school.*

Brittany: *Barry watches Strider sometimes. Barry and Lee are close. They share custody of the dog, which makes them close.*

Madison: *They have also been friends longer.*

Conversation for Exit Ticket: Question #2

Samantha: *I understand the story better because I learned...*

Tom: *We learned that Strider likes Lee better.*

Jared: *I learned how they made up. The agreement they made.*

Madison: *I didn't understand what happened when they made up.*

Tom: *Barry and Lee worked out an agreement. They made up because Lee can take care of Strider during track season. Then go back to joint custody, and then during football season Barry can have him.*

Jared: *Lee was the one who found Strider. Strider jumped over the fence to be with Lee. Strider likes him better.*

Exit Ticket from 3/6/14

Question #2: Jared/Madison: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because I learned more about the agreement that Lee and Barry made.

Question #2: Brittany/Samantha/Tom: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because I learned that Strider likes Lee better.

These excerpts showed how the students displayed and improved their comprehension. A simple question about which friend Lee likes better, spurred a conversation that allowed the students to build a case using details from the text about why Lee probably likes Barry better. This also led the students to discuss the part of the book where Lee and Barry made an agreement to share custody of Strider. Some students admitted in their exit ticket reflections that they were not clear about this part of the story before they talked about it.

The following example of exploratory talk was very rich, because the students not only supported their answers with evidence from the text, but they thought deeply about the text by making inferences in regard to what makes Lee and Geneva such good friends.

3/10/14- Strider

Samantha (sharing discussion leader job): *Do you think Lee will stay friends with Geneva?*

Madison: *I think they will stay friends because they got closer in the story. In the book it says that Geneva was happy that Lee got third place.*

Samantha: *I think yes because they seem really close and they are like best friends. She keeps saying yes to doing things with Lee.*

Brittany read a passage from the text: *“Geneva joined me as I was walking down the hallway to math class.” It means a lot to Lee that Geneva joined him on his walk. Lee likes Geneva and this makes me think Geneva likes Lee back.*

Madison: *It was important because it was when Geneva became friends with Lee.*

The students were again able to use details from the text to reflect on and elaborate on why they think Lee and Geneva will remain close friends. The students were analyzing the text and supporting their thinking using details from the text.

In this section, the students took the opportunity within a person job sharing to further discuss the text by building on the ideas of one another to form clear conclusions about the text. The students were able to deepen their understanding of the text by analyzing the motives and feelings of the characters. The students were also able to help their classmates become more confident in their understandings of the text and strengthen their recollection of events in the story.

Clarifying Misunderstandings

The second way exploratory talk was further categorized was by conversations that corrected misunderstandings about the text. The following examples of exploratory talk show how students deepened their understanding of the text by clarifying the misunderstandings of group members or themselves. The students often recognized that they understood the text better when they talked about

it, and clarified any misunderstandings. This was evident as the students reflected on their discussions when they completed their exit tickets.

The first excerpt is from a conversation that allowed the students to correct a misunderstanding about the story. Abby was able to clarify for Adrianna that the talent show and Gladys cutting Eugene's hair were separate events, and the narrator merely made a sarcastic comment that cutting hair is the only talent of Gladys.

1/13/14- Best School Year Ever

Adrianna (sharing illustrator job): This is a picture of Gladys cutting Eugene's hair. Eugene wanted his hair to look like a dog. Gladys wanted to cut hair at the talent show.

Abby: That wasn't for the talent show. They were saying let the Herdmans be in the talent show. They were discussing what the Herdmans could do. They weren't actually entering the talent show.

Exit Ticket from 1/13/14

Question #3: Adrianna: Something I would add to my literature circle job is: that Eugene was not getting his hair cut for the talent show.

It was clear in this excerpt that Abby was actively listening to Adrianna, and willing to contribute to the conversation to ensure the other students were understanding the text. Abby used her book to prove her thinking was true. Adrianna was also aware that her comprehension improved due to the contribution of Abby.

The following example displays a kind of exploratory talk that was only done a few times during Group A's meetings. A student, who was not a discussion leader, asked a question of the group.

Adrianna's question allowed her to retrieve answers about a part of the text that she was unclear with. As the students continued to converse about this, more information became clear to them, which was evident through the wide variety of exit ticket responses related to this subject.

1/16/14- Best School Year Ever

Ann (sharing connector job): *"See the amazing purple baby for 25 cents". My connection is Howard holds his breath like my friend does. She also turned purple.*

Adrianna: *Why is the baby is purple?*

Ann: *Luella took the blanket away and he held his breath.*

Chris: *It is because he holds his breath. Not because he is sad or angry.*

Exit Ticket from 1/16/14

Question #1: Jeremy/Abby/Chris/Ann: A discussion highlight was that Howard's face turned purple.

Question #2: Jeremy: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because Howard holds his breath when he wants his blanket back.

Question #2: Abby: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because I didn't know that Howard holds his breath when he wants his blanket back.

Question #2: Chris: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because now I know why they stole the blanket.

Question #3: Adrianna: Something I would add to my literature circle job is that Howard turned purple because he got his blanket taken away.

Question #3: Ann: Something I would add to my literature circle job is that is that Luella took Howard's blanket.

Multiple students contributed to the conversation where the reasons and motivations behind Howard turning purple became clear. The students also wrote unique responses on their exit tickets, which shows how they individually reflected on their own understanding of this part of the text.

The next conversation allowed for a misunderstanding about the story to be corrected. Brittany was mistaken about who donated the shirt to the thrift store and then who purchased it. The students were able to come to the realization that Brittany was mistaken based on the way she worded her question. They did not hesitate to help her fully understand what happened in the story.

2/28/14- Strider

Brittany (reading discussion leader question): *Where did Mom take Lee's shirt?*

Jared: *It's Kevin's shirt.*

Madison: *Mom never took the shirt.*

Brittany: *Lee took it.*

Tom: *Kevin's mom took it to the thrift shop.*

Brittany: *I had the wrong person.*

Teacher: *Why was Kevin chasing Lee for the shirt?*

Madison: *It's his old shirt, his lucky shirt.*

Brittany (shakes her head in agreement): *I thought it was Lee's mom who took the shirt to the thrift shop, but it was really Kevin's mom who brought the shirt to the thrift shop.*

Exit Ticket from 2/28/14

Question #2: Brittany/Madison/Jared: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because I understand that Kevin's mom brought the shirt to the thrift shop, not Lee's mom.

In this excerpt, many students jumped in to share their thinking, and it was evident that the students were actively listening and ready to participate in the conversation. It also became clear that the students were becoming comfortable correcting one another in a respectful way, and using their book to find clarification and answers to misunderstandings.

The next exploratory conversation clarified a major misunderstanding that some students had about the ending of the story. Some students thought that Lee came in third place (which is what he said in his final ELA paper), when he actually came in first place in the big track meet. The students were able to clarify this misunderstanding through their discussion and use of the text.

3/10/14- Strider

Samantha (referring to Jared's summary of the chapter): *You should have added the track race at the end of the story. Lee ran in the big track race and he came in third place.*

Tom: *No, he came in first and beat his record time.*

Madison: *He didn't come in first.*

Tom: *I remember when Lee was in ELA class; his teacher asked him why he didn't say that he came in first.*

Madison: *The book says he came in third.*

Tom: *But the next page, the teacher says, "Why didn't you write the true thing?". In the essay, it says he came in third. Lee says that he didn't want to brag.*

Samantha: *Madison was reading Lee's composition so she didn't know Lee came in first.*

Brittany (reading the quote from the text): *"The teacher asked Lee why he didn't write the truth in his poem. Lee said he didn't want to brag".*

Conversation for Exit Ticket: Question #2

Madison: *This discussion helped me better understand the story because I thought Lee came in second in his race, but he came in first.*

Brittany: *I thought he came in second, too.*

Exit Ticket from 3/10/14

Question #2: Madison/Samantha/Brittany: I thought Lee came in 2nd when he came in 1st.

This conversation was integral in fixing up the understanding of some of the students. It was easy to misinterpret this part of the story, since the character had lied about what really happened. The students were able to discover the truth through their conversations and use of the text. If the students did not take part in this literature circle discussion, multiple students would have finished this book thinking Lee did not succeed in winning a race.

In order for the students to clarify another student's misunderstanding, it was essential they were actively listening and participating in conversation. These exploratory talk excerpts showed the students were engaged in their conversations and capable of working together to better understand the story. The students also recognized how their conversations and classmates helped them better understand the story, which was evident in their exit ticket reflections.

Building Ideas & Clarifying Misunderstandings

The last way exploratory talk was further categorized was by conversations that included building up ideas and clarifying misunderstandings. The following examples included the students clarifying misunderstandings and building up ideas based on what other students said.

This first excerpt was interesting because the students were talking about two events that happened in the chapter relating to the teachers' lounge. There was some confusion as they talked through this, because the students began to realize they were talking about different events. By the end of the conversation, the students sorted out the differences between the two stories (Kenneth Webber "disappearing" into the teachers' lounge and some faculty members becoming stuck in the teachers' lounge when the door became jammed) by using details from the story to explain and clarify their points.

1/14/14- Best School Year Ever

Chris (sharing passage master job): *"Alice began being important right away. She was the only first grade student allowed in the teacher's room".*

Ann: *This is important because she was the only one that was able to go in there and throughout the chapter more kids go in.*

Abby: *It was important because it was about how they all got trapped in the teacher's room.*

Adrianna: *The teachers got trapped in the teacher's room.*

Chris: *No, it was a kid named Kenneth Webber.*

Adrianna: *No, he wasn't trapped in there. He moved to Toledo.*

Ann: *Imogene said he got locked in there because she made up lies, but he was really in Toledo. He wasn't coming back into the classroom, so everyone believed her that he got locked in the teacher's room.*

Adrianna: *Alice's mom got locked in the teacher's room too, and the district supervisor. They got locked in for an hour and a half.*

Conversation for Exit Ticket

Adrianna: *A discussion highlight is when all the teachers got locked in the room.*

Ann: *Yes, that is a discussion highlight.*

Chris: *No, they never got locked in the room. A discussion highlight was when the children said they spread the word about them saying swear words.*

Ann: *It is a discussion highlight, because it was something we all talked about in our jobs.*

Chris: *It was the children who got locked in the teacher's room.*

Ann: *The teachers, the district supervisor, and Mrs. Wendelken all got locked in the teachers' lounge.*

Teacher: *What happened to them?*

Ann: *They were yelling and screaming until their voices got hoarse.*

Teacher: *Then what happened?*

Jeremy: *They ordered pizza and beer.*

Teacher: *Did they?*

Jeremy: *No, it was a rumor.*

Teacher: *How did they get out?*

Adrianna: *Imogene let them out.*

Teacher: *What did the district supervisor think about Imogene?*

Abby: *That she was a good student.*

Ann : *The district supervisor thought Imogene was a good student and that they need more like her. She didn't know the Herdmans were actually bad.*

Exit Ticket from 1/14/14

Question #2: Jeremy/Ann/Chris: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because the district supervisor thought Imogene was a good girl, but she was not. I didn't know that he thought she was good.

