

EXAMINING THE NEW LITERACIES PEDAGOGIES OF SECONDARY ENGLISH
LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS

by

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Dedication

To all those whose literacy strengths have been overlooked, and those who are committed to the continued improvement of literacy education

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Abstract

EXAMINING THE NEW LITERACIES PEDAGOGIES OF SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS

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This qualitative study highlights the practices of current secondary English language arts teachers who graduated from the teacher education program at George Mason University to address the following research questions: (1) To what extent and in what ways do English language arts teachers who graduated from one teacher education program that focuses heavily on New Literacies pedagogies incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their current practice? (2) How do these teachers use digital technologies in their literacy instruction, according to their own narratives? This work is grounded in the sociocultural view that literacy is deictic and situated; modes of communication are not stagnant and vary across contexts. Data collection included an iterative series of three interviews each with seven teachers (21 interviews total). The analytical process consisted of open coding, which led to the development of categories and themes. The data indicate that teachers engage students in New Literacies pedagogies to an extent, but not necessarily with intent. Teachers also incorporate digital technologies into their teaching, though mainly in ways that are technological, rather than curricular. Finally, this research explores several ways that the teachers are enabled to and restricted from

engaging students in New Literacies pedagogies. A major implication is that teacher educators need to enable future teachers to authentically integrate New Literacies pedagogies with more traditional literacy instruction. Additionally, both policymakers and administrators must work to create contexts in which teachers are treated as intellectuals, giving them the autonomy to enact New Literacies pedagogies.

Chapter One

New Literacies researchers and pedagogues recognize the significant influence of social and cultural practices on literacy perspectives and development, as opposed to viewing literacy as solely an individual, mental practice (Gee, 2015). This paradigm relies on the assumption that literacy is deictic and situated within particular contexts. Therefore, meaningful literacy practices are varied and ever-changing. The changing nature of literacy has implications for the teaching of literacy in public education, as meaningful literacy instruction may vary between districts, schools, classrooms, and even individual students. As the notion of New Literacies pedagogies is not new, and many teacher education programs have been promoting aspects of this paradigm for quite some time, some teachers already incorporate these notions into their classrooms. The purpose of this study is to illuminate the New Literacy pedagogies (including those involving digital technologies) of secondary English language arts (ELA) teachers who graduated from George Mason University's (GMU) teacher education program, which focuses heavily on New Literacies pedagogies, as well as how the teachers' circumstances and context influences their practices. As New Literacies acknowledges the deictic nature of literacy and education, perspectives and uses of evolving technologies is highly relevant to the paradigm (Leu et al., 2013). In light of their significance in society and schools, which has been pervasive for some time and highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, I

focus a piece of this research specifically on the role that digital technologies play in the classrooms of these teachers.

This work is instrumental to the field of teaching and teacher education because teaching from a New Literacies focus shifts the role of teachers from “dispensers of literacy skills” to “orchestrators of learning contexts,” particularly once students have mastered fundamental literacy skills (Leu et al., 2013, p. 1163). Teacher educators who intentionally focus on developing New Literacies pedagogies in their teacher candidates need to know the extent to which the paradigm is being carried out into the profession, as well as the circumstances in which teachers feel New Literacies pedagogies can be enacted. This work is also significant to administrators and policymakers, as it highlights the contexts and circumstances in which teachers are able to incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their practice. In the remainder of this chapter I introduce the research, address the purpose and significance of the study, provide an overview of my positionality, situate the study in a sociocultural and critical theoretical framework, and provide key definitions of terms.

Problem Statement

Proponents of New Literacies, myself included, view literacy as a social and/or cultural practice, where language and communication are intricately tied with a particular purpose or goal (as opposed to decontextualized; Gee, 1992, 2015). The nature of the context, and the individuals who are considered “experts” in that particular setting, determine whether or not an individual is literate in any given space. This means that literacy is plural — literacies; there is more than one way to be literate, and there are

varying sets of rules for what makes an individual literate, depending on the situation at hand and the individuals with whom one is engaging in the literacy practice (Gee, 1992, 2015).

The institution of school has prioritized certain types of literacy over others; it has a specific set of notions about what counts as literacy, which often do not take into account its pluralistic, deictic, social, or contextual nature (Street, 1984, 2011). Though schools claim to be neutral in both the curriculum they deliver and the instructional methods through which they deliver it, the reality is that the demands of traditional literacy instruction and assessment address specific types of literacy — types that conform to the needs and desires of middle class, white, English-speaking students (Anders, 2011; Smagorinsky et al., 2020). Within this system, students who cannot meet benchmark levels of “literacy,” as determined by state and federal legislation, are often deemed “behind” and relegated to remedial or special education classrooms designed to raise their standardized testing scores (Anders, 2011; Smagorinsky et al., 2020). Schools, therefore, have been used to promote an agenda in western society — that individuals who do not conform to white, middle-class culture and work toward proficiency in dominant forms of literacy are not intelligent and cannot be successful (Smagorinsky et al., 2020; Street, 2011).

Not all individuals who work within schools or in teacher education programs view literacy in this monolithic way; the reality is quite the opposite in many cases. Individual teachers and schools have made substantial efforts to recognize and incorporate the various literacy practices of students in their daily interactions. However,

educational policy, particularly at the state and federal level, currently does not consider emic approaches — research considered from the perspective of those who belong to the social group being studied — to literacy research. Policy tends to follow research that is “neutral” and etic — from the perspective of individuals who do not belong to the social group, but instead observe with the lens of an outsider (Smagorinsky, 2017; Smagorinsky et al., 2020; Street, 2011). Policy, and the outcomes of policy (e.g., rigorous methods of accountability, such as standardized testing) that exist within the larger picture of public education do not take into consideration the various ways in which individual students might demonstrate their literacy practices (Smagorinsky, 2017).

New Literacies notions have been circulating in research on teaching and teacher education for quite some time, and many teacher education programs do incorporate a great deal of activities, assignments, and discussions that highlight aspects of this paradigm (Fowler-Amato et al., 2019; Lammert, 2020). However, the inclusion of New Literacies practices in schools is, at this point, optional, sporadic, and subject to the backgrounds and experiences of the teacher in question (Leu et al., 2013). As others have insinuated, this is, at least in part, a result of the lack of emphasis on critical pedagogies and New Literacies practices from a broader perspective in schools (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Jacobs, 2019; Kist & Pytash, 2015; Liu & Ball, 2019). It is not a required element of teacher preparation, new teacher mentoring, or professional development. Even when preservice teachers do engage in New Literacies work in their teacher preparation programs, they tend to maintain a more traditional view of literacy pedagogy and assessment, which means that their initial orientations do not reflect New Literacies

paradigms (Jacobs, 2019). Additionally, the policy initiatives and curricular standards teachers encounter once they begin their careers influence the practices of teachers who might otherwise approach literacy instruction in a different way (Leu et al., 2013). The demands of accountability from the institution of education may cause individual practitioners to push their existing New Literacies perspectives aside in order to help their students reach certain benchmark “achievement” levels (Jocius, 2017).

The lack of emphasis on New Literacies approaches in the realm of teaching and teacher education as a whole is clearly an issue at the political and administrative level of the institution of school. However, teachers and teacher educators have already demonstrated the possibilities of New Literacies pedagogies, even within the current structures of formal education (e.g., Bruce, 2009; Colantonio-Yurko et al., 2017; Dyches, 2017; Frankel et al., 2018; Ginsberg & Glenn, 2019; Hickey et al., 2011; Jocius, 2013, 2017; Lam et al., 2021; Manderino, 2012; Martin & Beese, 2017; Martinez & Montano, 2016; Sjodin, 2020; Smith, 2019). As providing an avenue for teachers to incorporate New Literacies is a major step into integrating the paradigm into schools, the question is how we might make New Literacies pedagogies seem more reasonable for practitioners.

Although there is a great deal of research on New Literacies practices, the majority of this scholarship, particularly as it relates to adolescents, has occurred in spaces outside of the institution of education (Mills, 2010), such as after-school programs at community centers or participants’ homes (e.g., Alvermann et al., 2012; Deroo & Watson, 2020). The tendency to conduct New Literacies research outside of school is, in part, because the traditional model of schooling has not necessarily encouraged or

rewarded those who incorporate New Literacies into their classrooms (Street, 1984, 2011). While the studies on New Literacies out of school is important work, it is often difficult to translate into in-school possibilities. We also need to avoid romanticizing out-of-school literacy practices, and instead consider how to leverage this paradigm in a way that reaches and benefits all students in the classroom (Hull, 2003).

In addition, while scholarship exists on the New Literacies practices of current teachers, much of the research is based on individual, specific instances of incorporating New Literacies into schools, contributing to complaints about the “limits of the local” in this line of research (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). To an extent, this limitation is due to the nature of the New Literacies paradigm, which encourages examining the context of a school and the students before deciding how to proceed with teaching. Therefore, these targeted examples are important to the field of New Literacies studies. However, we need to more broadly survey New Literacies pedagogues to determine the approaches and attitudes that are pervasive across contexts, as well as the ways particular contexts impact teachers’ New Literacies pedagogies in general.

Statement of Purpose

In this research, I investigate the practices of secondary English language arts teachers who have some background in New Literacies pedagogies through their teacher education program. I explore the extent to which the participants engage in New Literacies pedagogies, as well as the circumstances which enable or constrain their engagement in New Literacies pedagogies. This work has implications for several groups. First, it provides some insight into the level of influence that one current teacher

education program — the secondary English language arts program at George Mason University — that intentionally focuses on New Literacies pedagogies has on the practices of its graduates. Second, it contributes to the conversation on how we might improve our teacher education programs in a way that encourages graduates to engage in New Literacies pedagogies. This work illuminates the circumstances in which New Literacies pedagogies are enabled and constrained, and provides useful information which teacher educators can use to better equip future teachers for practicing New Literacies pedagogies. This study also addresses the larger issue of how New Literacies might reasonably be included in secondary public school classrooms, as well as the influences that promote or deter current teachers from teaching using New Literacies practices. Finally, this work has implications for policymakers and administrators, as it discusses the type of environment that encourages teachers to incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their classrooms, and sheds some light on current policies and contexts that are incompatible with practicing New Literacies.

My first research question explores the extent to which and the ways in which teachers engage in New Literacies pedagogies in their classroom. The follow-up question asks about the participants' experiences working in schools — specifically what circumstances enable and/or constrain the manifestation of their literacy pedagogies. In other words, the two parts of the question combined are intended to explore the extent to which the participants felt they engage in New Literacies pedagogies, as well as the factors that contribute to this level of engagement. The second research question is directly related to the incorporation of digital technologies in the participants'

classrooms. As I discussed above, an important aspect of New Literacies is the view that tools and technologies play an integral role in shaping the experiences of an individual in a given context, and mediate the level of success that the individual has in meeting the expectations of the literacy standards in a particular setting (Gee, 2015). Given the pervasive and expanding nature of digital technologies in society and schools (particularly since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic), the second research question focuses on the ways in which these teachers include digital technologies into their practice. Additionally, since simply including digital technology into the classroom does not necessarily indicate that a practice conforms to the New Literacies paradigm, the second question also encompasses an exploration of the degree to which and the circumstances in which these teachers incorporate digital technologies in ways that reflect a New Literacies stance (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Mills, 2010).

Research Questions

1. To what extent and in what ways do English language arts teachers who graduated from one teacher education program that focuses heavily on New Literacies pedagogies incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their current practice, according to their own narratives?
 - a. Under what circumstances and to what extent have these teachers felt encouraged to or constrained from practicing New Literacies pedagogies, and what factors have contributed to that sense of encouragement or constraint?

2. How do these teachers use digital technologies in their literacy instruction, according to their own narratives?
 - a. Under what circumstances and to what extent have these teachers felt encouraged to or constrained from incorporating digital technologies in their pedagogy, and what factors have contributed to that sense of encouragement or constraint?

Overview of Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways and extent to which teachers who graduated from the secondary English language arts teacher education program at George Mason University — a program that focuses explicitly on the New Literacies paradigm — engage in New Literacies pedagogies. I draw upon elements of narrative inquiry for my work. In this research, I view narrative inquiry as “both a phenomenon and a method” (Berry & Cook, 2018, p. 87). In other words, my orientation is that stories are central to our lives, and that the stories individuals tell are both rich data sources and important to consider when making decisions about policy and practice. Thus, it is key that participants’ knowledge and beliefs are highlighted through their own stories (Berry & Cook, 2018; Kim, 2015; Riessman, 2008). My method reflects this orientation. The main data source for this research is interviews, as interviews provide the opportunity to investigate New Literacies pedagogies from the perspectives of the participants, and thus center their voices and stories (Kim, 2015).

Rationale and Significance

New Literacies has been criticized for “the limits of the local,” or its lack of applicability to a variety of contexts (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). This is, to an extent, a conundrum, as a major premise of the New Literacies perspective is that literacy is context-dependent, making the standardization of practices difficult. Gee (2015) pointed out the failure of New Literacies to move beyond notions of literacy communities as local and static (bordering on stereotypical), and how this has contributed to a lack of action in the broader field of educational policy by those engaged in New Literacies work; he specifically cited the absence of intervention by the New Literacies community in the era of No Child Left Behind.

Although New Literacies proponents believe that literacy is localized and contextual, there are certain tenets of New Literacies that span across boundaries (Leu et al., 2013). (I will discuss the major tenets of New Literacies in chapter two.) Ladson-Billings (1995) called for research that bridges researchers and practitioners, as well as research that looks to exemplary pedagogues for incorporating students’ cultures and identities into the classroom. Mills (2010) called for research on New Literacies that is situated in authentic educational contexts. This research contributes to the literature in those areas. It also addresses the issue of the “limits of the local” by exploring the ways that New Literacies pedagogies are currently being incorporated into the participants’ classrooms, and what contexts and circumstances provide an environment where teachers feel that New Literacies pedagogies is possible, and even encouraged. This work

contributes to ongoing work to improve the communication between researchers and practitioners, particularly in the realm of New Literacies pedagogies.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, I provide a platform for practitioners who serve in our secondary schools every day to share their perspectives and pedagogical decisions, particularly those related to New Literacies, with their former teacher education program (a program that explicitly focuses on promoting New Literacies pedagogies — discussed in chapter three). Additionally, I synthesize the narratives of these teachers in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of what New Literacies pedagogies look like in schools, and what circumstances in which these pedagogies thrive or are constrained. I bring my own lenses to the research in terms of what New Literacies pedagogies is, which I will elaborate on in future sections. Therefore, I am explicit in my analysis about how my own perspectives influence the findings.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural Theory

New Literacies perspectives are born out of sociocultural views of literacy. A major premise of sociocultural theory is literacy is a social practice that is inextricably linked to culture (Gee, 1992; Gutierrez & Lee, 2009; Rueda, 2011; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 2003), where traditional cognitive skills are not deemed as important as “ways of social belonging” (Van Enk et al., 2005, p. 498). Sociocultural proponents argue that literacy is not a fixed set of skills; it varies according to the place, time, and social setting. In addition, literacy is never a decontextualized practice (Gee, 1992).

Too many literacy scholars and anthropologists assume that reading, writing, and communicating are neutral activities, overlooking the power structures that decide what literacy is in the first place (Street, 1984). Street (1984) termed this the autonomous view of literacy, and contrasted it with the ideological model, in which he argued that it is impossible to isolate reading and writing from context, and there is no neutral or objective literacy. Instead, reading, writing, and communicating are embedded in the larger world of literacy, and literacy is intertwined with Discourse — “distinctive and integrated ways of thinking, acting, interacting, talking, and valuing connected with a particular social identity or role, with its own unique history” (Gee, 1992, p. 33).

Gee (1992) contended that humans are made up of a variety of Discourses (big D) — groups and ways of life that we are meaningfully a part of. Language/literacy is one of many meaningful ways in which we do or do not identify with or feel ourselves an authentic part of a particular group. In order for individuals to be literate in any given context, they must be socialized into the Discourses — the particular situation(s) and nuance(s) of the group or institution at hand (Gee, 1992). Development of a set of literacies associated with a specific Discourse occurs best through many different types of social interactions, including talking and interacting with those who are already members of the group, as opposed to through direct instruction. This gives the individual an opportunity to understand the values and beliefs of the group. Often, this social interaction occurs between a novice learner and an individual or group of individuals who is considered somewhat of an expert in the particular type of literacy being addressed (Gee, 1992; Rueda, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978).

Humans participate in many different Discourses, and therefore may or may not fit into a given social situation (Gee, 1992). Often, whether a person is considered literate or not depends entirely on the context in which the individual is in at any given moment. Because different contexts call for different social norms and Discourses, individuals may be literate in one context, but not in another (Street, 2003). Additionally, a person's Discourses can conflict with one another, forcing that individual to choose which Discourse he/she wants to express or be a part of at any given moment. This tension can influence the level of engagement and interest individuals have in a particular Discourse, particularly one that is at odds with a Discourse they feel more familiar with or loyal to. This ultimately affects whether or not an individual pursues expertise and fluency in one or both of the conflicting Discourses (Gee, 1992).

School is one example of a social institution that often brings with it a particular set of Discourses, and the nature of the relationship between a teacher and student is one such social interaction (Gee, 1992; Street, 2003). Schools and classrooms are built around specific cultural norms and structures. The interactions between teachers and students involve reading and writing, of course, but the outcomes of reading and writing are tied to the social relationship between the individual (the student) and the social situation (the relationship with the teacher, the relationship with other students, the relationship with the school, etc.).

Because literacy is multidimensional and contextual, it is impossible to provide an all-encompassing assessment of literacy. Standardized tests are an attempt to decontextualize literacy, but in reality they measure a specific set of skills within the

realms of traditional reading and writing. They are, therefore, not adequate assessments of students' literacy skills from the sociocultural perspective (Gee, 2003). The contextual nature of literacy, coupled with the fact that school offers only one context which any given student may or may not be familiar with, influences students' literacy development in school when measured using traditional standards of achievement.

The foundational aspect of sociocultural approaches to education that must be considered in all literacy scholarship is that a one-size-fits-all approach to literacy instruction is not possible. This narrow view of literacy — one that assumes there is, in fact, a dominant form of literacy, all students learn in the same way, all students have the same educational objectives, and individuality does not play a role in education — is undermining the lived experiences, cultures, and backgrounds of students. Asking all schools and all teachers to approach literacy in the same manner seriously undermines the varying types of knowledge that individuals have, want to have, and value (Street, 1984). In order to make literacy instruction more equitable for all students, sociocultural approaches are imperative in our increasingly diverse nation. We must consider that students' goals may not necessarily align with the intended outcomes of traditional literacy instruction, and therefore we should take into account their perspectives and identities when determining what we focus on in school (Gutierrez & Lee, 2009).

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy research rejects the notion that educational institutions are objective, meritorious, and colorblind (Freire, 1970, 1998; Luke, 2019; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Street, 1984; Vossoughi & Gutierrez, 2016). The reality is that literacy

cannot be separated from social contexts and conventions, and to claim that this can happen is to value one set of contexts and conventions above the rest. Western cultures have privileged specific types of literacy — those that are most closely tied to white, middle class individuals who speak English as a first language — and have deemed those who are not skilled in those specific areas illiterate (Street, 1984). These values have extended to the traditional approaches to literacy in U.S. public education.

The approaches to school commonly implemented and valued in our public education system do not necessarily have an impact on higher order performance tasks. In addition, different types of literacy afford individuals different sets of skills (Scribner & Cole, 1981). Thus, traditional approaches to literacy in U.S. public education are simply those that develop the skills valued by Western cultures. If a child has not been socialized into the Discourses and approaches to literacy that are valued at school, they will be deemed as less successful than their socialized counterparts (Gee, 1992). This is even more true when the Discourses at school, which are new to an individual, conflict with the Discourses a student brings to school, which are familiar and understandable to an individual. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) assert that critical approaches to literacy research and literacy pedagogy challenge traditional, accepted norms in schools that privilege white, middle class students and seek to overturn existing power structures.

Sociocultural approaches to teaching and learning are inherently critical (Vossoughi & Gutierrez, 2016). Researchers and teachers, myself included, who bring a sociocultural lens to literacy instruction recognize that students are individual beings who bring knowledge and literacy skills to school with them. Schools should capitalize on that

knowledge and those skills in order to develop students' literacy in a way that is meaningful to them in order to give them the tools to change their own circumstances and/or the circumstances of others in the world (Freire, 1998; Vossoughi & Gutierrez, 2016).

The critical nature of this work is embedded in the idea that literacy instruction can be liberating. This is inspired by the work of Freire (1998) who argued that, in many traditional educational settings, the teachers and the students are represented as opposites, where knowledge is a “gift bestowed” by the teacher onto the student (p. 72). The students are considered passive receptacles who are responsible for memorizing and repeating the information provided by the teacher. In this type of setting, knowledge is objective, and the students are responsible for learning what is “true.”

An alternative view of the teacher-student dynamic is what Gutierrez and Lee (2009) termed a horizontal relationship, where teachers and students work side by side, as opposed to a vertical one, where the teacher always resides above the students, holding the power in the relationship. In this model, students have the capacity to produce original knowledge, and teachers can and should learn from students; there is a joint responsibility for learning between the students and the teacher, where students are human beings as opposed to objects (Freire, 1998). This process, which Freire (1970) called “problem-posing education”, involves emancipation for the students, as they are given freedom and power to investigate issues and affect change in their society.

If our goal truly is to understand literacy and learning for all students, then context must be included in the picture. When we ignore it, we are contributing to the

creation of discriminatory power structures in our schools. Literacy must be addressed as something that is ever-changing, is different for every person, and is variable according to the multiple contexts in which it is situated. As Rueda (2011) noted, this does not oppose the idea that literacy can be unifying and connect people across contexts. Shared ways of knowing, in fact, allow people to transcend time and place, and common Discourses give people a way to make these connections. Valuing the contextual and multidimensional nature of literacy means acknowledging that individuals have different ways of approaching, understanding, and demonstrating knowledge, and that no one set of cultural practices should dominate or have privilege over the rest. This is how sociocultural approaches to literacy inform critical approaches to literacy; by attending to the sociocultural, we are inherently being critical researchers and pedagogues.

Definition of Key Terminology

This section succinctly defines several essential nuanced terms that I use throughout my work.

- ***Critical Pedagogy:*** Derived from critical theory, critical pedagogues recognize that the institution of education privileges some individuals while marginalizing others, and are cognizant of the ways in which this affects students. Critical pedagogues also look for ways to mitigate the harm done to students through their own practice.
- ***New Literacies:*** New Literacies is a paradigm which acknowledges the deictic nature of literacy and the ways in which modern thinking and technology have

reshaped and continuously influenced what is important in our communication practices.

- ***Nondominant or Minority Students:*** These are terms I use for students who do not fit the “standard” mold privileged in traditional educational approaches (e.g., white, English-speaking, Christian, neurotypical, middle-class).
- ***Sociocultural Theory:*** This is the view that social and cultural factors affect the way that we think and live, which has implications for school, as our social and cultural situations may or may not fit the mold of the educational structures in place in a given context.
- ***Traditional Literacy:*** Traditional literacy is the type of literacy — reading, writing, and communication skills — that schools in the United States have historically enacted and, to a large extent, remain focused on. The goal of traditional literacy is to help students reach “proficient” levels of literacy by the standards of the government and develop “higher order” cognitive skills in students that will, in theory, create opportunities for them to improve their status in society.

Organization of the Dissertation

In this section, I have introduced the purpose and rationale for my proposed dissertation study. In chapter two, I will review relevant literature related to New Literacies pedagogies. In chapter three, I outline the research methods I employed to consider my research question. In chapter four, I present my findings for each of the

research questions. In chapter five, I discuss the implications of my findings from chapter four. I also present the boundaries and limitations of the study.

Chapter Two

In chapter one, I discussed how indispensable New Literacies is to effective public education. The problem is that, while this view is crucial to equitable literacy teaching and learning, it is not a paradigm that is privileged in the current structures of education, nor is it necessarily an emphasis in teacher training, new teacher mentoring, or professional development (Street, 1984, 2011). Many teachers are never even exposed to the paradigm, much less provided an opportunity to engage with it. Public schools still, for the most part, adhere to traditional forms of literacy instruction and assessment (Smagorinsky et al., 2020; Street, 2011). While this issue certainly needs to be approached from a policy perspective, the intention of this research is to highlight the practices of current secondary ELA teachers who have been exposed to New Literacies pedagogies and to investigate the circumstances in which these teachers enact these pedagogies in their practice, as well as the circumstances that might restrict teachers from enacting New Literacies pedagogies. This research contributes to the conversation on reasonable ways to include New Literacies pedagogies into teaching in our current schools. It also informs teacher education programs on how to incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their programs in ways that address the needs of current teachers, including what barriers teachers might encounter. Finally, this research is relevant to both administrators and policymakers, as it details some of the barriers under their control that may prevent teachers from enacting New Literacies pedagogies.

This chapter has two main purposes. The first is to more clearly explain what I mean by the term New Literacies. I include a section where I discuss the connection between sociocultural theory and New Literacies, including how New Literacies paradigms address some of the longstanding concerns in sociocultural theories of pedagogy. I then present the major tenets of New Literacies. The second purpose of this chapter is to highlight recent New Literacies pedagogies research, particularly in secondary English language arts. There is a plethora of available research on New Literacies; therefore, the examples are meant to be illustrative, rather than exhaustive. I also provide an overview of New Literacies in teacher education, focusing on what the role of teachers is within this paradigm.

New Literacies Versus new literacies

A variety of researchers and scholars work within realms of New Literacies, and this work ranges widely in scope and topic. Leu et al. (2013) argued that New Literacies can be divided into two categories: new literacies (with lowercase letters) and New Literacies (with capital letters). New literacies (lowercase) refers to research that investigates specific aspects of New Literacies (e.g., multiliteracies, online reading comprehension, information and communication technologies, etc.). New Literacies (uppercase) refers to the overarching paradigm — what patterns and notions persist across new literacies research. It also refers more generically to changing notions of what counts as literacy. In my work, I focus on the latter — New Literacies as a way of thinking, rather than specific skills or aspects of technological advancement that fall underneath the paradigm.

Sociocultural Tensions and New Literacies

The National Literacy Panel report by August and Shanahan (2006) explains how cultural and linguistic factors can affect literacy achievement in youth. This text exposes many of the tensions and outright differences between current forms of public education and equitable sociocultural teaching practices, but does not offer solutions or specific approaches for classroom teachers and schools-based educators. One potential reason for this lack of an actionable approach, at least in the August and Shanahan (2006) report, is linked to Rueda's (2011) discussion on the tacit and fluid nature of sociocultural norms and values. In order to try and understand students better, educators may attempt to make the tacit aspects more tangible and the fluid aspects more constant. However, they run the risk of making broad judgements about groups of students; minimizing aspects of a child's background to rigid, surface-level knowledge; and approaching diverse students with deficit thinking, all of which directly contradict the purposes of a sociocultural approach (Rueda, 2011). As Rueda (2011; see also Gutierrez & Lee, 2009) discussed, an individual's culture is not easy to define, as it is often tacit and automated — even those who appear to belong to the same culture often have nuanced beliefs and values which differ from those around them. Additionally, culture and the influence of culture are constantly changing (Gutierrez & Lee, 2009). This makes culture a difficult construct to pinpoint and study, which is one reason why the importance of individuality and culture has been minimized or completely erased in public education policy, particularly since the institution of No Child Left Behind.

The purpose of sociocultural literacy instruction, then, is not necessarily to create an individualized plan tailored to the variety of identities that students bring with them to school, but to provide students with space and autonomy to bring their own funds of knowledge to the conversations, activities, and assessments on a daily basis (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992). Funds of knowledge is a term that refers to the diverse bodies of knowledge that individuals accumulate through their families and households — knowledge that is “historically accumulated and culturally developed” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). New Literacies is a specific avenue through which to consider and implement sociocultural approaches to literacy instruction. This paradigm deals with modes of communication, including how individuals produce and consume information.

New Literacies researchers and teachers recognize the existence and value of the many different types of literacy and Discourses that individuals may bring to school, and are open to exploring new definitions and types of literacy, acknowledging the crucial role that social context plays in shaping literacy practices, and how, in return, literacy practices shape society (Leu et al., 2013; Street, 2003). They also reflect on which types of literacy and Discourses are being privileged in a given situation (and thus, which are being overshadowed or excluded), and acknowledge that changing our notions of what and whom we consider to be “literate” has the potential to make school more equitable and relevant to a larger percentage of students (Leu et al., 2013; Street, 2003; Van Enk et al., 2005). Finally, New Literacies pedagogues investigate how they themselves might incorporate literacies into their classroom that are not currently being privileged (Street, 2003). “Paradigm cases” of New Literacies — where conventional notions of literacy are

no longer the priority — provide an avenue where educators can reach more students by inviting and encouraging literacy skills and cultural norms that have traditionally not been privileged in schools (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007).

Another potential reason that a solution to sociocultural inequities in the classroom has not been adequately addressed is the issue of efficiency that is so ingrained in the world of traditional education (Rueda, 2011). In schools, we are often worried about which types of literacy will be most economically advantageous for students' futures. Though not "inherently superior," traditional educational literacy (e.g., reading comprehension related to traditional, print-based texts, writing analytical essays related to works in the canon of literature) is often considered "more socially powerful" than other forms of literacy (Van Enk et al., 2005, p. 503). While there are arguments about the validity and the effects of the belief in the social power of traditional literacy, New Literacies acknowledges that traditional forms of reading and writing are often valued in society, particularly in high-stakes situations (e.g., job applications). Traditional literacies are not considered obsolete in the realm of New Literacies; rather, local literacies (e.g., the ability to read and follow a recipe, fluency in a language other than English) and conventional school literacies are both considered important, and a merging between them is essential in order to facilitate student development; thus, New Literacy research and instruction seek a balance between dominant and local literacies (Leu et al., 2013; Street, 2003).

This balance between dominant and local literacies works in the opposite direction as well. Much of the work in sociocultural approaches to education and literacy

have centered around individuals who are traditionally considered cultural or linguistic “minorities.” However, sociocultural factors affect all students in a variety of ways (Rueda, 2011). Students who come to school socialized into the dominant Discourses and literacies can benefit from learning about the literacies of those that have not been privileged in schools. Thus, striving toward this balance is not, ideally, intended to simply socialize individuals into the dominant community, but to expose all individuals to a new range of practices while still acknowledging their individual backgrounds and cultures.

The role of New Literacies pedagogues, in part, is to intentionally create flexible and autonomous spaces so that students can use their individual knowledge and skills to grow and learn. They also are constantly asking what types of literacy are being privileged in their classrooms, and what types of literacy they are leaving out. They work to design their pedagogy so that both dominant and local literacies are incorporated.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and New Literacies

New Literacies fall under the larger paradigm of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), and many aspects of CRP are critical for understanding New Literacies, both of which address sociocultural issues in teaching. Culturally relevant pedagogy is a theory originally proposed by Ladson-Billings (1995), who argued that students’ identities and cultures must be regarded as knowledge and thus incorporated into schools and classrooms. She proposed that, in order for teachers to engage in CRP, they must do three things: (1) contribute to students’ academic development, (2) acknowledge the significance of culture and demonstrate that significance by authentically incorporating it

as knowledge into the classroom, and (3) cultivate critical consciousness within themselves and their students. New Literacies is more specific than CRP, but cannot be enacted without enacting CRP. In the following sections, I discuss aspects of New Literacies that fall under the wider umbrella of CRP. Later in the chapter, I will discuss elements that are more specific to New Literacies. In this study, I asked participants about New Literacies pedagogies that apply to the larger paradigm of CRP, as well as pedagogies that are specific to New Literacies.

The Deictic Nature of Literacy

Aligned with sociocultural theories of literacy, New Literacies scholars argue that literacy is no longer (or perhaps never really was) composed of stagnant pieces of information that an individual can acquire and master. Literacy in today's world is "deictic" in nature, which means that it is constantly evolving. To be literate one day does not necessarily mean an individual will be literate the next (Leu et al., 2013). Therefore, the ability to understand and memorize existing facts is no longer a top priority, as a given set of facts may or may not be relevant the next year, month, or even day. Rather, literacy is dependent on the skills and strategies an individual cultivates and possesses to methodically approach the various tools and texts available in any given situation, and use those tools and texts to achieve a desired outcome (Leu et al., 2013). New Literacies pedagogues acknowledge that literacy is always changing, and honor this acknowledgement through their teaching in a variety of ways (some of which are discussed in future sections). For example, in English language arts, New Literacies teachers would incorporate a variety of texts and genres in their teaching. While this may

include texts and genres from the literary canon, it would also acknowledge that newer texts and genres significantly matter to students' literacy capabilities, and would thus incorporate these newer texts and genres in their teaching.