In the previous excerpts, the students were disagreeing about what happened in the story. I joined the conversation to help the students clarify the details by prompting them with questions and directing them to use their books. Two separate conversations where the students asked questions, answered questions, and built on the ideas of others eventually allowed the students to achieve a clear understanding about what happened in the two events that took place in the teachers' lounge.

The following excerpt allowed the students to clarify their thinking in multiple ways. Brittany was able to ask a question about a character, and Jared brought his previous knowledge about landlords to the discussion to explain what Mrs. Smerling does. This group (Group B) was more comfortable taking part in exploratory talk without teacher prompting. They would ask questions, make inferences, and frequently build on the ideas of others.

2/27/14- Strider

Samantha (sharing discussion leader job): *Why do you think Mrs. Smerling doesn't like Lee so much?*

Madison: *Maybe she is older and he bugs her.*

Brittany: *Maybe she doesn't like dogs or maybe she had one that died.*

Jared: *Maybe she is allergic.*

Tom: *She doesn't like how they bark.*

Jared: *He is noisy when the dog is around and the dog aggravates her.*

Madison: *He is younger...*

Brittany: *and not responsible enough.*

Madison: *Yeah, he isn't 20. Little kids usually bug their neighbors.*

Samantha: *I think she doesn't like him because she is old and she doesn't like kids.*

Brittany: *Who is Mrs. Smerling?*

Jared: *She is a landlady.*

Samantha: *What is that?*

Jared: *Say if I bought a house and you wanted to live in it. I would be the land man and you would live there and pay me rent.*

Exit Ticket from 2/27/14

Question #1: Samantha/Tom/Jared/Brittany/Madison: A discussion highlight was Mrs. Smerling being grumpy to Lee and Strider.

The students were able to have a rich discussion about the different possibilities of why Mrs. Smerling does not like Strider. The quality of this conversation, and the respect this group showed one another, explains why Brittany was comfortable asking a question that allowed her to deepen her understanding of the role of a specific character.

During the following conversation, Samantha was able to lead the group in exploratory talk by further questioning the other students about what happened during this part of the story. Her questioning allowed the students to bring up additional information about the story, and in turn, it allowed the students to discuss what a “rig” is.

3/3/14- Strider

Samantha showed her illustration to the group to guess what it is.

Madison: *I think it was when Lee was watching the Olympics and his Mom was talking to his Dad.*

Brittany: *Yeah, I think so too.*

Samantha: *What were they talking about?*

Jared: *The Dad's rig was taken away, and Bill wanted to talk to Lee's mom.*

Madison: *It was his tractor right?*

Jared: *A truck...a truck is a rig.*

Conversation for Exit Ticket: Question #2

Madison: *I thought Bill's tractor broke down too, but it was a truck. A rig is a truck.*

Samantha: *I thought that too.*

Tom: *I thought a rig was a tractor.*

Exit Ticket from 3/3/14

Question #2: Samantha/Tom/Brittany: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because I learned that Bill's rig is a truck, not a tractor. His truck broke down.

Samantha questioned the group about her own job, because even though she knew Lee's father's rig broke down, she recognized that she was not sure what a rig was. She asked the group the question to help herself understand better, and in turn, the group became involved in an exploratory conversation that helped many students understand the story better.

The following conversation allowed the students to sort through the sequence of events in the story. They were able to come to the conclusion that Lee's father made two visits to the house for two slightly different reasons.

3/7/14- Strider

Jared (sharing discussion leader job): *Why did Lee's Dad come over to his house?*

Tom: *To build a fence.*

Jared: *He came over to make a dog fence already. Why is Lee's Dad coming back over again?*

Samantha: *To build the dog house.*

Tom: *Oh, they already finished the fence so now they are building the house.*

Exit Ticket for 3/7/14

Question #2: Brittany: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because I forgot that Dad built the doghouse with Lee.

Question #2: Tom: Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because it taught me how Lee's Dad is really good.

This conversation allowed the students to clarify details about the sequence in which Lee's father helped Lee build the dog house and the fence around the yard. Although these details are concrete, the students were able to develop a clearer picture about what exactly happened between Lee and his father. The fact that there were two visits was important because Lee and his father wanted to find excuses to spend more time together, which Tom was able to understand better as he described this realization in his exit ticket.

Exploratory talk allowed the students to drastically increase their comprehension of the story. When the students were actively listening to one another, asking questions, answering questions, clarifying misunderstandings, and using their books to support their thinking and find answers, they were able to carry out conversations that involved higher-level thinking and inferring. The students acknowledged in their exit ticket reflections that the exploratory conversations resulted most often in the "ideas they understand better". Exploratory talk was achieved when the students had respect for one another, were engaged with their classmates and the story, and felt that they were in a safe and supportive environment where they were allowed to change the thinking of others.

Performing Voice

Performing voice takes place when students move past just talking about a book; they act it out through the use of voices (Pearson, 2010). During the two cycles of literature circles, the two groups used performing voice a total of four times. All four instances were in relation to a discussion about vocabulary words that were chosen by the vocabulary enricher.

Performing voice was helpful in allowing students to deepen their comprehension of the text. The students used performing voice as a way to show they knew the meaning of a word, without using words to describe the meaning. Performing voice allowed students to show their understanding in a different way, which made their discussions more meaningful as they deepened their understanding of the word and text.

The following two excerpts allowed the students to grasp the meaning of the words “hoarse” and “croaked” by displaying what it sounds like first, and then using words to describe it.

1/14/14- *Best School Year Ever*

Abby: *My second word is hoarse.*

Jeremy: *Hoarse means your voice is like this {made a raspy sound with his voice}.*

Chris: *It's when you can't really talk.*

Abby: *A rough or harsh sound.*

3/4/14- *Strider*

Jared (sharing vocabulary enricher job): *Croaked is a harsh sound or cry, like this {acted out the croaking sounds}.*

These two excerpts allowed students to use their performing voice to clarify and display their understanding of the vocabulary words. Some students sometimes had difficulty using words to accurately describe the meaning of the word, but by acting it out first, the other students could add to the definition of the word and understand its meaning more clearly.

The following exchange was interesting because Madison related the word enthusiastic to the way a person sounds when they talk. She related reading a passage in a cheerful expression, using a lot of intonation, as one way to show you are enthusiastic.

3/3/14- Strider

Jared: *My word is enthusiastic.*

Madison: *Like active, humorous. It's like when you read a book and you do a lot of expression like this {read a passage from the book with a great deal of voice and expression}.*

In this excerpt, Madison related the word enthusiastic to the way someone reads a book, when other students may have described it as feeling excited about something. The students were able to understand that enthusiastic has to do with the attitude a person has and the way the person shows his or her attitude to others.

The next conversation included performing voice multiple times. The students used performing voice to display three possible meanings of the word "chugged", before they read the sentence from the text and decided on the correct meaning. This example shows how their conversations allowed them to expand their thinking to the many meanings some words can have.

3/10/14- Strider

Tom (sharing vocabulary enricher job): *The word is chugging.*

Brittany: *Like when you chug milk?*

Jared: *Like gulp it down fast {acted out how someone would gulp down a drink}.*

Brittany: *Or like the train, when it goes choo choo {acted out train noises}.*

Tom: *Its running and breathing really fast like this {acted out running and breathing hard}.*

Once again, the students used performing voice to display the multiple meanings of the word “chugged”. Although the students did not say they learned something new, this excerpt showed that the students understand the idea that words have multiple meanings.

Although performing voice did not take place frequently, it was beneficial in allowing students to clarify their thinking about the meaning of words. These excerpts show that students found it helpful to act out the meaning of words to show their understanding when they could not find the words to explain the definition of a word.

Anecdotal Talk

Anecdotal talk involves the students making connections to their personal lives and experiences. The students sometimes used anecdotes to make connections to their personal lives, which sometimes helped the students form a deeper understanding of the text. Deeper understanding of the text was achieved when the students interconnected their experiences within the events in the book to help themselves relate to the book in a more meaningful way (Pearson, 2010).

Anecdotal talk only sometimes allowed the students to deepen their thinking and comprehension of the text by relating it to their own lives. There are different kinds of anecdotal talk as it relates to student understanding. Sometimes the connections are surface level, which do not allow the students to make meaningful connections to the text or deepen their understanding. Sometimes the

students interconnect their own life into the story, which allows them to establish deep connections to the story and enhance their understanding of the text. The information discussed during anecdotal talk was not cited on the students' exit tickets, which means the students did not consider it most valuable in deepening their understanding of the text.

The following excerpts were also presentational talk, because the student shared his or her connection to the story, and no further talk took place about it. The student reading his or her job made a connection to the story independently, which may have helped him or her understand the story better. The lack of conversation that took place after the student sharing his or her connections means it probably did not allow other students to think more deeply about that part of the story. In some excerpts, the connections seemed forced and related to superficial details in the story. Some connections were well thought out and meaningful, but the students did not benefit from them because of their lack of discussion.

1/14/14- Best School Year Ever

Adrianna (sharing connector job): On page 4 it says, "Then I remember the assignments compliments for classmates". In grade 2, we had to write compliments to our friends. On page 50, it says that "Alice had to go to the teacher's room". Once when I was in gym, the gym teacher had me get something from the teacher's room.

This connection did not allow the student sharing or the other students to deepen their understanding of the text. The connections were concrete and involved no analysis of the story. The connection could have been stronger if the students discussed how or why they gave each other compliments. The personal experience could have been compared and contrasted to the text, which may have lead to exploratory talk and a deeper understanding of the text.

2/28/14- Strider

Madison (sharing connector job): *I have a connection when it smelled like garlic when Lee was traveling with his dad. My neighbor, Maddie was cooking sauce, and she smelled like garlic all day. Actually, my neighbor that smelled like garlic was my babysitter.*

Also, I connected to having a funny shirt. Lee had a funny shirt and I have a bathing suit I don't like. I still wear it because my Mom gave it to me. Lee wore a crazy shirt with stripes.

Once again, these connections were surface level and did not allow the students to weave their own experiences and feelings into that of the characters. Madison's first connection was very surface level because she only relates to knowing someone who has smelled like garlic. Her second connection was stronger because she begins to think about her own motivations for wearing clothing she does not like. This connection could have been stronger if Madison or the other students inferred about Lee's reasoning for wearing the "funny shirt".

2/28/14- Strider

Tom (sharing passage master job): *"I tensed up waiting to see if Strider would place his paw when Barry showed up, and he kept all 4 feet on the sidewalk". I am surprised that Barry was forgotten, because I had a dog I gave away but he still remembered me. This is important because whenever Barry and Lee stop, Strider puts his foot on Barry's foot. Barry was sad that he went on the trip to see his real Mom in LA. Now that Barry had returned, summer is going fast. I think Barry and Lee feel that summer is going fast and they don't want to. They don't want to give up Strider when they return to school.*

Tom's connection to the story was very meaningful to him. Tom displayed that he was thinking about the story as he read it, because he was sharing his own reaction to the event of Barry being

forgotten by Strider. Tom also made inferences and predictions within his analysis and connection to the story. Even though Tom's connection showed how deeply he was thinking about the story, the lack of communication from the other students shows that they may not have benefitted from Tom's thinking.

3/4/14- Strider

Madison (sharing passage master job): *"She is worried about you but don't forgot you are my kid too". This shows his dad still loves him. I think this is interesting because my parents are together, so I don't know how it feels.*

"This also made me wish that I had a sister or two of my own". This was interesting because maybe Lee is lonely. I don't like my sister sometimes, so I wonder if Lee would really like having a sister.

This excerpt is similar to the previous, as Madison displayed analysis of the story in connection to her own experiences. However, the other students did not contribute to the discussion, which shows their understanding of the story was probably not deepened by Madison's connection.

3/7/14- Strider

Tom (sharing connector job): *Geneva was running track and jumping hurdles. Lee and Barry were in the stands and cheering for Geneva. This reminded me of when I saw my cousin play football.*

Lee asked his father to help him build a fence around the house. Lee was very happy his Dad was building a fence with him. This reminds me of when I built a birdhouse with my mom at scouts.

In this excerpt, Tom's first connection was very concrete and did not involve any analysis. The second connection was somewhat stronger, as Tom described Lee's feelings in relation to the event of

building a fence with his Dad. This connection also shows that the other students' thinking did not benefit from Tom's connection.

In the following examples, the students carried out conversation about the connection that was made, which led the students to exploratory talk. When the students elevated the anecdotal talk to exploratory talk, the students demonstrated they were actively listening to their classmates, thus developing more meaningful conversations and forming a better understanding of the text.

1/13/14- Best School Year Ever

Abby (sharing connector job): *My sister cut her hair and Eugene's hair got cut in the book by Gladys. She cut his hair in the shape of a dog. My sister cut a piece of her hair off.*

Ann: *Gladys cut his hair for fun. Did your sister cut hers for fun?*

This example shows Ann was listening to Abby and wanted to contribute to the discussion by relating Abby's experience to the text, and asking a question to know more about how Abby's sister was similar to Gladys.

3/3/14- Strider

Jared (sharing connector job): *Lee washes his shirt every night. My connection was I wash my shoes every day and night after I go on a hike with my friends and my shoes get so dirty I can't even see the color of them.*

Teacher: *What happened in the story that made you think about cleaning your shoes every day?*

Jared: *Lee doesn't want his shirt to smell like onions in case Kevin chases him again.*

Brittany: *His Mom wants him to wear a different shirt.*

Tom: *He wears the same shirt every day because it aggravates Kevin, and he wants him to chase him.*

This connection along with teacher prompting allowed the students to build off the ideas of one another to analyze Lee's reasoning for wearing the same shirt each day. Each student contributed a new and different detail from the text, which ultimately led to Tom correctly synthesizing the information.

In the last excerpt, Brittany shared her personal connection, and then asked her group to guess which part of the story she was connecting to. This allowed the group to become more involved with her connection. They had to really think about what happened in the story to find an event that was similar to what Brittany had experienced.

3/6/14- Strider

Brittany (sharing connector job): *My connection was I wanted my Mom to call and tell me everything is okay. Look to see what I connected to from the story. It is about Barry.*

Samantha: *Lee was waiting for Barry to phone him to make sure everything was okay with their friendship.*

Brittany: *Yes. I was mad at my mom, and then she said I am going to send you to Mercy. It is about Kevin and his father.*

Tom: *Kevin was mad at his father for divorcing his mother for a younger woman.*

The way Brittany decided to share her job led the students to become involved in the conversation. The students had to think about the chapters and Brittany's experience to draw similarities between Brittany's life and Lee's life. This allowed the students to become engaged in the conversation and display their understanding of the text.

Anecdotal talk proved to sometimes be beneficial in deepening the students' understanding of the text. It appeared to sometimes be difficult for the students to feel comfortable adding to a discussion that was related to someone's personal connection. When the students used anecdotal talk as another kind of presentational talk, no further comprehension outside of the student sharing his or her job was achieved. When the students were able to add onto the conversation, the conversations were elevated to exploratory talk, which sometimes resulted in deeper student comprehension.

Summary of Questions 1-2

The students primarily took part in five different kinds of talk, which included presentational talk, cumulative talk, exploratory talk, performing voice, and anecdotal talk. Each kind of talk generally had a certain level of comprehension that was associated with it. Exploratory talk often resulted in high and increased comprehension due to meaningful conversations that involved many students, while presentational talk resulted in low increased comprehension due to only one student sharing. Cumulative talk, performing voice, and anecdotal talk were sometimes beneficial to the students increasing their comprehension, depending on how the students took part in the conversations and responded to one another. Ultimately, the students could turn any of the jobs into an exploratory conversation if they were willing and able to add onto the thinking of others, ask questions, and/or clarify details.

Research Question #3: How do the reading roles used in literature circles seem to impact how students participate in literature circles?

Both focal groups used reading roles throughout their entire literature circle cycle. At times, the reading roles or jobs were a great starting point for conversations. As shown in the data analysis for questions 1 and 2, the students took part in a great deal of exploratory talk in their literature circle discussions, but they also took part in presentational talk. This means that the reading roles were sometimes helpful in starting conversations that would build to exploratory talk. At other times, a student would take part in presentational talk by sharing his or her reading role completely without any further conversation to follow. This was also problematic as some students seemed to be waiting until it was their turn to share, which was apparent if they were looking around, not paying attention to the person speaking.

Since the reading roles led students to carry out deep and meaningful conversations, as well as surface level and one-sided conversations, I came to the conclusion that the quality of conversation did not have as much to do with the reading role itself as it did to how well prepared the students were to share and respond to the reading roles in a way that furthered the conversation. The students needed to know how to think about and translate their thinking into conversations as they related to the points that were brought up by the person sharing his or her job.

When I examined the students' conversations, there were two ways the sharing of reading roles or jobs impacted student conversations. The first way student conversation was impacted depended on how the student shared his or her job. When students questioned the group or asked for participation within their job sharing, the group was more likely to achieve exploratory talk. The second way reading roles impacted student conversation was the way in which students responded to the jobs. Some of the ways the students responded were: listening only, asking a question, correcting a misunderstanding,

adding on additional information, or sharing their own feelings. The way students presented their jobs often influenced the way in which students responded.

When the students used the reading roles as a starting point in conversation, and did not just read out their whole job, the students were more likely to take part in exploratory conversation. Students achieved exploratory conversation more often when they only shared part of their job, purposefully leaving some information out to allow others to fill in the blanks or share different thinking. For example, the connector would sometimes share his or her personal connection, and then have the group discuss what from the story they thought the connector was making a connection to. The passage master would sometimes share only the quote from the text that he or she selected, asking the group to talk about why they think it is an important passage, before the passage master shares what he or she wrote. The vocabulary enricher would sometimes read the sentence from the text that the selected word was in, allowing the group to guess what the word means before they share the true definition. The illustrator would sometimes show his or her picture and have the group talk about what the illustration shows, before the illustrator read his or her own writing about the illustration. The students were shown this as one way to share and use their jobs in discussion. Even though the students were not required to share this way, this often seemed to be a successful way to facilitate conversation.

Partial Job Sharing

The following excerpts display examples of students not immediately sharing their whole job, allowing for further discussion and group participation. All of these examples show that students achieved exploratory talk when the student sharing his or her job only shared a limited piece of it. I furthered classified these exploratory talk examples into the following categories: asking questions, building up ideas, and clarifying misunderstandings. These conversations were categorized based on how the students responded to the person sharing his or her job.

Partial Job Sharing: Asking Questions

When students shared part of their jobs during literature circles, the other students sometimes responded with a question. The first excerpt shows how the conversation that came from Samantha's discussion leader question led another student to ask a question she needed clarification with. If the students did not have a conversation after the question, Brittany probably would not have felt comfortable asking her question.

2/27/14- Strider

Samantha (sharing discussion leader job): *Why do you think Mrs. Smerling doesn't like Lee so much?*

Madison: *Maybe she is older and he bugs her.*

Brittany: *Maybe she doesn't like dogs or maybe she had one that died.*

Jared: *Maybe she is allergic.*

Tom: *She doesn't like how they bark.*

Jared: *He is noisy when the dog is around and the dog aggravates her.*

Madison: *He is younger...*

Brittany: *and not responsible enough.*

Madison: *Yeah, he isn't 20. Little kids usually bug their neighbors.*

Samantha: *I think she doesn't like him because she is old and she doesn't like kids.*

Brittany: *Who is Mrs. Smerling?*

Jared: *She is a landlady.*

Samantha: *What is that?*

Jared: *Say if I bought a house and you wanted to live in it. I would be the land man and you would live there and pay me rent.*

This excerpt showed how the partial job sharing that was involved with the discussion leader job led students to take part in meaningful conversation that ultimately allowed Brittany to ask a question she needed clarification on.