Challenging the Domination of “Experts” and Expert Texts

A key aspect of New Literacies is centered around the question of who should and can produce knowledge. New Literacies proponents do not endorse notions of “getting back to our roots” by looking to “experts,” “professionals,” and historical figures in favor of the pursuit of an idealized and glorified former state of being. This emphasis on the past as a place that we need to return to encourages an educational system built around rote learning, memorization, and standardization. Instead, New Literacies proponents question what constitutes an expert, and maintain that specific individuals and texts are not the only sources of knowledge in a particular field; while the expertise of professionals is not necessarily discounted, it is one set of voices in the conglomerate of contributions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Traditionally, credibility and the privilege to widely share knowledge and opinions have largely been determined by credentials such as how many degrees/certifications an individual holds, what institutions he/she attended, an/or what connections an individual has, which is especially concerning when considering the fact that white middle- and upper-class individuals have dominated the institutions and networks associated with credibility.

New Literacies acknowledges that expertise and knowledge is not “limited and scarce,” but is possessed uniquely by people of varying races, cultures, classes, and backgrounds (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007, p. 18). The boundaries between who is

considered a producer and who is labeled a consumer of knowledge are blurred as people are becoming more inclined to prioritize relationships over the somewhat arbitrary construct of credibility (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). What this means is that centralized publishing, which has long been controlled by institutions and small groups of people, no longer holds the value that perhaps it once did. While edited, published texts certainly still have their place, individuals are just as likely to look for information from “ordinary” or “average” citizens, people that the individual can relate to, as they are to consult a more formal or “credible” source. This shift in information-seeking means that the lived experiences and knowledge of a variety of people are privileged.

New Literacies pedagogues encourage their students to question these lines between those who produce and those who consume knowledge (Leu et al., 2013). Under this model, students are encouraged to critically examine the work of “experts,” while themselves creating and producing texts (in a variety of forms) that demonstrate their own beliefs and understandings of the world. Digital platforms have shattered the glass ceiling that was once publishing and have opened up opportunities for individuals to become creators of content. Since virtually anyone has the ability and permission to post on the internet (and other platforms), a literate individual is no longer one who consumes and retains existing information, but rather is an active producer of original knowledge and content (Hobbs, 2017). In addition, the lack of regulation of content creation means that being literate requires an individual to become his/her own editor and determine the legitimacy of a given text on an individual basis (Moje et al., 2020). I will more closely address several of these topics in future sections.

Positioning Students as Literate. Students as a group have not traditionally been considered experts in school; literacy has been something that “happens to adolescents rather than with them” (Frankel et al., 2018, p. 447). The presupposition is often that students come to school illiterate, and the experts at school are responsible for changing that by passing down the knowledge that they possess. Within a New Literacies paradigm, however, students are viewed as individuals who come to school with existing, albeit varied, relationships with literacy.

Many of the populations that sociocultural and New Literacies studies focus on have historically been underserved by traditional educational approaches. Because, in many cases, these students have been subject to persistent reinforcement that they are not literate individuals, the participants often do not consider literacy a part of their identity. To challenge this notion, researchers and teachers have worked to position students as autonomous and experts of literacy in their own lives, though the ways that students are positioned and the liberation of the students in the classroom are manifested in a variety of ways (Caraballo, 2017; Martin & Beese, 2017; Sjodin, 2020). This approach opposes the “banking” method of learning, instead opting for a model where knowledge is co-constructed and literacy is a social experience (Freire, 1998).

Teachers are directly responsible for fostering students’ understanding of their unique relationship with literacy, including their literacy identities and beliefs about their literacy capabilities, which is mediated through the pedagogical choices teachers enact and privilege in the classroom. Thus, teachers need to reflect on what is deemed as success (and, consequently, failure), what types of texts are being included (and what is

being left out), and what skills are being prioritized (and what skills are not being emphasized) in their classrooms (Caraballo 2017; Jocius, 2017). When educators have highly specific and inflexible notions of what literacy achievement looks like, they risk overlooking the literacy capabilities of the students in front of them. For example, Caraballo (2017) discussed the experience of one student who consistently received low grades in his ELA class, but identified as a writer. He (the student) contended that the conceptions of writing in his class did not capture the ways in which he himself valued writing, which, to him, was less about grammatical rules and more about self-expression. Similarly, Jocius (2017) explored the text production of two students, and points out how the student who preferred to create texts that fit into a more traditional view of literacy was viewed, at least in this case, as a “good” student. In contrast, the student who preferred less traditional forms of literacy, but still engaged in the meaningful production of texts, was viewed as a “bad” student.” ELA teachers who view their discipline as a place where individuals can bring a variety of discourses, passions, and views to the table, both for the sake of development and critical interpretation, have more of a chance to facilitate positive literacy identities in their diverse set of students (Caraballo, 2017).

In order to position students as literate, they must be included in the conversation about both what constitutes literacy and how to go about fostering literacy skills (Frankel et al., 2018). One way to start this conversation is to explicitly ask them how to modify instruction to best suit their needs (which may be more appropriate in a secondary setting than an elementary setting; Dyches, 2017). Teachers can also ask students about their own views of literacy, including what it is, its level of importance, and where they see

themselves fitting into the literate world (Caraballo, 2017). Working to understand and incorporate students' experiences and funds of knowledge is another key aspect of cultivating positive literacy identities (see section below; Gonzalez et al., 2005). Frankel et al. (2018) explicitly modified the roles of students in the classroom, positioning their 12th grade students as “literacy mentors.” This shifted the role of teacher-student to a more collaborative approach. The process included direct conversations with the 12th grade mentors about standardized literacy education and assessment in the United States, acknowledging the fact that they are not neutral. This strategy contributes to a breakdown of barriers between expert and novice, as it provides a space for discussion about what else literacy entails beyond the aspects that have been identified by the state or even the district.

Positioning students as literate does not mean that teachers avoid challenging students or asking them to engage in risk-taking. Rather, teachers can affirm that the knowledge students bring into the classroom is valid, and then work to facilitate an environment where students are called on to critique what they know or believe in light of new information and discussion with others (Pytash et al., 2017; Sjodin, 2020). The notion of incorporating challenging tasks when positions students as literate connects back to the discussion above about merging dominant and local literacies; the goal is not to simply reinforce what students already know, but to acknowledge it while also exposing them to new ways of thinking and being.

The hierarchical structure of school is a major barrier to many aspects of New Literacies pedagogies, including this notion of authentically positioning students as

literate (Frankel et al., 2018). Researchers and teachers have found that even conscious and explicit efforts to value students as experts have restraints in the current model of education (Frankel et al., 2018). This issue is by no means a reason to halt these efforts, but does demonstrate a need for a continued focus on teacher-student dynamics in addition to continued questioning of the best methods for the structure of public schools as a whole.

Valuing Lived Experiences and Funds of Knowledge. Formal education and traditional school structures make up a small part of many students' lives (Anders, 2011; Van Enk et al., 2005). Literacy is multidimensional; its development can take place in many different forms and places, as opposed to being a fixed and somewhat limited set of skills that develops sequentially and is practiced mostly in school (Kirkland & Hull, 2011). Literacy is developed in many different areas of life, literacy skills are highly dependent upon the context, and school is not necessarily the place where an individual learns the majority of his/her literacy skills. Additionally, to be literate in one context is not to be literate in all contexts (Kirkland & Hull, 2011).

Students bring their various biases, experiences, and understandings of the world to school with them. Texts are not neutral, people are not neutral, and reading is not a passive task (Gee, 2001; Street, 2003). If all students read the same text, each might potentially walk away from that text with a different perspective of its importance and meaning (Gee, 1992). Knowledge and literacy are not context-free (Gee, 1992).

For many children, the distance between home and school is vast (Smagorinsky et al., 2020). People tend to be more successful on a task that relates to their everyday lives

and knowledge in some way (Gee, 2001). Students whose linguistic norms at home do not match the linguistic norms at school, or students whose experiences at home do not relate to the literacy activities in school, struggle to make necessary connections between what they already know and what they are learning in order to develop (August & Shanahan, 2006). The challenge of connecting home and school is even larger for students whose first language is not English (Verhoeven, 2011). Many of the aspects of life that the students already know about and can connect to — their funds of knowledge — are not necessarily explored or even mentioned in a traditional school setting (August & Shanahan, 2006; Gonzalez et al., 2005).

Students who do not meet the traditional standards of public education are more likely to be labeled as deficient (Gutierrez & Lee, 2009; Smagorinsky et al., 2020). Students as young as five years old have been deemed failures based on traditional school notions of success (Anders, 2011). Changing this narrative requires a focus on what students do know, building relationships with students, and identifying students' unique needs (Anders, 2011; Janzen, 2008). Changing focus in this way means that teachers must know their students and what funds of knowledge they are bringing into the classroom in order to help scaffold new learning; this allows them to connect students' everyday knowledge, interests and language with the language of the subject at hand (Anders, 2011; Janzen, 2008; Rueda, 2011). In addition, many students engage in and perform well on tasks out of school that are similar to traditional literacy in school, but resist the in-school approaches to those same literacy practices. Given that many students who are unsuccessful in traditional approaches to literacy are often successful in similar

activities in out of school settings, teachers must consider how to give students opportunities to learn about and demonstrate literacy skills that connect to their personal goals in their individual cultures and communities (Gutierrez & Lee, 2009; Kirkland & Hull, 2011; Moll et al., 1992).

New Literacies addresses this issue by advocating for the positioning of all students as literate, recognizing that their literacies may or may not coincide with those privileged by school. One of the main ways that students can be positioned as experts is by prioritizing the knowledge and experiences that they bring to school and using this to enhance new literacy learning experiences. In part, teachers and schools must actively seek out the literacy practices that students engage in at home (e.g., translating for parents, reading at their church, etc.; Caraballo, 2017). Young people are willing, even eager, to engage in literacy practices that are tied to their own culture and purposes (Mills, 2010). Teachers and curriculums that value the multiple identities of students are more likely to gain a better understanding of students' literacy capabilities and knowledge. In ELA curriculums that position students as experts, students are consistently provided opportunities to share aspects of who they are and where they are from (Beucher et al., 2019; Caraballo, 2017; Martin & Beese, 2017; Martinez & Montano, 2016). Topics and problems that students are interested in are placed at the heart of the curriculum (Martin & Beese, 2017; Sjodin, 2020).

In some cases, teachers have connected the curriculum to students' lives by asking the students to bring their own knowledge into the discussion. For example, one teacher asked students to compare their own views of religion with the doctrines present in

Beowulf. This same teacher asked students to contemplate the ways in which they are heroic, in comparison to the archetypal exploration of heroism in the text (Dyches, 2017). Teachers also have connected seemingly archaic literature to current events; for example, students have connected classic British literature to the 2015 hate crime where a white supremacist killed nine unarmed black churchgoers (Dyches, 2017). Inviting students to share their counterstories, stories of personal experiences that counter the dominant narrative, particularly one that is highlighted in a given piece of literature, is yet another way to value the lived experiences of students (Dyches, 2017). In other cases, teachers might focus on the genre of study while students are responsible for determining the topic. For example, teachers might focus on the genre of poetry in a given unit, while students eventually choose a poem (potentially in collaboration with other students) and relate this poem to issues that surround their individual lives (Smith, 2019).

A simple but powerful way to discover the topics that are meaningful to students is to ask them. For example, Lam et al. (2021) conducted surveys with students to investigate issues that were of most importance to the majority of the population. The results demonstrated that immigration and immigration policy were highly relevant to these students' lives, so the teachers worked to center those topics into the curriculum, and then expanded on the students' knowledge of those topics in a variety of ways that both affirmed and challenged their existing knowledge.

Pedagogies Specific to New Literacies

The previous section discussed New Literacies pedagogies that align with New Literacies but also apply more widely to culturally relevant teaching. In this section, I

review literature that is specific to New Literacies pedagogies — those that align with New Literacies and are unique to the paradigm.

Deprioritizing Traditional Literacy

New Literacies scholars argue that traditional notions of what it means to be “literate” are highly limited and do not take into account a “cyberspatial-postindustrial mindset” that acknowledges the fundamental changes in our society over the last century (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Literacy is complex and involves a wide variety of communication tactics beyond traditional reading of print-based texts and rote, “correct” responses, many of which have typically been ignored (or recently, superficially incorporated) in public schools. Thus, though they still have a place in literacy instruction, conventional notions of what it means to teach literacy or be literate are highly specific and limited.

New Literacies approaches provide a fresh way of thinking about literacy and how schools advocate for and privilege specific notions of what it means to be literate — notions that serve to widen already-existing inequities, particularly for non-dominant students whose cultures and languages are not privileged in schools (Leu et al., 2013). For these students, the divide between Discourses at school and Discourses at home often create an illusion that they are not literate individuals (Gee, 1992). Expanding notions of literacy in school beyond those that have traditionally been a focus serves to close this gap and position students from a variety of circumstances as literate (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007).

Shifting our priorities in literacy instruction and assessment does not mean that we are completely disregarding authentic and important research on reading and comprehension from the past; studies conducted under a variety of paradigms provide a key foundation for New Literacies approaches (Leu et al., 2013; Manderino, 2012). In addition, New Literacies does not characterize print-based reading and writing as obsolete; rather, they become tools among a variety of strategies and approaches to understanding, comprehension, and knowledge production. As mentioned previously, New Literacies research and instruction seek a balance between dominant and local literacies (Street, 2003). In a New Literacies classroom, students are encouraged to “try on” new Discourses and ways of thinking as a means of expanding their current knowledge (Hickey et al., 2011).

A concerning issue related to this section is the fact that traditional literacy is privileged in schools in political ways that are beyond the control of teachers; this is most glaring in the domination of standardized testing, which does not take into account New Literacies paradigms in any way. These tests directly influence the curricular and pedagogical choices that teachers make in a classroom, resulting in a seemingly unbreakable cycle of focusing on specific notions of literacy (Leu et al., 2013). Teachers who do view literacy through a New Literacies lens struggle to find an appropriate and ethical balance between breaking away from traditional literacy and incorporating explicit instruction for the sake of helping students’ meet required benchmarks (e.g., passing standardized tests), especially with those who have been labeled as “deficient” or “at-risk” (Frankel et al., 2018).

Diversifying Genre and Perspective. In 1996, the New London Group called for a “pedagogy of multiliteracies,” encouraging educators and scholars to formally recognize, study, and teach the various ways in which communication occurs in daily life. Within this work, the group emphasized the importance of digital communication platforms, as well as how linguistic and cultural practices shape literacy purposes. Although the multiliteracies movement is distinct and separate from New Literacies, the two have many aspects in common and certainly inform one another. In this case, New Literacies challenges the claim that certain text types (mainly books or formally edited and published pieces) are the ultimate authority. The paradigm pushes toward diversifying genre of texts, and the importance of considering multimodality — when text types are combined to create an entirely new genre. Incorporating diverse genres of and perspectives in texts shifts the privileges in schools away from those that have historically dominated public education, and provides opportunities for students who have long been underserved to find a niche (Manderino, 2012).

One illustration of this need for diversification comes from the work of Dyches (2017), who highlights the pervasiveness of British literature in secondary ELA classrooms in the United States. The lack of textual diversity persists despite the increasing realization that students have difficulty relating to the works they study and that they do not represent the racial, linguistic, or cultural diversity of the U.S. population. She discussed how nondominant students have repeatedly engaged with homogeneous reading lists and authors that do not represent their knowledge, backgrounds, or cultures, putting them at a disadvantage in a variety of ways. In addition,

the limited selection has done a disservice to dominant students, as all students benefit from a diverse text selection.

New Literacies pedagogues recognize and are critical of the pervasiveness of the canon (Dyches, 2017; Dyches et al., 2021). Often, ELA teachers are required to use certain texts (and genres) in their classroom. However, there are opportunities to bring in supplementary texts (e.g., nonfiction historical texts, poems, songs/raps, short stories, websites, blogs, film clips, etc.) that address diversity issues related to both genre and perspective (Dyches et al., 2021). One pedagogue explained how he uses optional (nonrequired) texts as the main focus in an English language arts unit, and incorporates the required canonical work as a part of the study of the optional texts (Dyches et al., 2021). In this case, the teacher adheres to the requirements of the institution by teaching the mandated work, but approaches that work from a stance of New Literacies by prioritizing a variety of pieces and genres beyond that of the canon.

Additionally, in recent years, there has been a major push to incorporate a variety of texts beyond the canon in ELA. One genre that has received particular attention is young adult literature — literature specifically written for, by, and/or about adolescents. This genre is highly relevant to New Literacies as the wide and ever-expanding variety of texts have the possibility of reaching diverse audiences and provide a space for practicing critical literacies and engaging in discussions about major social and political topics (Miller et al., 2020; Morrell & Morrell, 2012; Olan & Richmond, 2017). For example, the work of Ginsberg and Glenn (2019) highlighted how selected young adult literature texts centered around Muslim characters both affirmed students who identified as Muslim and

also challenged preexisting notions about the Muslim faith for others. Some authors have suggested connecting the young adult genre back to the canon (Rybakova & Roccanti, 2016). Others argued that reading young adult literature is sufficient in its own right (Ivey & Johnston, 2013).

Although it has its proponents, the diversification of texts and perspectives has been a source of tension in schools and districts around the country. In particular, young adult literature has been the center of many political and educational debates. Despite the plethora of research demonstrating the complex nature of young adult literature, many individuals question the rigor of such texts; oftentimes, these individuals are concerned with the implications this type of text will have on students' traditional literacy outcomes (despite the research that demonstrates that these texts both relate to traditional literacy standards and have the potential to improve traditional reading and writing skills; Colantonio-Yurko et al., 2017; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Ostenson & Wadham, 2012; Rybakova & Roccanti, 2016; Smith & Salgado, 2018). In addition, as the content of young adult literature often directly addresses current debates and issues in society, it is commonly viewed as contentious and therefore labeled unsuitable for the classroom, perhaps most often by parents who view the content as in opposition to their own values or beliefs about what young adults should be exposed to (despite the fact that young adult literature often counsels adolescents on the consequences of their choices, honing in on issues that tend to be highly relevant to this demographic; Ivey & Johnston, 2018).

Digital Technologies. Digital technologies have become pervasive in educational contexts. Incorporating them into instruction is one way that New Literacies teachers

might begin to deprioritize traditional literacy, as well as promote a diversification of genre and perspective. However, New Literacies should not be mistaken for a pursuit of traditional literacy skills using digital platforms; the reality is that teaching from a New Literacies stance requires a much more significant shift of perspective (Fishman & Dede, 2016). Simply using technology to reproduce what we already do in schools is not considered New Literacies.

Lankshear and Knobel (2007) argued that new literacies (lowercase) can be divided into two categories. “New technical” refers to literacies that reflect digital access and new technologies. “New ethos” refers to the paradigm of New Literacies — notions of literacies as a practice from stagnant, published, expert-dominated, and individual to deictic, fluid, varied, and collaborative. They separate new literacies into two types of cases: “paradigm cases” (cases that have both “new technical” and “new ethos” approaches) and “peripheral cases” (cases that do not have “new technical” but do have “new ethos” approaches). They have no term for cases that solely include “new technical” approaches because using a new technology in a manner that reinforces traditional literacy goals is not considered a new literacies practice; literacy practices that use “new technical stuff” may not maintain the intent of “new ethos.” As a paradigm, New Literacies acknowledges the realities of our rapidly changing world, and calls for a major transformation in what we have come to know and value as literacy. As we consider new epistemologies and ideologies, technology is certainly a significant piece of the equation, but using technology only as a way to accomplish old goals simply does not reflect the depth of these changes (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Hutchison and Reinking

(2011) conducted a national survey of literacy teachers in the United States and concluded that many of the participants' conceptualizations of technology integration were primarily technological, meaning that they reported using digital technologies to work toward the same goals as when they do not use digital technologies; rather than curricular, where they use digital technologies in ways that go beyond or expand outside of traditional literacy outcomes.

Although simply incorporating digital technologies does not always fall under a New Literacies lens, using these tools to foster New Literacies paradigms in school is a common and useful approach. For example, in a later section I will discuss creation and production of original knowledge — a main component of New Literacies. The widespread ability to share knowledge has been made easier by the rise of the internet, which gives a platform for individuals to share their work without needing a publisher or an institution. In addition, the internet has contributed to massive productivity gains over the course of the last few decades, as it has enhanced individuals' abilities to communicate and problem-solve (Leu et al., 2013).

Access to digital technologies has been rapidly expanding over the course of the last few decades (Leu et al., 2013). However, one criticism that has arisen from the digital literacies turn in New Literacies studies is that the digital technologies that are incorporated into much of this work are not necessarily available or accessible in all contexts (Mills, 2010). While a digital divide certainly still exists in terms of access to technology, a new issue that has arisen is the second wave digital divide, where teachers and students do have physical access to the technology, but have few resources to help

them navigate it (Hargittai, 2002; Zielezinski & Darling-Hammond, 2016, 2018). Skills beyond those required of traditional reading and writing are needed to fully capitalize on the benefits of the internet and other digital technologies (Leu et al., 2013). Smith (2019) demonstrated this in her findings through a discussion of how students' use of digital tools afforded them unique lenses through which to analyze literature, but simply having access to the digital tools did not guarantee that they would take advantage of them. Hutchison and Reinking's (2011) national survey indicates that literacy teachers' have a variety of perceived obstacles related to technology integration, and both physical access to technology as well as professional development on how to incorporate technology are at the top of the list.

While digital technologies play an important role in New Literacies pedagogies, incorporating digital technologies without considering the New Literacies paradigm in the implementation does not mean a practice can be categorized as New Literacies. In the conclusions from their national survey of literacy teachers' perceptions of information and communication technologies (ICTs), Hutchison and Reinking (2011) called for more research on the gap between literacy teachers' perceived importance of ICTs and their integration of ICTs into instruction. Additionally, the researchers discussed a need to further investigate literacy teachers' conceptualizations of the role of ICTs in literacy instruction; this is important given that the participants' perspectives on ICT integration appeared to mainly be technological, as opposed to curricular, meaning that they emphasized the use of technologies to reinforce traditional literacy goals. This study further investigates the questions posed by Hutchison and Reinking (2011) by exploring

how teachers who have graduated from a teacher education program that prioritizes the New Literacies paradigm incorporate digital technologies into their classroom, and the extent to which these practices reflect the spirit of New Literacies. This will help inform teacher educators and school/district leadership on how they might incorporate digital technologies in teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities in ways that reflect a New Literacies orientation. In addition, this research informs teacher educators, administrators, and policymakers on how current school contexts encourage and/or restrict teachers from incorporating digital technologies into their literacy instruction in ways that reflect a New Literacies paradigm.

Multimodality. An example of deprioritizing traditional literacy is having students engage in multimodal learning — moving beyond reading print-based text and writing essays to participating in a variety of modalities (e.g., spatial, visual, audio; Dyches, 2017). Although multimodal activities often include digital technologies, this is not a requirement. Proponents of the use of multimodality in schools recognize that words, although obviously powerful, cannot necessarily account for all aspects of representation of meaning (Jocius, 2017; Smith, 2019). In addition, providing students with multiple means of access to or representation of a text can deepen students' understanding of a particular text or concept (Smith, 2019). In the case of multimodal text production, students are evaluated on their success with creating “nuanced, multilayered compositions that demonstrate an awareness of audience, aesthetic, and mood” (Jocius, 2017, p. 208). In other words, the final product becomes more about the overall message

produced and less about the form that it is produced in, which has historically often been centered around more traditional reading and writing.

Multimodality is useful for all students, but perhaps critical for those who have historically struggled with traditional literacy instruction, as it provides an opportunity to both understand and create text in complex ways either outside of or in conjunction with the traditional written word (Smith, 2019). In particular, students whose first language is not English benefit from a variety of modes of exposure to and creation of texts, as multimodality affords them an opportunity to “see” texts in ways that words on a page may not due to linguistic and cultural barriers (Smith, 2019). This is a method teachers can use to help culturally and linguistically diverse students make connections between the curriculum and their lives outside of the boundaries of school (Kirkland & Hull, 2011). However, similar to the discussion above about the second-level digital divide, incorporating multimodal forms requires scaffolding; students must have opportunities to learn about and practice with multiple types of texts if they are going to be meaningful and useful (Howell, 2017; Smith, 2019).

One example of incorporating multimodality in school is by engaging youths in work involving the genre of video documentaries, where students study these texts and even produce their own (Lam et al., 2021). In the case of Lam et al. (2021), students studied narrative storytelling in the form of a documentary, and considered the relevant choices and decisions that had to be made to most heavily impact a given audience. Students participated in the study and creation of a more progressive genre of literacy

while also engaging in activities more closely associated with traditional reading and writing outcomes.

New Literacies digital and/or multimodal practices have the potential to be applied to any text, including those from the canon. Students have engaged with digital and/or multimodal texts to enhance and demonstrate their understanding of literature. For example, Hickey et al. (2011) chose to use *Moby-Dick* as their core text, despite having alternative options outside of the canon, in an effort to demonstrate the possibilities that digital and multimodal literacies can afford teachers who are promoting a participatory culture and participatory assessment in their classrooms. Similarly, students in a tenth-grade ELA class created multimodal interpretations of literature in lieu of writing an analytical essay (Smith, 2019). Smith (2019) discussed how encouraging students to interpret a text in a variety of modes opened up opportunities for understanding thematic elements of the text that otherwise may have been obscured. Students both consulted existing multimodal texts and created original multimodal texts during this process. This process led to a blend of textual creation that included, but was not limited to, writing about the text in question. In another case, students used multimodal tools to respond and analyze *The Kite Runner* (Jocius, 2013).

Whether students are engaging with or creating them, there are a wide variety of forms that multimodal texts can take. These include, but are not limited to coding/programming (Hagge, 2018), hypertext documents/presentations (Smith, 2019), music/rap (Deroo & Watson, 2020; Jocius, 2013; Smith, 2019), photography/images (Jocius, 2017; Smith, 2019; Zenkov et al., 2017), and video/video editing (Bruce, 2009;

Jocius, 2013). This variety means that teachers have a great deal of flexibility with how to engage students in multimodal consumption and production of texts. It is crucial, however, that teachers are exposed to digital and multimodal projects in their teacher education experiences so that they can understand what the process is like from a student's perspective, and have opportunities to discuss the various challenges from both the teacher side of the equation as well as the student side (Bruce & Chiu, 2015).

Enabling Students as Creators and Producers of Knowledge

New Literacies proponents argue that literate individuals are those who engage in the production of original knowledge and content. Asking students to create a text allows them to be a part of what Hobbs (2017) calls a “participatory culture” (see also Hickey et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2009; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). An orientation that positions students as creators and producers of knowledge means students make choices about their work including what to create, what platforms to use, what audience to appeal to, what tone is appropriate, etc. (Smith, 2019). When producing an original text, students are presented with an avenue for creating meaningful, authentic, relevant work that explores and honors their identities, both in school and out of school (Jocius, 2017; Lam et al., 2021; Smith, 2019). Ultimately, the goal is not simply that students demonstrate their knowledge through their creations (although that is often one aspect), but that students learn and develop through the process of creating a text (Hobbs, 2017; Smith, 2019). This process involves a complex series of decision-making to achieve a purpose (Hobbs, 2017; Jocius, 2013).

Students can demonstrate their understanding of a text or concept through original production of content that is not necessarily grounded in the structures of traditional writing practices (Jocius, 2013; Smith, 2019). For example, literary analysis is often a skill of utmost importance in secondary ELA classrooms. A traditional approach to assessing a students' analytical capabilities is by assigning an essay. While writing an essay is technically creating an original text, there are often parameters and guidelines that restrict students from incorporating their unique skills and knowledge in such an assignment. Opening up additional possibilities for how students might demonstrate their understanding of a text is imperative in New Literacies pedagogies, as providing a space for students to compose through a variety of modes can mediate their learning in ways that might otherwise be restricted (Smith, 2019). Though it is not necessary, this may involve multimodal and/or digital literacies (as discussed in a previous section; Smith, 2019).

In part, enabling students as creators and producers of knowledge means providing classroom spaces for students to critically inquire about and take action on the issues that surround them in society (Fowler-Amato et al., 2019). For example, Lam et al. (2021) focused their research on a group of students who produced a multimodal documentary on the issue of deportation that represented their understanding of immigration and immigration policy. The pedagogy consisted of research, discussions and debates, and a variety of skills related to nonfiction writing and video production (e.g., interviewing, storyboarding, video-shooting, editing). Students then demonstrated their knowledge of the topic of immigration by creating an original text detailing their

understanding, based on the knowledge they brought to the class as well as knowledge they had gained throughout the unit. This production involved making a variety of choices about what to include and what to eliminate in order to cultivate the most powerful message possible.

Emphasizing Collaboration in Digital Spaces

New Literacies advocates for a culture where thinkers shift from individual units of intelligence to collective bodies of knowledge and each individual unit brings his/her own contributions to the table (Hobbs, 2017; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). An emphasis on collaboration in the classroom is at odds with the notion that individuals must prove their worth by demonstrating their competency in a given area, often in a rigid, standardized, and biased demeanor (e.g., rites of passage such as college entrance exams; Ladson-Billings, 1995). An emphasis on collaboration is an important component of culturally-relevant pedagogy, but in New Literacies, an emphasis on collaboration is centered around collaboration while using digital tools and technologies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007).

Hobbs (2017) highlighted the reality that, “[u]nfortunately, academic culture often prizes the ideal of the lone creator, a figure that is deeply rooted in the Enlightenment mythos of the self-contained individual, working solo” (Hobbs, 2017, p. 72). The New Literacies paradigm argues that positioning students as solitary entities in competition with one another, working fiercely and alone to earn higher grades than their classmates, is not the best approach to education. Leu et al. (2013) examined the evolving nature of the hierarchical structures of businesses; where once they were top-down, they are now

often more team-based and capitalize on specialized knowledge from individual and small groups of team members. The shift to more horizontal leadership requires a shift from thinking about individuals as separate “units of intelligence” to collective groups who make up bodies of intelligence, with individuals providing unique knowledge and expertise to form that body (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Thus, a revolutionary aspect of New Literacies that has major implications for society (and schools) is that not every individual (or student) has to know the exact same information or has to possess the exact same skills in order to produce desirable outcomes. Rather, workplaces, institutions, and schools can prioritize relationships and the art of communication (in-person and virtual) so a diversity of knowledge coming from a variety of sources can be collected, organized, and published (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). While there are certainly benefits to all students having certain types of knowledge, the priority would be the original product that students produce, and the process that they go through to create that product, rather than rote tests of factual information.

While many workplaces and institutions already embrace this approach, schools are lagging far behind. A shift to a more collaborative, team-based environment means that teachers should make space for collaborative work where students produce knowledge and original texts (Smith, 2019). Through this process, individual students would simultaneously benefit from and bolster the knowledge of their classmates, all while learning how to work in a group to achieve a common goal, prioritizing relationships and communication skills over memorization (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Students would assume varying roles in a given project or assignment, allowing them to

capitalize on their personal strengths and then relying on collaboration with classmates for the finished project. Varying student roles in the classroom mimics the format of the “real-world” — adults are not all asked to complete the exact same tasks. We seek jobs that fit our interests and skills. With this model, teachers would privilege the work of the team over the work of the individual, acknowledge and capitalize on various students’ strengths, and transform classroom cultures from competitive to collaborative (Fishman & Dede, 2016).

An emphasis on collaboration also relates to Gee’s discussion of Discourses (1992). Development of a set of literacies associated with a specific Discourse occurs best through many different types of social interactions, including talking and interacting with those who are already members of the group, as opposed to through direct instruction. This gives the individual an opportunity to understand the values and beliefs of the group. Often, this social interaction occurs between a novice learner and an individual or group of individuals who is considered somewhat of an expert in the particular type of literacy being addressed (Gee, 1992; Rueda, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). Incorporating authentic collaborative experiences in the classroom would mean that individuals would be provided opportunities to learn from the Discourses of one another; those who are unfamiliar with the Discourses of school might gain insight from those who are, and vice versa. This authentic collaboration can occur in a variety of forms and modes, which ties back into the previous discussion on multimodality (Smith, 2019).