In the following excerpt, Samantha further questioned the group after asking them to guess what her illustration was showing. Her questioning allowed the group to further their conversation, which eventually led another student to ask a question to clarify what the word “rig” means.

3/3/14- Strider

Samantha showed her illustration to the group to guess what it is.

Madison: *I think it was when Lee was watching the Olympics and his Mom was talking to his Dad.*

Brittany: *Yeah, I think so too.*

Samantha: *What were they talking about?*

Jared: *The Dad's rig was taken away, and Bill wanted to talk to Lee's mom.*

Madison: *It was his tractor right?*

Jared: *A truck...a truck is a rig.*

In this excerpt, there were two questions asked that allowed for further discussion and understanding. Samantha's initial question led the students to discuss the part of the story where Lee's Dad called for help because his rig broke down. The conversation that was being held allowed Madison to feel comfortable enough to ask a question about what a rig is. This allowed multiple students to clarify their understanding about what Lee's Dad does as a profession.

In the next example, Brittany asked a question to clarify what meaning of the word "chugging" was used in the text. This allowed the group to discuss the multiple meanings of the word "chugging" before deciding on the correct use.

3/10/14- Strider

Tom (sharing vocabulary enricher job): *The word is chugging.*

Brittany: *Like when you chug milk?*

Jared: *Like gulp it down fast {acted out how someone would gulp down a drink}.*

Brittany: *Or like the train, when it goes choo choo {acted out train noises}.*

Tom: *Its running and breathing really fast like this {acted out running and breathing hard}.*

In this excerpt, Brittany's question led to the group to share the multiple meanings of the word "chugging". This made it clear for all students that words can have multiple meanings, and they need to examine the context of the sentence to determine the correct meaning.

In all of these excerpts, the students only shared part of their jobs initially, which prompted the other students to get involved and take part in the conversation. Sometimes the student sharing his or her job asked the question to initiate conversations, and sometimes once the conversation was already flowing, the students were comfortable asking their own questions to clarify the story for themselves.

Partial Job Sharing: Building Up Ideas

In the following excerpts, students were sharing their discussion leader jobs. The discussion leader job requires group participation to answer the question before the discussion leader reveals what he or she wrote as an answer. In many instances, the discussion leader would give all students an opportunity to share his or her thinking by asking them if they want to add anything else on or by making eye contact with each person to imply they can answer. The questioning from the discussion leader allowed the students to share and build up their ideas through conversation.

1/9/14- *Best School Year Ever*

Adrianna (sharing discussion leader job): *Why did the cat shoot out of the dryer with his tail, hair, and ears standing straight up?*

Chris: *Cats are afraid of water and there was water all around the washing machine.*

Ann: *I think it was because it was going so fast, and the washing machine twists around.*

Jeremy: *I am surprised the cat didn't die.*

Abby: *I think because of the water, since it spins so fast, the hair spikes up when it was turning.*

Adrianna: *He was scared and got sick because it turned so many times.*

In this excerpt, the discussion leader, Adrianna, shared only the question and saved her answer for after everyone else shared. This partial job sharing allowed the other students to share their own inferences about why the cat reacted to the washing machine the way it did. The other students added details to the conversation that would not have been included if Adrianna read her question and answer without asking the group to participate.

1/13/14- Best School Year Ever

Ann (sharing discussion leader job): *Why did Gladys cut Eugene's hair in the shape of a dog?*

Chris: *Because he wanted to be a....I mean she just wanted to do it for fun.*

Ann: *Gladys cut his hair in the shape of a dog for fun.*

This partial sharing of a discussion leader job allowed Chris to recall information from the chapter and share his thinking, which helps him internalize and remember events from the chapter after the day they were discussed.

1/13/14- Best School Year Ever

Ann (sharing discussion leader job): *Why didn't Alice win the talent show?*

Jeremy: *Eugene was smashing walnuts on his head.*

Chris: *She didn't win the talent show because of the walnuts. The audience cheered for Eugene.*

Adrianna: *Alice had to keep stopping because the walnuts were in the piano.*

This excerpt allowed the students to respond to a question and re-shape their thinking as each student added onto the idea that was stated by the person just before them. As the students talked about and re-shaped their ideas, Adrianna was finally able to synthesize the information from her classmates and clearly state the correct answer.

3/6/14- Strider

Madison (sharing discussion leader job): *Do you think Lee is closer friends with Kevin than Barry?*

Samantha: *He has been friends with Barry his whole life, and he just met Kevin at school.*

Brittany: *Barry watches Strider sometimes. Barry and Lee are close. They share custody of the dog, which makes them close.*

Madison: *They have also been friends longer.*

The partial sharing of the discussion leader job once again allowed the students to develop their ideas and add on new information as they took turns talking. As the students developed their answers, they pulled multiple examples from the text to support their answers. This ultimately allows the students to better understand and recall these events from the story.

3/7/14- Strider

Jared (sharing discussion leader job): *Why did Lee's Dad come over to his house?*

Tom: *To build a fence.*

Jared: *He came over to make a dog fence already. Why is Lee's Dad coming back over again?*

Samantha: *To build the dog house.*

Tom: *Oh, they already finished the fence so now they are building the house.*

In this excerpt, the students built on the ideas of one another as well as asked a question. This conversation allowed the students to clarify their thinking about the sequence of events where Lee's Dad made multiple visits to help Lee.

3/10/14- Strider

Samantha (sharing discussion leader job): *Do you think Lee will stay friends with Geneva?*

Madison: *I think they will stay friends because they got closer in the story. In the book it says that Geneva was happy that Lee got third place.*

Samantha: *I think yes because they seem really close and they are like best friends. She keeps saying yes to doing things with Lee.*

Brittany read a passage from the text: *"Geneva joined me as I was walking down the hallway to math class." It means a lot to Lee that Geneva joined him on his walk. Lee likes Geneva and this makes me think Geneva likes Lee back.*

Madison: *It was important because it was when Geneva became friends with Lee.*

In this excerpt, the students were able to make inferences using evidence from the text to form their opinions about why they think Lee and Geneva will remain friends. They were able to do this based on the partial job sharing that was initiated by the discussion leader.

In the following excerpts, the students built up their ideas when the illustrator asked the group to guess what he or she drew for the illustration. When the students guessed what the illustrator drew, they were able to add on more and more details in order to completely describe what happened in a significant event from the chapter.

1/9/14- Best School Year Ever

Chris (sharing illustrator job): *What do you think I drew?*

Ann: *I think it was when the Herdmans were at the laundry place and they threw the cat in the laundry thing and they people were yelling at them.*

Chris: *I drew a picture of the people in the Laundromat asking Mr. Stenborrow for a refund.*

Chris was able to draw his classmates into the conversation when he asked them to interpret his picture. Ann gave a more thorough description of the events in the story that led to the people asking Mr. Stenborrow for a refund. If Chris shared his picture without asking others to take part in the

conversation, Ann's knowledge about what the Herdmans did to the cat would have gone unshared. If students do not share their insights, other students will not be able to benefit from them, and the idea will not become as internalized within the students.

1/10/14- Best School Year Ever

Abby (sharing illustrator job): *Guess what you think I drew.*

Jeremy: *I think it is the closet.*

Adrianna: *I think it was the closet with all the paint when it was spilling.*

Chris: *All the paints in the closet.*

Abby: *The picture was the snake is in the closet. Leroy put him in there on the light.*

This example of Abby asking her classmates to guess what she drew allowed many of the students to become involved in recalling this important event from the chapter. They were each able to contribute a new detail that re-shaped the final explanation.

1/15/14- Best School Year Ever

Ann (sharing illustrator job): *Does anyone want to guess what the picture is?*

Abby: *It is a person. It's when... I can't remember his name...*

Jeremy: *Lester was worried...*

Abby: *When Lester put the paper clips in his mouth.*

Ann: *This is a picture of Lester and how Imogene put the paper clips on his teeth to make them look like braces.*

This example showed how the students built on the ideas of one another. Each child contributed a new and different detail, until they were able to provide a thorough description of what happened when Lester was given “braces”.

3/10/14- Strider

Madison (sharing illustrator job): *Does anyone know what the picture is?*

Brittany: *I think it was when Lee was jogging and Geneva joined him.*

Tom: *Me too.*

Madison: *Anyone else have a guess?*

Samantha: *I agree with what Brittany said.*

Madison: *This is when Lee and Geneva were talking. Lee told Geneva that her hair was the color of butterflies and Geneva was really happy. They also ate donuts and drank coffee.*

Jared: *You could have drawn when they pulled the weeds.*

Tom: *They were talking and Lee said that her hair was like a monarch butterfly, and Geneva said that was better than being called carrot top.*

In this excerpt, the students built off the ideas of one another to describe the picture Madison drew. In this example, the students continued to share their thinking even after Madison explained her picture. This conversation showed how well the students understood the story, and how willing they were to contribute their knowledge to aid in the understanding of their classmates.

In the next two examples, Brittany shared the quote from the text that she selected as being important. She had the group discuss why they think it is important before she shared what she wrote.

By having the group share their thoughts, they were able to expand their thinking and make inferences beyond what Brittany wrote about why the passage was important.

2/27/14- Strider

Brittany (sharing passage master job): *The passage I picked was, "I wonder if Strider forgot about me". Barry said that when he was on vacation.*

Samantha: *I think he wrote that because Barry misses Strider, and he wants to know if Strider misses him back.*

Madison: *He probably wants to know if Strider misses him because they are sharing the dog and he doesn't want him to only like Lee and not Barry. Maybe Strider has forgotten about Barry so when he gets back he might be sad.*

Brittany: *It makes me think that Barry really misses Strider.*

3/10/14- Strider

Brittany (sharing passage master job): *"Today Geneva joined me as I was walking down the hallway to our math class." Does anyone want to guess why it is important?*

Madison: *It was important because it was when Geneva became friends with Lee.*

Brittany: *It is important to the story because Lee likes Geneva and it means a lot to Lee that Geneva joined him on his walk. It makes me think Geneva likes Lee back.*

Tom: *I don't think she likes him because she said he was weird.*

These were the only two examples of a student leading conversation when he or she was the passage master. Brittany took the initiative to get her classmates involved in the conversation by having

them think about and talk about why she selected the passages that they did. This allowed for the students to make rich inferences about why Geneva likes Lee and how Strider feels about Barry after he was gone.

When Brittany shared her connector job, she shared her personal connections, and asked the group to think about what she may have been connected to from the story. This allowed the other students to be active thinkers and participate in discussion about Brittany's personal connection.

3/6/14- Strider

Brittany (sharing connector job): My connection was I wanted my Mom to call and tell me everything is okay. Look to see what I connected to from the story. It is about Barry.

Samantha: Lee was waiting for Barry to phone him to make sure everything was okay with their friendship.

Brittany: Yes. I was mad at my mom, and then she said I am going to send you to Mercy. It is about Kevin and his father.

Tom: Kevin was mad at his father for divorcing his mother for a younger woman.

Once again, Brittany was able to lead her group in a discussion where they had to think about the chapter in relation to Brittany's experience, rather than simply listening to her talk and possibly not gaining anything from the job sharing.

These examples of partial job sharing allowed the students to take part in discussion, and build on the ideas of one another. These conversations ultimately led to exploratory talk where the students made inferences and deepened their understanding of the text.

Partial Job Sharing: Clarifying Misunderstandings

The following three excerpts show examples of how students clarified a misunderstanding based on the discussion that came from a student partially sharing his or her job.

1/14/14- Best School Year Ever

Chris (sharing passage master job): *“Alice began being important right away. She was the only first grade student allowed in the teacher’s room”.*

Ann: *This is important because she was the only one that was able to go in there and throughout the chapter more kids go in.*

Abby: *It was important because it was about how they all got trapped in the teacher’s room.*

Adrianna: *The teachers got trapped in the teacher’s room.*

Chris: *No, it was a kid named Kenneth Webber.*

Adrianna: *No, he wasn’t trapped in there. He moved to Toledo.*

Ann: *Imogene said he got locked in there because she made up lies, but he was really in Toledo. He wasn’t coming back into the classroom, so everyone believed her that he got locked in the teacher’s room.*

Adrianna: *Alice’s mom got locked in the teacher’s room too, and the district supervisor. They got locked in for an hour and a half.*

When Chris shared the passage he selected as important, he allowed the other students to talk about why it was important to the story. This partial job sharing led to a detailed conversation where the students sorted out the two different stories that involved the teachers’ lounge. This allowed the

students to understand the story more fully. If the students only listened to Chris share his thinking, it is possible they would have moved on in the story without being fully clear as to what happened in these chapters.

2/28/14- Strider

Brittany (sharing discussion leader job): *Where did Mom take Lee's shirt?*

Jared: *It's Kevin's shirt.*

Madison: *Mom never took the shirt.*

Brittany: *Lee took it.*

Tom: *Kevin's mom took it to the thrift shop.*

Brittany: *I had the wrong person.*

Teacher: *Why was Kevin chasing Lee for the shirt?*

Madison: *It's his old shirt, his lucky shirt.*

Brittany (shakes her head in agreement): *I thought it was Lee's mom who took the shirt to the thrift shop, but it was really Kevin's mom who brought the shirt to the thrift shop.*

As the students listened to Brittany's question in preparation to discuss an answer, they were able to figure out that Brittany was confused about where the shirt came from. Her partial job sharing led to a discussion that ultimately allowed her to understand the story more fully.

3/3/14- Strider

Tom: *The word I picked was "valuable".*

Jared: *It means one of a kind.*

Brittany: *It is worth a lot.*

Samantha: *Like if you have a water bottle that is one of a kind.*

Madison: *Water bottles aren't valuable though because they are not worth a lot of money.*

Tom: *So, it means made of a great deal of money. So, if there was a necklace worth a lot of money, it would be valuable.*

In this excerpt, Samantha had a slight misconception about what the word valuable means. She knew it was associated with something that was meaningful to someone, but the other students were able to clarify that valuable things are also usually worth a lot of money.

Partial job sharing was a useful technique which allowed many students to take part in conversations. When the students were asked to take part in the conversation by the student whose turn it was to share, it ensured that they were actively listening to the other students and thinking about the story. The partial job sharing is often what led the students to achieve exploratory talk, and ultimately deepen their understanding of the text.

Whole Job Sharing

When a student would read all of his or her job at one time, the kind of talk taking place was often presentational talk. The other students were less likely to engage in conversation when jobs were shared in this way. Students reading their whole job at one time resulted in many instances where the other children merely listened, without giving any kind of meaningful response. There were a limited number of times that students achieved exploratory talk when jobs were shared in their entirety first. The following sections will be made up of students sharing their whole jobs at one time. Student

responses were classified into the following categories: listening only, asking questions, building up ideas, and clarifying misunderstandings.

Whole Job Sharing: Listening Only

The following excerpts will demonstrate examples in which there was no additional conversation after the job was shared. This means the students took part in presentational talk only, meaning their comprehension of the text was not deepened.

1/8/14- *Best School Year Ever*

Jeremy (sharing illustrator job): *Howard goes missing from his stroller outside the store while Luella is babysitting. Luella meets Charlie who tells her that the Herdmans stole Howard. The Herdmans painted Howard's head and were charging money to see the tattooed baby.*

Chris immediately moved on to share his job.

Chris (sharing summarizer job): *In chapter one, the narrator said the first day of school was not so bad. In class there were a group of bad kids that did bad things. Also, the class year project would be to study each other. Next, a bad guy stole the baby brother and it turned out to be Herdman and told children it cost 25 cents to look at the bald baby's head and put marker on it. So when they got home and tried to wash it off and they did and the mother did not get mad.*

Ann immediately moved on to share her job.

In both of these excerpts, the student sharing his job included information that was not clear or accurate. The other students either did not know it was not correct, or did not feel confident or comfortable correcting a classmate.

1/9/14- *Best School Year Ever*

Adrianna (sharing discussion leader job): *Why do you think they put the frogs into the fountain?
They put them in there because they wanted them to swim.*

The group immediately retrieved exit tickets.

This excerpt as stated in the previous section of this paper, did not include correct analysis for why the Herdmans put the frogs in the drinking fountain. Therefore, the students did not fully comprehend the Herdmans' motivation for putting the frogs into the drinking fountain.

1/14/14- Best School Year Ever

Chris (sharing passage master job): *The compliments they sent to Alice and they made her important. It is important because this is how they start talking about Alice....The children talk about the teachers in the teachers room say "thank god" two times. It is important because all the children went home to tell all their parents.*

Adrianna: *You did a very good job with text based evidence.*

Ann: *You included lots of details and I really liked it.*

Abby: *I agree with them.*

In this excerpt, Chris shared information that did not completely make sense and was not accurate. Rather than trying to make sense of Chris' thinking, the students complimented his ideas. This shows that they were either not listening or did not know how to/feel comfortable responding to Chris' thinking.

1/15/14- Best School Year Ever

Jeremy (sharing summarizer job): *Lester was so worried that she could only say L from M or X from K because she was scared and one of the Herdmans only did the eye test, and come on Alice I said if you think the school bus is warm and comfortable you must be out of your mind.*

Adrianna: *You should have added more. It was really short.*

Abby immediately moved on to share her job.

This excerpt displayed inaccurate and limited information from the chapter that was supposed to be summarized. The other students did not take the opportunity to discuss Jeremy's thoughts or the parts of the chapter that were left out.

2/28/14- Strider

Samantha (sharing summarizer job): *Lee bought a shirt from the thrift store. Barry came back from LA and laughed at the shirt. Lee went with his Dad to work and he asked Lee about his Mom. Kevin chased Lee when he saw that he wore his old shirt.*

Madison immediately moved on to share his job.

There were opportunities after this job was shared for the other students to add on additional information that was important. For example, the students could have discussed why Barry laughed at the shirt or why Kevin chased Lee in the school. The full job sharing stifled the opportunity for other students to add on additional information.

2/28/14- Strider

Tom (sharing passage master job): *“I tensed up waiting to see if Strider would place his paw when Barry showed up, and he kept all 4 feet on the sidewalk”. I am surprised that Barry was forgotten, because I had a dog I gave away but he still remembered me. This is important because whenever Barry and Lee stop, Strider puts his foot on Barry’s foot. Barry was sad that he went on the trip to see his real Mom in LA. Now that Barry had returned, summer is going fast. I think Barry and Lee feel that summer is going fast and they don’t want to. They don’t want to give up Strider when they return to school.*

Jared immediately moved on to share his job.

Tom had complex and meaningful thinking that was done in relation to the text, but the other students did not participate and further benefit from Tom’s thinking.

3/4/14- Strider

Madison (sharing passage master job): *“She is worried about you but don’t forgot you are my kid too”. This shows his dad still loves him. I think this is interesting because my parents are together, so I don’t know how it feels.*

“This also made me wish that I had a sister or two of my own”. This was interesting because maybe Lee is lonely. I don’t like my sister sometimes, so I wonder if Lee would really like having a sister.

Samantha immediately moved on to share his job.

Madison also had meaningful thinking as she made connections to important passages from the text. However, the lack of conversation that followed her thinking shows the other students did not further their thinking in meaningful ways.

In the excerpts that were presented, the students shared their jobs in their entirety, which perhaps made the other students feel that nothing else needed to be stated. The students seemed to take on the notion that the person who was job sharing was the expert, and they were hesitant to ask questions or clarify incorrect information when the jobs were shared outright. When the jobs were shared in their entirety, the other students sometimes appeared to not be paying attention, since they would not be required to participate in the conversation. Regardless of the reason, these examples of whole job sharing demonstrate missed opportunities for the students to deepen or display their understanding of the text.

Constructive Whole Job Sharing

The following sections display students sharing their jobs in their entirety, followed by natural conversation that led to exploratory talk. Natural conversation did not take place often when the students shared their jobs completely before talking, but there were some examples where students asked questions, built up ideas, and clarified misunderstandings, allowing them to deepen their understanding of the text.

Whole Job Sharing: Asking Questions

On a few occasions, a student in the group would ask a question after another student fully shared his or her job. In these excerpts, the students asked questions to clarify details that were unsure to them. When students are comfortable asking questions, it gives the group an opportunity to help one another develop a deeper understanding of the story.