For example, ELA classrooms often highlight literary analysis as a core skill in need of development. A New Literacies classroom might maintain this focus, at least in

part; however, teachers can facilitate understanding of literary analysis through social interactions between students. They can share their unique insights and analytical lenses that they bring to a text, emphasizing this practice as a social one rather than an individual one (Hickey et al., 2011; Smith, 2019). In one case, students worked in pairs to understand a poem of their choice, and constructed their interpretation of that poem in a multimodal presentation (Smith, 2019). While students were responsible for breaking down and analyzing the poem, which is a common practice in traditional literacy instruction, their processes for this were varied and they relied on one another as they constructed their meaning of the work. Smith's (2019) work is one example of how New Literacies blends traditional and nontraditional forms of instruction.

Although inter-student collaboration is an important aspect of New Literacies, collaboration is not necessarily restricted to positioning students to work with one another. There are cases where students have been encouraged, even required, to seek assistance and guidance from sources outside of the bounds of the classroom. For example, Lam et al. (2021) discussed how students consulted with their families, particularly their parents, during a project in which they produced a video documentary detailing their knowledge and perspectives on immigration. They also incorporated key stakeholders and representatives from institutions who work in the surrounding community to visit with the students. Collaboration might occur between teacher and student, where students are positioned as pedagogues who help inform curricular decision-making (keeping in mind that, as a collaborative approach, both the teacher and the students have input into the final curricular choices; Frankel et al., 2018). Teachers

might also expand the notion of inter-student collaboration to involve students from a variety of classes and grade levels; this model might include levels of hierarchy in which some students operate as mentors to others (Frankel et al., 2018).

One of the major barriers to an emphasis on collaboration over competition in current schools is assessment, which has historically been individualized and standardized (Gee, 2003). Leu et al. (2013) predicted that misalignments between New Literacies instruction and assessment would continue until educational systems recognize the deictic nature of literacy and adjust their assessments to match this view. This lack of cohesion continues to be a major issue. Hickey et al. (2011) suggested the concept of “participatory assessment” to address this disconnect, arguing that more traditional forms of assessment undermine students’ learning by highlighting specific concepts and aspects of those concepts, resulting in a representation of knowledge as simple and attainable, as opposed to complex and evolving. Similarly, there is an emphasis on obtaining knowledge for the sake of knowing, rather than applying knowledge to a given purpose (Hickey et al., 2011). Participatory assessment does include some individualized evaluation, but only after an extended period where students have been invited into the Discourses of a particular unit. In addition, the individualized assessment is a demonstration of applied knowledge. Reflection and assessment are intricately tied together in this model; in fact, students’ artifacts were not directly assessed. Instead, their productions were assessed through their own explanations and reflections (Hickey et al., 2011). Hickey et al.’s (2011) work also did include more traditional types of individual assessment, which they argue is necessary in current formal educational contexts,

particularly for teachers preparing students for state exams. Though this view can certainly be contested, it is another demonstration of the blending of dominant and local literacies in New Literacies pedagogies.

Fostering Critical Literacies For Online Texts

Critical literacy is the ability for an individual to analyze a text for the purpose of evaluating its worth and truth in the eyes of the consumer and in the eyes of the larger social context or situation in which the text exists (Freire, 1970). In this model of literacy instruction, individuals work to understand the agenda of a given text and the choices made to achieve that reach that agenda, emphasizing the social and political structures that have influenced the production of the text and the motivations that the creator might have had to produce that text (Luke, 2019). Students are encouraged to critique the text in the light of their own situations and understandings of the world. This ability to critique requires that students are able to access the texts, making direct instruction in reading comprehension highly important. The ultimate goal is to empower individuals to make their own decisions about a text and its ideological presuppositions; the ability to process a text, then, is a step towards this goal rather than an end-goal in itself (Freire, 1970). Fostering critical literacies in students means that teachers provide students with the tools to question texts and information, as opposed to passively consuming with the assumption that the texts and information are “true” (Leu et al., 2013; Luke, 2012). This includes questioning the institutions which are responsible for producing these texts (Luke, 2019).

Teaching students to critically consume information is not specific to New Literacies. However, as New Literacies pedagogues guide students to seek information from a variety of sources, and since content creation is largely unregulated, it becomes even more important for individuals to develop the skills needed to critically consume information, particularly online information (Leu et al., 2013; Luke, 2019; Moje et al., 2020). The rise of digital technologies and the internet increases the need for students to be able to efficiently find, evaluate, and make meaning of texts; additionally, the skills and strategies needed to do this with online texts are different than, but build upon, the skills and strategies needed for traditional, print-based texts (Leu et al., 2013; Moje et al., 2020). Leu et al. (2013) calls this the new literacies of online research and comprehension (a lowercase new literacies theory). They outline five processing practices that occur when students are researching and reading online: (1) reading to identify important questions, (2) reading to locate information, (3) reading to evaluate information critically, (4) reading to synthesize information, and (5) reading to communicate information. Although this is a lower case theory, it contributes to the notion that critical literacies are central to the New Literacies paradigm (Leu et al., 2013).

New Literacies and Teaching/Teacher Education

New Literacies acknowledges that the evolving nature of literacy, and the fact that technology has fundamentally changed how we interact with others, means that a teacher's perspective of and role in facilitating meaningful literacy experiences also must change, though it remains crucial (Leu et al., 2013). Shifting the nature of school to a New Literacies approach means that the role of the teachers changes from "dispensers of

literacy skills” to “orchestrators of learning contexts” (Leu et al., 2013, p. 1163). In other words, since one individual does not possess all information related to literacy, particularly as it continues to evolve and expand, a teacher’s role is not to simply transfer information or skills from his/her own repertoire to the students; instead, teachers can create learning environments where students and teachers can learn from one another alike, opening opportunities for students to share the skills that they already possess and gain new skills from both the instructor and from other students (Jenkins et al., 2009; Leu et al., 2013). This becomes increasingly true as students move past stages of learning rudimentary reading and writing skills, so it is of particular importance in secondary schools (Leu et al., 2013).

One relevant recommendation for the changing role of pedagogues is that we might approach education as an encounter, where a student interacts with the teacher in a manner which exposes that student to a new aspect of the world (Barrow, 2020). In this view, there is no presupposition of deficiency — both the teacher and the student approach the encounter with unique experiences, and are offered a place where they can develop their relationship with and knowledge of the world that may disrupt their current ways of knowing and being. This orientation complicates the false dichotomy that individuals either are or are not literate (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Similarly, teachers might consider the way they position students in the classroom, and how these pedagogical choices might enhance or constrain their (the students’) literacy identities (Frankel et al. 2018).

Viewing the relationship between student and teacher as an encounter may also help teachers recognize the connections between their own lives and the lives of their students (and vice versa), which addresses an issue identified by Kist and Pytash (2015) that preservice teachers tend to position themselves as distant and very different from those whom they teach. This view is prevalent despite the fact that many of these preservice teachers are close in age to their future potential students. In addition, these same preservice teachers engaged in many new literacies practices and tendencies that they identified as important to the students, but they felt a need to defend their new literacies practices, as if they were not acceptable without some sort of explanation (Kist & Pytash, 2015).

Another important aspect of New Literacies and the role of teachers is questioning which forms of literacy we are privileging in any given situation, and how that affects our perceptions of students' literacy skills. For example, some teachers consider traditional engagement with reading and writing to be superior demonstrations of literacy capabilities, or consider students who prefer these traditional modes of literacy to be "good" students, and those who do not to be "bad" students (Jocius, 2017). In other cases, teachers incorporate new literacies (the technologies and tools associated with New Literacies), but do so in ways that reinforce the agenda of traditional literacy views (Kist & Pytash, 2015).

In a study that is similar to this research, Dyches et al. (2021) examined the critical content knowledges of English language arts teachers — the degree to which they view the curriculum with a critical lens, and the extent to which they disrupt the

traditional curriculum in an effort to disrupt existing power structures. They found that teachers demonstrated certain critical content knowledges, including (1) knowledge of disciplinary critique — particularly of the canonical nature of the curriculum, (2) knowledge of marginalized identities — including a lack of diversity in the authorship of required texts, and (3) knowledge of supplementary content and the understand of the worth of supplementary content both as it relates to and outside of its relationship with the traditional curriculum. The authors found two specific ways in which the participants clearly did not demonstrate critical content knowledges: (1) maintaining a narrow focus on race and gender, and (2) avoiding the explicit naming and discussing marginalized groups. Additionally, Dyches et al. (2021) cited several ways in which the teachers were limited in their ability to enact critical content knowledges; the discussion mostly centered around the inaccessible nature of canonical texts. Overall, the researchers concluded that the teachers' critical content knowledges exist on a continuum — strong in certain areas and less so in others. Additionally, they claimed that the participants did not view their critical content knowledges as a source of liberation; they argue that this lack of a liberatory view is a major issue that contributes to the hegemony of traditional curriculum and teaching. My research is a broader version of this study, as critical content knowledges are one aspect of New Literacies pedagogies.

Kist and Pytash (2015) discuss how there is an assumption among many, particularly those who work in teacher education, that teachers born in or after the 1990s have grown up with technology and are therefore “digital natives” who both appreciate and are likely to incorporate digital literacies into their classroom more frequently and

with more ease than those born prior to the 1990s. In their research, however, they have discovered that secondary English language arts preservice teachers have a range of feelings toward new literacies (lower case) that reflect a tension between their perspectives and a New Literacies ideology. Many of the teachers found New Literacies to be wholly undesirable; others believed in the importance of incorporating new literacies practices, but for the purposes of reinforcing traditional literacy skills and perspectives, particularly standardized tests and the significance of the literary canon. In this case, the preservice teachers acknowledged the importance of new literacies in the eyes of the students, but failed to recognize how that could shape their practices beyond providing motivation and engagement toward reaching existing literacy goals that did not include New Literacies notions (Kist & Pytash, 2015). Similarly, Hutchison and Reinking (2011) conducted a national study that indicated that teachers in their first five years of teaching integrate digital technologies into their practice less than teachers with more experience.

One essential aspect of New Literacies teaching that I briefly mentioned in a previous section but would like to emphasize is scaffolding (Howell, 2017; Smith, 2019). Scaffolding is viewed as an important aspect of pedagogy in many different paradigms. It earns a mention in this research, however, as it is imperative for equitable and effective New Literacies instruction. Simply asking students to participate in critical literacies, collaborative processes, and/or the creation of original texts is not enough. Students must be socialized into these practices, which means teachers must provide examples and practice situations in which students can engage without fear of failure (Howell, 2017).

To assume that students are familiar with a particular type of text, or are comfortable engaging in a particular classroom environment, without providing structures for helping the students succeed in these endeavors, is to ignore the notion that all students come to the classroom with varying experiences, and may or may not be familiar with a given Discourse.

Teacher education courses or professional development sessions that promote a New Literacies standpoint both foster discussion about New Literacies stances and provide preservice/practicing teachers with opportunities to engage in work that involves New Literacies practices (Kist & Pytash, 2015). Relatedly, teachers and preservice teachers need to be exposed to a variety of new literacies (particular tools or technologies through which to infuse the New Literacies paradigm into the classroom), but this exposure must be accompanied with discussions of overarching notions of New Literacies to avoid the pursuit of traditional literacy goals in new ways (Kist & Pytash, 2015). An important part of teacher education or professional development in New Literacies is critical self-reflection, to facilitate the “aha” moment where teachers might recognize the important, yet distinct, ways in which New Literacies might shape students’ thinking and interactions in the classroom (Dyches et al., 2021; Kist & Pytash, 2015).

Traditional beliefs about teaching and literacy are highly pervasive, even in young preservice teachers (Kist & Pytash, 2015). Teachers’ perceptions matter a great deal when it comes to what is incorporated and what is left out of the curriculum, so this view of literacy affects the possibilities of incorporation of authentic New Literacies into classrooms (Dyches et al., 2021; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Jocius, 2017; Kist &

Pytash, 2015). This research is intended to add to the body of knowledge about how teachers might view literacy from a New Literacies lens, and how those teachers translate that view into their daily classroom practice within the current institution of school. The study also looks into how the teachers' circumstances may encourage or discourage the incorporation of New Literacies.

Summary

One of Kist and Pytash's (2015) main recommendations is that teacher education courses (and, presumably, professional development for current teachers) should focus on the paradigm of New Literacies in conjunction with the incorporation of new literacies, reasoning that knowledge of new tools and technologies without an emphasis on New Literacies perspectives leads teachers to focus on a reinforcement of traditional literacy standards and values. The tools and technologies through which one might implement New Literacies are always changing and shifting; the underlying paradigm is what remains (although even aspects of the paradigm itself are deictic to an extent and may change over time; Leu et al., 2013). However, it is not enough to simply present the paradigm of New Literacies without providing tangible ways in which it might be incorporated into the structures of school; we are tasked with helping teachers be strategic with how they might introduce novel ideas about literacy and learning in school while working within the current system (Kist & Pytash, 2015). Avoiding these conversations means that we contribute to the reinforcement of a system that increasingly encourages the use of innovative tools and technologies, but to reach the same outcomes that have been valued for hundreds of years.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding New Literacies Studies from the standpoint of practicing teachers who enter public schools every day and have a background in New Literacies pedagogies through their teacher education program at George Mason University. Much of the research above, while extremely useful, is limited to specific aspects of New Literacies thinking, highlighting certain aspects while not addressing others at all. My hope is that this research will contribute to bring New Literacies into more teaching and teacher education contexts, with the broader goal of working toward a shift in perspective as to what counts and what is important in literacy instruction.

Chapter Three

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate the practices of secondary English language arts teachers who have some background in New Literacies pedagogies through their teacher education program at George Mason University. I explore the extent to which they engage in New Literacies pedagogies, as well as the circumstances that enable or constrain their engagement in New Literacies pedagogies. In this chapter, I detail the methods that I used to conduct this research. I begin with a statement about how my positionality has influenced the methodology of this study. I then discuss major aspects of narrative inquiry, the design I have drawn upon for this work. Next, I provide details about my data collection (including site access, selection of participants, and data sources). I also explain my analytical process. Finally, I discuss quality/validity, ethics, methodological significance, and issues of representation.

Researcher Positionality

I come from a white, middle-class, English-speaking family. I grew up around the alphabet and my home life provided me with varied and frequent exposures to language. School, in my eyes, was easy, and even enjoyable for the most part. Perhaps this, coupled with my love of reading, explains why I pursued an undergraduate degree in English, and then immediately enrolled in the secondary English language arts teacher education program at George Mason University. My first few years of teaching, however, left me confused and concerned by the lack of engagement, particularly when it came to

reading and writing, I was seeing from a variety of students. The research and literature that I have encountered since beginning my doctoral journey have been revolutionary in my understanding of students and public education in the United States. In particular, the resources and research on sociocultural approaches to education have taught me that my own experiences in education are incredibly different than the majority of individuals in this country, and that I simply have been lucky in the sense that my own background knowledge happened to match up with the power structures embedded in the goals and purposes of the classroom.

This dissertation comes from my perspective as an eager teacher who began a teaching career with all good intentions, but very little understanding of students whose backgrounds do not closely resemble my own. Yet, I am the definition of a standard teacher in the U.S. — white, middle class, female (Institute of Education Sciences, 2020). While students' best interests are probably better served by a more diverse population of teachers, the reality is that every teacher also must be able to work with students from a variety of backgrounds. My goal in reading about and researching sociocultural approaches to literacy is to improve my own practice and to contribute to the voices that call for more equitable, just, and meaningful approaches to education.

In this work, I explore the extent to which and the ways in which teachers who have graduated from the secondary English language arts teacher education program at George Mason University — a program that focuses on New Literacies — incorporate this paradigm into their current practice. New Literacies pedagogies are derived from sociocultural views, and are not often formally rewarded by our current educational

institutions (Street, 1984, 2011). I consider myself a New Literacies researcher and pedagogue in the field of education. I believe that New Literacies is a way of thinking and teaching that can help us to more equitably serve a diverse array of students, but that this possibility can only become a reality if educators and policymakers approach teaching and education from a stance of “active hope,” meaning that each individual has a personal responsibility to persistently work toward social and political change for all (Freire, 1998). I teach English language arts in a large public high school in the Mid-Atlantic United States that serves a diverse range of students (including a rich array of racial, cultural, linguistic, cognitive, socioeconomic, and gender identities). —

My dual role over the past four years working in K-12 schools on a daily basis and as a researcher and student at George Mason University has helped me develop an awareness of the ways in which practitioners can inform the work in higher education, and vice versa. I do not believe, however, that these conversations happen often enough. This has sparked my interest in working to develop better relationships between schools and universities (e.g., an affiliation with the National Association of Professional Development Schools). This dissertation is intended to be an important, albeit small, contribution to the discussion on school-university partnerships.

While I acknowledge the existence of a fixed reality to some extent, I also recognize that there is a fundamental lack of agreement over this reality in society, which obscures what is considered “fact” and “truth” (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Charmaz, 2004; Luke, 2019). Much research is based on the assumption that society does have certain fundamental agreements, and therefore overlooks the perspectives of stakeholders whose

beliefs do not align with the dominant narrative (Berry & Cook, 2018). Teachers have their own notions of what the purposes of education should be and what practices make the most sense for reaching those purposes. My research investigates the perspective of teachers, a group that is traditionally silenced by the institution (Berry & Cook, 2018; Giroux, 2019). It is an opportunity for teachers who work in schools on a daily basis to voice their opinions and share their experiences related to literacy instruction.

This research is not intended to be a conclusive study, but is supposed to open a dialogue where teachers are positioned as holders of knowledge (Berry & Cook, 2018; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Thus, it is just one part of a cyclical process where, rather than simply seeking answers, we are working to better open up to and understand one another, particularly in the field of New Literacies (Freeman, 2000). This work is important to those of us who view the institution of education with a critical eye, who maintain a hope that the system can be changed, and believe that we are collectively and individually responsible for enacting that change (Freire, 1998).

Defining Literacies

My sociocultural views have shaped how I define literacy, which has significantly influenced both the purposes of and the approach to this research. I use the plural — literacies — to acknowledge that there are a variety of ways and an infinite number of purposes for which an individual might read, write, and communicate (Gee, 1992, 2015). Literacies are social practices and are always tied to a purpose that is influenced by the context in which they take place (Gee, 1992; Street, 2003). Schools tend to focus on a specific type of literacy, geared toward helping students reach “proficient” levels of

literacy by the standards of policymakers — usually centered around print-based reading and writing — and developing “higher order” cognitive skills in students that will, in theory, create opportunities for them to improve their status in society (Gee, 1992; Street, 2003). The lessons on reading, writing, and communicating in schools address this focus. In this work, I refer to this specific type of literacy as “traditional literacy.” However, there are many types of literacies (and thus many purposes for engaging in literacy) that are not privileged in schools, and they cannot be merely reduced to a checkbox where an individual is either literate or illiterate. Rather, individuals can practice the literacies with which they are already familiar in order to become more experienced with those literacies, as well as engage in literacies that they have previously not been exposed to. When schools classify students as “literate” or “illiterate” using standardized assessments, they are really only measuring the students’ traditional literacy skills. Our definitions of literacy are often too limited in schools, and we should broaden our notions of what counts as literacies (and which literacies matter). This would allow us to better serve our diverse population of students by engaging them in literacies practices that are aligned with their own goals and purposes, while still exposing them to skills associated with traditional literacy, which is currently privileged in many aspects of our society.

There are certain basic skills that are essential to helping students function in modern society. An example of this includes the rudimentary ability to read and write alphabetic text. There are certainly debates about the best ways to facilitate the development of these basic skills, and the sociocultural and New Literacies paradigms apply to elementary education instruction as much as they do to secondary education

pedagogies. However, literacy pedagogies in elementary school are very different from secondary. This research is geared toward literacy pedagogy in secondary schools, where students have already received instruction and practice in these basic skills.

Design

In their work, Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) challenged qualitative researchers to consider who the main producers of knowledge are in a given research setting, and what the roles of researchers and participants are throughout the process. This reflexive thinking helps researchers align their epistemologies with their methodologies. As I discussed in a previous section, one of the central tenets of New Literacies is that the divide between who is considered a producer and who is considered a consumer of knowledge is closing (Leu et al., 2013). For too long, education has heralded teachers as consumers of knowledge. I have drawn upon aspects of narrative inquiry in this work by centering the perspective of participants and considering the multiple and intersecting identities of both myself and the participants (Berry & Cook, 2018; Kim, 2015; Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009; Riessman, 2008).

Bruce (2008) discussed the liberating nature of narrative research, which “acknowledges the importance of grounding education in human subjectivity, emphasizes the importance of claiming one’s voice, while also respecting and empowering the human person” (pp. 324-325). The flexible and empowering nature of narrative inquiry fits into my own perspectives on literacy pedagogy. Narrative inquiry is one way to gain intersubjectivity with the experiences of those in schools — particularly those whose

perspectives have historically been largely ignored or silenced (Smagorinsky et al., 2020).

As I mentioned in my introduction, narrative inquiry is not just an explanation of my data collection methods; rather, it explains my orientation as a whole (Berry & Cook, 2018). In this case, I come from the perspective that we must gather stories and perspectives from practitioners about their work in schools pertaining to New Literacies in order to understand what is working, and where we are struggling to incorporate this paradigm. Their knowledge and experiences are indispensable to our understanding of the system and how New Literacies currently fit into it (or does not; Berry & Cook, 2018; Kim, 2015; Riessman, 2008).

Research Questions

The research questions that are driving this study are:

1. To what extent and in what ways do English language arts teachers who graduated from one teacher education program that focuses heavily on New Literacies pedagogies incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their current practice, according to their own narratives?
 - a. Under what circumstances and to what extent have these teachers felt encouraged to or constrained from practicing New Literacies pedagogies, and what factors have contributed to that sense of encouragement or constraint?
2. How do these teachers use digital technologies in their literacy instruction, according to their own narratives?

- a. Under what circumstances and to what extent have these teachers felt encouraged to or constrained from incorporating digital technologies in their pedagogy, and what factors have contributed to that sense of encouragement or constraint?

Program Selection

In this study, I wanted to talk with teachers who I was confident have at least some knowledge of New Literacies pedagogies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I engaged in purposeful sampling by selecting only individuals who have graduated from the secondary English language arts teacher education program at George Mason University and are currently active practitioners. I selected this particular program because I have participated (as a student) and taught (as an instructor) in this program; additionally, I have worked closely with those who run this program throughout my experience as a doctoral student. Therefore, I am extremely familiar with the program and am confident that New Literacies pedagogies are emphasized throughout, which means I am confident that all individuals who have graduated from the program have not just been exposed to, but also have engaged in conversations and activities that help them become familiar with New Literacies pedagogies. This is a critical requirement of my study, as I am interested in exploring the extent to and the ways in which teachers who have already been exposed to New Literacies pedagogies incorporate them into their practice. Notably, however, although the GMU secondary ELA teacher education program is oriented around the paradigm of New Literacies, the teacher educators do not necessarily use that term to describe their assignments to future teachers.

I limited my participant selection to those who have graduated from the George Mason University English language arts teacher preparation program for a few reasons. First, I am most familiar with this program, and am confident that the graduates of the program have been provided with the foundations of New Literacies pedagogies upon graduation. Second, I am a (partial) insider with this group; I am a graduate of the program and a current instructor in the program. I have also taught ELA in a public secondary school for over five years. Third, limiting my participant selection to those who graduated specifically from the ELA teacher education program helped me to set parameters about what to focus on in chapter two, as the literature in New Literacies pedagogies is quite extensive (even when limited to ELA).

Throughout the GMU secondary ELA teacher education program, there are various readings, activities, and assignments that provide future teachers with opportunities to discuss and engage in New Literacies pedagogies. A few examples of assignments in required courses that align with New Literacies paradigm are:

- **Digital Portfolio:** Students produce a digital portfolio by creating a website (using a template such as Google sites).
- **“Perspectives on Reading or Writing” Project:** Future teachers explore their own perspectives and the perspectives of an adolescent on reading and writing, and the tensions between those perspectives. They represent their findings in a technology-based presentation.
- **“20 Minutes of Wonder” Teaching Demonstration:** Future teachers are required to utilize research-based teaching strategies to create a lesson plan in

which they incorporate new digital and multimedia genres into their pedagogy in an interactive manner.

- **Multi-Genre Project:** Future teachers create a justice-focused multi-genre project to help them consider the ways in which their teaching can make the world a more just place, and to explore genres beyond those traditionally used in the classroom (as well as how the composition process changes across genres).
- **Reading Groups:** Each week (for four weeks) students read a young adult text and work in a group to: (a) discuss the text in a way that incorporates technology, (b) create a product that showcases the text, and c) present the text, discussion strategy, and product to the rest of the class.
- **Purposes of Reading Project:** Asks future teachers to connect with an adolescent to gain an understanding of why they read and how this informs their future teaching of reading.
- **The Way Forward Book Talk Project and Lesson Plan:** Students work in pairs to create a book talk and a lesson plan they might use in their future classrooms to teach a concept of their choice using two texts — one contemporary and one canonical.

A full description of each of these assignments is available in Appendix A.

Selection of Participants

A major question for consideration during recruitment was how many participants I should work with. Freeman (2000) claimed that the concern is not necessarily the number of participants, but rather who I work with, how I work with them, and why I

work with them. To an extent, I agree with Freeman's (2000) assertion, but I think it's important to consider the number of participants that will offer the optimal amount of breadth and depth. There are not necessarily strict rules for determining the number of participants in a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this case, I wanted to have a deep understanding of the circumstances of my participants — what Patton (2015) refers to as “information-rich cases.” Thus, I interviewed seven participants — a relatively small number — over a series of three interviews.

I accessed my participants through my personal and professional networks, reaching out to them mainly via email. I ensured that participants fit into the inclusion criteria during the recruitment and consent process. Please see Appendix B to view the recruitment email. I am personally connected with several teachers who have graduated from the secondary ELA program at George Mason University. Additionally, I currently work within the College of Education and Human Development as a research assistant and an instructor, so I have professional contacts who work in the secondary ELA teacher education program full time, and I have taught in the secondary ELA teacher education program in the past. Therefore, I had a great deal of access to the individuals who have graduated from this program.

The issue during recruitment was less about access and more about participant selection. I wanted participants who teach in a variety of contexts because I wanted to learn about the experiences of teachers who work in unique circumstances so that I could understand practitioners' experiences with New Literacies across the domain of teaching, as opposed to the experiences of teachers in specific types of teaching situations.

The participants in this study had an average of 4.5 years of full-time, contracted teaching experience; the teacher with the most experience had been teaching for nine years, while the teacher with the least experience had been teaching for less than two. Five of the teachers work in school districts in the suburbs of Virginia, just outside of Washington, D.C.; one teacher works in a county in rural Virginia; one teacher works in a county in rural Illinois. Four of the teachers work at high schools (grades 9-12); three of the teachers work at middle schools (grades 6-8).

The student demographics at each of these schools varies widely. Two are predominantly white (with the highest percentage of white students at 80%); one is predominantly Hispanic (40%); four have relatively equal percentages of two or more races. The percentage of low-income families varies from 18% — 48%.

Consent

I individually sent each participant a copy of the informed consent statement (Appendix C) prior to the start of the interview. Once individuals indicated that they were willing to participate in the study, I sent them a link to a Google form where they indicated consent. The Google form contained a link to the informed consent statement and read “I have read the informed consent form. All of my questions about this study have been answered by the researchers. I agree to participate in this study. I consent to being recorded via Zoom during my interviews.” Participants checked the box indicating they agreed to participate and typed their name in a signature box. Once all participants indicated consent via the Google form, I downloaded a copy of the responses and deleted the online version of the form, so that there was no online record of the responses. I

conducted the consent process, with supervision by the chair of this research — Kristien Zenkov. Kristien and I are aware of the identity of the participants, but the identities are confidential and will not be shared in any reports or presentations. The other members of this dissertation committee do not have access to information that exposes the identity of the participants. Please see Appendix C to view the Informed Consent Form.

Data Collection

Issues of access do not stop at the recruitment of participants. The methods I used to collect data and the approaches I took to those methods inevitably influenced the stories that participants shared (Freeman, 2000). In this section, I share details about my data sources and data collection process.

Data Sources

Interviews. Interviews are a common data source in qualitative, and particularly narrative, inquiry because researchers can structure interviews in a way that centers the voices and perspectives of the participants (Kim, 2015). Thus, the primary data source for this research is semi-structured interviews; I brought central questions to the interview, as well as topics I thought might be useful to discuss, but also left room for the participants to guide the trajectory of the conversation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I framed the questions in these interviews in such a way that the teachers' stories were central to the data collection, a method that acknowledges that, as a researcher, I do not simply stumble upon the narratives of others; rather, I participate in the creation of narratives through the questions I ask and the setting I ask them in (Riessman, 2008). I used interviews as a primary data source because interviews provide a platform through which teachers can

share through their own subjective lenses, which is intricately tied to my purpose, as I wanted to center teachers' voices in this work.

Data Collection Process

I used an emergent design in my data collection process. Emergent, or flexible, design is “process-oriented” and responsive in that the researcher uses initial data collected in the research to inform the methods of additional data collection (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This design helps place participants' perspectives at the center of the research as their responses and perspectives shape the trajectory of the research. I conducted a series of three interviews with each of my participants, with each interview building upon the last. Once my study was approved by the university institutional review board, I sent the participants the interview protocol and a link to sign up for interview times. I interviewed each participant once and then conducted initial data analysis on the first round of interviews. This first round of interviews and analysis was influential on my creation of the protocol for the second round of interviews. I repeated this process again for the third interview. For example, in interviews one and two, I asked the lead-off question “Can you tell me about a recent meaningful, impactful, and/or successful lesson in which you incorporated digital technology (or multiple types of digital technologies)?” I did not have any reference to professional development in my follow-up questions. However, one of the participants (Demi) began discussing professional development as a key component in her incorporation of digital technologies. Therefore, in interview three, I included additional questions related to professional development and digital technologies in order to gain the perspectives of the other participants on this

combination of topics. Another example of the participants' discussion influencing the development of protocol is the topic of COVID-19. In the first interview, teachers were eager to discuss their literacy instruction during and after the pandemic. In response, I created the lead-off question "Can you tell me about a lesson, project, or assignment that you felt was successful that you taught during the virtual or hybrid learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (or under the most restrictive circumstances you experienced at your school)?" for interview two. In essence, the data produced during our conversations drove the topics for future conversations.

Online Interviewing. I conducted my interviews via the online platform Zoom. There are strengths and drawbacks to conducting interviews online (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Nehls et al., 2015). One of the major benefits is that I had access to a wider selection of participants, as I was not limited by geographic barriers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Nehls et al., 2015). Additionally, individuals also may feel more comfortable if they are engaging in an interview in a location that is familiar to them, providing the interviewee with a level of control over the process and encouraging them to talk more openly (Nehls et al., 2015). I engaged the participants in a video interview, as opposed to only an audio, which allowed me to still pick up on nonverbal cues (Nehls et al., 2015). Recent research does not demonstrate that interviewing online negatively affects the dynamic of an interviewees relationship with the participants, or the nature of the discussion; online interviewing seems to produce data that is just as full and rich as in-person interviewing (Nehls et al., 2015). Additionally, I recorded the interviews using Zoom features, so I was able to return to them as needed during the analytical process.

Zoom transcription services provided an automated transcription that I reviewed and made corrections to as needed. I allowed the recordings to be automatically deleted after 90 days for the purposes of confidentiality.

However, online interviewing is not without its drawbacks. The confidentiality of participants can be compromised through the recordings, so I have taken extreme care to safeguard this data. Individuals can also be limited by their access to and ability to use technology, though the population of this study is likely to have the skills to engage in a video conference, given their background with technology in their teacher education program and their experience with video conferencing while teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interview Protocol. I developed a semi-structured interview protocol to guide my conversations with teachers. The semi-structured design ensured that I asked similar questions to all participants, but also left room for the participant to have some control over the narrative and what stories to share (Carspecken, 1996). I shared the interview protocol with the participants in advance so that they had an understanding of some of the topics I was interested in discussing and time to reflect on how their experiences relate to the questions. In addition, sending the questions in advance might have inspired them to consider topics that they wanted to cover during the conversation.

In total, I had three separate interview protocols — one for each iteration of interviews. Carspecken (1996) recommended generating between two and five lead-off questions that are concrete and encourage description. The lead-off questions open up the conversation to the main domains of my research. I categorized each lead-off question

under a general topic or domain to help focus my thinking (Carspecken, 1996).

Underneath each lead-off question, I identified a set of covert categories; these are topics that I did not necessarily intend on directly asking the participant about, but are questions that I had in mind when asking the initial lead-off question, as well as subsequent questions. I did not share the covert categories with my participants as they were reminders for me about what topics I considered important when discussing the particular domain with the participants (Carspecken, 1996). Finally, I generated a series of potential follow-up questions that related to each of the lead-off questions. I used these follow-up questions to guide the conversation related to the lead-off question.

In order to be explicit and transparent about my interview protocol creation, I will explain how I came up with the lead-off questions for each of the interviews. For the first interview, I created two lead-off questions that were intended to help me get to know my participants and a little bit about their teaching. The first lead off question is “Can you tell me about a recent lesson that you taught that you felt was particularly meaningful, impactful, and/or successful?” This lead-off question relates most closely to my first research question: To what extent and in what ways do English language arts teachers who graduated from one teacher education program that focuses heavily on New Literacies pedagogies incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their current practice, according to their own narratives? The second lead-off question is “Can you tell me about a recent meaningful, impactful, and/or successful lesson in which you incorporated digital technology (or multiple types of digital technologies)?” This relates to my second research question: “How do these teachers use digital technologies in their literacy

instruction, according to their own narratives?” I intentionally created extremely open-ended lead-off questions for the initial interview so as to give the participant a great deal of control over the trajectory of the conversation.

For the second interview, I started off by asking the participants “Between now and the last time we talked, did you have any new insights/thoughts/ideas/examples that you wanted to share that relate to our previous conversation?” Based off of the questions from my initial interview, I wanted to discuss teachers’ virtual and hybrid instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, so I asked, “Can you tell me about a lesson, project, or assignment that you felt was successful that you taught during the virtual or hybrid learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (or under the most restrictive circumstances you experienced at your school)?” I also wanted to know how useful teachers considered their teacher education program in their day-to-day instruction, so I asked, “Can you tell me about a time where you attempted to incorporate a lesson, strategy, activity, etc. from your teacher education program or that was inspired by what you learned from your teacher education program into the classroom?” This question is a little more pointed toward the paradigm of New Literacies, and follow-up questions asked the participants about specific aspects of New Literacies pedagogies.

For the final interview protocol, I started with the same question from interview two: “Between now and the last time we talked, did you have any new insights/thoughts/ideas/examples that you wanted to share that relate to our previous conversation?” Additionally, based on my discussions with participants during interviews one and two, I added three follow-up questions related to digital tools and professional

development related to digital technologies. I also wanted to know more about teachers' beliefs related to literacy, so my two lead-off questions for the final interview were "What does it mean to be a "good" literacy teacher?" and "Can you describe a student who exemplifies your definition of literate?"

Please see Appendix D for the full interview protocol that I shared with the teachers.

Data Analysis

For some time now, the scholarly community has called attention to the need for qualitative researchers to more clearly systematize and delineate the methods they use to analyze their data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This enhances the quality of the research and also allows other researchers to utilize or modify the analytical style in their own work. However, it is a step that is often neglected, at least in part due to the fact that there have historically been limited tools to assist researchers in qualitative data analysis. In addition, qualitative data analysis is not a linear process, and therefore can be difficult to clearly and succinctly explain (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

During my process of analyzing the data, I was influenced by three main works. I drew heavily from Saldaña's (2015) methods of coding and organization. I was also inspired by Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic networks analysis — a method for organizing qualitative data by breaking up data into levels of themes — basic (most specific), organizing (broader), and global (most broad/encompassing) — though I did not follow this method precisely. I also relied heavily on Carspecken's (1996) methods of reconstructive analysis. My process consisted of the following steps:

1. Transcription: I conducted the interviews via the online platform, Zoom, which automatically creates a transcript when the interview is recorded. I read through each transcript, fixing any errors made by the automated generator. As I was initially reading, I began making researcher notes and began a list of potential codes to come back to.
2. Coding the data: After I finished this initial step of transcription, I began emically coding, looking specifically for aspects of the conversations that relate to my research question. I also kept track of potential themes (Saldaña, 2015). I engaged in preliminary reconstructive analysis, including coding with low levels of inference, meaning field analysis, and reconstructive horizon analysis (Carspecken, 1996).
3. Identifying themes: Once I coded all of the data, I created categories based on the various significant codes and pieces of data from the first step. While categorizing, I began to record emerging themes (Saldaña, 2015). I refined the themes through an iterative process of returning to the data and initial codes, and back to my themes, revising and refining as I went (Saldaña, 2015).
4. Describing and exploring themes: The creation and organization of themes is only an initial step in the process of data analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Saldaña, 2015). Once I created a robust list of themes, I returned to the original data to describe the contents of each theme and further explore the patterns in the data.
5. Summarizing themes: I succinctly presented the major themes from the data.

6. Interpreting patterns: I revisited the overarching themes and connected them back to my original research questions. At this time, I explored potential theoretical and practical implications.

One potential critique of the use of my analytical methods is that the deconstruction of the data in such a fashion could obscure the essence of the participants' stories, as it tends to favor organization and sense-making over preservation of the story as a whole; this speaks to the issue in narrative research of how to best and most authentically represent participants' voices (Byrne, 2017). However, as I mentioned above, I drew on aspects of narrative inquiry for this study, but did not use the entire framework. The series of decision junctures I make in my methods must be connected to the overarching epistemological and theoretical goals of the project (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009; Reybold et al., 2012). The purpose of this study is to illuminate the beliefs and practices literacy pedagogies (including those involving digital technologies practices) of secondary English language arts teachers who graduated from George Mason University's teacher education program, which focuses heavily on New Literacies pedagogies, as well as how the teachers' circumstances and context influences their New Literacies practices. Thus, it is reasonable that I organized the data according to topics between the participants, as that assisted me in identifying commonalities and unique circumstances. Grouping the data thematically is a tool that helped me make sense of those commonalities while still maintaining the integrity of the original stories, allowing me to share the stories of my participants in a logical way so that my audience can follow

my interpretations. The reality is that the interpretation of data is constructed in a specific social context, unique, and limited (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Freeman, 2000).

However, I disagree with Freeman's (2000) claim that my unique interpretation of the data can only benefit myself and other researchers. While I acknowledge the inevitable subjectivity of my research, as I mentioned above, it is not meant to be conclusive, but to contribute to the body of knowledge about New Literacies teachers and teaching. The work is certainly relevant for other researchers, but my primary target audience is teachers, future teachers, and teacher educators. I framed my discussion of the implications of this work in a way that emphasizes the possibilities for incorporating New Literacies pedagogies into the current system, and opens a conversation for teacher educators about how to better prepare future teachers for bringing New Literacies into their practice. Additionally, I highlighted some of the potential barriers to incorporating New Literacies pedagogies in schools that are relevant to multiple stakeholders, including administration and policymakers.

Reconstructive Analysis

During my process of analyzing the data, I engaged in preliminary reconstructive analysis including low-inference coding and meaning field analysis. In the first step, I noted potential underlying meanings of participants' statements through low-inference coding (Carspecken, 1996). I then conducted meaning field analysis for statements from each participant. Meaning field analysis consists of explicitly brainstorming the variety of possible meanings from a participants' statement, with the knowledge that we cannot know with certainty the exact meaning of every statement of an individual. However, we

can consider the range of possibilities. I then used reconstructive horizon analysis to bring the background references — possible meanings of participants’ statements that I was not necessarily focusing on — to the forefront of my attention (Carspecken, 1996).

Defining New Literacies Pedagogies

A boundary to my analytical process was the subjective nature in which I defined what does and does not constitute as New Literacies pedagogies (Reybold et al., 2012). The main focus of my work in chapter two was outlining and explaining my perceptions of what exactly constitutes New Literacies pedagogies. Using the literature on New Literacies that I outlined in chapter two, I defined New Literacies pedagogies with the following parameters:

- Pedagogies that acknowledge the deictic (i.e., changing) nature of literacy
- Pedagogies that acknowledge the “multiple, multimodal, and multifaceted” (Leu et al., 2013, p. 1158) nature of literacy
 - This includes the use of digital technologies, although (as discussed in a previous section) digital technologies must be used in ways that reflect a New Literacies orientation
- Pedagogies that challenge the domination of “experts” and expert texts, including any of the following:
 - Position students as literate, including, but not limited to:
 - Enable students as creators and producers of knowledge
 - Value students’ lived experiences and funds of knowledge

- Expand students' experiences with literacy beyond the traditional by providing students with a variety of genres and perspectives, particularly those that reach beyond the canon and beyond the genres traditionally revered by the canon
- Develop students' abilities to critically consume knowledge in texts, particularly texts from online sources, rather than passively accepting texts as "true"
- Pedagogies that emphasize collaboration over competition
- Pedagogies in which the participant recognizes their role as facilitators of interactions and experiences for students rather than beholders of knowledge tasked with transmitting information to students

Quality/Validity

The notion of validity in qualitative research has often been viewed as a check box (e.g., did the researcher employ established techniques such as member checking and triangulation to establish validity? If yes, then the research is valid). Cho and Trent (2006) have pushed back on this view and argued that we must consider how the lenses through which a particular study is being conducted help determine what is and is not valid. In addition, they encouraged scholars to look at validity as a process, and emphasized the need for approaches to validation to continuously be critiqued and improved in scholarship.

The work that I have engaged in falls under what Cho and Trent (2006) call "Social Change Purpose," meaning that I believe there is a need for reconsidering the

basic structures of and approaches to formal education. I used two of the methods that they suggested to help establish validity in my work — critical reflexivity of self and redefinition of the status quo. I also engaged in preliminary reconstructive analysis, including meaning field analysis and reconstructive horizon analysis (Saldaña, 2015). I was also inspired by the notion of dissensus research (Kvale, 2006). I will discuss each of these briefly in subsequent sections. Finally, I will consider issues related to the topic of triangulation, a common way in which researchers often “check the box” of validity in qualitative studies.

Positionality and Critical Reflexivity of Self

Bias and researcher involvement are contentious topics in qualitative research. Some scholars argue that qualitative researchers should work to remove any contamination caused by their own presence or views — in essence, attempting to make themselves invisible; others claim that acknowledging both our bias and our involvement in the research is more transparent, realistic, and meaningful (Briggs, 2003; Dunbar et al., 2003; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014). I fall into the latter category; rather than contaminating evidence, a researcher uniquely shapes and contributes to the study, and explicitly owning that contribution helps others to understand the biases the researcher may bring to the table as well as how those biases are influencing the methods.

The lenses I bring to the research are subject to transformation, and therefore, I engaged in the process of reflexivity — constantly questioning my own approaches to the research and how they are influencing meaning — throughout the duration of my work (Berger, 2015; Cho & Trent, 2006). Engaging in reflexivity included remaining in tune to

my reactions to the stories and perspectives participants shared, as I consider myself a partial insider with them and brought my own beliefs about New Literacies pedagogies to this data (Berger, 2015).

Redefinition of the Status Quo

Cho and Trent (2006) also discussed a “redefinition of the status quo,” where participants are emancipated through the outcome of the research. This does not fit neatly into my study. While my work will, in some ways, validate the pedagogies that these teachers are engaging in, and although this is a small piece of the process of transforming teaching and education in the United States, the immediate emancipation of teachers is a much larger and more complex issue than what this study can accomplish. However, this work does highlight some of the New Literacies practices that teachers are already engaging in in schools, as well as the barriers they are facing that may prevent them from incorporating New Literacies pedagogies. This exposure helps create a sense of solidarity for existing New Literacies teachers and teacher educators, motivate teachers and teacher educators who desire to engage in New Literacies pedagogies (and/or inspire others to be New Literacies pedagogues) but feel powerless to do so, and promote the New Literacies paradigm for those who are currently unaware of or disinterested in this approach to teaching. It also assists teacher education programs who already incorporate New Literacies to better prepare future teachers for working within the current system. Finally, this research demonstrates the ways in which contexts can enable and constrain teachers from engaging in New Literacies instruction; thus, it highlights that teachers need support at the department, school, district, and state level to enact liberatory pedagogies.

Dissensus Research

Throughout the process of this research project, I remained wary of the need to represent my participants without romanticizing them (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014). In addition, I was consciously looking for issues related to power dynamics while conducting my interviews. One way in which I addressed these concerns is by explicitly acknowledging the differences between my own perspectives and those of the participants (Kvale, 2006). This served to mitigate some of the issues with reporting, as it allowed me to share all relevant participant stories, but also comment on those stories from my own perspective.

A Note on Triangulation

One common way in which qualitative researchers attempt to establish validity in their studies is through triangulation, where they access information related to their research topic through multiple data sources (e.g., a researcher might use interviews, observations, and focus groups all in the same study) that, supposedly, serve as confirmation of one another and allow researchers to move beyond biases that arise from specific types of data collection (Denzin, 1978). Triangulation, as it was originally conceived, is predicated on a singular truth and gaining access to that truth, which is not the case in my work (Cho & Trent, 2006). In addition, many qualitative researchers use this method of “ensuring” quality without really giving consideration to how or why they are incorporating it, thus rendering triangulation unhelpful in many instances (Reybold et al., 2018).

Reybold et al. (2018) have offered an alternative approach to the notion of triangulation. They claimed that triangulation has historically been used to *solve a triangle*, using known pieces to find the unknown parts of the triangle. This conception of triangulation, they argued, is rooted in the notion that there is a fixed answer to how to conduct a research study, and that it only needs to be found. Instead, the researchers advocated for *mapping a triangle* — recognizing that research is iterative and emergent, and that the different pieces of the “triangle” are always subject to change, and therefore deserve scrutiny throughout the research process. This orientation begins with the researcher explicitly acknowledging her positionality and establishing a clear direction for the research. Throughout the study, as the scope and nature of the work is more clearly shaped, researchers need to continually evaluate the choices they make at each “decision juncture” in the process and how it contributes to the study as a whole (Koroljungberg et al., 2009). In this view triangulation is a process, not a box to be checked and forgotten (Reybold et al., 2018).

I view triangulation as an emergent process, and one that does not necessarily mean having three methods of access to the data (Reybold et al., 2018). I was interested in the practices and beliefs of ELA teachers who have some background in the New Literacies paradigm, which was best served by providing the participants with a space to share their stories. Originally, I intended on asking teachers to share artifacts (e.g., lesson plans, handouts, assignments, rubrics, etc.) that they use in their literacy instruction. I did not end up using any artifacts in this study for reasons I elaborate on in chapter five. I considered adding in an observational component to this study, but the reality is that I

was interested in prioritizing what is said over what is done (or observable; Atkinson & Coffey, 2003). My observations might not have matched up with what the teachers said about their work or the encouragement and barriers they face. Observations, in this case, would not necessarily have provided answers to my questions, and certainly would not have operated as “corrective” (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003). Therefore, they did not make sense and would only have superficially validated my work (Cho & Trent, 2006; Reybold et al., 2018).

Ethics

One ethical question that Ghaffar-Kucher (2014) has posed is for whom and what purpose am I writing this research? In part, I am obviously writing it for the academy, but my underlying motivations for being in a higher education program are derived from my experiences as a teacher in public schools in the United States. The dissertation is certainly for the degree. The question becomes how can this translate into something beyond a dissertation — something of more relevance to my participants, as well as teacher educators and current and future teachers? In addition to my scholarly pursuits, is it an ethical necessity that I engage the public in my work with New Literacies pedagogies? (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014). My answer to this question would be yes, so the concern becomes how to best approach this? This is a question I have grappled with and will continue to pursue beyond the publication of the research in this dissertation.

Another ethical consideration is who it benefits to bring this topic into the view of the public eye? (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014). There are certainly potential ramifications for my participants if their confidentiality is ever compromised. Through this work, I have

discussed both the ways that current teachers are encouraged and restricted from practicing New Literacies. As I have explained previously, I view this work as important to the teachers themselves as a way of providing a platform for their voices and a bridge between public schools and universities, but I wonder to what extent my participants share this view? Participation in the study was, of course, optional, so if a teacher did not want to share then they were not required to. Both the participants in the study and those who fit the criteria but chose not to participate might have felt an ethical dilemma between wanting to share, but also wanting to protect themselves.

In this research, I worked with participants who teach in the same district that I do. This has implications for my role as a practitioner. Even though I am committed to keeping the individuals I interview confidential, this work could be viewed as controversial, and perhaps even unethical, by those that I work with — particularly those who hold a higher position than me (Leigh, 2014). This is an ethical dilemma for me as a researcher. My experiences as a classroom teacher have inspired this work; many of these were positive, and even encouraged by my particular school. However, some of my own stories about the institution of education are not quite as flattering. The overall scope of the work is critical of the standardization inherent in all U.S. public school systems as of today. A question I had to ask myself during this process at times is to what extent am I willing to risk my position as a practitioner? How is this ethical issue affecting my publication?

Interviews

One potential dilemma when conducting interviews is how to create a meaningful space in such a contrived interaction (Freeman, 2000). A first step in this process is to be transparent with the participants. There are a host of reasons why the participants in this study might not place trust in me, and to have that expectation, particularly without giving them information on which they can make an informed decision about me as an individual and about my work, is unreasonable (Dunbar et al., 2003).

There are two ways in which I cultivated a level of transparency and trust with participants. The first was by disclosing information about my own status as a practitioner and the ways in which I relate to them, and perhaps even deviate from them, through the practice of teaching. Although our roles were obviously different in this interaction, I am a classroom teacher myself and I approach my work with my practitioner standpoint in mind. I also graduated from the same teacher education program as my participants. With a degree of shared perspective and experience, I had a platform in which I could create relationships with participants. Some scholars have argued that self-disclosure of our own experiences might “contaminate” the interview (Dunbar et al., 2003). I disagree with this perspective and contend that providing information about myself humanizes me and helps to create a bond between us.

A second, related approach to transparency is being clear and direct about the impetus and purposes of my work. We often approach interviewing with the perspective that the interviewee provides the information, and we document, analyze, and make meaning from their responses (Dunbar et al., 2003). This is a recipe for replicating hegemony in research, and one way of countering this view is realizing that we owe it to

the participants to be forthcoming about ourselves and our work, so that they can make an informed decision about what role they would like to have in the process. Thus, I attempted to be as transparent as possible with the participants about the nature and purposes of my research.

Another way to create a meaningful interaction with participants is to consider the ways in which we, as researchers, view the interaction itself. Kvale (2006) criticized the notion of a dialogic interview, claiming we do not have mutual interests in the conversation. From my perspective, however, I do have mutual interests with the participants, although this may not be clear to all participants in the beginning. I purposely select individuals who, at a minimum, have a background in New Literacies through their teacher education program. I view the teachers as holders of key information who can share their stories of teaching with this orientation. Although true dialogue may not have been attained, we at least approached it because I constructed the interaction with practitioners who have similar backgrounds to me, and by explicitly addressing that shared interest with the participants. This shared understanding will help to transform the power dynamic and turn the interview into more of a conversation (Dunbar et al., 2003).

Though eliciting stories through interviews makes sense, given the aims of my work, there are a variety of concerns with this method that need to be addressed. First of all, interviews are not neutral and are filled with competing and fluctuating power relations between interviewee and interviewer (Enosh & Buchbinder, 2005; Kvale, 2006). Another issue is when we feel familiarity with a participant's experience or story, we are

more likely to make assumptions without asking the participant to elaborate (Freeman, 2000). As an individual who identifies as a New Literacies pedagogue in my practitioner life, and as an individual who graduated from the same program as my participants, it might have been easy for me to hear a small piece of a perspective on or story about New Literacies teaching and assume that the details of the story relate to my own. Despite the fact that there are many similarities between me and my participants, there are also many differences — in both our views and practices of teaching. Rather than attempt to minimize those differences, I attempted to capitalize on them to learn about the range of experiences and perspectives of the participants. As Freeman (2000) put it, I paid particular attention to how our commonalities and differences influenced the construction of our interaction. This means that I acknowledge to both myself and them that, although we have some shared beliefs about teaching, we have different experiences that shape those beliefs and different approaches to enacting those beliefs in practice.

Privacy and Confidentiality of Participants

The interview recordings in this study were kept for 90 days from the time of each interview on the password-protected Zoom platform, at which time they were automatically deleted. All other data, including transcriptions of the Zoom recordings, were stored in a password-protected Dropbox folder. I assigned a pseudonym to each participant before printing or analyzing any results. I was the only individual present during the online interview sessions. I have access to the names of each individual that participates in the study, as well as their contact information. Dr. Kristien Zenkov also has access to the participants' identifiable information, as he oversaw the recruitment and

consent process. The other members of the dissertation committee did not have access to the names or contact information. Personally identifiable information has been destroyed upon the conclusion of the study.

Issues of Representation

When discussing the process of research, Freeman (2000) wrote “At first, I saw research as a weaving or sculpture in which the process of selection of raw, disconnected materials creates a final image. I am seeing it more as a dance or a play, in which the materials are already whole but can be put into motion in different ways” (p. 368). The ways in which I set the materials of my work in motion illuminated certain aspects of New Literacies teaching, and obscured others. While all participants in this study engaged in New Literacies pedagogies to a certain degree, there are a variety of reasons that teachers may practice aspects of New Literacies pedagogies that may or may not align with my own understandings of the purposes of New Literacies paradigms. I viewed the participants’ stories through my own lenses, which is both an asset and a boundary of qualitative (and, really, all) research (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Freeman, 2000; Kvale, 2006).

Representation relates directly to a conversation on access and participants. The participants I chose and the reasons that I chose them contributed to the outcomes of my study and the conclusions that I drew. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on New Literacies teaching, but is not all-encompassing. Therefore, it would be advantageous to expand this study to include a wider variety of participants in the future

(something I will elaborate on in the section on boundaries and limitations); it would also make sense to look at this study in relation to other research on New Literacies.

While I consider myself a partial insider in the New Literacies ELA teaching community, I also recognize that insider-outsider status falls on a continuum; for example, my affiliation with an institution of higher education and my role as researcher casts me as an outsider, and therefore limited my ability to “give voice” to these teachers. I did not operate under the naive impression that this study mitigates unequal power relations between teachers and the institution (Briggs, 2003). In addition, I took into account aspects of my identity and those of my participants outside of the realm of our profession (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014; Leigh, 2014). This work intersects with race, age, socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, and many other aspects of our identities that we do not necessarily share.

I also did not hold the status of insider with the participants who work in a school, district, or state that is different from my own. The circumstances of teachers vary widely according to the institutions that preside over their working lives. This reality has both positive and negative consequences for my work. For example, I did not have knowledge of the participants’ unique contextual situations, and while I gained a semblance of that from our conversations, I have not experienced their circumstances for myself; however, participants were potentially not be as concerned about disclosing certain information about their situations, since I am further removed and therefore less likely to negatively impact their working lives (Leigh, 2014).

I sought individuals who graduated from the English language arts teacher education program at George Mason University. However, there are thousands who have completed the requirements of this program and have gone on to teach. Inevitably, some have left the field of teaching as well. This study honed in on a few of these individuals to gain a deep understanding of their experiences, but inevitably left many who meet the inclusion criteria out. Therefore, the outcomes of this study contribute to an understanding of the New Literacies practices of English language arts teachers who have graduated from the teacher education program at George Mason University, but is not all-encompassing. Additionally, since I have limited my participants to graduates from one university, the study represents a fraction of the practices of teachers who have a background in New Literacies training. There is clearly a need to expand this work to other universities in order to gain a more well-rounded picture of the New Literacies practices of current teachers. Thus, though the revelations from this study are informative for current and future teachers/researchers, it does not represent the entire scope of New Literacies teaching and may even contradict the practices of New Literacies teachers in other contexts (Briggs, 2003; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014).

I also recognize the significance of this work in the light of its contentious nature. The way that I represented this group would undoubtedly be read differently by different groups (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014). The reality is that my work would likely not sit well with some individuals who avoid bringing a critical lens to our current educational approaches. While I did keep oppositional audiences in mind, I also did not want to water down my data with the intent of pacifying those who disagree with the concept, as that

would have directly countered both my own stance as a critical researcher and my intention of illuminating the stories of the participants.

Summary

All researchers bring a specific lens to the table, and have to make choices that create boundaries for a given study. This is not a limitation so much as it is a recognition that each piece of research contributes to the larger body of knowledge. What matters is that the decisions we make at each juncture represent our positionalities and intentions behind the work (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009). I continue to reflect on the decisions that I have made at each stage in the research process, and how they align with my ways of thinking about educational practices.

Chapter Four

The purpose of this research is to investigate literacy pedagogies of English language arts teachers who graduated from George Mason University's secondary teacher education program. Specifically, I am focusing on the extent to which they bring the New Literacies paradigm into their teaching, as well as what factors enable and constrain them from enacting New Literacies pedagogies. My research questions are:

1. To what extent and in what ways do English language arts teachers who graduated from one teacher education program that focuses heavily on New Literacies pedagogies incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their current practice, according to their own narratives?
 - a. Under what circumstances and to what extent have these teachers felt encouraged to or constrained from practicing New Literacies pedagogies, and what factors have contributed to that sense of encouragement or constraint?
2. How do these teachers use digital technologies in their literacy instruction, according to their own narratives?
 - a. Under what circumstances and to what extent have these teachers felt encouraged to or constrained from incorporating digital technologies in their pedagogy, and what factors have contributed to that sense of encouragement or constraint?

In order to explore these questions, I conducted a series of interviews with seven participants (three interviews each, 21 interviews total). For my data analysis, I began by cleaning up the transcripts automatically generated by Zoom, the online platform through which I conducted the interviews. In the next step, I began the initial coding process using low-inference, emic coding (Saldaña, 2015). During the initial coding process, I also engaged in preliminary reconstructive analysis, including meaning field analysis and reconstructive horizon analysis (Carspecken, 1996). I also made notes about potential categories and themes. I created and refined categories and themes through an iterative process of returning to the data and initial codes (Saldaña, 2015).

In this chapter, I will present my themes, organized by each research question. Within each section, I share an overview of the findings, followed by illustrative examples and quotations from the data. The examples I chose to share are those that I feel are most relevant to the particular theme at hand, although many fit into a variety of themes. I tried to include examples from each of the participants on multiple occasions in an attempt to represent every individual participant and their precise wording as many times as possible. I chose quotations and examples from the various participants both to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the themes throughout the data and to share the voices of each participant as much as possible while still remaining concise.

Research Question #1: To what extent and in what ways do English language arts teachers who graduated from one teacher education program that focuses heavily on New Literacies pedagogies incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their current practice, according to their own narratives?

In this section, I present ways that these teachers facilitate literacy instruction in ways that align with the New Literacies paradigm. All of these teachers incorporate aspects of New Literacies pedagogies into their current practice to some extent and on a continuum; some incorporate New Literacies more frequently and with more fidelity than others (see chapter 5 — New Literacies as a Way to Facilitate Culturally Relevant Pedagogy — for a discussion on fidelity of implementation). I will share two major themes that emerged from this data related to teachers' New Literacies pedagogies: (1) Teachers engage in practices that align with New Literacies, though it is unclear that they do so with the New Literacies paradigm in mind. (2) Teachers engage in culturally relevant pedagogies that are aligned with, but not specific to, the New Literacies paradigm. I will elaborate on each of these themes in the sections below. I was specifically looking for evidence of New Literacies pedagogies in the data, using my literature review in chapter two to guide my analysis. I organized the results for this section using the same headings I used in chapter two, sharing the extent to which and the ways in which teachers discussed engaging students in those New Literacies practices.

Teachers Engage in Practices That Align With New Literacies, Though It is Unclear That They Do So With the New Literacies Paradigm in Mind.

The teachers in this study shared a variety of ways that they engage their students in pedagogy that, on the surface, aligns with a New Literacies framework. However, it is unclear from the data whether they do so with the intent of enacting New Literacies. I will share specific examples in each of the sections below.

Teachers Act as Orchestrators of Learning Contexts. As mentioned in chapter two, the shift to a New Literacies approach to teaching means that the role of literacy pedagogues shifts from “dispensers of literacy skills” to “orchestrators of learning contexts” (Leu et al., 2013, p. 1163). I also discussed the proposal that New Literacies pedagogues view education as an encounter, where teachers do not presume that students come to school deficient, but that students bring unique experiences to the classroom, and the classroom is a place that presents them with opportunities to expand and challenge what they know (Barrow, 2020).

At times, these teachers embrace roles as orchestrators of knowledge. When asked what the main mark of a good literacy teacher is to her, Ella said,

Encouraging this idea that there's not one right answer. That's the beauty of English. That you can come up with your own answer and you learn how to formulate that and communicate that and hear other peoples' and incorporate what they say into what you think. And then find evidence to back up what you think so you're — more people believe you. Like the idea that we're all looking for answers but we might not all find the same one is something I really try to push. Which kind of blows their little minds.

One way teachers appear to operate as orchestrators of learning contexts is to provide a space for students to make choices in regard to their learning. Teachers provide choice in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to, reading material/texts, assessment types, and topics for projects/research. For example Francis facilitates a choice novel project in which students have options in both their reading material and in the products they create. They select activities from a clickable PDF BINGO card that has three columns (elements of fiction, creative writing, multimedia presentation/playable game). Each column contains a variety of activities, and the students are required to select one activity from each. In addition, all students are required to create a movie poster for their text, using any medium they choose. Francis explained, “We basically switched to all choice novels this year, giving them the opportunity to read whatever they want because we can kind of practice any skill with any text.” Francis indicated that his role as a teacher is not to control precisely what material the students interact with, but instead help facilitate activities to help them engage with that material.

Most of the teachers conduct at least one unit in which students choose their own sustained text where students are free to choose any longer work in any genre. A common practice among the teachers is to either use shorter texts (e.g., poems, short stories) or excerpts from longer texts (e.g., a single chapter from a novel) for full-class instruction, and then provide students with more choice in their full-length texts. One reason for this is that teachers want their students to read sustained texts that are appropriately challenging, and they recognize that students do not all enjoy reading the same text nor do they all read at the same level. Students are usually encouraged to engage with a

variety of text types when the students are provided with choice. Teachers also engage students in free-reading time, where students read material of their choosing and have no high-stakes assignments attached to that material.

Teachers Enable Students as Creators and Producers of Knowledge. New Literacies proponents advocate for engaging students in the creation and production of original texts. The participants believe that students should spend equal amounts of time creating texts as they should reading and learning about the texts others have produced. Their commitment to this belief is demonstrated through the variety of examples of projects where students create and produce knowledge. They have students engage in the creation and production of knowledge for different reasons, some of which I share subsequently.

Students create and produce knowledge to help with their reading comprehension and to demonstrate their understanding of a text. For example, Ella's students reinterpret a scene from *Macbeth*. Initially, they read the original feuding scene and break it down in groups to try and more fully understand it. They then create their own feuding scenes using modern examples; Ella shared one example of a group who created a feuding scene between Taco John's and Taco Bell (two rival fast food establishments in their county). Demi's students write an additional scene for *A Raisin in the Sun* "where they have to kind of do analysis but not directly because, in order to make the next scene make sense, they have to do a pretty good analysis of what's happening." Similarly, Francis' students have several options for creating texts related to a novel of their own choosing. He calls

one of these options “tales from the dark side,” where students retell the text from the perspective of the antagonist.

Students create and produce knowledge to demonstrate their understanding of a concept or a genre. For example, Cara shared a unit focused on satire in different forms. The students engage with a variety of satirical text types including videos, political cartoons, written pieces (“like *The Onion* articles — stuff like that”), and songs. Students then pick a form in which to create their own satirical pieces. Students, in this case, have to demonstrate an understanding of the concept of satire and an understanding of the genre in which they choose to create their satirical piece. Demi’s students read *Frankenstein* and study what makes a text gothic. The final assignment is to write their own gothic tale, incorporating the elements of a gothic tale discussed in class.

Students also create and produce texts for the purposes of deepening their knowledge of language and expanding their vocabulary. Demi has students explore what makes a sentence beautiful using *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925) as an anchor text. She says,

They have to, you know, create the definition of what makes beautiful sentences and a lot of times they talk about the content of it or the imagery of it. And then we talk a little bit more about the sound of it and the structure of it... It makes them start looking at language as — in a different way... And then they’re looking for beautiful sentences out in the world. They’re supposed to bring in sentences that they find in other places.

Students are ultimately tasked with creating their own beautiful sentences.