1/16/14- *Best School Year Ever*

Ann (sharing connector job): *"See the amazing purple baby for 25 cents". My connection is Howard holds his breath like my friend does. She also turned purple.*

Adrianna: *Why is the baby is purple?*

Ann: *Luella took the blanket away and he held his breath.*

Chris: *It is because he holds his breath. Not because he is sad or angry.*

Ann did not explicitly state in her connector job why Howard turns purple, although she implied it. When Adrianna asked for clarification, it allowed the students to take part in the conversation and help one another understand the story more fully.

3/4/14- Strider

Brittany (sharing illustrator job): *Lee's Mom made dinner for Dad and Lee. She made a roasted chicken. She invited Lee's dad because it was Christmas.*

Samantha: *What is Christmas or Thanksgiving?*

Tom: *It was Christmas, because she got to take the day off.*

Although the students asked a question after the illustrator job was shared in its entirety, the question clarified a detail that was not extremely relevant to the overall meaning of the text. However, it does that Samantha was actively listening to her classmate.

Whole Job Sharing: Building Up Ideas

In the following excerpts, the students were able to build up ideas after a student shared his or her job in its entirety. In two out of the four examples, conversation was also furthered by the teacher prompting the student with a question.

1/10/14 - Best School Year Ever

Adrianna (sharing summarizer job): *In Chapter 3, Leroy left his snake tied up to the string on the light in the janitor's closet. The principal was looking for the snake, but it was in Leroy's pocket. So, he stuck the tail first in the pencil sharpener. No one went near the pencil sharpener again.*

Ann: *Your summary was good, but you kept it on one part of the book, and you should have written about the whole chapter.*

Teacher: *What were some of the other details she could have included?*

Abby: *Wrote more about the snake and how he needed the special thing.*

Adrianna: *The teacher saw the snake and screamed when she went into the closet.*

Ann: *She went to get the principal. Leroy put it in his pocket and no one found it.*

Adrianna: *And no one checked Leroy's pockets, so they didn't know.*

Ann: *She went in with her little helpers and the paint spilled on them.*

In this excerpt, the students were able to build on the ideas of one another after the job was fully shared. However, the building up of ideas was facilitating by my questions for the students. If I did not intervene, it is possible the students would have remained unclear about the events that unfolded with Leroy's snake in the janitor's closet.

1/15/14- Best School Year Ever

Abby (sharing passage master job): *"Lester doesn't have braces. But when she looked in his mouth, she nearly died. What do you got in there, she yelled. It looks like paper clips". I thought this was important because he put paper clips in his mouth and his mother almost died.*

Adrianna: It's important because it is bad for your teeth. The nurse was involved, and she thought it was a problem because they were paper clips and not braces.

Ann: Imogene always causes trouble and she put it on his teeth. It could really damage his teeth from putting paper clips on there.

In this example, two of the students added onto Abby's thinking. Ann made a significant contribution to this conversation, because she stated the fact that Imogene put the paper clips on Lester's teeth. Abby had originally stated that Lester put them in his own mouth. In this example, Abby's thinking was clarified due to the students contributing to the conversation.

2/27/14- Strider

Jared (sharing summarizer job): The summary of the chapter is that Barry is going to leave for LA. Lee has to keep Strider away from Mrs. Smerling. Lee went to the thrift store to get a book to occupy them.

Teacher: Are there any other important details that Jared could include in the summary?

Brittany: I think you should of added why he got the book.

Teacher: Why did Lee get the book?

Jared: So he could stop and read it on their long runs.

This is another example where teacher questioning allowed the students to build onto the conversation and state important details that were not yet clarified.

3/6/14- Strider

Jared (sharing passage master job): *"Don't forgot me, I called, and then I turned away and cried". Lee gets into a lot of fights with Kevin and Barry, and then tries to make up for it. I think the next fight he gets in will be with Geneva.*

Madison: *I think it is not true, because he likes Geneva.*

Brittany: *I think they will get into a fight.*

Jared: *He has gotten into two fights so far, so he will probably get into another one.*

In this excerpt, the students disagreed about whether or not Lee will get into a fight with Geneva. Although the students disagreed, they were each able to provide a solid argument for their thinking based on evidence from the text.

In the examples from this section, the students were only able to carry out further conversation on their own two times. It was difficult for the students to contribute to the conversation when the student sharing his or her job said everything they wanted to say first. If the students did not have a question or hear something incorrect, they often felt that there was nothing else to contribute to the conversation.

Whole Job Sharing: Clarifying Misunderstandings

When a student read his or her job in its entirety, the students were less likely to take part in more conversation. However, if the students heard something in the student's job that was incorrect, they would sometimes correct the misunderstanding. The following excerpts display a student sharing his or her job completely, and the students correcting something that was presented incorrectly.

1/8/14- Best School Year Ever

Chris shared summarizer job.

Teacher: *Was there any additional details from the chapter that were not included in the summary?*

Ann: *There was one part that was wrong. He said they took a Herdman, but it should actually say Howard.*

Adrianna: *Howard is Mrs. Mcluskey's baby.*

Chris: *It was Louella's younger brother.*

In this example, the students were able to correct a piece of information that was incorrectly stated by Chris. After Ann made the correction, Adrianna and Chris were able to add on other information about Howard's identity. I had also asked the students if there was anything they wanted to add. If I did not prompt them to share, they may not have corrected Chris' misunderstanding.

1/13/14- Best School Year Ever

Adrianna (sharing illustrator job): *This is a picture of Gladys cutting Eugene's hair. Eugene wanted his hair to look like a dog. Gladys wanted to cut hair at the talent show.*

Abby: *That wasn't for the talent show. They were saying let the Herdmans be in the talent show. They were discussing what the Herdmans could do. They weren't actually entering the talent show.*

In this excerpt, Abby corrected a blatant misunderstanding Adrianna had in her understanding of the chapter. Adrianna did not realize the author was making a sarcastic comment about Gladys being

in the talent show, when she was in fact not entering the talent show. Abby's active listening and contribution to the conversation allowed a major misunderstanding to be corrected.

3/10/14- Strider

Samantha (referring to Jared's summary of the chapter): *You should have added the track race at the end of the story. Lee ran in the big track race and he came in third place.*

Tom: *No, he came in first and beat his record time.*

Madison: *He didn't come in first.*

Tom: *I remember when Lee was in ELA class; his teacher asked him why he didn't say that he came in first.*

Madison: *The book says he came in third.*

Tom: *But the next page, the teacher says, "Why didn't you write the true thing?". In the essay, it says he came in third. Lee says that he didn't want to brag.*

Samantha: *Madison was reading Lee's composition so she didn't know Lee came in first.*

Brittany (reading the quote from the text): *"The teacher asked Lee why he didn't write the truth in his poem. Lee said he didn't want to brag".*

In this excerpt, there was another important misunderstanding that needed to be corrected. Lee had actually won the race, but wrote in a poem that he came in third place. Some students thought the poem was the truth. During this conversation, the students were able to use their books to find the truth about Lee's race.

In this section, the students recognized misunderstandings that severely changed the meaning of the story. Even though the jobs were shared in their entirety, the students were able to speak up and discuss the parts of the story they believed to be incorrect. The students were sometimes able to speak up after the jobs were completely shared, and achieve exploratory talk. However, this did not happen as often compared to when jobs were partially shared.

Summary of Question 3

When the reading roles were shared partially, the students were more likely to take part in discussion, furthering their thinking about the text. When the reading roles were fully shared at one time, the students were less likely to stay engaged and participate in conversations that furthered their thinking or the thinking of others.

It was evident in the student conversations that the students sometimes felt the differing reading roles gave them new insight into the chapters that were read. The reading roles gave the students an opportunity to reflect on the chapter independently before talking with the group. This gave them a chance to organize their thinking and prepare statements to share, which is necessary for students who need time to clarify their thinking. The reading roles ensured that each child was able to share his or her insights about the book and/or take control of one part of the conversation. It gave everyone an opportunity to share and lead the group in discussion, which was especially helpful for those students who are shy and allow others to control conversations. Overall, the reading roles can be helpful tools to further discussion when students are taught how to use and respond to them in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the text through conversation.

Summary of Chapter Four

In this six-week study, I discovered that my students use many different kinds of talk when they converse about a text during literature circles. Each kind of talk has a level of comprehension associated

with it. Presentational talk resulted in no increased comprehension, because the students only listened to what another student said without applying or changing their thinking. During exploratory talk, the students showed that they were obtaining a deeper level of comprehension through their conversations. They were able to ask questions, build on the ideas of one another, and clarify misunderstandings. The reading roles or jobs the students used in literature circles could help or hinder their conversations depending on how they shared their jobs and responded to one another. When students shared their whole jobs first, the students were less likely to take part in any additional conversation. When students shared only part of their jobs, they were more likely to elicit conversation from their classmates and achieve exploratory talk.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine what kinds of talk take place during literature circles and how they impact students' comprehension of a text. I also examined how reading roles or jobs impact student participation. This study focused on answering the following three research questions:

- 1) What kinds of talk and interactions take place during students' literature circle discussions?
- 2) How do student talk and interactions in literature circles seem to impact student comprehension?
- 3) How do the reading roles used in literature circles seem to impact how students participate in literature circles?

Over the course of the six-week study, I audio recorded two literature circle groups, as well as examined their exit ticket reflections. I found that many different kinds of talk took place during literature circles, and the kinds of talk had differing levels of comprehension associated with them. I also determined that reading roles or jobs can be beneficial or hindering, depending on how the students use and respond to them.

Conclusions

The students engaged in a variety of talk, but only some kinds of talk were natural and meaningful

The students engaged in a variety of talk during literature circles. The kinds of talk that took place included: presentational talk, cumulative talk, exploratory talk, performing voice, and anecdotal talk. The students used all five kinds of talk, although some more frequently than others. According to Marchiando (2013), the kind of talk that was used during a conversation was related to how engaged

the children were with the story and the conversation, as well as how comfortable they were conversing with their peers. The different kinds of talk served different purposes for the students, and all had the potential to help the students make meaning from the text (Marchiando, 2013).

Although many kinds of talk were present, some kinds of talk were more natural for the students to take part in. When the students were fully engaged and interested in the conversation, they naturally reached exploratory talk, which allowed them to carry out meaningful conversations where they drew conclusions, made inferences and predictions, and helped one another understand the story in a more meaningful way. Barnes and Todd (1995) state that the small group atmosphere of literature circles supports risk-taking because students can discuss their uncertainties about the text without the pressure of being in front of the whole class. The small groups can make great progress in their understanding because they can make the exploratory talk fit their own needs (Barnes & Todd, 1995). This was present frequently in this study when my students asked questions and clarified the misunderstandings of their classmates.