Some projects engage students in the creation and production of knowledge to develop their understanding of the setting of a text and the experiences of the characters during a particular period of time. For example, in Grace's class, students read the dramatic version of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Goodrich & Hackett, 2017). Subsequently, she provides them with a list of Holocaust victims. Each student is assigned to an individual who was in a concentration camp, and they used The Holocaust Museum's website to research their selected individual. Ultimately, students write a piece of historical fiction. They are required to research as much factual information about the individual as they can, and then fill in the blanks to create a narrative about the individual that is rooted in fact but has added imagined details. Grace explained,

I was looking for an actual timeline of their lives, which was easy for them to do because that's what's given to you on the website. But then they had to fill in the blanks. So like if it said 'got married', I had them write a diary entry about their marriage. If it said it 'went to the Warsaw ghetto' they would make their diary entry about what they experienced in the ghetto.

In this case, the students learn about Frank's tragedy, and apply their understanding of her experience to create fictional stories about others who were also subject to persecution during World War II.

Teachers ask students to create and produce knowledge that encourages them to reflect on their growth and development. For example, in Anna's class, the students complete an end-of-the-year project in which they create a self-portrait that demonstrates an aspect of their personal growth over the course of the year. The students can discuss

any aspect of their lives in which they feel they have transformed since the previous August, and they depict this transformation visually by creating a self-portrait, using any medium they prefer. The students also write a paragraph explaining how the self-portrait demonstrates a way they have transformed over the course of the year in some aspect of their lives.

Teachers Incorporate Diverse and Multimodal Texts. The New Literacies paradigm emphasizes that literacy is complex and spans beyond the reading of traditional literature and traditional text types. Teachers expressed their belief that being able to read print-based texts is important, but is not the sole determinant of whether or not an individual is considered literate. They also agreed with the statements that literacy is multidimensional and there are a variety of text types that are not necessarily traditional or print-based that are valuable. They used phrases such as “reading an image,” indicating that reading is not necessarily confined to print-based texts. Demi shared,

We [she and her students] were talking about kind of just how people choose to express themselves — whether it’s through art or through literature... the AIDs quilt — when AIDS was an issue when the country got together and made this big quilt and what a big statement it was... This we actually did during COVID. I used the “Streets of Philadelphia” — that’s a Bruce Springsteen song. And it was a movie. And we just connected all of that to see how people express themselves during difficult times.

The previous example is an illustration of how teachers engage their students in activities to illuminate the various ways that people communicate beyond traditional, print-based

texts. Teachers also use diverse and multimodal texts to reinforce or challenge notions found in more classic works. Ella shared,

We read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and then we watched *Finding Forrester*, and then we read *Monster*. And we compared all of them and I wasn't sure how it was going to go at first, but there are so many parallels between that movie and *Monster* that I really enjoyed it — discussing it, and then also we have like — here's a character, who had his struggles, but like he was successful and he did not go on trial, and he did great things right, and so it's at least a little bit of a break from that.

In this case, Ella pairs a film and a young adult novel with a text that is considered more traditional. Additionally, when teachers give students free choice with their text selection and there is no work or assessment attached to the reading, they typically encourage students to engage with a variety of text types, including (but not necessarily limited to) graphic novels, audiobooks, websites/blogs, and podcasts. However, some were hesitant to allow students to read graphic novels — worrying that students who read graphic novels would finish too quickly; Anna warned her students that those who chose graphic novels during a choice unit would need to have a second text lined up once they finished the first. This concern was not voiced in relation to more traditional text types (e.g., novels).

The following two sections detail two additional ways that teachers use diverse and multimodal texts in their whole-class instruction.

Teachers Incorporate Multimodal Versions of Classic Texts. Teachers use multimodal versions of classic texts. Sometimes, the teachers have students read parts of the original work, and use multimodal texts to fill in the gaps. For example, when discussing how she facilitates a unit centered around Macbeth:

Then we start, you know, reading the play. We actually just watch a performance of scene one. And if — you know, the first scene of Macbeth is super short. It's just the witches like introducing them basically and it's just like 30 lines or something. And so we watch a performance of that. I really like, you know, talking about how this is setting the tone of the play. That it's going to be very like mysterious and magical. And most of what they're saying is not making sense on the first hearing of it. And you know they're saying it in kind of a witchy tone and so on... And then we watch a movie version of scene two. Because it again reinforces what we just talked about. About what Scotland looked like during the time because I have this movie version. There's not much dialogue in the scene. It's mostly just them fighting a battle and it's got, you know, obviously like the Scottish countryside and it really paints a good picture of what they look like and how they fought and etcetera. So I like doing that at the very beginning before we even start reading anything. And you know obviously we always talk about, with Shakespeare, that it was meant to be experienced. To be seen performed and so we try to get as much of that as we can in the classroom and then we start reading. Like dividing up the characters and everything for scene three."

She also uses the graphic novel of *Macbeth* for parts of this unit. She shared,

The illustrations of it are so good — like the facial expressions of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth are really well done so if my students don't understand what's going on, they can just like look at their faces and figure out a lot.

Several teachers described combining versions of classic texts in this way, using a variety of text types including children's (with and without images), graphic, and film versions, and pairing these with selections from the original texts. In other cases, teachers completely replace the original work with a different version. For example, Grace's students read a modern, dramatic version of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Goodrich & Hackett, 2017). When teachers are using shorter texts, they might have students read the original work and the multimodal work. For example, Francis shared,

“And Still I Rise” they loved. We’ve got a video of her [Maya Angelou] actually reading it, which is a lot more fun than just reading it because you read it, and it feels like man, she’s getting stomped on all over the place, but she’s still pushing through it. But when she reads it, she’s got a huge smile on her face and she’s kind of dancing to the side. And there’s lots of movement and her pacing is way different.

In the three previous examples, the teachers’ comments indicate that their use of diverse and multimodal versions of classic texts spans beyond the purposes of engagement.

These texts enhance the students’ understanding of and experience with the original work in ways that are not possible without diversifying the text and/or genre.

Teachers Use Diverse and Multimodal Texts to Teach Fundamental Reading and Writing Skills. Teachers use nontraditional or multimodal texts (such as images or videos) to teach (or at least introduce) skills associated with reading comprehension of print-based texts. Several of the teachers use images and video clips as a way to teach a variety of skills. Teachers use texts that are not print-based at the beginning of a unit or when initially facilitating instruction related to a specific skill. The teachers feel that tends to bolster students' confidence. Once the students feel comfortable with the skill using the nontraditional text, then teachers will bring in a print-based text to practice the same skill. Anna talked about using nontraditional texts (such as images) to discuss tone and mood. When I asked her about her choice of using images over print-based texts, she responded,

Tone and mood — that stuff — those are best taught through sight. That's where they learned them first. And so many of them still have an elementary mindset that it's easier to meet them there and then elevate them than it is to try to like yank them up from the bottoms of the ocean.

In this case, the motivation to use a variety of text types is because the students need to start with something that Anna deems easier, more manageable, and/or more relatable before presenting with the rigorous work with more traditional texts, but not necessarily for the value of the text types themselves. Anna continued,

It kept them entertained and engaged and then, of course, like jumping from that into their longer texts that tied to our concept for the unit. That kind of like made them feel like oh well, if I did this before then I can do this on this 10 sentence

thing. If I can do this looking at this five-minute video I can do this with this two-minute article... so I mean it worked it wasn't it wasn't the most traditional thing in the world, but it works.

In the examples above, Anna has recognized the benefits of New Literacies from an engagement standpoint to help students develop their fundamental reading skills.

Similarly, teachers use diverse and multimodal texts to help students grasp figurative language. Cara shared,

The last half hour of every English 11 class we read books. So we do lit circles... where basically, like, I pick super super high interest books... and then the extra question matches with whatever skill we're learning in the unit. So like, when we're focused on figurative language it's like find three examples of figurative language and identify them and analyze one.

Demi uses songs for "figurative language and sound." She also shared an example of using a rap to teach assonance and consonance. Overall, the teachers capitalize on the engaging nature of diverse and multimodal texts to help students develop their reading and writing abilities.

Teachers Want to Incorporate More Diverse Text Formats in Their Instruction.

In addition to the two ways teachers described using diverse and multimodal texts in their instruction above, teachers also expressed a desire to incorporate more diverse texts in their instruction. Grace shared, "I've always wanted to do a podcast. I found this cool thing on Instagram this woman does where she has them pick a true crime podcast and they have to basically create their own about another true crime issue." Cara wants to

include a graphic novel in her students' literature circle options in the near future. Ella said,

One of my dreams is to teach a science fiction class. Like a semester class where it's all struggling students and we just read science fiction because I think that would be so cool. Hasn't happened yet.

Teachers also discussed wanting to include various other diverse and multimodal texts in their instruction, such as videos, songs, and more current literature.

Teachers Engage Students in Critical Reading of Online Texts. In chapter two, I shared that, critical literacy, though not specific to New Literacies, is central to the paradigm, particularly as the paradigm recognizes the significance of the internet and digital technologies in literacy learning and instruction (Leu et al., 2013). The type of unit most of these teachers referenced when asked about critical reading is research. Teachers often engage their students in initial source evaluation when they ask them to conduct research. Several work with their librarian to create lessons on the richness of a text as it relates to a particular research topic.

When she and I were discussing what constitutes literacy, Anna commented that one indicator of literacy is if a student can determine whether a resource is factual or not. For her team-taught students, she teaches this skill very generally; essentially, she instructs them to avoid Wikipedia and use specific terminology when searching in Google. Her honors students, because they "have demonstrated a higher level of critical and abstract thinking," are required to use databases, with a preference for peer-reviewed articles, or consider who the publisher is and "which way they are leaning." Other

teachers also shared that the extent of their instruction on source evaluation is to encourage or require their students to use the school databases and established newspapers (but did not comment on what determines whether a newspaper has been “established”). Brie models the process of searching for sources for her students, showing them how entering various combinations of keywords into the search engine results in different outcomes.

Some of the teachers elaborated on what makes a text worth reading or including in a students’ research. When Grace’s students were conducting research on a country of their choice to determine whether or not they would want to live there, she asked them, she said,

We talked about what makes a good source... They were showing me like, travel magazines. And I’m like well what type of side does this tell you? Like it obviously has a side. It’s trying to get you to go here because it’s a travel magazine. And they want you to travel to that place. So is it going to tell you the whole truth or just the parts that are pretty? So, it’s a lot of that. It’s a lot of modeling. What makes a good website? And we do it all year. Like we go to the library every two weeks.

Similarly, Francis shared,

I’ll help them find ways to figure out what’s worth looking at, what’s not, and how to verify their sources and vet stuff and all that good stuff. And the librarians do a great job giving them tips on how to do it. And then they blow them up with the — was it the hydrogen dioxide website, which is — it’s all just water, but it’s

how it's destroying the world... and the tree octopus is the other one... dog island is one I think they pull up every now and then. And they show — even with all these tricks, you can still get caught because some of these things are really good at it.

Francis is referring to websites that are created with the intention of demonstrating the convincing nature of inaccurate or misleading information on the internet, which his librarians use as examples for students.

Teachers Engage in Culturally Relevant Pedagogies That Are Aligned With, But Not Specific to, the New Literacies Paradigm.

As I shared in chapter two, New Literacies is a paradigm that is situated within culturally relevant pedagogy, so culturally relevant teaching practices can be a part of New Literacies pedagogies. I asked teachers about some of the aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy that are most important to New Literacies pedagogies. Again, though, it is unclear if teachers are implementing these pedagogies with intent. As culturally relevant pedagogy is an aspect of New Literacies, and is important to the paradigm, I will briefly elaborate on some of the culturally relevant teaching practices the participants shared and share specific examples in the following sections.

Teachers Acknowledge the Deictic Nature of Literacy. New Literacies proponents believe that literacy is always evolving, so providing students with the skills and strategies needed to access tools and texts is imperative. When asked about their definition of literacy, five participants in this study indicated that they define literacy broadly and do not believe that there is a single measure of literacy that can determine if

a student is “literate” or illiterate.” They believe literacy changes over the course of time and that their instruction has to shift to match these changes. At the beginning of our first conversation, the first thing Cara said before I even had a chance to ask her a question was, “So the topic of your research — literacy — what do you mean by that because I feel like people use that term to mean lots of different things.” Teachers are concerned with providing students with the skills and strategies to access texts, demonstrated in Francis’ comment that he can give students choice in their text selection because he can teach skills with any text.

When responding to the question about their definition of literacy, two teachers — Anna and Francis — lean more toward the notion that literacy is a stable concept and does not change a lot. When I asked them to elaborate, each teacher provided a similar response; they talked about how aspects of literacy instruction change, but that they do not believe that the basic aspects of fundamental reading and writing skills change. Several of the teachers noted that the core of all literacy is basic reading and writing, and that these must be mastered first. All of the participants teach English to students in the 7th-12th grade, and they were initially surprised at and continue to be concerned by the reading levels of many of their students, some of whom cannot read at all and others who are reading at an extremely low level.

Teachers Work to Position Students as Literate. In chapter two, I wrote that teachers are directly responsible for cultivating students’ unique relationships with literacy, which includes their literacy identities and beliefs about their literacy capabilities. Teachers enact this responsibility through the pedagogical choices they make

and the ways in which they facilitate literacy instruction (Caraballo, 2017; Jocius, 2017). Teachers recognize the importance of positioning students as literate individuals, and work hard to try and do so in their classrooms.

One way teachers position students as literate is by minimizing the traditional teacher-learner dichotomy — where the teacher appears to have all of the knowledge, power, and control in the classroom — that is common in more traditional modes of literacy instruction. For example, teachers provide open-ended activities and assessments that give students a chance to demonstrate what they do know rather than punish them for what they do not know. One example of this is Ella's *Macbeth* quiz:

It's like Sesame Street's 'Which of these is not like the other?' We had that as our quiz for act two of *Macbeth*. And like we gave an example, first of all with like Disney princesses... and we talked about how, like, different ones could be the right answer right, like you could pick different ones and make a good argument. But then they got a list of like — like it was, you know, Duncan, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, and a dagger — like a knife. Which of these is not like the other? And you have to explain why based on act two... They did come up with a lot of different things... the easiest answer on the first one is Duncan is different because the rest of them were involved in the murder. He was innocent. But a lot of others picked way different things. Like they were like Lady Macbeth is different because she doesn't have any power in the situation.

In this case, Ella is not asking students to memorize her interpretation of the text, but is, to an extent, transferring the power to the students to share their own understandings.

Teachers also position students as literate by trying to meet students where they are at in their reading lives and provide students with opportunities to engage with reading they are interested in and is important to them. One strategy teachers use is they intentionally group students with classmates who have similar reading interests. For example, both Anna and Cara have students fill out a survey at the beginning of the year that asks students about interests and previous books, movies, and shows they have enjoyed in order to construct meaningful book club groups. Cara then puts them in groups with a text she assigns that she thinks they would like. In Anna's class, the students work together to select a text they would like to read. Cara described several other strategies, such as book tastings — where students read small sections of texts in order to get an understanding of what they are about, and then select the texts they are most interested in.

Teachers Value Lived Experiences and Funds of Knowledge. Teachers can also position students as literate by valuing the knowledge they have when they arrive at school and incorporating their funds of knowledge into the classroom (Gutierrez & Lee, 2009; Kirkland & Hull, 2011). All of the participants in this study believe that students' knowledge and experiences at home and outside of school are important to consider when engaging students in literacy instruction. Most of the teachers think it is pivotal to bring students' funds of knowledge into the classroom on a regular basis. Ella, the teacher who did not fully agree with this statement, elaborated that she does think that bringing students' experiences and funds of knowledge into the classroom is important, and she

feels that she needs to do that more often. However, she also believes it is more important that she exposes her students to new knowledge and experiences.

Teachers also can learn from their students' knowledge in ways that support classroom literacy and learning. Brie shared,

During *A Thousand Splendid Suns* I have a few students who are from like that area and speak that language so when I was reading out loud, I was like can you please stop me if I — and they would actually stop me and they're like no this is how we pronounce it, and this is the meaning of the word. And so they would actually tell us the vocab word and we would put it up on a word wall.

Demi invites her students to speak up when they possess knowledge that she does not, and she reinforces the importance of that knowledge by having students display it in her classroom.

Teachers bring students' experiences and funds of knowledge into the classroom by providing assignments that allow students to demonstrate ways they are literate that do not fit neatly into a more traditional reading or writing assignment. When talking about a "passion project" she facilitates, Ella shared,

I was like 'This is the standard that you have to meet with this. And we're going to do it any way except for a book report. Like you cannot do a book report. But we're going to find any other possible way to meet the standards... And so we made a giant list of all the different things that you could do that wasn't you know, a traditional book report... This was the coolest example... He [the student] loves music and like writing music and so he read this book called Ready

Player One and he decided one of the biggest themes about it was like the importance of persistence... and so he filmed himself writing a song like as he was writing this over several weeks... At first it was just a few notes and he was like clearly thinking and then he would stop and like... write his notes or whatever. And then he would go back and play some more and, as he was doing that there was like a voiceover of him talking about the book and persistence, but also like persistence in music.

In this case, the student was able to connect the text he was reading in class to his knowledge and understanding of music.

Teachers also provide students with opportunities to investigate topics they feel are important and relevant. Cara shared an example where students write a problem-solution paper:

They got to pick the problem, primarily because I kind of feel like you know you're about to — well you're juniors so you're going to be a senior and then you're going to be your own person and like my kind of philosophy in life — and this is what I tell them — you don't have to try to fix the whole world, but you should pick something that you care about and like try to fix it and, like, whatever job you get, I promise you, you're going to be happier in life if you're doing something that you care about and that you want to try and fix. And so then I'm like okay, for this paper, pick a problem that you care about... I'm always like follow your passion.

Similarly, Bri's students conduct research on the problems in the career field that they want to go into or are considering in the future.

Teachers use more traditional or classic texts as a way to connect to current relevant topics. Demi shared,

I had never read *A Raisin in the Sun*... when I came here I read it and it was at the same time that Ta-Nehisi Coates had come out with... his most recent, I guess, or his big splash about redlining and — and it was in *The Atlantic* and I was reading and I was like oh my god, I never knew this, and this is *A Raisin in the Sun*...

Prior to reading *A Raisin in the Sun*, I have them do basically a jigsaw with different articles and I've added to them over the years regarding redlining and like I try to make things current... I also have a segment where — you remember — what's his name? Lindner. Right, he's the guy from the neighborhood. I take a piece of his text where he basically says, you know, black people aren't welcome here kind of thing because they should be with their own people. And I shift that around so that the kids have to choose one part of their identity — whether it's their gender or ethnicity or whatever, and then they put their background into that speech... so that they can kind of feel and think through this from a different lens.

In this case, Demi recognized the ways that the text they were reading connect to current society, and she encouraged students to make additional connections to their own lives.

Teachers also facilitate conversations or have students engage in low-stakes activities (e.g., journal writing) with these more classic texts that allow them (the teachers) to learn about students' experiences and knowledge. Ella conducts an activity where students

respond to generic statements that relate to the topics in the text, but also may relate to their own lives and understandings:

Okay so you know one of the statements is ‘people should do whatever is necessary to achieve their goals’, right. And they debate on that, and then ‘being overly ambitious can be dangerous. Or ‘everyone is capable of doing evil if put in the right circumstances.’ Or ‘if a person does something wrong they always end up paying for it in the end.’ You know, things like that. And so yeah it does — we don’t even talk about Macbeth at all because you know we haven’t started reading it yet and they don’t know anything about it. So it’s just about the ideas that are going to come up. And a lot of times, if people struggle with what to say besides just like ‘I agree’, we talk about examples. Like come up with an example that proves your point and that helps them to think it through like examples from their lives or a movie or a book or whatever, you know.

Strategies such as these provide teachers with opportunities to learn more about their students’ lives in order to both develop a good relationship with the students and incorporate aspects of the students’ interests into their curriculum.

Teachers acknowledge that a gap exists between many of their students and school, and talked about how students come into their classrooms not believing that they belong at school. They realize that many students do not see connections between themselves and school-based literacy. The participants believe that it is their responsibility to help these students make these connections and to communicate to the students that they are, in fact, literate individuals who are coming to the classroom with a

great deal of knowledge. During one interview, Demi had spent that day talking with her literacy students about March Madness, the NCAA basketball tournament:

The Washington Post did this visual image where you could click on like 60 basketballs from the 60 different teams, you know. And it's like a cartoon... And then we opened up the bracket and I started — I showed them — we were talking about that it's basketball and they didn't understand and then I compared it to the World Cup bracket. They totally understood that so then they were able to make a connection. And then we were talking about all the different colleges and where they were... And then we looked at the bracket and they were, you know — you can click on information... But in terms of literacy like I don't know, I think it's important to connect to the art, culture, right? And it was math and graphs and all kinds of things and so what was cool about it and very important for my literacy classes is they never feel connected to the broader school. And since the broader school is doing this thing and they didn't do it because they didn't know what it was — and now they're doing it... Anyway, I try to get them connected to the school all the time as best I can, or connect it to their world... We have significant socioeconomic diversity here — I think more than any other place I've ever been. We have the wealthiest of the wealthy that live along the Potomac River. We have abject poverty living on Route One. And, you know, 95 percent of the kids in my literacy class are from route one and they're — they just live in a totally different world than the rest of the school. And so um you know... it's all the other things. They have to work and they don't get to stay after and do, you know, whatever

activities there are. So anytime we can connect anything... why are they coming to school? Are they coming here for food? Are they coming because they hope to get a job later? Are they coming so their parents get arrested? I don't know why they're coming. But once we find out that like we lose kids if they don't see that it matters — it connects to their life in some way then they just don't come back or when they're here they just glaze over. So anytime we can connect something in the classroom to their lives or something in the classroom to the rest of the kids in the school, I try really hard to do that.

Demi engages in several different aspects of culturally relevant and New Literacies pedagogy in this example. She recognizes the gap between these students and school, and how that is affecting their ability to participate in the community. She tries to close that gap by comparing the NCAA bracket, something the students do not understand, to the World Cup, something they do understand. She acknowledges the multidimensional nature of literacy (“in terms of literacy... it's important to connect to the art, culture right? And it was math and graphs and all kinds of things.” She is also modeling how to navigate an online text, which I will discuss in a future section.

Teachers Emphasize Collaboration, But Not Necessarily in Digital Spaces. In chapter two, I shared that the New Literacies paradigm advocates for a cultural shift where collaboration is deemed an essential aspect of school, and teachers create contexts in which students can collectively create and produce knowledge in digital spaces (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Teachers in the current study indicated that they do value

the notion of collaboration, but most of their examples did not contain any discussion of digital technologies.

When we were discussing why she values collaboration over competition, Cara explained that she feels competition is simply no longer relevant in the real world — that the majority of jobs require people to work with one another. She elaborates, “Like you want to be good, but only better than yourself... I can’t think of how competition is a life skill anymore. I don’t think that competition actually has a place in modern society.”

These teachers facilitate projects in which students are required to work with one another, though some teachers had more specific examples of engaging students in collaborative experiences than others.

Teachers ask students to engage in collaborative activities to help support and develop their reading comprehension and other fundamental print reading skills. In some cases, this takes the form of actively reading together and determining the meaning of a text. Brie divides her class up when they read *The Canterbury Tales*:

The way the classroom is set up — they’re sitting in like big table groups, so we assigned each of those groups one tale and they had to read it together and like highlight the important details and create their own script using the tale and then they had to perform it for the class.

In this example, the students have to work together to make sense of their tale, and then collaborate to create a live rendition. Cara engages her students in literature circles based on their interests. She shared,

Every class, I sit down with a section or with a group and we read aloud in a circle and I

think it does a few things. One, if they weren't interested in the book because they weren't really reading it, it like hooks them into it... [Two] It really helps with fluency. Like every year I wish... I could like take a tape recorder and record them like beginning of the year to the end, because they will get so much better at reading aloud just by practicing it like once a week.

In this case, reading collaboratively helps engage students in reading a text, and also helps them with their fluency.

In other cases, students engage in discussions with one another in a variety of structures (e.g., pairs, small groups, whole class) to help support their analytical skills. Cara shared an example of this that she implements when working with the science fiction novel *Never Let Me Go*, saying,

One thing that I keep trying to push kids to do is ... talking about the deeper ideas and themes of a text so I came up with this like word web activity. So basically I gave each group a list of like ten words. The words were like... complacency and complicity and like sticking to the status quo, forbidden love, hope, friendship. I don't know so it was like big concepts like that... So first I just gave all of the students these ten words and I said in your group, you have to rank them in order of importance to the book. Like one being the most important and ten being the least important.... So they rank them and then we went around the class and every group had to defend their top choice and their bottom choice. And that went really

well because I feel like it got the kids talking about which they thought was important in the book and making judgments about that.

The students then engage in another collaborative activity related to their rankings. All of the work the students do culminates in a Socratic circle where students share their perspectives of the text. Another example of developing students analytical skills collaboratively came from Demi:

The kids had to write a short analysis... and they all had to find like a piece of indirect character evidence in the book and then you know they put it on like sticky notes and then they said what the quote meant about each character. And then we put them in piles of the different characters and then everybody in the room was assigned a different character... and they had a whole stack of pieces of evidence that were gathered by everybody with their ideas of what they were saying about the person. So they had a big stack to start with... and they were able to talk things through together as a group.

In both of the examples above, students are provided with the opportunity to hear the perspectives of their classmates, and are offered an opportunity to consider how those perspectives fit into their own understanding of the text.

Teachers engage students in collaboration to develop their understanding of concepts. For example, Grace's students work together on a debate to practice their rhetorical and persuasive skills:

They had to be in groups of three... it was pro-con on — one of them was like cell phone use in school, one of them was dress code. Book banning. Social media

for kids under 13... And they literally went through the whole process of creating a debate. They had to come up with questions they would ask the other team, rebuttals, opening statements, closing statements.

The students ultimately conduct their debates in the library in front of their own classmates, students from other classes, and various other individuals that Grace and her team invite to the event.

In this section, I have shared examples of the extent to which and ways in which teachers talked about incorporating New Literacies into their instruction. In the next section, I transition into an exploration of the factors teachers shared that enable or constrain them from engaging in New Literacies instruction.

Research Question #1a: Under what circumstances and to what extent have these teachers felt encouraged to or constrained from practicing New Literacies pedagogies and what factors have contributed to that sense of encouragement or constraint?

Teachers do incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their practice, but there is a great deal of variety in terms of when and how often. The purpose of my second research question is to uncover what might enable or prevent a teacher from engaging students in New Literacies instruction.

Teachers' Views of New Literacies

Teachers sometimes indicated that they view the activities and pedagogies related to New Literacies as less rigorous and less necessary to incorporate into the curriculum. Of her culminating project — a project that aligns with the New Literacies paradigm,

Grace said, “And yeah, I mean, that’s just fun. I don’t know that it’s actually beneficial.” When asked about successful ways that she has incorporated diverse texts, Brie shared, “We’ve had random articles that we use on, like, the religious holidays when we weren’t able to teach anything new. Like one talked about cell phone usage in class and that kind of got them to think about “Oh, maybe I should put my cell phone away more.”” When asked how he incorporates multimodal texts, in the classroom, Francis said,

We throw little videos on and stuff like that, like PowToons and things that we find or things from Flowcabulary that kind of reinforce things. They’re almost never the principal instruction tool but they often accompany them to try to give them information in multiple formats. So it’s kind of irritating because lots of times the kids will just scroll right past it.

When explaining how she assesses a journal entry in which students are supposed to connect a text to their own lives, Brie shared,

especially if they’re talking about their own life... I don’t want to grade that with a rubric, but I just want to make sure that they’re understanding it fully and if they write more than a sentence usually then they get the points.

Teachers often place tasks that engage students in New Literacies at the end of the school year, after state testing is over. For example, Anna’s creative end-of-year self-portrait project occurs in the last few weeks of school, once the SOL exams have been completed. Similarly, Grace’s eighth grade students create a scrapbook at the end of the year, which includes a variety of tasks (e.g. choosing a song and explaining how it relates to their middle school career, producing a collage, and writing a fictionalized story of something

that happened to them during the year). Many of the teachers indicated that they want to incorporate New Literacies teaching into their practice, but feel that they have to fit in other types of literacy instruction first, and add New Literacies pedagogies when it can be squeezed in. In the above examples, the activities and projects are considered more optional and fun — ways for students to unwind after the real work is finished.

District and Administrative Involvement

The degree to which and the ways in which administration involves itself in the day-to-day affairs of the classroom teachers is one factor that determines the degree to which these teachers enact New Literacies. Cara claimed that a neutral administration is the best a teacher can hope for; in her experience, administrations have either been neutral or a constraint to her teaching. Several of the teachers in this study share a similar sentiment — that administrations that stay out of the way and avoid unnecessarily interfering with the work of teachers are the best they can hope for. Most of the examples that involved administration in the data were discussing ways that the administration constrains New Literacies pedagogies. However, there were a few examples of teachers expressing support from administration. One such example came from Francis:

We've got a lot of autonomy in a lot of ways at this school. As long as we're doing what we're supposed to be doing and our kids are doing what they're supposed to be doing, admin trusts us to do our job, which we really appreciate, you know? They're not in our rooms and they know that they're not in our rooms and they hired us for a reason, which is very much appreciated.

Others, such as Grace, have a history of leaving schools where the administration was too aggressive; in her case, the school was deemed to be failing (according to Virginia Standards of Learning test scores), and the administration was desperately trying to avoid additional ramifications from the district. She shared:

The administration — they were not like my administration now. They were all about the test scores because they were... unaccredited at the time because we had failed for so many years... My first principal there was amazing but he did leave after my first year. The guy who took over for him was not amazing. He was the type of person who did not understand that kids couldn't be silent... He used to come into my classroom, leave it, and then walk into the other eighth-grade teachers' room, walk back into mine and ask why we were not in the exact same place.

Teachers who have an administration that gives them freedom to manipulate the curriculum expressed concern about the possibility of moving to a different school where they were restricted from working in this manner. Additionally, some worry that the administration at their current schools is tightening their approach. When discussing the professional development for Modern Classroom — a platform that Demi does not support for many reasons (one of which is because she feels the platform prevents the integration of collaboration when using digital tools and technologies), she shared:

I just did get my new thing that said am I taking the training this summer, which I am not taking the training unless they force it on me. And that might be the case

where I — if they ever come and force me to teach that way then I would have to leave.

Demi did not clarify if she would have to leave the school or would leave the profession altogether if she was forced into this training.

Text Selection and Access. The New Literacies paradigm recognizes what the New London Group (1996) termed “a pedagogy of multiliteracies” — that communication occurs in various forms, and that these forms are worthy of recognition and study. One particular way that New Literacies supports the notion of multiliteracies is by challenging the claim that certain text types are more worthwhile of study than others. New Literacies teachers support the incorporation of diverse genres and perspectives in the classroom.

Many of the sustained (meaning texts that are not typically read in a single class period, such as a novel or a play) whole-class texts these teachers use with their students tend to conform to more traditional reading genres or fall under the umbrella of the traditional canon of literature, but this was not necessarily the teachers’ choice. Text selection is of utmost importance in English language arts, and every teacher I talked to had some sort of barrier that prevented them from reasonable access to diverse and current literature. The county and school a teacher works in plays a major role in what barriers exist in regard to access to texts.

Some of these teachers have the physical copies of texts, but work in a district where the approval process is extremely lengthy. The district that three of the teachers from this study work in spent a great deal of money purchasing a variety of texts for each

of its schools in the 2019-2020 school year, and teachers across the county were involved in the process of selecting these texts. However, none of the texts are considered “approved” unless they have previously successfully made it through the approval process, which is rare — particularly because most of the books have been published relatively recently. In order to use these texts, teachers are responsible for initiating the approval process, which is quite time consuming — it is sometimes difficult to get a title approved within the course of a school year — and often the outcome is discouraging. There are a variety of individuals who vet potential new texts (including colleagues, administration, and parents). Each of these individuals is required to read the text, determine if they believe the text is suitable, and provide comments for their determination. If any one of these parties disagrees with the text selection, the process stops there and it is not considered approved. If teachers want to engage students in literature circles using a variety of texts, each of the texts must successfully be approved. Thus, though teachers may come across timely and relevant texts and have the physical copies of the texts available for students, the approval process is certainly not possible with short notice. The frustrating and tedious nature of this approval process discourages teachers from incorporating new, timely, diverse texts — texts that align with the New Literacies paradigm — into their curriculum.

Other counties’ approval processes are left up to the individual school, which poses its own challenges. Grace, talking about her old school (the one that was deemed unaccredited by the state), had a conversation with her principal because, she said:

I wanted to do a different novel. I wanted to buy — so our book room was like the oldest book room in America. Like nothing there was from [after] 1970. And I don't even know which book. It was, I think, *Tuck Everlasting* (Babbitt, 1975). Like a very normal book... He was like "Why would you want to buy a new book?" and I was like that book came out in the 90s. Maybe even 80s. It's like, old... yeah that's when I finally decided to leave.

When I asked about how texts were selected for her ELA classes at this school, Grace responded, "That was given to us by a reading specialist who had never taught middle school. That was really great — um — she had only ever taught kindergarten prior to becoming a reading specialist." In this case, Grace's principal acted as a gatekeeper, preventing her from accessing texts she felt would be relevant texts for her students. Additionally, she was not even provided the autonomy of choosing her own texts; instead, this was left solely up to a reading specialist who did not have expertise with adolescents.

Text selection often comes down to the individual team. Brie's school requires that their teams use the same sustained texts for whole-class instruction for every unit except one. Her team did not have a conversation about the text choices; she is required to use *Beowulf*, *Hamlet*, and *The Canterbury Tales* (Chaucer, 2003), but she is allowed to choose one additional text, as long as it is approved at the school and available in the book room, to add to the list. She chose *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (Hosseini, 2007). When asked to explain this text choice, she said:

Because it's a lot different from the other books, obviously, like from a cultural standpoint... they've never read a book like that... Like you could tell what parts they were reading just by their facial expressions and they were actually like really into the book and a lot of them were surprised that they liked it so much. So I'd like to keep teaching that hopefully.

Brie's selection indicates that, with more autonomy in the text-selection process, she might incorporate more current literature. Additionally, her comments demonstrate that she is interested in providing texts that represent a wider variety of cultures and perspectives.

Teachers at schools where teams are in charge may have more flexibility on some teams than others. With her senior-level students, Ella is essentially allowed free choice for her text selection; she said that because of this, she can conduct literature circles using current young adult texts. However, with her freshmen, she is required to make decisions about text selection with the other freshman teachers. She shared:

The only reason I can do that [the literature circle unit] with seniors is because it's much more relaxed on what we teach. Whereas with like freshmen, I'm locked in. Like this is what we're teaching. And we decided as a group, so there is some opportunity... We do change things sometimes but the approval process is more just like we discuss it as a group and we decide — like the people who are teaching one that year. But we have to have some reason why we're changing it. And then we come up with something and then, if we pick something else you know we have to have a rationale for it.

In Ella's case, there is a possibility that she can work with her freshman-level team to include different text selections in the future.

Teachers sometimes negotiate text selection with their schools. Ella wanted to replace *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960) with more current texts related to the same topic. She shared the following example of the process she went through:

I almost got to a point where we weren't going to teach it anymore, and then like chaos and drama erupted, and so, then that didn't work. So now we're back to teaching it. My compromise is I was like well, we have to teach something else after it that is more modern and like just better. And so I eventually won that battle and I didn't — I wanted to do something like *Long Way Down* (Reynolds, 2017). I don't know if you've read that but it's like really easily accessible. But also like really meaningful and comes up and we can talk about it in a more modern way. But of course, that was like too modern to teach as a whole class, you know and like they literally didn't like want something in the 21st century. So okay, so the closest I could get was *Monster* (Myers, 1999), you know? Which I have just like some issues with because now we're teaching a trial of a black person for like — what, like a long time, like two months, like three months, which is kind of problematic. But that was the best we could do so now we teach *Monster* after *Mockingbird*.

In this case, Ella was prevented from moving away from a canonical text (*To Kill a Mockingbird*) completely. She was also prevented from incorporating a text (*Long Way Down*) she considered timely, relevant, and engaging. However, she was able to bring in

a text she considers more modern and relevant (*Monster*) to pair with *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

In Cara's school the text approval process is lenient or non-existent, but her county has begun to make the process more strict and require the use of a textbook for teaching some of the core texts. She said:

My school has now said — we got this new textbook system — so we're only going to order novels that are printed by this textbook company. And like that's infuriating and I will just buy whatever I need to buy because, like, who is that company. And I asked the questions and we don't get answers... What am I allowed to teach in my classroom? So maybe that's why I'm like a neutral state/district/admin is the best you can hope for because honestly, there's no such thing as a good one. All they do is just put in stupid rules and constrain people. Like those are the ways that I've definitely been harmed — ways that I have been and ways that I can see it coming down the pipeline. You know like why are we centralizing where we're buying books?... These textbook companies have essentially lobbyists, and then districts want to look a certain way, so it all just goes in that direction.

A few things stand out in Cara's example. First, she notes the issue that, though there is no explicit approval process in her county, there is a tacit approval process, as the teachers are supposed to use books printed by a specific company; if they do not, the teachers are responsible for buying the texts themselves. Relatedly, she notes that potentially larger issues can arise in the future because of the centralization of book

purchases. Third, she points out that the agreement with the textbook company is for the districts to “look a certain way,” a statement she did not elaborate on.

There is one example in the data of an administration explicitly defending a teachers’ text selection. Grace seeks approval from her administration when she wants to teach a new text. When parents had an issue with one of the texts she chose, he listened to the issues of the parents, but ultimately supported Grace’s text choice based on the reasons she had for selecting the text. There were several examples in the data where teachers were either restricted from or in some way admonished for their text selections. Ella shared, “When we were in Virginia with my student teaching, we taught *Persepolis* and I liked it, and so I did teach that one year and then I got in huge trouble about it, so I haven’t taught it again.” Ella also attributes the perspectives on text selection to teaching in the Midwest:

I don’t really want to portray the midwest as backwards, because we’re not. Like we have intelligent thought also. But the cliché is somewhat true as far as like the east coast versus the midwest as far as text selection. They’re much more traditional and I’m like the rebel teacher. So that’s just the sort of persona I’ve accepted of my life.

Ella’s comments demonstrate that sometimes, in order to incorporate diverse texts, teachers have to accept the role of “rebel” by their colleagues and superiors.

In the counties of other teachers in this study, the problem is not the approval process, but the lack of access to a diverse selection of texts and no feasible way to gain access. In these counties, the approval process really does not exist or is minimal, but the

teachers have essentially no access to new texts unless they use their own money to purchase them. In Grace's case, she is typically supported by her administration in regard to text selection, but she has to come up with the access to the texts herself. Similarly, Cara does not have a rigorous approval process (though, as demonstrated in a previous example, she believes it is coming soon), but she has set aside a certain amount of her own money each year that she uses to buy new books for her students, and the teachers she works with all do the same. *She shared:*

It used to be you would literally just submit what book you wanted and they would be like okay — here's 100 copies of it. For all of the lit circle books me and the two other teachers that use the system buy them. So, we don't through any kind of approval because you only need 10 copies right, because you're only going to have — your biggest group is going to be 10... So like every year, each one of us drops 100 bucks but then we just cycle them, right? Because, like, I don't need all of these books at once.

In addition to using their own money to purchase books, these teachers spend a great deal of time planning out when various classes will be studying a particular work so that all students have access to a copy, an issue that becomes more pronounced as they move away from texts that are considered part of the canon of literature (i.e. texts that align more closely with the goals of the New Literacies paradigm).

Teachers often provide students with free choice in their sustained text selection for reasons that are purely logistical. The lack of texts and the painful approval process make it difficult to select appropriate, timely, relevant texts. Allowing students to choose

their texts means that teachers are not required to gain approval for those texts.

Additionally, since not all students will be reading the same text, there is no need for the teachers to have a substantial number of any particular text on hand. In these situations, teachers are giving students a choice because their hands are tied; they either have to use one of the available, approved texts or allow students to freely choose, and free choice is, in the teachers' eyes, the lesser of two evils. Even so, some of the teachers expressed that they still struggle to obtain even a single copy of the texts students desired to read for their choice text.

Standardized Testing/Standardized Measurement

Leu et al. (2013) claimed that New Literacies instruction and assessment would not be prioritized in classrooms until educational systems recognize and consider the deictic nature of literacy when creating and determining the purposes of standardized assessments. The pressures of standardized testing influence the practices of teachers who might otherwise approach literacy instruction in a different way (Leu et al., 2013). High-stakes accountability methods can influence teachers to focus their teaching on helping their students reach benchmark levels of achievement (Jocius, 2017).

Each teacher in this research verbally addressed the limitations of state-mandated standardized tests (e.g., the Virginia Standards of Learning tests) during our conversations. However, there are several examples from the data where teachers placed significant weight on standardized measurement of literacy skills without outward acknowledgement of the limits of the measure. For example, Anna discussed a particular instance in which she and her team teacher engaged students in what she claimed was a

“meaningful” literacy lesson that took place over the course of two class periods on inferencing. The teachers determined that this was necessary because students had scored poorly on standardized testing questions related to inferencing. Anna described the process as “tedious” for the kids, explaining how they used the same graphic organizer over and over for this activity and were quite tired of looking at it by the end. However, she stated that this was worth it because their inferencing scores went up on the post-test. She explained that students needed to complete the post-test measuring their inferencing scores in the class period immediately following the lessons so she and her team-teacher could tell if the lessons actually helped, implying that if there was too much time between the instruction on inferencing and the assessment, the students’ scores would not change. In essence, Anna was not necessarily concerned with whether the lessons on inferencing would affect her students’ ability to inference in the long-term, but believed it was important to demonstrate that she and her team teacher were capable of raising scores on the standardized measure in the short term for the purposes of collecting data.

In some cases, the teachers acknowledged the limitations of standardized tests and measures, and addressed them as a factor that constrains their teaching. However, they often feel that they have no choice but to “teach to the test.” Anna said:

Research skills are important and they’re part of our standards, but they’re not like the big ones, the big thing is the persuasive writing skills. So that’s what I really want them to focus on because they struggle enough with writing. I don’t think I need to add to it.

Essentially, what is being said here is that both sets of writing skills — research based and persuasive — are included in the standards, but only persuasive writing skills are on the Virginia state test, so the research writing skills are deemed significantly less important. Similarly, Francis lamented that, “since they got rid of the fifth grade writing SOL, nobody teaches writing anymore until eighth grade so we’ve got until March to teach them how to write an essay.” Cara has students answer a question about their reading daily; she showed me examples of her questions and shared, “We’re prepping for the writing SOL so we’re doing kind of boring comma stuff right now, but only because their SOL is in six days. Normally, it’s more like this...” In this case, Cara had to halt her typical instruction and insert specific test-taking strategies that she would not use otherwise and feels are boring, but necessary, to assist students in passing the test.

Teachers noted specific ways that standardized curriculum and measurement prevent them from engaging students in activities that they feel would be more useful. Francis noted:

I don’t feel like I’ve been able to develop relationships...I’m distracted by other curriculum that I’ve got to get to. It feels like I’m working from behind all the time in 8th grade...It’s very skills-driven at this time, so we don’t have the ability to just kind of sit around and chat about things. You know, all the good stuff...with the discussions and Socratic seminars...I’ve tried to run things where the kids can actually analyze stuff and have conversations. I have to try and shoehorn in in like half a week that I can maybe teach them how to do it and then get them to practice it a little bit because we’ve got to hit all these skills that

they've never seen and are about to get SOLED on because I've got two SOLs for 8th grade. And that's what everybody cares about, which is irritating...and also teach them not only how to write essay for the SOL, but how to actually write an essay because the SOL essays are garbage...You've got to actually learn how to communicate with an essay later. But that doesn't actually fit into the curriculum — there's no time for it.

In this example, standardized curriculum and testing affect Francis' ability to engage students in meaningful learning tasks as well as his ability to develop relationships with his students. Similarly, when asked what she would do differently if she had the power to change the structure of school, Grace said:

Book clubs. Like I wanted to do more of that this year, but I never got around to it. Where they got to be in their groups like choosing — choosing a book they read and then actually spend time discussing it and they're all reading the same one but it's just you never have enough time like, they have to take two SOLs.

Grace was unable to engage students in a potentially meaningful learning experience because she did not have the time due to the need to prepare for standardized tests.

Standardized measurement is particularly limiting for special education students, English learners, and students who are considered to have “remedial” basic literacy skills. For example, Brie teaches a literacy lab course, a class for individuals who are deemed below grade level in reading achievement, made up largely of English learners and special education students. She is required to use a specific program with these students daily. The program tracks the students' “achievement.” Brie explained how the program

is not interesting or motivating for her students and prohibits her from engaging them in more project-based, authentic literacy tasks. Cara teaches all eleventh-grade students. Some of her sections are dual-enrollment, which is considered an advanced course, while others are standard English 11 courses. When asked about the dynamic of her classroom, Cara shared points about how her dual enrollment class involves a lot of writing, but:

we read really good books and the class is super loud. Like honestly, you're going to be talking to people a lot... So we do a lot of like group activities. There's a lot of standing up. Going to be a little bit of acting... But we have a lot of fun.

In relation to English 11, the first comment she made is:

What I would tell you is there is not a lot of homework, so that's good. But we do have two SOLs in English 11 — writing and reading. So we do prep for that. It's a fair amount of writing but I'm going to teach you exactly how to do it. Like there's a strict format we're going to follow."

She did go on to share about more creative aspects of the class, but her first comments related to the standardized tests, indicating the amount of weight placed on them and the amount of pressure she feels to help students succeed on the tests.

Colleagues and Mentors

When asked about ways in which they are supported in their venture to be a good literacy teacher, every single participant answered that they lean on certain colleagues for planning strategies, assessment strategies, and other forms of peer mentorship. A critical revelation from this study is that individuals who work in an environment where New Literacies pedagogies are welcomed and promoted by coworkers were more likely to talk

about engaging students in New Literacies pedagogies in their classrooms. Working alongside other teachers who view the curriculum with a critical eye and consider innovative ways to teach that align with New Literacies seems to inspire these participants to do the same.

Colleagues and mentors can challenge one another to consider which aspects of literacy they are privileging in their teaching. One example from the data relates to text selection and integration into the curriculum. Cara shared:

The most important thing to do is find a school where you like the other teachers around you because they're the ones who are in the trenches with you. Like they're the ones who you are going to bounce ideas off of, and you can steal ideas from. And if you can straight plan with them, the work is now divided between many. And just like, everyone has blind spots. Like you know I know that I love sci fi and I'm like I should teach this book! And my friend is like I don't know. It's kind of a weird book... so like having those different perspectives is more important than any other admin support.

Conversely, when I asked Brie about the more traditional text selections she teaches, she said that the team chose the texts. When I asked her to elaborate on her perspectives of the text choices, she said:

They probably wouldn't be my first choice but there's stuff we have to teach. So, I think — we tried to — me and my team teacher — cause he's been teaching English or teaming for English for like 17 years now, so he knows all of those texts a lot better than I do. And we try to make it so like the themes of the texts or

what was happening relate to them [the students] more. So I think that's how we tried to make them more meaningful.

On the one hand, Cara is talking about how she and her coworkers challenge each other's views and push each other to truly consider the reasons behind using particular texts. On the other hand Brie did not seem to question or critically consider the text selections of her team, seemingly satisfied to make the selections already present as relatable as possible. She also mentions the length of time that her team teacher has been in the profession (17 years). As it is Brie's second year teaching, and much of her experience has taken place virtually or in a hybrid manner, it seems reasonable that she would rely on her colleagues for their opinions about text selection. The particular colleague in question selects texts that Brie herself is not completely certain about, but goes along with.

When talking about engaging students in New Literacies pedagogies, teachers also spoke of the flexibility of their teams (as opposed to insistence on a rigid curriculum and a lock-step manner where all teachers need to be in the same place at the same time). A structure several of the teachers mentioned works well is when teachers are free to modify their day-to-day instruction to suit their own needs, but work toward a common team assessment that can be implemented when it makes sense for their classes. Francis said, "We plan together summative quarterly assessments of about three standards each. And outside of those three standards, however we get to them, we get to them." This does not necessarily mean that the teachers do not engage students in many of the same activities. Rather, the teachers borrow ideas from one another, build off of each other's

work, and share their modifications. Francis elaborated, “The other teacher who teaches the same population I do — we plan together... We share resources all the time. We steal them and tweak them and do whatever we want with them.” Cara’s school does not require that teachers use the same core texts in their instruction, but several of the teachers choose to use the same texts so that they can share resources and ideas.

Librarians are another source of support and mentorship for these teachers when they engage in New Literacies instruction. When Grace talked about her students working collaboratively on their debate projects, she shared, “I teamed up with the librarian for that. And we went into the library and we did like podiums and we did like a big debate in front of the classes and we invited other staff members to come.” When I asked her about the topic selection for the debates, she said “The book banning one was the one that — you know how in [our county] they had that big — yeah — so my librarian was very upset about it so she was like, “We’re adding that one no matter what.”” The librarians provide input and help plan for various activities that engage students in New Literacies, and they also provide a space where students can share their work outside of the classroom.

Research Question #2: How do these teachers use digital technologies in their literacy instruction, according to their own narratives?

As I discussed in chapter two, digital technologies play an important role in New Literacies when used in ways that align with the goals of the paradigm, so I am focusing part of my research on the teachers’ use of digital technologies. Using digital technology in a classroom is not necessarily an indication that a teacher is engaging in New

Literacies pedagogies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). If a teacher is pursuing goals that align with those of traditional literacy instruction, but incorporates digital technology into the classroom in pursuit of these goals, this is not considered New Literacies.

Although teachers do integrate technology with some level of frequency in their instruction, much of the integration remains technological, rather than curricular, a finding consistent with that of Hutchison and Reinking (2011). In other words, teachers do incorporate a range of digital tools and technologies into their instruction — some more often than others — but the participants did not share very many examples in which they approach instruction in reading and writing related to digital and multimodal texts differently than how they approach reading and writing instruction for traditional, print-based texts. For example, teachers discussed students reading texts online. Grace shared, “I don’t use it [digital technology] as often as some of the other teachers because we read books still... we have an app called Zora and that has all ebooks, so we use that a lot now.” When asked about ways she would use digital technology if she had more time and freedom with the curriculum, Grace shared, “I’d love to get Kindles because then we could just start downloading our ebook... Books are really expensive, so if we could just — the ebooks are way cheaper and we don’t get to buy books very often.” Anna’s response to the same question was:

I think if I had time to just be paid and sit down and make a bunch of like digital worksheets with Wiser.me or Deck.Toys or something like that... they [students] don’t feel like they’re doing the work as much as if they were sitting there reading a textbook or taking notes.

In the cases above, teachers use or express a desire to use digital technologies for the purposes of making current instruction more convenient and/or engaging, but not necessarily changing the nature of the instruction itself.

Two additional important themes emerged from the data related to the use of digital technology: 1) Teachers engage in practices using digital technologies that align with New Literacies, though it is unclear that they do so with the New Literacies paradigm in mind. (2) Teachers use digital technologies to help them remain organized and have better communication with their students. I will elaborate on each of these themes in the sections below.

Teachers Engage in Practices Using Digital Technologies That Align With New Literacies, Though It Is Unclear That They Do So With the New Literacies Paradigm In Mind.

Similar to the findings for my first research question, the participants shared examples where they use digital technologies that seem to align with New Literacies, but it is unclear if they do so with the New Literacy paradigm in mind.

In some cases, teachers orchestrate learning contexts in which students can collaborate to create a digital text. Demi facilitates a project in which half of her students read *1984* (Orwell, 1949) and half read *Brave New World* (Huxley, 1932). She has the students work in pairs with an individual who reads the other text. They discuss their respective texts and compare themes, ultimately representing their findings in a web page they co-create using Google Sites.

Teachers use different platforms to facilitate online discussions. Anna discussed the benefits of anonymity using online platforms so students who would normally not really participate in discussion could do so without feeling particularly vulnerable. Online platforms also allow students to interact with individuals who are not necessarily in their class. Ella's students engage in young adult literature book clubs with texts that address current social justice issues. She shared:

One thing we do once a week within that unit is her (a coworker) and I do an online discussion... and it's all of her senior classes... and all of my senior classes... that are discussing the books and it's a different topic every time.

Many of the projects and tools teachers discussed that incorporated digital technologies in ways that align with New Literacies were choice projects, where the students might select to use a digital technology to create their project, but were not necessarily required to. Since the digital tools were optional, some students engaged with them and some did not.

Teachers sometimes engage students in lessons or scaffolding related to digital tools. Francis asks students to create a one-pager using a digital platform of their choice. He provides students with templates and demonstrates how to use the various graphic design tools on a variety of platforms. Ella described the process she goes through to scaffold online discussions. She shared, "It's a lot of instruction at the beginning. Like we definitely aren't just like here, go online and answer these questions. Because they don't just automatically spontaneously erupt into good discussion." She engages students in a dialogue about how to stimulate conversation online. She continued:

Even the first time we do that, they still don't get it. So the first week I actually — normally I just let them post throughout the week as they have time. But the first discussion, you know, say it's like a Tuesday, I just have them all... write one post, like all at the same time. And before they post it I like go around and check everybody's'. So I give feedback on all of their initial posts the first time.

In this case, Ella provides significant modeling and scaffolding for the students to ensure they understand what is important to communicate in their post.

Digital Technologies During COVID-19. The significance of digital technologies and tools in teaching shifted from important to fundamental during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic because teachers were forced to use digital technologies to engage with their students. Teachers in this study had more planning time than typical during the 2020-2021 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and felt that they were able to effectively incorporate new digital tools because they had opportunities to actually learn about the tools. This was mediated, though, by the necessity of using digital tools since this was the only way they could reach their students.

Additionally, though teachers did use digital technologies much more often during the pandemic, they sought platforms that would help them do the best job of reproducing the outcomes of an in-person experience. Teachers used the digital platforms Pear Deck and Nearpod to allow students to interact with questions and other activities during a lesson. JamBoard, which essentially functions as a digital whiteboard, was another popular digital tool. Anna shared:

When we worked on sentence types last year, we were all virtual. And my co teacher and I created a bunch of different types of sentences and they had to sort them out on these Google Slides if they were compound, complex, or simple... they could manipulate it on the screen and slide them over.

All of these platforms allowed teachers to see students' responses and participation in real time. Grace recorded herself reading *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) aloud to replace reading aloud to students for the first ten minutes of class and then gave a comprehension quiz. Ella shared:

I had some students who were fully remote who were really... struggling with formal essay writing for obvious reasons. And I started just — because the people in person, I could at least talk to obviously, you know, and these one-on-one conferences are like really where the writing — like learning happens. And they would never join in Google meet. Like I could not beg- borrow them — like there's nothing I could do to get them to join a Google meet. And so I started recording Screencastify videos of me — like I pulled up their essay and I would just go through the entire thing... I left comments — as in like, typed comments, as I was saying them out loud. And I would highlight things... And then I emailed them directly to the students and I was like hey, you have to watch this video... It was totally unsustainable.

The digital tools were acting as a necessary substitutes, but not necessarily being used in ways that spanned beyond goals of in-person instruction.

While there were a few successes, the overarching sentiment for most of the teachers is that virtual teaching was a complete disaster, and they hope to never return to this structure. Teachers expressed that these tools were useful during virtual teaching, and helped them reach a place where they felt okay, if not necessarily positive, about their teaching. However, the relevance of these tools evaporated with the return to in-person learning. Cara tried to use one of her Nearpod creations once during her in-person instruction, and found it lacking. She said, “If I need you to highlight something, I’ll print it out and you can highlight it on paper. If we’re gonna do a matching game, I’ll cut it out and I’ll make you work with a partner.” Many of the teachers seem to think that digital tools and technologies are not relevant to their teaching anymore because they have returned to in-person learning; they associate incorporating digital technology in the classroom to teaching online or virtually. As Cara put it, “I don’t teach an online class. Like there are online classes that you can sign up for and take at school.”

Teachers Use Digital Technologies to Help Them Remain Organized, Be More Efficient, and Have Better Communication With Their Students.

Teachers use digital technologies to help maintain a sense of organization and keep track of materials. In general, learning management systems have improved the communication between teachers and students and made the distribution and collection of materials and assignments much more efficient. Digital technology also helps teachers remain organized. Most of the teachers prefer that students turn their work in online so there is no chance of losing it. Ella shared:

I think it is just easier in general for certain things... it's easier for me — paper just

stressed me out. Like I can't handle just piles of paper everywhere. My Google drive is my life. Like all organized and I can instantly find anything from like four years ago and that's — I hate writing things by hand. So naturally I have always been inclined to go digital.

Teachers feel that digital technologies make them more efficient with their grading with the exception of Demi, who feels that grading on a computer is draining and typically prefers to grade paper-based assignments. When I asked Grace how digital technology enhances her teaching, she said, “It's definitely good for grading purposes. I feel like I'm a much more efficient grader than I ever was with paper. I never lose what they hand in now because it's there, and I'm kind of scatterbrained.” In addition to helping teachers organize work that needs feedback, some teachers also shared that they use assessments that can be graded by the technology, freeing up their time. For example, Anna said:

I find them [digital technologies] very useful especially for things where I'm not having to give access to feedback... for things like literary elements, it's either a metaphor or it's not. It's either a simile or it's not. You either wrote a theme statement or you didn't... It's either a correct answer in a reading comprehension or it isn't. Those sorts of things, the very black and white things — it's super effective and it actually saves me time and provides me more time to work one on one with the kids and to plan and evaluate the work that's been assessed because the computer does a lot of that for me. It's even very effective and efficient for

writing because I can read everything. I have a lot of kids who struggle with handwriting... so being able to read their work and not having to carry it with me — I just have to take my laptop home — is very effective and efficient for me and them.

Learning management systems such as Google Classroom or Schoology are also beneficial for dispersing resources and ensuring students have access to class materials at any given time. Teachers feel that students also are able to keep much better track of their own assignments and activities. Students always have access to documents if they missed class or lost a hard copy. Teachers can set due dates on their learning management system so there is no confusion about when something is due. Students can also use platforms such as NoodleTools for organizing their research. Teachers like that they can hyperlink various materials onto a single document. Francis uses a clickable PDF for his choice novel BINGO board. Several different sets of assignment directions and rubrics are available for students via a single document.

Similarly, teachers often use digital technologies to recreate worksheets and other activities online. Teachers have moved their worksheets onto a computer via a variety of platforms including Google documents and Canva. For the most part, it does not seem like the worksheets are modified or additional features are added once they are created online; students fill them out in the same ways and submit them virtually. Teachers also have students reproduce texts online for the sake of convenience. For example, Anna said, “They had to do a book review... and that was in a master Google slideshow. And that — like it was a really easy way for me to grade it.” The convenience of digital

technologies extends to students being able to communicate with one another. Anna continued:

It was easy for the kids to see what books they may want to read next. It was an easy way for them to collaborate without them having to — especially for my group, they are struggling in other classes so they can't just come to my learning seminar to work on it.

Research Question #2a: Under what circumstances and to what extent have these teachers felt encouraged to or constrained from incorporating digital technologies in their pedagogy, and what factors have contributed to that sense of encouragement or constraint?

For the most part, these teachers maintain the perspective that digital technologies and tools can be helpful and useful in the right circumstances, but are not central to teaching English language arts. Cara said:

When I think about literacy... I think that one of my main passions as an English teacher is to like get kids to like books. Like I love books and I think — you know I tell my children that the studies show that like reading books just makes you a smarter and better person with like one fell swoop. So like that's kind of my goal.

Several other examples of the data demonstrate similar sentiments — that the books are the central focus of the curriculum. Similarly, Grace shared:

Right now we're reading *The Outsiders*, which is awesome. But it's not like — I'm not gonna make them do a giant digital project with it. We're going to do old school — some fun, pretty stuff but it's not going to be digital. And I know my

kids wish I would do more, but I always wonder if it's because they want to be able to cheat a little bit easier.

Grace indicates that the text is the awesome part of the curriculum, and that she prefers “old school” activities that do not include digital projects to work with this text.

Teacher Interest

Teachers' level of interest plays a role in the amount that they prioritize time spent exploring and incorporating digital technologies into their teaching. Cara explained that, while time is a factor that limits her from integrating more digital technologies into her teaching, interest is of more significance. As she puts it:

So, during the pandemic when we were virtual, we had some PDs on Nearpod and FlipGrid which I was interested in, especially because it was a pandemic. Now... even on PD days, like, you just have other things to do right? And I am just less interested in digital technology because I am not digital anymore. And I didn't like begin digital. You know what I mean? I feel like some teachers came out of COVID being like, “Here are some really good things that happened in my class” And I'm like yeah, we got it done. And I never want to do it again. So my personal interest is low and waning.

Teachers had more opportunities to work with digital technologies and tools during the 2020-2021 school year than ever before. However, those tools that were effective (or at least passable) during the pandemic are not necessarily useful in the in-person classroom, as they were intended for instruction in which teachers and students were not gathered in the same physical space. What has resulted for some teachers, however, is an overarching

perception that all digital tools operate in a manner inconsistent with the goals of in-person instruction, so teachers have shifted their interests elsewhere. On the other hand, Ella describes herself as “really into technology” and says that , even before the pandemic, she was the teacher who told students they needed their laptops every day.

A lack of interest may be connected to the amount of time a teacher spends considering the implementation of digital technologies. Brie had very little to say about digital technology. When asked if there is any way she would use digital technology if she had unlimited freedom or time, she said, “I honestly haven’t thought a lot about that.” When asked if there is any way that digital technology enhances her teaching, she shared, “I don’t know other than like I always have slides up on the board. It’s really easy to like model something.” A lack of interest could also be related to teachers’ self-efficacy regarding digital technologies. Grace said, “I know my kids wish I used it [digital technologies] more. They’re always like you’re so lame because I’m just not good at it.”

Teacher Pedagogical Choices

The pedagogical choices made by the teacher when using a particular digital tool matters when it comes to whether or not it is used in a way that aligns with New Literacies. Some digital tools are suited for New Literacies instruction, but only if they are used in a manner consistent with New Literacies goals. Google documents is one example of such a tool; Google documents can be a one-dimensional tool, where students type out an essay they once would have written by hand and submit it with little or no interaction with others regarding feedback or revision. However, the tool makes it easy for students to share their writing with one another and with the teacher, as well as allow

reviewers to comment in real time. Teachers can provide students with nearly instantaneous feedback. The use of tools such as Google documents in collaboration with Google Classroom allows teachers to see precisely where students are at in the process of their writing or other activity. Additionally, teachers can create activities in which students review their own work (e.g., using highlighting tools to indicate particular aspects of their writing). Similarly, Google slides can be used as a one-dimensional presentation tool, or it can be used as a space for collaborative work and a recording of ideas (for groups, individuals, and whole-class). Thus, the tool's utility and the teacher's instruction both matter a great deal if technology is to be used in the classroom in ways that align with the New Literacies paradigm.

An example of the impact of teachers' choices is illustrated through the essay-writing process. Teachers sometimes use digital technology to reproduce a process of essay-writing that is similar to what students completed before digital technology was available. Essentially, teachers provide students with a prompt, which is often tied to a text that students are required to read for the course. The students respond to the prompt by typing up an essay, and they submit it for evaluation and feedback, potentially with the submission of a draft at some point during the writing process. However, the teachers also shared examples of using digital tools to enhance the essay-writing experience. The process of revision can be much more dialogic, collaborative, and recursive when using digital tools; students have the opportunity to benefit from nearly instantaneous feedback from both their teacher and peers. Teachers can formatively assess students' writing, make note of areas where a majority of students might benefit from revision, and engage

students in whole-class revision activities related to those areas of need. Additionally, Anna's and Francis's students utilize the self-review features on the digital platform NoRedInk, which includes interactive and self-paced activities for students to review their own writing. Francis elaborated:

[The self-review tool] walks them through step by step with a checklist and it makes them highlight their sections to go back through and analyze different things... It ended up definitely impacting their next round of writing. You can see them actually taking some time and going through looking for some of those things.

Anna shared similar sentiments about the tool helping students slow down and review their writing individually, something that she cannot necessarily do for each and every student to the degree that NoRedInk does.