Cumulative talk, performing voice, and anecdotal talk were sometimes integrated naturally and meaningfully into conversation, while other times they became another kind of presentational talk. Cumulative talk appeared to take place naturally, but was only meaningful some of the time. The students could easily take part in cumulative talk if they were not paying attention or did not know what to say. This was evident when the students said things like “good job” or “I agree”. The students sometimes used cumulative talk to agree with someone, but then restated the idea in their own words, which did help deepen their understanding of the text. The students used performing voice when it helped them portray the meaning of a vocabulary word. This helped the students facilitate discussion about the vocabulary words, especially since some students could show they know what a word means without giving a definition. Anecdotal talk was only used when it stemmed from a student sharing a

connector job. The students were only sometimes able to talk about their own experiences as related to the text in a natural and meaningful way. Therefore, anecdotal talk only sometimes allowed the students to make deep and relevant connections. These three kinds of talk sometimes led the students to achieving exploratory talk. Pearson (2010) supports the idea that language can be used as a tool to think together. All kinds of talk can be beneficial when the students use them appropriately to fill a need or re-conceptualize a current understanding (Pearson, 2010).

Presentational talk took place when the students were not interested in or did not understand what was happening in the story. This occurred when students allowed their classmates to share their jobs and then they moved on the next person. Presentational talk took place more often in the beginning days of each cycle of literature circles, before the students were really engaged in the story and comfortable with their classmates. When the students became more comfortable and felt more confident in eliciting discussion in their classmates, presentational talk did not take place as often. Presentational talk can be valuable, but when used appropriately. Barnes and Todd (1995) state that presentational talk can be valuable for students to use after they have had significant time to use exploratory talk. Therefore, if the students put all of their thinking together and agreed upon one cohesive conclusion, presentational talk would be useful for students to convey that thought on their exit tickets or to a teacher (Barnes & Todd, 1995).

Exploratory talk leads to higher level thinking and allows students to form a deeper comprehension of the text

When the students carried out natural and meaningful conversations that led to a deeper understanding of the text, the students were most often taking part in exploratory talk. Exploratory talk allowed students to build on the thinking of one another, make inferences based on evidence from the text, and clarify misunderstandings. This kind of talk elevated the students' understanding of the text,

because they were able to re-shape their ideas through conversation. Barnes (2010) explains the importance of how talking helps one re-shape what he or she already “knows”. When students talk with one another they may see connections that were not already apparent or realize that there is other information that needs to be considered when forming a thought or opinion. Working collaboratively allows students to make choices that are supported with evidence, problem solve, and apply their thinking in complex ways (Barnes, 2010).

Vygotsky's social-constructivist theory states that cognitive development is socially constructed and shared (Sportsman et al., 2011). Reunamo and Nurmilaakso (2007) support the idea that students must discuss their thinking with others before they can fully internalize it. When my students talked in depth about their knowledge of the text, their understanding was deeper, but they could also remember details from the text and knew the story better. They could apply those details and their expansive knowledge about the text as they further discussed the story. The students were able to use the specific details they now knew well as evidence to support their inferential thinking.

Reading roles can encourage or inhibit conversation

The quality of conversation that came from using reading roles was mainly determined by how students shared and responded to the reading role. Reading roles could encourage or inhibit conversation, but that depended on if the students were prepared to respond to reading roles in a meaningful way that elevated the conversation. Cassidy and Christie (2013) and Ferguson and Kern (2012) support the idea that literature circle roles are a necessary tool for some students, because the reading role allows students to actively use reading strategies, organize their thoughts, and all students are given the opportunity to lead the group in discussion.

When students were asked to record their thinking in the form of a job, it was used as a springboard to start conversation. When the students partially shared their reading roles, they were

eliciting discussion from their classmates, which allowed each student to be actively thinking about the text and engaging in conversation. Ferguson and Kern (2012) and Marchiando (2013) state that writing down ideas in the form of jobs helps students to further think about how each jobs helps them understand the story better. Reading roles are a tool that can be used to allow students to self-monitor their use of reading strategies and their understanding of the text (Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013).

When a student shared his or her reading role in its entirety, the other students were more likely to take that student's word as the truth and move on. This shows that the students were not sure how to respond when they were not specifically asked a question that required them to converse. This also shows that sometimes my students became too focused on completing their jobs only, which resulted in the other students not paying attention or not taking part in discussion. If the students are not taking part in discussion, it means they are most likely not comprehending the text at a deeper level (Ferguson & Kern, 2012). One possible reason my students may not have discussed some jobs after they were shared is that they did not know how. I needed to provide more modeling and scaffolding to show the students how to further the conversation when they were not sure how to respond. I will examine this idea further in the following section, Implications for My Teaching.

Implications for Student Learning

Students are more engaged in talking about a text when they are in small groups

Literature circles provide students with an opportunity to work with a small group in a supportive environment. When students work in small groups, they have more opportunities to share their thinking, and are more likely to feel comfortable doing so. During literature circles, otherwise quiet and passive students took part in conversations and became active participants in their learning. Certo et al. (2010) and Park (2012) found that small groups allow students to share more frequently, because

the setting feels safe and inviting. When students talk about a text, they tend to like it more, recognize that they understand it more deeply, and remember the book more fully (Certo et al., 2010; Park 2012). By giving all students the chance to talk about a text in great detail each day, every student is given the chance to better comprehend the text.

The talk that happens in small groups also helps the students become better listeners and cooperative learners. Marchiando (2013) found that the cooperative learning that happens in literature circles helps students develop better attitudes and work habits. They students have increased responsibility in their reading because they have group members that rely on one another to fulfill their roles and contribute to the discussions. The students can also learn about how to respect and discuss differing opinions and viewpoints. The small group setting and conversations allow students to expand and change their own ideas after listening to and conversing with their peers (Marchiando, 2013).

Students are more accountable when they are given choice

According to Cameron et al. (2012) students are more likely to take an interest in what they are learning when they are given choice. The students had choice about what book they read in literature circles. When students have the opportunity to select a text that looks interesting to them, they are more likely to participate and make connections to the novel (Cameron et al., 2012).

Since the literature circles were peer-led, they allowed students to take on more responsibility and accountability in their learning. Student-centered discussions allow students to feel that their thoughts and opinions are valued by not only the teacher, but their classmates as well (Avci & Yuksel, 2011; Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013). My students also had choice as to how they participated in literature circle conversations, as I did not enforce any kind of talking model, outside of everyone sharing his or her job in some way. By allowing students to participate in conversations in any way that suited their group, conversations were allowed to be natural and free-flowing. Avci and Yuksel

(2011) support the idea that students are more likely to be engaged with a text and feel accountability over their learning when they have a voice in what they will be doing. Choice helps ensure students are engaged with a text and their learning.

Students understand a text more deeply when they take ownership of and lead their own learning

When students become active participants in their learning, they are more likely to improve and succeed. Literature circles gave each student a chance to become a leader within their group. Every day literature circle groups met, each student would share his or her job. Eventually, many students took this opportunity to move past just reading out their job. They took the opportunity to lead a discussion by asking their classmates questions and facilitating turn taking within the group. The more the students shared in this way, the easier it was for them to take part in natural conversation that led to exploratory talk.

Ferguson and Kern (2012) support the idea that when students are given accountability and taught how to self-monitor their own learning, they are more likely to make significant gains in their academic abilities. However, the students did not get to choose what job they completed each night. In some instances, the jobs that were completed were flat. The students made surface level connections, and I was unsure if it was because they were not putting forth their fullest effort or was it because the particular job they had to complete did not resonate with them within the chapter. Ferguson and Kern (2012) address a similar concern, where the students were “fake reading” in order to only complete the assigned job. To solve their problem, in addition to completing a job, the students had to answer questions explaining how they used the reading strategy associated with the job, as well as evaluate how the reading strategy helped them better understand the text. It is important for students to understand how and why the literature circle jobs are useful in allowing them to become stronger readers. In order for students to have full ownership of their learning, they must be taught how to self-

monitor their use of reading strategies, so that they can use them interchangeably to deepen their understanding of a text (Ferguson & Kern, 2012).

Implications for My Teaching

Interesting and appropriate literature needs to be chosen

My students engaged in exploratory talk more frequently when they were interested in what was going on in the text. This means that rich and meaningful texts must be selected first by the teacher, then by the students. Daniels (2002) discusses the importance of teachers selecting high-quality texts that will elicit thinking and conversation from students. Before picking out texts for literature circles, teachers must assess if a text has character development, conflict, values, growth, and theme. In order for students to have rich discussions, the text must be strong in all of these elements. When there is a strong story in the text, the students are more likely to become engaged in the text and carry out meaningful discussions that will enhance their understanding of the text (Daniels, 2002).

After the teacher selects interesting and appropriate literature, the teacher needs to have a plan to allow students to choose what they want to read. The students need to be given time to browse through the options the teacher has selected. One way to do this is by having book talks. Book talks involve providing the students with a brief synopsis of what the book is about. The students should also be able to look at the books to see if they feel the book is one they can read and understand. Cameron et al. (2012) suggest teachers reading the books before literature circles. This will allow teachers to know personally if a book is appropriate for their students. Teachers also need to be able to take part in the conversations with the students, which can only be done if the teacher knows what is happening in the book (Cameron et al., 2012).

Significant amounts of modeling and scaffolding must be provided to teach students how to use reading strategies and complete reading roles

If students are going to be able to successfully carry out meaningful conversations independently from the teacher, they first need to understand how to be an effective reader who can use reading strategies to self-monitor their own understanding of a text. In order to accomplish this, the teacher must provide the needed modeling, scaffolding, and guided instruction. The students must be given explicit instruction on how to read for meaning, utilize reading strategies, and apply those reading strategies to complete a literature circle job that displays their understanding of the text. In addition to the modeling, students must be given guided practice with the use of scaffolds.

When the students complete reading roles, they need to be taught how to effectively do this. Some students chose two passages for passage master before finishing the first page of the chapter, when they should have read the whole chapter, flagging parts that they thought were important, and deciding at the end which they found to be the most meaningful. However, I did not always provide some students with enough modeling or practice to effectively accomplish this.