Classroom Management

Several of these teachers think there is a place for digital technologies in the classroom, but find them extremely difficult to manage. Teachers feel that students are overly addicted to their devices, and use them in class for purposes of entertainment or other reasons unrelated to the lesson or activity at hand. In particular, teachers think that using digital technologies is more difficult to manage in standard-level classes or with special education students. Grace shared:

Three of my IEP students have serious addictions to the technology, like to a scary extent. So when you take it away, they lose it and, like, start freaking out. So we have to start the class for them with no computer at all. They're not

allowed to see it. We keep it in a different room and then for like SOLs we pull it out. And like it's their reward if they do really really good that whole entire day, they can have it for like the 25 minutes at lunch or whatever. But it's like a serious addiction to them. It's a big distraction and they can't control themselves around it.

In the above example, the students can use technology for the purposes of standardized testing or during their free time, but it's too distracting during other times of the day.

Similarly, Anna said:

In my standard classes, we're not using NoodleTools. We're doing old-school research folder... It was a struggle enough to get them to stay attentive doing the research itself, let alone trying to learn and use a new tool... The kids who tend to be very intrinsically motivated, they do well with it and it actually helped them because they have the inquiring mind to go beyond and they feel they have the space to go beyond, whereas a worksheet for them feels very constraining.

The technology, in this case, is both distracting and time-consuming for students who Anna does not feel are intrinsically motivated; teaching the students to use a new digital tool takes too much time. "Old school research folders" and worksheets are considered the better option for these students. Additionally, Brie stated:

I don't like it [technology] for literacy lab because it's really hard for them to focus and pay attention and they do a lot better when I print out whatever we're reading and and they're able to like physically write on the reading or like write

their own notes but I think for English 12 it's very helpful because they work very well with Schoology and Google Docs.

In all of these cases, the students were not deemed capable of using the technology effectively. Teachers identify that there are groups of students who can handle using technology in the classroom, but there are other groups who cannot. In another instance, Grace shared that she has her students do research and hand write it on index cards so that "they cannot copy and paste it." She felt that copying and pasting the material made it so students were not really thinking about what they were including in their work. In all of these cases, the teachers chose to remove digital technologies from the classroom altogether.

Many of the teachers have been provided access to programs that allow them to see the laptop screens of each of their students, but expressed that this is not necessarily helpful or effective.

And then some of my other kids, if you let them use it there's no way they're on one page. We have Lightspeed so we can see what they're doing on the computer, but we have a bunch of kids who figure out how to put like blocks on Lightspeed... and they can just block the teachers from seeing what they're doing so I've been a little wary of it, especially after last year [2020-2021].

Students' technological skills have outperformed the capabilities of the digital tool intended to help with classroom management, so Grace has become wary of digital technology in general. Notably, she shares that she is especially wary of digital technologies since students were virtual during the pandemic.

Collaboration

The teachers perceive digital technologies as a constraint to emphasizing collaboration in the classroom. They feel that much of the digital technology they have come across is helpful for engaging students individually, but is detrimental to their work to facilitate meaningful interactions between themselves and their students. Part of the reason for this sentiment is that the tools and technologies teachers have had the most time and practice with are those that are best-suited for teaching virtually. For example, during virtual teaching, Cara used Flipgrid as a platform for students to record and share their presentations. Students could watch each others' presentations and leave comments. She explained:

I can see the benefits. Kids can go back and watch them. Kids can be funny. If you're shy, you're by yourself making it. But now I'm like you know if we're gonna do presentations like do it live. Let's hear each other, clap for each other. I'd rather take up the classroom time and just do it together than just do digital technologies. Maybe I'm like an old school fossil in that way. I just feel like sometimes digital technologies — they make it too individualistic. And like yes, on one hand that's good. Every student is engaged cause they have to be cause they have their own little laptop. But it's just like — maybe I'm not using them right. It just doesn't really work for me.

Cara used the technology during virtual teaching because there was no other option, but the technology was not adding anything to what was originally an in-person experience. Once students were able to be back in-person, the usefulness dissipated.

Teachers may also have the perception that digital technologies interfere with collaborative experiences due to specific platforms introduced by individuals outside of the classroom who are not necessarily considering the effect that the digital tool has on students' collaborative experiences. When asked about collaboration in her classroom, Demi said:

We have been a little bit dissuaded from that at my school... because of stuff that I don't agree with entirely... We have an issue where, you know, a lot of our kids of color or minority students are the ones that don't do as well ... and it also runs down the line of socioeconomics... but what our principal has decided is the way out of this or to fix this is to do this thing called Modern Classroom... it's a company out of Baltimore that puts forth this training and somehow they've convinced my principal that they're this big pedagogical wonder and the basic idea is that teachers are supposed to record their classes... And then kids watch them... They do it on their own, right. So if you're in math class... you watch the videos and then you go ahead and go ahead and you're just doing your own personal work. And so the idea is... to let kids do stuff at their own pace at all times... and you can't collaborate because you're not working on the same things... but that's what we're supposed — we're all supposed to be moving to.

Demi has been introduced to and is required to use a digital platform that, in her opinion, is not conducive to facilitating collaboration and does not enrich the classroom experience.

Ella did express a desire to use digital technologies to connect her students with students they otherwise would not be able to share ideas with. She shared:

Here's my life dream... to get in contact with someone teaching in Virginia and find someone who's teaching the same book as me and do an online discussion with that school on that book at the same time.

When asked why she had not yet done this, she said she has not had the time to orchestrate the activity. As we were talking she also changed her statement a bit by elaborating that the discussion could be on any type of text; she does not think it has to specifically be about a book.

In General, Teachers Experience Challenges Constructing Authentic Collaborative Experiences. Though teachers expressed that they see the benefits of emphasizing collaboration more generally (i.e., not necessarily while using digital technologies) in their classrooms, they also shared concerns and challenges to authentically facilitating collaborative activities in schools. Specifically, teachers mentioned issues with classroom management and making class time productive while still including authentic collaborative experiences. Anna explained how she has no problem facilitating collaboration in some of her classes, but has trouble in others — everything from students getting off topic to getting into a “full-fledged fist fight”. Several of the teachers lamented that students do not know how to collaborate. They believe that this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ella said that some of her current younger students simply do not know how to work in a group; they have never been taught. Similarly, Demi expressed concern that we do not teach collaboration,

but instead teach students that they need to do their part. She meets with students when she conducts collaborative projects to discuss how collaboration does not necessarily mean everyone has a precisely equal role; she also shares with students that, if an individual in the collaborative group is not contributing, it is the responsibility of the team to address this issue; one student doing all of the work in a pair means that the one student did not collaborate, either. Ultimately, Demi does not assess the collaboration — only the project. Essentially, collaboration is not a requirement, but is a skill teachers are working to cultivate while engaging students in instruction related to content. Francis has an issue with collaboration and grading. He says he cannot count a collaborative activity as a summative grade because,

You can't ensure that everyone does the same amount of work. So it'll be a formative grade... And all of their formatives together are worth 20 percent of their grade, so you don't have to do a single one of those and you get a B.

In Francis' view, everyone needs to have completed precisely the same amount of work in order for an activity to be counted as a summative grade.

Usefulness and Ease of Access

The level of ease a teacher experiences when trying to access digital technologies matters. Internet connectivity is often extremely weak at the teachers' schools. Anna said, "the wifi not connecting... I could have just printed something out and given it to them." This issue is heightened during lunch periods, when it seems that more devices are connected to and using the school's internet. Teachers reported that both they and their students get frustrated when trying to access a tool or platform that will not load or is

operating extremely slowly, and this takes up valuable class time that ultimately would be more productive in an unplugged activity.

The level of user friendliness is also important. As Anna noted, the teachers need to be able to navigate the technology: “There’s been a lot of times — most of the time when I use technology and it doesn’t work it’s because I’ve either set something up wrong... user error on my part and a lot of troubleshooting.” Students also need to be able to work the platforms. Demi said, “Some of the products are so bad. They’re clunky. They don’t work. The kids get frustrated.”

If the purpose of the digital tool a teacher is using is limited in nature, then it is difficult for teachers to reach beyond the scope of the digital tool to create a lesson that promotes New Literacies. The selection of digital tools is sometimes not left up to the teachers; they are, at times, required to use particular digital platforms and tools. Demi an illustration of ineffective digital tool selection. Her class is required to use iLit from Pearson, a private education company that creates and markets tests, study materials, and a variety of other educational resources to public schools across the world. The students are required to take an entrance test with the program, a test that Demi complains is extremely lengthy to the point where students spend the first several weeks of school on the computer taking this initial test. Additionally, she shared, “learning how to use their data is difficult because none of it is intuitive. It doesn’t line up with anything we use with our kids.”

Demi made several comments on the topic of digital technology marketing. She elaborated on her example of Modern Classroom in the section discussing collaboration (the previous section), saying:

I keep trying to explain to people... they're like, "Oh it's all research based." So I went to the website. They have one research document up there that they commissioned Johns Hopkins to write about basically what is good teaching? And good teaching is student-centered teaching. And they took this document and applied their tactic to it. And then basically said that this is what they say is so good. And it's just a business selling training...

In another instance, she said, "And you know a lot of it's just stuff that you know the educational software people are very good marketers. They're not necessarily very good product developers. So it's just a sales pitch and then their stuff stinks." The marketing for digital platforms and products sometimes makes them seem much more useful to teachers than they actually are.

Professional Development

A final reason that digital technology is not being well-utilized in schools is because teachers are overwhelmed by the number of technological tools and platforms they are being introduced to. Nearly every teacher complained that they are exposed to a large number of digital tools, but very little or no training. More than one teacher described the training they do receive as "terrible". Demi elaborated:

Training for new technologies looks like this: you go into a room and people say open up your browser and play with this software. I have no interest nor time to

do that. It's not helpful in any way... I don't have time to sit around and play with something. I want something to work on. I want to know how to use it.

Across the board, teachers indicated that they are often exposed to a digital tool, are provided very little or no training on the tool, and very little time to explore it themselves. The result is typically that they never even attempt to use this tool in their classrooms. The little time they spend on the tool has been a complete waste.

Teachers did mention examples where they were exposed to good training for digital technologies. In the cases in which Demi has had good training with quality digital technology, she was much more likely to incorporate it, saying, "If we had good training for good pieces of software, then you know that's worthwhile". She mentioned that a lot of the quality training for digital tools is training she discovered and completed on her own, as opposed to training created at her school or created somewhere else but provided by the school. Teachers feel that they had the most support to incorporate new digital tools and technologies when they were teaching virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. For one thing, the training was more focused. Ella shared:

I will say my district did a somewhat good job on that [professional development for digital technologies] like you know August 2020 when we came back, they picked four pieces of digital technology that they thought were going to be the most used and they gave us some pretty good professional development on it.

Teachers were also provided with a more adequate amount of planning in which to truly investigate and use new digital resources.

The topic of professional development for digital tools relates back to the discussion in a previous section on teacher interest in digital tools. In her first comment above, Demi specifically says she has no time or interest to explore digital tools when the professional development structure is poor. However, she does feel that, when both the tools and the training are quality, her time spent learning about digital tools is worthwhile.

Chapter Five

The purpose of this research was to investigate the literacy pedagogies of teachers who graduated from George Mason University's secondary English language arts teacher education program, specifically focusing on the ways they incorporate New Literacies into their practice and what enables and constrains them from doing so. Additionally, this study explores how the participants use digital technologies in their literacy pedagogy, and what enables them and constrains them from using digital technologies, both in general and in ways that align with New Literacies paradigms. In this chapter, I discuss the implications of my findings for teaching and teacher education, administration, policy, and theory/research. In each of these sections, I connect this study to current research in the field. I also share the boundaries and limitations of the study. As an English language arts teacher, I consider myself somewhat of an insider with my participants (Berger, 2015). Therefore, in some places, I add anecdotes of my own experiences that relate to the discussion. I do not intend to present my experiences as formal data; rather, it is commentary that serves to elaborate on the data shared in chapter four. I finish this section with a discussion of the boundaries and limitations of the study, section stating my final thoughts on the research.

Research Questions

As a reminder, these are the research questions this study is centered around:

1. To what extent and in what ways do English language arts teachers who graduated from one teacher education program that focuses heavily on New

Literacies pedagogies incorporate New Literacies pedagogies into their current practice, according to their own narratives?

- a. Under what circumstances and to what extent have these teachers felt encouraged to or constrained from practicing New Literacies pedagogies, and what factors have contributed to that sense of encouragement or constraint?
2. How do these teachers use digital technologies in their literacy instruction, according to their own narratives?
 - a. Under what circumstances and to what extent have these teachers felt encouraged to or constrained from incorporating digital technologies in their pedagogy, and what factors have contributed to that sense of encouragement or constraint?

Implications For Teaching and Teacher Education

One of the major goals of this research is to provide suggestions for how teachers might engage in New Literacies pedagogies in ways that are reasonable and manageable, given the many hats teachers are wearing and the varying pressures placed upon them. Additionally, this work is intended to contribute to conversations in teacher education about how to engage future teachers in New Literacies teaching that will transfer into their future careers. As I noted in chapter two, there is a lack of emphasis on critical pedagogies and New Literacies in teaching and teacher education (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Jacobs, 2019; Kist & Pytash, 2015; Liu & Ball, 2019). Despite this, there is a plethora of research demonstrating the possibilities of New Literacies pedagogies,

even within the current structures of formal education (e.g., Bruce, 2009; Colantonio-Yurko et al., 2017; Dyches, 2017; Frankel et al., 2018; Ginsberg & Glenn, 2019; Hickey et al., 2011; Jocius, 2013, 2017; Lam et al., 2021; Manderino, 2012; Martin & Beese, 2017; Martinez & Montano, 2016; Sjodin, 2020; Smith, 2019). In this section, I present three major implications from this study for teachers and teacher educators: (1) New Literacies can be a way to facilitate culturally relevant pedagogy. (2) The New Literacies paradigm needs to be more seamlessly integrated into instruction. (3) Teachers need more support integrating digital technologies in their teaching in curricular ways. I elaborate on each of these notions in the sections below, and I also connect these implications to current work in the field.

New Literacies as a Way to Facilitate Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

As I discussed in chapter two, New Literacies is a paradigm that falls under the larger umbrella of culturally relevant teaching. While teachers in this study do engage in pedagogies that are specific to New Literacies, they were more likely to talk generically about aspects that relate to culturally relevant pedagogies. Culturally relevant pedagogies are a critical piece of the New Literacies paradigm, and it is encouraging that teachers have this orientation in their classrooms. However, the characteristics that make New Literacies unique (e.g., deprioritizing traditional literacy, the turn to digital literacies/multimodality, enabling students as creators and producers of knowledge, etc.; Leu et al., 2013) are more specific ways of thinking about and practicing culturally relevant literacy pedagogy.

At times, teachers in this study seemed to believe that they should teach from a culturally relevant perspective, but also were at a loss for what this truly looks like in practice. For example, Brie mentioned several generic strategies such as having students relate *Beowulf* to their own lives by writing about what happened in the text and how they can relate to this. Perhaps Brie could not think of a specific, relevant, meaningful example during our interview. However, I maintain the view that, in both teacher education programs and professional development settings, teachers have been repeatedly instructed to “get to know students” and “make school relevant” with very little support in how to actually do this. What has resulted is teachers become almost robotic in their responses about classroom dynamics and their pedagogical choices; they say what they have been taught to say, but do not necessarily know how to facilitate culturally relevant pedagogy beyond a rote beginning of the year routine (such as a survey) or the occasional inclusion of a video featuring a celebrity or song created by a modern artist.

Administrators and facilitators of professional development consider the job done as long as teachers can repeat back the mantras of culturally relevant pedagogy without considering the deeper systemic and structural issues that have shaped teachers practice (Young, 2010). There is little support for the actual implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy for practicing teachers (Sleeter, 2011; Young, 2010). I am not criticizing the intent or the efforts by teachers to weave culturally relevant pedagogy into their practice, but I am saying that notions of critical, liberatory pedagogies are currently often surface-level. Embedding the more specific aspects of New Literacies into teacher education and allowing the teachers to practice New Literacies pedagogies during their teacher

preparation programs may lead to a more deep integration of culturally relevant pedagogy.

There are examples from the research that can support teachers in engaging students in culturally relevant pedagogy and, more relevant to the current conversation, examples that demonstrate New Literacies instruction that engages students in culturally relevant pedagogy. For example, Pytash (2016) created a writing project for incarcerated youth in which they created screenplays related to topics in their lives that they feel are worthwhile. They studied a variety of multimodal mentor texts to explore how to write screenplays, and students engaged in several collaborative activities to deconstruct existing texts and create their own texts. A main aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy is that students' lives, interests, and funds of knowledge must inform teaching practices. Pytash discusses how the success of the unit is born from the knowledge students bring to the classroom, but the instructors also heavily scaffold screenplay writing instruction to make connections between writing inside and outside of the classroom.

Integrating New Literacies

In chapter two, I explained Leu et al.'s (2013) distinction between new literacies (lowercase) and New Literacies (capitalized) in depth. As a reminder, new literacies (lowercase) refers to particular aspects (e.g., multiliteracies, online reading comprehension, information and communication technologies, etc.) of the overarching New Literacies paradigm. This research connects to Kist and Pytash's (2015) strong support of discussions in teacher education and professional development surrounding the distinction between new literacies practices and the New Literacies paradigm in order to

encourage teachers to reflect on the overarching goals of their instruction, not just the means in which they attain those goals.

For example, at times, it seems that teachers ask students to create and produce knowledge because it is a strategy that they have heard works well when working toward more rote types of learning. Brie described a lesson in which students create short stories using vocabulary words from *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (Hosseini, 2007). She shared:

I'm not a reading specialist or anything, but I've been learning a lot from the actual, like, literacy teachers who have been doing this for a while and they have been telling me how important vocab is. So one of the warm-ups that I did that my students seemed to really enjoy was I had them create short stories with random vocab words from the previous chapters that we read in the class before.

While, in this case, students are technically creating and producing knowledge, Brie acknowledges that the purpose is not so that students produce authentic texts that they deem relevant or useful, but so that they can better understand “random” vocabulary words. In some of the examples of literacy pedagogy teachers shared, such as this one of Brie, the teachers are using new literacies (lowercase) strategies and instruction as a way to hook students in or convince them to engage in outcomes associated with more traditional literacy goals. The teachers often seem to have recognized the benefits of New Literacies from an engagement standpoint, but do not necessarily believe that the ultimate outcomes and purposes of New Literacies are as important as those promoted in traditional literacy instruction and assessment. The integration, in these cases, is not consistent with the paradigm of New Literacies; rather, they are using new literacies

strategies to support traditional literacy instruction and outcomes (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). My point is not to criticize the use of new literacies pedagogies to reinforce traditional literacy paradigms; after all, the ultimate goal of New Literacies is not to eradicate traditional literacies, but rather to expand our conceptions of literacy and consider how other forms of literacy might layer with traditional literacies to provide more enriching and meaningful educational experiences for a wider variety of students (Leu et al., 2013; Street, 2003). Perhaps the answer is to encourage teachers to articulate their goals for a particular activity or project so that they are not erroneously believing they are implementing New Literacies.

Teachers have, at times, separated New Literacies and traditional pedagogy into compartments, and dedicated time to each. For example, Brie and her team teacher engage students in two simultaneous units, one that is more aligned with traditional literacy instruction and another that engages students in New Literacies. The two units are not connected in any way. Additionally, as I noted in chapter four, more traditional forms of literacy instruction are often considered the first order of business in a classroom, and the projects, assignments, and readings that engage students in New Literacies pedagogies come after the mandatory or more important curriculum has been completed a finding consistent with Pytash et al. (2017). New Literacies is seen as more fun but less important and challenging than more traditional literacy instruction. Engaging students in culturally relevant and New Literacies pedagogies does not mean that teachers have to avoid challenging students or engaging them pedagogies that push them beyond their current abilities; if New Literacies is enacted with fidelity, then quite

the opposite is true (Sjodin, 2020). New Literacies activities and assignments could be included throughout the school year and rooted in meaningful expectations (Pytash et al., 2017). A reasonable goal for teachers and for teacher education programs in the near future is work in creating a more seamless integration between traditional and New Literacies pedagogies, where New Literacies goals and outcomes are seen as equally valuable as traditional literacy outcomes.

Perhaps one way to start this process is for teachers to align their New Literacies pedagogy with specific standards, a strategy several of the teachers already implement (Hutchison & Colwell, 2014). For example, each option on Francis' choice novel BINGO project aligns with a specific state standard. Similarly, Ella facilitates what she terms a "passion project" in which students choose a text to read and create a product that represents an idea from the text. She starts this process by showing the students the state standard that they have to meet with the project. "I was like, 'This is the standard you have to meet with this [project]. And we're going to do it any way except for a book report'... I think there were two or three different ones. Like one of them was about theme, and one of them was about like character development or something like that."

As I mentioned in chapter four, all of the participants maintain the view that collaboration is important in the classroom. Although there are clearly times where it makes sense for teachers to have students work on their own, a pattern of emphasis on individuality emerged when teachers discussed their facilitation of activities related to standardized testing and standardized measurement. Anna explained how she and her team teacher began creating open-ended questions to assess reading achievement because

the students were cheating off of one another when the questions were multiple choice. While the notion of open-ended questions for assessing reading achievement has its benefits, the motives for the change bring about some concern. The data in this study revealed a connection between standardized measurement and teachers' requirement that students work individually. Obviously, this is partially because when teachers are collecting data on reading achievement, they want the results to be wholly individual so as to best understand the needs of each student. However, working collaboratively can help support students academically (as well as socially and emotionally; CASEL, 2021). Encouraging students to work collaboratively when preparing for standardized testing and measurement, as well as practicing test-taking strategies, has potential benefits for students both academically and mentally (Henry et al., 2012; Vermette & Kline, 2017). Relating back to the discussion of Discourses in chapter two, students who are not familiar with a particular Discourse are able to develop a greater familiarity with the Discourse through a variety of social interactions particularly with those who are already members of the group (Gee, 1992; Rueda, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978).

Teacher preparation programs should emphasize the ways that teachers can bring New Literacies strategies into even the most limiting of situations. This is particularly important given that the quality of classroom instruction is lower in classrooms that are under the greatest pressure to improve test scores and, typically, teachers are less likely to have autonomy in schools that are deemed underperforming; this is more likely in schools where the majority of students are minorities and/or of a low socioeconomic status (Giersch, 2018; Hong & Hamot, 2020; Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Plank & Condliffe,

2013). Thus, students in schools and classrooms that have been identified as struggling miss out on the more innovative, project-based, collaborative pedagogies (such as New Literacies pedagogies), which only serves to deepen the divide between students and school for individuals who already do not identify with the structures and purposes of school to begin with (Domina et al., 2017; Donaldson et al., 2016; Giersch, 2018; Hodge, 2019).

Integrating New Literacies With Foundational Reading and Writing Skills. I

have emphasized throughout this work that the New Literacies paradigm challenges what types of literacies should be privileged in schools (Leu et al., 2013; Street, 2003; Van Enk et al., 2005). However, this does not mean that traditional reading and writing skills are unimportant (Leu et al., 2013; Street, 2003). Leu et al. (2013) claimed that teachers are responsible for orchestrating opportunities for literacy learning for students who are familiar with a variety of literacies; the role of orchestrator increases, according to the authors, “especially as students move above the stages of foundational literacy” (pp. 1162-1163). The quote suggests that teachers’ roles as orchestrators of learning contexts become more important as they move beyond the need for instruction in basic reading and writing skills, which many would assume applies to secondary teaching.

Every teacher in this study talked at some point about how a large percentage of their students do not enjoy reading, and thus do not engage in sustained reading. Most of the teachers expressed that they were unprepared for this attitude toward reading, as they themselves have always enjoyed reading and associated with like individuals during their time in school. Of equal surprise and concern for the teachers is that a large percentage of

their students lack fundamental reading skills; the National Center for Education Statistics reports that lower-performing students' reading scores have dropped since 2015 while higher-performing students' scores have remained relatively stable (NAEP, 2019). All of the teachers in this study addressed, some more directly than others, the need for students to have basic reading and writing skills in order to engage in more project-based, authentic tasks (the types of tasks that New Literacies advocates suggest are more relevant and important for students). This creates quite a conundrum because the students who are deemed to be struggling the most with reading and writing are the ones who are least likely to be provided with instruction that aligns with the New Literacies paradigm (Domina et al., 2017; Donaldson et al., 2016; Giersch, 2018; Hodge, 2019; Zielezinski & Darling-Hammond, 2016).

The data in this study indicate that, the less basic reading and writing skills students possess, the more teachers struggle to incorporate New Literacies pedagogies, consistent with previous research that suggests that students in lower-level tracks receive instruction that is less innovative, supportive, and relevant (Domina et al., 2017; Donaldson et al., 2016; Frankel et al., 2018; Giersch, 2018; Hodge, 2019). Instead, as several of the teachers discussed, these students are typically placed in classrooms where specific programs are used in an attempt to close the achievement gap. These programs, including the one Brie talks about, often are not engaging for students and actively discourage collaboration, discussion, creativity, critical thinking, project-based assessment, and other aspects of New Literacies that I have discussed in this work. This

restrictive style of schooling serves only to further alienate students (Forkosh-Baruch et al., 2021; Zielezinski & Darling-Hammond, 2016).

A couple of questions arise from this clear need for strong basic reading and writing skills. First, how can we address this issue at an earlier age so that students are arriving in middle school with the necessary reading and writing skills to engage in a New Literacies classroom? Obviously, there is no simple answer to this, and teachers and schools are working their hardest to ensure that students develop their foundational reading and writing skills in the early years. Additionally, New Literacies is not a paradigm specific to secondary instruction. Thus, a more relevant question is how can we provide instruction to students who are identified as struggling readers and writers to improve their reading and writing without compromising the integrity of the New Literacies paradigm? Though this study does not address this question, the answer lies partially in the notion that New Literacies instruction does not ignore the teaching of basic reading and writing skills. It actually promotes this need, but also suggests teaching these basic skills in a way that is more relevant, engaging, and authentic than using a remedial computer program (Zielezinski & Darling-Hammond, 2016, 2018).

Emphasizing Process in Addition to Product/Outcome. When we were discussing assessment, teachers mainly shared examples of assessment that came from the outcome or result of assignments, barring the mention of giving points for meeting checkpoints along the way during a lengthy project. Cara discussed providing feedback and assessment during the process of students writing a problem-solution paper on a topic of their choice. Oftentimes, however, assessment and feedback were only discussed in

relation to the end of a project or when a product is submitted for final evaluation. While the ultimate outcome of an assignment remains important in New Literacies pedagogies, the nature of the paradigm requires that we look at the journey that students take to get to that final outcome. The process is where many of the aspects of New Literacies pedagogies come into play (Murphy, 2017). For example, when considering the notion of collaboration versus competition, collaboration is not simply about what the group produces, but how they work together and problem-solve.

As Demi discussed, some of her projects seemingly require collaboration, but ultimately, students are not truly evaluated on the ways in which they worked with another student or a group of students. In a scenario where students are working in pairs, a student who completes the entire project individually and earns high marks on the project engages in the same amount of collaboration as his/her partner who contributes nothing to the project and earns no credit. Neither has truly learned anything about collaborating through this process. Similarly, Francis shared how collaborative activities cannot be summative assessments, as collaboration is incompatible with current notions of what grades students get and how they get them. Another aspect of New Literacies where the process is significant is when teachers are enabling students to create and produce texts. The final product is, again, important, but is not solely indicative of what a student knows or has learned. Future teachers to be guided in how to honor the significance of process in their teaching through discussions, exemplary models, fieldwork, and reflections (Murphy, 2017).

Authentic Curricular Integration of Digital Technologies

While New Literacies pedagogies do not always include digital tools and technologies, the reality is they play a central role in every defining aspect of the paradigm. For example, enabling students as creators and producers of knowledge requires that students are able to share their work, and the internet makes this much more feasible. Although the data in this research contains some examples of curricular integration of digital technologies, the majority of examples related to digital technologies reinforces previous findings that teachers' incorporation is primarily technological, rather than curricular (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Kist & Pytash, 2015). The topic of how to facilitate teachers' and future teachers' authentic, curricular technology integration is complex, but, in this section, I suggest a few areas where we might focus our attention.

Perhaps the most important topic is the degree to which we approach digital technology from a teacher education standpoint. Preservice teachers, first and foremost, need exposure to and authentic practice with digital technologies in their training in order to develop attitudes and beliefs that technology is important in their classroom and can transform their teaching in positive ways (Forkosh-Baruch, 2018). Institutions that have adopted the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards (2022) are more likely to focus on technology integration in their teacher education programs (Voithofer et al., 2019). Additionally, teacher educators' attitudes toward digital technologies determine the degree to which digital technologies are emphasized in individual teacher preparation courses (Voithofer et al., 2019). According to Voithofer and Nelson (2021), only 15 percent of teacher educators who introduce the TPACK

(technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge) model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) as a way to help teachers integrate technology into their instruction describe how they engage future teachers in field work related specifically to technology, and teacher education programs are not providing necessary support through scaffolding and modeling. Digital technology is often considered an add-on, rather than an integrated aspect of the curriculum, which may contribute to the perceptions of teachers in this study that digital technologies are good to incorporate, but optional and not necessarily their responsibility. Some teacher educators feel that there are too many technology standards for future teachers, and the standards are often vague, making it difficult for teacher educators to focus their priorities or facilitate learning about digital technologies in ways that are meaningful (Segal & Heath, 2020).

Integrating technology into teacher education programs does not necessarily mean that we are cultivating curricular and New Literacies integration for future and current teachers. How we approach digital technology integration in teacher education and professional development matters. Even when teacher educators focus on technology integration specifically throughout their courses, teachers still have issues truly integrating technology, and can end up using the technology in ways that reduces literacy instruction to a rote series of steps (Segal & Heath, 2020). Teacher educators and mentor teachers need to emphasize curricular integration of digital technologies by introducing it and continuously coming back to the notion throughout the teacher education program. Forkosh-Baruch et al. (2019) advocate for a greater emphasis on the role of pedagogical reasoning and reflective practice when it comes to teachers' decision making related to

technology integration, but identifies several barriers that affect whether or not teachers can effectively do this. One such barrier (related to an above section), is the lack of school-based clinical experiences future teachers are exposed to. Future teachers must have opportunities to authentically facilitate lessons in which they integrate technology in curricular ways and have an opportunity to reflect on these experiences throughout their teacher preparation programs (Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Forkosh-Baruch et al., 2021). Future teachers need opportunities to share examples of curricular technology integration — both examples they observe and those they themselves facilitate (Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Forkosh-Baruch et al., 2021).

Future teachers cannot learn about curricular integration of digital technologies from current practitioners unless the current teachers are engaging in curricular integration themselves. Although there are some examples from these data where teachers are using technology in innovative ways, the data indicate that teachers typically use digital technologies for the purposes of organization and efficiency. Utilizing digital technologies in these ways is not inherently a bad thing, but integration of this kind is technological — using the technology to work toward the same goals as when teachers do not use technology — rather than curricular — using technology to work toward different goals that are different than and span beyond traditional literacy outcomes (Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Kist & Pytash, 2015; Resta et al., 2018). Moreover, this research supports the conclusion that underserved students, (e.g., special-education students, English language-learners) are less likely to receive instruction using digital technologies that is curricular, engaging, and creative than students who are

deemed higher-performing (Resta et al., 2018; Zielezinski & Darling-Hammond, 2016, 2018).

The findings in this research support the existing literature that teachers' interest, attitudes, and self efficacy toward digital technologies are all factors that contribute to their likelihood of integrating technology in their teaching (Hanny et al., 2021; Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2018). Approaching the topic of technology integration with current practitioners needs to start with their dispositions toward digital technologies and why they hold those dispositions (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2018). This research also demonstrates that the pandemic has not necessarily resulted in teachers incorporating digital technologies into their practice more often. In fact, some of the teachers in this study pointed to the opposite; they were forced to teach online courses due to the extenuating circumstances, and now that they are back in person, they do not necessarily see a need to include technology in their instruction. The sentiment of several of the teachers in this study is perhaps best expressed by Cara: "I have a few projects that they'll do out of class that are all digital but I don't really teach the technology." Perhaps teachers' understanding of digital technologies has been shaped by the pandemic, where digital technologies acted as a replacement to in-personal learning. Many of the digital platforms teachers have been exposed to attempt to replace the in-person experience, rather than enhance it (Forkosh-Baruch et al., 2021). Teachers might benefit from both discussion about and scaffolding of how to use digital tools in ways that support authentic, in-person collaboration in the classroom — technology that enhances the classroom experience rather than taking away from it (Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Howell,

2017; Smith, 2019). Teacher educators and professional development leaders might consider engaging future and current teachers in discussion about how digital technologies in the classroom can “engage students in aesthetic interpretation” (Pytash et al., 2017, p. 170) and multimodal expression rather than ways in which they can be more efficient at a particular task or engage in work when not in the same room as one another.