One scaffold I will use in the future will be to have students use post-it notes to flag or mark the parts of the chapter they think they want to use within their jobs. Then after they finish the chapter, they need to reflect on questions that are associated with their particular job, in addition to actually completing the job. For example, Ferguson and Kern (2012) asked their students who were the connectors to answer these questions, “Did anything from this week’s reading remind you of your life?” and “How does thinking about this help you understand this part of the reading?”. The students were required to think more deeply about why they were writing about the ideas they were. In addition to more reflection, the students were also given choice, as each job had 4-5 questions in which the students could select from (Ferguson & Kern, 2012).

Scaffolds are designed to be taken away eventually when students no longer need the scaffold to perform the skill. Therefore, scaffolding is a delicate process and must constantly be re-assessed by the teacher and students to make sure the scaffolds are helping students achieve, not inhibiting them (Cassidy & Christie, 2013; Ferguson & Kern, 2012; Marchiando, 2013). Using the reflection questions as a scaffold will help the students decide on which parts of the chapter were most meaningful for his or her understanding in relation to the job. Once the students have mastered the ability to make meaningful selections from the texts to complete their jobs, the written justification for the selection may be able to be taken away.

Students need to be explicitly taught how to take part in conversations, and they need practice doing it

Students need explicit instruction, scaffolding, and guided practice in order to learn how to effectively carry out meaningful conversations that will strengthen their comprehension of a text. In order to do this, the students must be taught how to share literature circle jobs, actively listen to one another, ask questions, build on the ideas of another, and respond to one another in a natural and respectful way. Pearson (2010) describes the delicate balance between providing structure in literature circles with not inhibiting the natural flow of discussion. However, students had better experiences in achieving exploratory talk when they were taught ground rules for discussions, such as everyone gets a turn to talk, politely disagreeing, and using the text to prove thinking (Pearson, 2010).

In my modeling and guided instruction, I showed the students how to partially share each reading role or job in order to bring their classmates in on the conversation. Even though I showed students how to do this, I did not require them to share their jobs in this way. Although many students did share this way, I think additional modeling and scaffolding could have helped the students become better at conversing in literature circles. What I did not show the students how to do was respond to

one another if the person sharing his or her job shares the whole job. As a scaffold, I could have provided the students with sentence starters or questions that could have been used to facilitate conversation after another student shared his or her job. For example, the students could be given these questions to integrate into their conversations: Did you agree with what that character did and why? What would you have done if you were in a similar situation? Why do you think the character said or did that? How do you think the character is feeling? What was your reaction as you read this? What evidence from the text can prove your thinking? These questions can be a useful scaffold that allows the students to politely and thoroughly carry out conversations about a text.

Recommendations for Future Research

Using reading roles versus not using reading roles

Although reading roles can be useful in allowing students to organize their thinking and prepare talking points about a text, it would be interesting to see how the same group of students converse when they have assigned reading roles to when they do not. A future study could examine how the quality of conversations is impacted when students are no longer required to use assigned reading roles. Another possibility would be the students are able to choose what reading role to complete based on the strategies they used to better understand the text, instead of being assigned a reading role. It would be interesting to see if students could carry out natural conversations when scaffolds are limited or completely taken away. It is possible that students would flourish, and gain a new sense of control and responsibility over their conversations. It could also be possible that students would be more likely to get side-tracked or unsure of what to say.

Various talking models and release of scaffolding

There are many different ways teachers can conduct literature circles. It would be interesting to see how the same students respond to different literature circle models that have various levels of structure. For example, how are students conversations impacted when they take part in the very structured talking model, fist and fingers, compared to the more natural model of speaking into silence? In addition to examining the impact of the different speaking models, it would be interesting for a study to examine the ways in which scaffolds are monitored and then gradually taken away. In particular, I would like to learn more about the scaffold and the various amounts of structure involved with reading roles. In the past, I have struggled with knowing when the appropriate time is to take scaffolds away. Sometimes I believe the children are ready to be without them when they are not, and sometimes I leave them in place for too long that the children start becoming disinterested in the learning. I would be interested in learning more about the assessments that can be used within literature circles that will allow me to make decisions about gradually minimizing the scaffolds until they are no longer needed.

Final Thoughts

Throughout this six-week study, I learned a great deal about how literature circles allow my students to better understand a text and grow as readers. I began this study still unsure of what my students were actually gaining from literature circle discussions. I wanted my students to carry out meaningful conversations where they could engage in exploratory talk, which would ultimately allow them to deepen their understanding of the text while becoming acutely aware of how talking with their peers helps them accomplish this deeper understanding. I learned how students use the various types of talk in their conversations and how each kind of talk enhances the understanding of the students in various ways. I also learned how I can have students use their reading roles to facilitate and enhance the quality of conversations. In addition to learning about what was actually happening to students'

understanding of the text while they talked, I also learned what I can do in the future to allow students to gain more from their literature circle discussions. In order for students to form a deep understanding of a text through literature circles, they must be taught not only how to apply reading strategies to a text, but how to engage in effective conversations where they actively listen and respond, make inferences, ask questions, analyze the text, and conceptualize their thinking based on what they learned from their peers. Literature circles can be a very integral part of a balanced ELA curriculum, if teachers are prepared to properly instruct students on how to carry out meaningful conversations that will enhance their understanding of a text.

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Appendix A

Literature Circle Job Descriptions

Illustrator: Good readers picture or visualize what they read. The role of the illustrator is to draw and color one part of today's reading that is important to the story. You also need to include 2-3 well written sentences to explain your picture.

- Be sure your picture has good details from the story. Look back if you need to. COLOR!
- Your sentences need to have proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. They also need to be 4th grade sentences.

Connector: Good readers make connections between important ideas in the story and their own lives, the lives of others, or another story. Your connections must include the part in the story and a descriptive part of the connected person or story. Each connection must be presented in a paragraph with proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. You need to make 2-3 connections.

Vocabulary Enricher: Good readers develop new vocabulary as they read. Your role is to look for unfamiliar, unusual, interesting, or puzzling words. You need to find 3-4 of these and record them in your literature circle journal. Here is the format:

Word and page number-

Sentence that it is used in-

Meaning (you need to look this up in a dictionary)-

Use the word in a sentence of your own-

Passage Master: Good readers show insight about what they have read and reflect on the story. Your job is to choose 2-3 thought-provoking ideas, phrases, or paragraphs. Write down the passage in your journal and then why this passage was interesting to you. How is the passage important to the story?

Discussion Leader: Reading for meaning is a collaborative process. As we discuss with others, we deepen our own understanding of the story. Your job is to write 2-3 open-ended questions to lead your group in a discussion of what they read. Be sure to include your own answers to the questions.

Summarizer: Write a summary in your journal on the chapter(s) you read. Be sure to include only the important details, characters, and events.

- Must be well written paragraphs using proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Paragraphs must have at least 4-5 sentences with a good topic sentence and conclusion.

Adapted from:

Marchiando, K. (2013). Creating lifelong readers: Student ownership and peer interaction in literature circles. *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, 41(3), 13-21.

Appendix B

Literature Circles Exit Ticket

Name: _____

Book Title: _____

Group Members: _____

A discussion highlight was:

Today's discussion helped me understand the story better because:

Something I would add to my literature circle job is:

A question I want to address tomorrow is:

Appendix C

Observation Protocol

Student talk/actions in literature circles & student writing samples

Observation Date and Time: _____ Length of Observation: _____

Description of Activities (teacher and student)	Reflective Field notes

Appendix D

CONSENT FOR OBSERVATION, WORK SAMPLES, AND AUDIO RECORDING OF STUDENT

The purpose of this research study is to explore the value in the kinds of talk that take place in literature circles. The person conducting this research is a graduate student at The College at Brockport, SUNY as well as your child's fourth grade teacher. This study is for partial fulfillment of the requirements for a graduate degree. This study will not disrupt your child's classroom routine. There will be no impact on your child's grades or class standing by not participating in this study. If you would like your child to participate, consent to audio record must be given.

If you agree to have your child participate in this research study, she/her will be observed and audio recorded during his/her regularly scheduled literature circle time. Observations will be recorded as field notes and documented in a research journal. Writing samples from your child's literature circle job journal and classroom exit tickets may be collected and used. Photo copies will be made of the original work samples and your child's name will be replaced with a pseudonym. All work samples and the master list with student names and pseudonyms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in which only the primary researcher will have access. All data, including work samples, research journal, field notes, and audio recordings will be destroyed and deleted upon completion of the study.

In order for your child to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in the study. If you would like for your child to participate, and agree with the statements below, please sign your name in the space provided at the end. You may change your mind at any time and your child may leave the study without penalty, even after the study has begun. Your child can decline participation in the study even with your consent to participate.

I understand that:

- a. My child's participation is voluntary and s/he has the right to refuse participation in the study.
- b. My child's confidentiality is protected. Her/his name will not be recorded in observation notes. There will be no way to connect my child to the observation. If any publication results from this research, s/he would not be identified by name. Results will be given through the use of pseudonyms, so neither the participants, nor the school, can be identified.
- c. There will be no anticipated personal risks or benefits because of participation in this project.
- d. My child's participation involves participating in regularly scheduled classroom literacy activities in her/his fourth grade classroom.
- e. The researcher will observe my child during literature circle time (five times/wk.) for approximately six weeks.

- f. The results will be used for the completion of a thesis paper by the primary researcher.
- g. My child's participation will involve being audio taped during literature circle discussions. The researcher will transcribe the audio tapes. There will be no way to connect my child to the quotes. If any publication results from this research, he/she would not be identified by name.
- h. My child's participation may involve having work samples, such as job journals and exit tickets, collected for data. Pseudonyms will be used with the work samples. There will be no way to connect my child to the work samples. If any publication results from this research, he/she would not be identified by name.
- i. All data, including audio tapes, transcribed notes, research journal, and work samples from job journals and exit tickets, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet by the investigator. Only the primary investigator will have access to the notes, tapes and corresponding materials. Data, audio tapes, transcribed notes, and consent forms will be destroyed by shredding or burning, when the research has been accepted and approved.

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to allow my child to participate as a participant in this study. I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. If you have any questions, you may contact:

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Child's Name: _____

Consent to Observe:

Signature of Parent: _____ Date: _____

Consent to Use Work Samples:

Signature of Parent: _____ Date: _____

Consent to Audiotape:

Signature of Parent: _____ Date: _____