Curricular integration of digital technologies depends partially on the tools teachers select to incorporate into their classroom and partially on the ways that teachers utilize the digital tools. In chapter four I shared how teachers facilitate essay-writing using digital tools. Some of the participants do this in ways that mimic more traditional literacy outcomes, but others use the digital tools available to fundamentally change the essay-writing process to make it more collaborative. The structures that teachers put into place in their teaching ultimately determine if they use the digital technology in ways that support curricular integration. Teacher educators and professional development leads can engage current and future practitioners in conversations and reflections that directly address how their choices determine the ways in which digital technologies are integrated. Wang and Hsu (2017) created a professional development program for science teachers built around the New Literacies paradigm, and they advocate for changing teachers' technology integration from having students learn from technology to having students learn with technology.

Demi pointed out that individuals responsible for professional development for digital technology should be engaging teachers in learning about the digital tools in a manner consistent with what we know to be good teaching. I have been to a myriad of

training and professional developments on digital technologies. While some of them were well-planned, many were borderline offensive in that it appeared the individual leading the training (often an individual who is not a teacher) had spent little time or effort preparing. If we want teachers to work hard to incorporate digital tools and technologies into their classroom in a meaningful way, we should work hard to create training and professional development that is meaningful and worth their time. Professional development for teachers' effective and curricular technology integration should align with what we know about quality instruction, which aligns with the New Literacies paradigm. This might include allowing teachers to actually create and do, rather than learn in theory; considering teachers' perspectives and voice in the professional development; cultivating spaces where teachers can collaborate; and engaging teachers in critical reflection of their teaching with digital tools (Prestridge & Main, 2018).

Though professional development related to individual digital tools and technologies can certainly improve, the reality is that digital tools will continue to rapidly change and develop. In order to keep up, teachers need to adopt the ways of New Literacies thinking — learn skills and strategies to efficiently sift through a variety of digital technologies and tools in order to find those most relevant and appropriate to the task at hand (Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Leu et al., 2013). Alternatively, teachers could learn about digital tools and allow them to inspire their craft of a lesson or assignment. Either way, it is unrealistic for teachers to expect to learn to use every tool well, and to be literate, in this sense, is for teachers to be able to evaluate the usefulness of a tool for their teaching on their own. Teachers also cannot be expected to know how to use all types of

digital technologies, but can create contexts where students can teach and learn from one another (Leu et al., 2013). Teacher preparation programs and other professional development leads should consider reducing the number of digital tools and platforms they expose teachers to, and instead focus on helping teachers and future teachers evaluate a tool for its usefulness in their particular classroom and learn the skills and strategies for navigating digital tools. (Forkosh-Baruch, 2018).

Implications For Administration

This research explores the contexts in which teachers are enabled to and constrained from engaging in New Literacies pedagogies. Additionally, the study investigates contexts in which teachers are enabled to and constrained from using digital technologies in their teaching, and ways they are enabled and constrained from doing so in ways that align with the New Literacies paradigm and curricular integration. In this section, I discuss how administrators might approach their practice in ways that enable teachers to engage in New Literacies pedagogies and connect these implications to current work in the field.

Based on the teachers' narratives in this research, administrators play a major role in whether or not teachers are able to engage students in New Literacies pedagogies or not. The sentiment of the group is that the most supportive administrations are those who treat teachers as the professionals who are best suited to make decisions about teaching. Schools and administrators must treat teachers as experts of pedagogy if teachers are to engage in New Literacies instruction. Individual schools and the level of support from

administration can exacerbate the issue of teacher deprofessionalization significantly (Wronowski, 2021; Wronowski & Urick, 2021).

In this section, I present two major implications from this study for administrators: (1) Administrators need to create contexts where teachers have access to the resources they need and the autonomy to use those resources to best meet the needs of the students in front of them. (2) Administrators must support teachers in integrating meaningful and relevant foundational reading and writing instruction for students who need it. I elaborate on each of these notions in the sections below, and I also connect these implications to current work in the field.

Creating Contexts of Access and Autonomy

The findings in this research support the position that teachers tend to implement pedagogies associated with higher-order thinking and the New Literacies paradigm with students who are enrolled in higher-level courses (such as honors, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate), while teachers tend to engage those in team-taught, self-contained, literacy lab, and English language learner courses in more surface-level, rote, teacher-led instruction (Donaldson et al., 2017; Giersch, 2018; Hodge, 2019). At the school level, teachers who work in schools that are considered “low-performing” are given less autonomy and more restrictions in their practice, leading to similar results of low-level instructional practices (Hong & Hamot, 2020). Literacy pedagogy and remediation for students who are deemed “behind” does not have to take place in a sterile, disengaged classroom. Unfortunately, students who are flagged as struggling readers are often placed in classes such as Brie’s literacy lab where access to diverse text

options are often limited and instruction is centered around improving students reading achievement based on standardized measures (Moje et al., 2008). Relating back to the discussion in the section “New Literacies as a Way to Facilitate Culturally Relevant Pedagogy”, teachers are taught about culturally relevant pedagogy in theory, but do not necessarily authentically enact it, an issue that stems from a variety of places (Sleeter, 2011; Young, 2010). From an administrative standpoint, teachers need to be provided freedom to enact liberatory pedagogies, particularly with students who are already having a difficult time succeeding in school contexts. Administrators also need to acknowledge and address the disparity between instruction in higher- and lower-track courses, and potentially consider options where students are not separated by perceived ability or achievement (Giersch, 2018). Perhaps one solution is to have classes focused on particular genres or topics of study, where students sign up for courses based on their interests, rather than their perceived literacy ability (Bakis, 2012; Ntelioglou, 2011)

When asked how they would change school if they had more power, most of the teachers’ responses centered around giving students more autonomy. They had a variety of suggestions for how they might do this, including providing students with more options in their assignments, projects, and texts; including more diverse and multimodal texts in their whole-class instruction; and providing contexts for students to engage in low-stakes, conversational discussions about texts without constantly feeling the need to attach an assessment or activity to them. Teachers also have their own ideas about what might work with students who have been deemed struggling by the institution of school.

When asked how she would change school if she had more power, Grace talked about wanting to read more with her students in her reading lab:

They're all SPED (special education) kids... and they have to go to a different academic skills class every other day. So we never get through — it takes us like a month to read one novel in verse. And I have kids who are, like, super excited and they want to read and then I feel so guilty cause I can't keep them for longer to keep them reading. And for the kid who says that he's never read a book in his life be like, "I want to finish this book!" It makes your heart sink.

When we were discussing text selection, Ella said that she has a dream where she teaches a semester course to struggling students where the entire reading selection is science fiction. I did not follow up on this statement, but it relates to the discussion on who has access to engaging texts in school. Students in this study who have been identified as struggling with basic reading and writing skills do not get the benefit of diverse text selections because they are required to work with online reading programs that are designed to help them develop fundamental reading skills.

Teachers who have access to a variety of resources and have the ability to obtain the resources they need are able to provide students with a more diverse selection of materials and therefore are able to better prepare for and facilitate New Literacies pedagogies. Text access and approval, which is discussed at length in chapter four and is directly controlled by school-based and district-level administrators, is a tangible example from the data of teachers being restricted from engaging in New Literacies pedagogies; it demonstrates that the processes of text approval and a lack of access to

texts prevent teachers from bringing modern, relevant, engaging, diverse texts into their classroom (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Several of the teachers have worked around the text approval process by providing students with free choice in their sustained text selection (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015).

Paving the Way for Curricular Integration of Digital Technologies.

Administrators' support of the integration of digital technologies is an important example of how they might enable teachers' New Literacies teaching. Several of the participants talked about requirements for using specific digital tools that have been purchased by their school or district, often with little or no input from the teachers. Additionally, some of the teachers brought up the issue that digital technology tools and platforms that are marketed toward teachers, students, and classrooms can be flashy and make grand promises, but realistically be of limited use in classrooms. One might argue that this is because of the limited perspectives of the teachers, but what seems more likely is that the individuals who are creating much of the digital technology that is theoretically suited for school are unfamiliar with day-to-day classroom operations and dynamics (Buzhardt & Heitzman-Powell, 2005; Kenttälä et al., 2018). The teachers in this study do not have a say in what digital technologies are purchased at the school and district level. It is simply not possible to know which digital technologies will best serve teachers and students without drawing from their perspectives much more closely and/or requiring individuals responsible for the creation and purchase of digital technologies to completely immerse themselves in the classroom experience. Districts and schools should more carefully

consider the tools and technologies they purchase, and teachers should have a significant say in this conversation (Buzhardt & Heitzman-Powell, 2005; Kenttälä et al., 2018).

Teachers' perceptions of and confidence in using digital technologies significantly contribute to their integration of digital technologies in the classroom (Hall & Trespalacios, 2019; Howard et al., 2018; Inan & Lowther, 2010; Liu et al., 2017). If teachers are able to efficiently sift through digital tools (as discussed in a previous section), but are not provided the autonomy to make their own decisions about the best tools to include in their pedagogy, the skill is rendered relatively useless. Rather than being overly restrictive and managerial about the digital tools and platforms teachers use in their pedagogy, administrators should worry about aspects of digital technology that will alleviate teachers' concerns about digital technologies and improve their perceptions of and experimentation with digital tools (Howard et al., 2018). Specifically, I suggest the following:

- Schools provide teachers with high-quality, context-specific professional learning that allows teachers to develop relationships with individuals, both those who work in their building and outside of it, who can inform their practice regarding the integration of digital technologies (Howard et al., 2018).
- Schools provide teachers with the flexibility to and encouragement in trying out new ways of integrating technology into their instruction, creating a culture of experimentation (Howard et al., 2018)
- Schools ensure that teachers and students have quality internet access at all times of the day (Resta et al., 2018; Zieleszinski & Darling-Hammond, 2016, 2018).

- Schools work to create a culture of responsible digital citizens who are capable of recognizing appropriate and inappropriate times for using personal devices.
- Schools produce a set of reasonable rules, informed by teachers' perspectives, surrounding technology — cell phones in particular — that are supported by the community. Administrations dutifully follow through on these rules and address issues surrounding inappropriate use of technology as they arise.
- Access to high-quality professional learning and a culture that supports experimentation can support teachers' curricular integration of digital technologies (Hall & Trespalacios, 2019; Howard et al., 2018; Resta et al., 2018).

In other words, teachers and administrators have different responsibilities related to the incorporation of digital technologies. Teachers who do not have to worry about the logistical aspects of incorporating digital technologies can concern themselves more with the ways in which the technology is included in their pedagogy. This does not necessarily guarantee that teachers will maintain a focus on New Literacies when they include digital technologies in their instruction. (This also comes into play in other areas of my findings.) However, the teachers in this study do bring a New Literacies orientation in other aspects of their teaching. In order to get to a place where New Literacies digital literacy instruction is even a possibility, though, teachers should be freed from some of these initial hurdles of technological incorporation.

Supporting Foundational Reading and Writing Instruction

The lack of basic reading and writing skills some students demonstrate in secondary schools cannot be ignored, regardless of if we consider it through a more

traditional or a New Literacies perspective. I addressed this from a teacher and teacher education standpoint in a previous section. From an administrative standpoint, the focus of secondary teacher education is not rudimentary reading and writing skills, so these teachers do not necessarily have backgrounds that support them in how to best help students in these circumstances (Doubet & Southall, 2018; Wexler et al., 2018).

Secondary teachers also do not always see themselves as teachers of reading (Hall et al., 2011; Lang et al., 2009). Four of the seven teachers in this study have been assigned to teach “remedial” reading courses that are supposed to be led by certified reading specialists, and yet not one of them has a reading specialist endorsement on their license. Instead, the school leaders (a combination of district and school-based administration) require that the students use online platforms that assess students’ baseline lexile levels and improvements over the course of the school year.

There are data that support the notion that reading interventions such as those described by the teachers in this study can improve adolescents’ reading skills (Daniel et al., 2021; Hurwitz & Macaruso, 2021). However, programs have varied levels of effectiveness; in their synthesis of research on reading programs for secondary students, Bayne et al. (2018) concluded that programs that capitalize on adolescents’ social and cognitive engagement are more effective than programs that provide extra reading time or programs that use technology (see also Kim et al., 2016). Research in the field of adolescent literacy suggests that students who are deemed “struggling” in schools have demonstrated proficiency with sophisticated out-of-school texts, and engage with them often (Moje et al., 2008). Students, especially adolescents whose Discourses are not

typically privileged by the institution of school, need to engage with texts that are meaningful in everyday life (Moje et al., 2008). The teachers in this study did not feel that their students were engaged in the online reading programs their schools use. They also did not feel they had a lot of control over the curriculum in these courses. Rigid, standardized, inflexible programs cannot replace teachers, and dictating the curriculum of the course is not a substitute for training teachers and providing them with the resources they need to facilitate literacy instruction to particular groups of students. Attempting to replace teachers with programs and scripted curriculum, including online reading programs, is a disservice to both the teachers and the students, and it is proving to be ineffective (Cassidy et al., 2016; Faber et al., 2017; Faber & Visscher, 2018; Jain et al., 2021; OECD, 2015).

There are a few ways that school- and district-level administrators can work to mitigate the issue of teacher expertise in the realm of fundamental reading and writing. First, administrators should prioritize the hiring of more teachers who are certified reading specialists (Cassidy et al., 2016; Savitz & Rasinski, 2018). Reading specialists and literacy coaches can provide support for teachers in integrating differentiated support for students at various stages of reading and writing proficiency (Savitz & Rasinski, 2018). Second, administrators can emphasize the use of standardized programs and measurements as tools that assist and inform teachers' engaging literacy instruction. Standardized programs and measurement should be used resources, but cannot replace the role of teachers altogether.

Additionally, as I shared in chapter two, incorporating multimodal texts in classrooms is helpful for all students, but is of particular importance for those who have historically struggled with traditional literacy instruction (Smith, 2019). Students who struggle with traditional instruction benefit from text structures that allow them to visualize texts in ways that words on a page may not (Smith, 2019). Multimodality of particular importance to students who are culturally and linguistically diverse as it facilitates connections between the curriculum and their lives outside of school (Kirkland & Hull, 2011). Thus, administrators should encourage teachers to incorporate diverse text selections into courses that are focusing on foundational reading and writing, as nontraditional texts (e.g., graphic novels) have demonstrated potential to improve students' fundamental literacy skills (Cook, 2017).

Implications For Policy

This research explores the contexts that enable and constrain teachers from engaging in New Literacies pedagogies, digital technologies, and digital technologies through the New Literacies paradigm. In this section, I discuss how policymakers might enable teachers to engage in New Literacies pedagogies and connect these implications to current work in the field.

Most states, including states that have adopted the Common Core, have standards for content-area instruction that relate to the major tenants of the New Literacies Framework (e.g., multimodal composition, the facilitation of collaborative experiences, creation and production of diverse texts, incorporation of diverse literature, etc.; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School

Officers, 2022). However, the standards related to New Literacies are not emphasized in state-wide standardized testing. Teachers and researchers have discussed the ramifications of too much emphasis on standardization and testing for decades at this point (Anders, 2011; Gee, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Smagorinsky, 2017; Smagorinsky et al., 2020). The data in this research highlight ways in which an overemphasis on standards without providing necessary support and scaffolding to reach those standards operates as a constraint to New Literacies pedagogies by limiting the amount of time teachers could potentially spend engaging students in New Literacies (Cassidy et al., 2016).

One illustration of teachers spending time on standardized testing that could be utilized in better ways is Anna's description that I shared in chapter four where she worked to increase her students' scores in the category of inferencing on a standardized measure by implementing a series of lessons she described as tedious over the course of several class periods. It is not that incorporating lessons that focus on inferencing is a negative thing, or that developing this skill in students contradicts the purposes of New Literacies pedagogies (as I have emphasized multiple times that New Literacies does not negate the need for fundamental reading and writing skills). However, New Literacies emphasizes the importance of developing skills for the long term and in ways that are useful and relevant outside of the purposes of the classroom. Anna's case is one of the many examples from this data of the negative influence of standardized measurement. Anna's and Francis's statements about teaching to the test (available in the section on standardized testing and measurement in chapter four) match up with findings that

support that state tests “predictably emphasize some state standards while consistently excluding others”, and that teachers tend to cater to those standards and skills that they know will be highlighted on the state tests while ignoring or superficially incorporating those that are not deemed important by the state assessment (Au, 2007; Jennings & Bearak, 2014, p. 381).

Relatedly, the common core state standards connect literacy to technology (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2022). Again, though, the standards are not assessed through state-mandated tests. Many teachers see the ability to navigate and utilize digital technologies as a useful literacy skill, but not their responsibility to teach; print-based literacy is deemed necessary, and digital literacy is often optional (Kist & Pytash, 2015; Pytash, 2016). Teachers in this study do not necessarily restrict students from using digital technologies in their classroom in curricular ways that reflect the New Literacies paradigm, but it is usually not a requirement. They do not always believe it is their job to scaffold and model how to use digital technologies in their classrooms. Cara said, “They did so much like video editing and stuff. I don’t show them how to do that stuff to be honest — in terms of literacy. I’m like hope you know how!” Cara acknowledged that knowing how to communicate using digital technologies is a form of literacy, but it is not one that she privileges in her classroom (along with most of the teachers in this research).

In addition, teachers in this study reported that they are more likely to use digital technologies in classrooms that are deemed more advanced (e.g., honors, advanced

placement, and International Baccalaureate classes) and less likely to use digital technologies in classrooms where students are deemed “struggling” (e.g., standard, teamed, literacy lab classes). In advanced classes, teachers are more likely to use technologies that engage students in higher order thinking skills; in standard and remedial courses, technology is more likely to be used for standardized assessment and more rote forms of learning (Resta et al., 2018; Zieleszinski & Darling-Hammond, 2016, 2018). Students who have already demonstrated their success in school are receiving much more quality instruction related to technology than those who have not. This contributes to a growing second-level digital divide — the notion that some students — typically students who are already privileged in schools — are receiving a much higher quality of instruction related using digital technologies than others (Leu et al., 2014; Resta et al., 2018; Zieleszinski & Darling-Hammond, 2016, 2018).

While the topics of emphasis on standardized measurement and teaching to the test by stakeholders in a variety of educational spaces (such as teachers, teacher educators, and administrators), standardized tests are ultimately the product of decisions made by policymakers. There are a host of issues with the current structure of standardized tests, not the least of which is that teachers have been incentivized to teach to standardized tests, resulting in reduced usefulness of the tests and, ironically, results that potentially inflate students’ literacy skills (Au, 2007; Jennings & Bearak, 2014). Policymakers can start by reconsidering the rewards and ramifications of standardized testing to reduce the pressure for teachers to teach to the test. This change would benefit everyone involved; we would have a more accurate picture of students’ proficiency levels

on the skills assessed on the standardized tests, and teachers would have more freedom to engage students in a wider variety of pedagogies including those that fall under the paradigm of New Literacies.

Similar to my recommendation for administrators, policymakers need to treat teachers as professionals if they want teachers to engage in the creative, thoughtful, reflective style of teaching encouraged by the New Literacies paradigm. There were several examples in the data of teachers expressing concern over potential repercussions for their pedagogical decisions. They are continuously thinking about the individuals who might have something negative to say about their teaching who are not directly involved in the day-to-day classroom experience — parents, administrators, and policymakers. While teaching certainly takes a village, teachers' expertise and professionalization has been under attack since the implementation of federal accountability measures (Wronowski, 2021; Wronowski & Urick, 2021). The recent institution of tip lines (such as the one created under the direction of Governor Glenn Youngkin in Virginia), where parents and other individuals can report teaching they deem inappropriate to the government, is a tangible example of this attack on teacher expertise. Demi mentioned this tip line on multiple occasions, though she did also say, "I'm old. If they kick me out for making kids connect to the real world then they kick me out for making kids connect to the real world." While this statement demonstrates her commitment to equitable teaching, it begs the question of why such a statement would concern a teacher in the first place, especially when we are in the face of a national teacher shortage and enrollment in teacher education programs is shrinking (Hill-Jackson et al., 2021; U.S. Department of

Education, 2022). Individuals involved in education at the highest levels should seriously consider what their words and actions say about their view of educators, and how that ultimately affects the profession and the nation.

Implications For Theory and Research

The focus of this research is the integration of New Literacies pedagogies into K-12 classrooms and teacher education. However, this study also provides information relevant to researchers and scholars in the field of higher education. Specifically, this research highlights the need for a comprehensive model in which we might explore teachers' knowledge and decision-making related to technology integration, including how individual and community factors weigh into their pedagogical choices related to technology (Forkosh-Baruch et al., 2021). Given the continued findings that integration of digital technologies remains relatively technological, rather than curricular, having a more systematic model in place to investigate influences on and dispositions toward technology use would be helpful for the field (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2018). Forkosh-Baruch et al. (2021) suggested focusing on teachers' epistemic frames as a starting point, and created a potential model for researchers to use and build upon.

Suggestions for Future Research

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the literacy pedagogies (including those involving digital technologies) of secondary English language arts teachers who graduated from George Mason University's teacher education program, which focuses heavily on New Literacies pedagogies, as well as how the teachers' circumstances and context influences their practices. The nature of the study is fairly broad, meaning that

there are several related areas that I or other scholars might hone in on in the future. In this section, I will share a few of my own thoughts regarding future directions related to this research.

More Nuanced, Specific Research of Aspects of New Literacies Paradigm.

This study was deep in the sense that I interviewed each of my participants three times for about an hour each. I was able to get to know these teachers because of the iterative design. However, the research is also broad because I was gaining a sense of the extent to which these teachers engage their students in New Literacies pedagogies overall. Each of the aspects of New Literacies that I introduce in this project merits additional, more focused research. Much of it already does have a significant body of scholarship surrounding it — some topics more than others.

One example of a specific area in this research that deserves additional attention is the topic of critical literacy and the critical content knowledge of teachers. In my conversations with teachers, I asked about the ways in which they foster critical literacy skills in their students. As detailed in chapter four, most of the teachers talked about source evaluation in research projects. Teachers did not discuss the ways in which they engage their students in critical analysis of a source beyond initial source evaluation (e.g. scrutinizing where it is published or the reputation of the individual who wrote it). In fairness, looking back over the transcripts, I did not ask teachers to elaborate on the tools and resources they use to foster critical literacy skills within a text (as opposed to when searching for texts). For example, I might have asked teachers for specific tools they provide students to question the information in a text, as opposed to asking them to

passively consume the text (Leu et al., 2013) or the ways in which they encourage students to explore the impetus of the institution who is responsible for producing that particular text and how it relates to the narrative of that text (Luke, 2012, 2019). I also did not ask teachers directly about their perspectives on the complexities of truth or about their views on the topic of power and how it relates to language. Future research can explore the specific tools and strategies teachers use to foster critical literacies in their students, as well as the effectiveness of these tools and strategies. This might segue into the production of new tools and strategies for teachers, as well as the distribution of effective tools and strategies via teacher education programs and professional development.

Teachers' Intent. It is unclear from my data whether teachers engage students in New Literacies as a way to enact the paradigm, or if they are motivated by other reasons. For example, in some cases, it seems more like the teachers engage their students in choice reading or choice book clubs because they are exasperated by the lack of engagement from their students when it comes to reading, and this is a last-ditch effort at ensuring students engage in reading full-length texts. In these cases, the teachers seem almost reluctant to allow students to choose their texts, but begrudgingly do so for the sake of ensuring that they can assign more traditional work to go along with the students' choice reading. Although providing students with choices in their reading is technically aligned with New Literacy pedagogies, it has, in this case, become an unspoken negotiation rather than an intentional choice that the teacher believes is best practice working toward New Literacies outcomes. This research did cover some aspects of

teachers' motivations, but additional research is necessary to more closely explore why teachers make the pedagogical choices they do.

Teaching Contexts and New Literacies Pedagogies. In this research, I investigated patterns in the narratives of seven English language arts teachers who graduated from a teacher education program that focuses explicitly on New Literacies pedagogies; each of these teachers works with a unique population of students. I tried to interview teachers who work in a variety of contexts, and, to an extent, I did ask them about how their contexts affected their teaching in the interviews. However, it would be beneficial to more robustly explore the effect of context on New Literacies pedagogy and interview a larger pool of teachers who work in a wider variety of schools. For example, Ella is the only participant in this study who does not work in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. She does believe that students' out-of-school knowledge and experience is important, but does not think it imperative that this is brought into the classroom; rather, she believes it is her job to expose students to new knowledge and experiences. Ella teaches in a rural county in Illinois and feels her students have had somewhat limited experiences that have cultivated a narrow view of the world for them. I would be curious if her perspective on the value of students' knowledge and experience in school is rooted in this perception of her population. I am also curious what narratives I would hear from those who teach in urban settings, as none of the teachers in this research teach in a truly urban context. Future research could expand on this study by talking to teachers in much more diverse contexts and explicitly focusing on how contexts affect the integration of the New Literacies paradigm. Additionally, future research might include teachers who

teach in diverse disciplines to consider how New Literacies is incorporated in various subject areas (Pytash et al., 2017).

Digital Tools and Technologies Evaluation. As I mentioned when talking about digital technologies, the teachers in this study were overwhelmed by the number of digital tools provided for them with little to no support in how to use them in the classroom. They also expressed frustration due to how many of the tools they feel are gimmicky and relatively useless when it comes to classroom instruction. I have not found any literature that systematically studies how schools or districts select the digital tools/learning management systems they purchase for teachers and students. Additionally, teachers must have a way to manage the proliferation of digital technologies and tools in school. Future studies might explore how current teachers filter through digital tools and select those that are most appropriate. Furthermore, scholars might investigate the best ways to enable teachers with this skill in both teacher education programs and professional development environments.

Boundaries and Limitations

All research is bounded by the nature and scope of the study. In this section, I share some of the ways in which the design of this research played a role in shaping the findings and conclusions.

Interviews

Atkinson and Coffey (2003) maintain that we cannot rely on interviews for information about what people do, only what they say they do (or their own interpretations of their actions). In this study, I investigated teachers' perceptions of their

own pedagogical practices and what enables/constrains those practices. The focus of this work is to better understand the extent to which teachers take the New Literacies practices they are exposed to in their teacher education program into their careers. My reliance on interviews is predicated on the assumption that what people say is not nearly as unreliable a category as it has been made to seem in qualitative research (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003). I did not analyze how observable the teachers' behavior was; nor did I research the effects that their teaching has on their students or individuals they interact with. The teachers' answers demonstrate their intentionalities, but do not demonstrate the outcomes from their practices.

I have worked to illuminate the perspectives and practices of teachers whose opinions and methods have not always necessarily been incorporated into conversations surrounding educational policy or major educational decisions. Briggs (2003) argued that the interview as a method of knowledge production is illusory given the power dynamics between researcher and participant; he maintains the position that interviews are tools for promoting social inequality, under the guise of giving voice to underrepresented and silenced populations. I disagree with this view; although interviews can reproduce hegemony when not conducted thoughtfully and carefully, they are also opportunities for researchers to hear the voices of those who work in the field every day. In this work, I have positioned teachers as experts in the field for how New Literacies pedagogies look in current contexts. That New Literacies paradigms are not necessarily incorporated across the field of education means that we have work to do to expand this paradigm. Providing practitioners with a larger platform contributes to the body of knowledge on

New Literacies pedagogies, and serves as a preliminary stepping stone in the process of promoting equitable and relevant literacy pedagogy to a wider range of students.

That being said, it is undeniable that interviews are not neutral and are filled with competing and fluctuating power relations between interviewee and interviewer (Dunbar et al., 2003; Enosh & Buchbinder, 2005; Kvale, 2006). For one, I, as a researcher, provided the initial questions, which were shaped by my own research interests and agenda. That same agenda affected how I recontextualized answers to the questions (Briggs, 2003). Additionally, while I maintain power through my position as a researcher and the interviewer in this process, the participants (or interviewees) also held a degree of power that shaped the construction of the findings; for example, they were able to manipulate and shape their answers according to how they want to be perceived (Enosh & Buchbinder, 2005).

I chose to share the semi-structured interview questions I created with the participants in advance because I wanted teachers to gain a sense of the topics I was considering for the conversation. I also wanted the teachers to have a chance to consider the questions and reflect on their experiences in the hopes that this would produce more thoughtful and complete responses. However, teachers may have answered my questions in a way that they thought they should respond (Kvale, 2006). Although I did share the questions in advance, there was no requirement to look at the questions or spend time brainstorming answers. Though some of the teachers seemed to prepare for the interviews in advance, many of them did not. This means that our discussions were subject to whatever examples and scenarios the teachers could recall at that particular time. I did

ask teachers at the beginning of interviews two and three if anything had come up since the last time we talked that they felt was relevant and wanted to share. Only twice did a teacher have something to share in response to this question though.

I may have gotten different answers from teachers if I had been even more forthcoming with the purposes and impetus of my research. Although I did give each teacher a brief summary of what this study is about, only one teacher — Cara — asked me what exactly I mean by literacy and literacy instruction. Perhaps if I had shared with the teachers a bit more about my own perceptions of literacy and what is important in literacy instruction, I would have heard different stories. However, I felt that ultimately, this was more damaging to the process than it was helpful. Since she explicitly asked, I did share with Cara a bit more about my research and views of literacy. Cara also ended up being one of the teachers who seemed to lean furthest toward a New Literacies approach to literacy pedagogy. It is unclear if our initial conversation about literacy influenced the way she answered my questions.

As my research is solely based on interviews, the data are bounded by the degree to which the participants were able to elaborate on their answers. Some of the participants were much more descriptive than others, and some individuals were more passionate about certain topics of conversation. For example, Demi had a lot to say about technology in the classroom. Brie was, perhaps, the most reserved of the group, often providing one-word or single-sentence answers to my questions elaborating minimally when prompted. This is also her second year of teaching; she began her career teaching virtually in the fall of 2020. Her somewhat limited responses may be due simply to a lack of experience.

During the process of analyzing the data, there were several occasions in which I was reading the transcripts of the interviews and wished I had asked a follow-up question. For example, when I asked teachers about critical literacies, most of them responded with a discussion of how they talk about source evaluation during research projects. I could have asked them more directly about the extent to which they teach about the relationship between power and language, as I do not think I asked the teachers exactly what I wanted to know in this instance. As a result, I did not gain enough insight into the extent to which teachers facilitate critical literacies in their classroom.

The questions I created for the final interview with my participants were centered around the teachers' philosophies about literacy and literacy pedagogy. I asked the teachers to complete a short activity at the beginning of the interview (see Appendix D) to jumpstart their thinking for our conversation. I wanted to explicitly address some of the aspects of New Literacies pedagogies in our discussion, so I asked questions that might be deemed leading in the sense that teachers likely knew that one answer was more desirable or appropriate than another. For example, I asked teachers the extent to which they feel that "Students' knowledge and experiences at home and outside of school are vital and it is pivotal to bring them into the classroom on a regular basis." I think that most teachers believe that they should answer that this is very true, and they might have answered in the way that they think I believe they should answer rather than the way they truly feel.

Artifacts

Originally, I encouraged participants to share documents and artifacts with me during their interviews, including assignments, activities, and other material that they have used in their classrooms (Brogden, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). They were asked to bring any of the artifacts they wanted to share (based on the interview protocol I sent them in advance, any of our previous interviews, or any artifacts they thought might be relevant) to the interviews and talk about their perspectives on those artifacts. I planned to ask the participants to share copies of the artifacts with me via email. Collecting artifacts in this way aligned with the methodological approach to this study as it still centers the perspectives of teachers; teachers had free reign over what was deemed important. I did not plan for the artifacts to act as a method of triangulation — I had planned to analyze the artifacts through what the teachers said about them in the interview process, which means that they really did not function as a separate and distinct data source — so much as a way to elicit conversations about the teachers' beliefs and stories of teaching. Artifacts would have provided me with additional information about the teachers' epistemologies and perspectives that was not necessarily addressed by the interview questions, thus expanding the notions of what counts as data and how that data might contribute to additional insight in the research (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019). Unfortunately, none of the teachers brought artifacts to the interviews. A few teachers offered to send me artifacts that came up in the discussion. Ultimately, I chose to eliminate the artifacts from my data collection. This is both a limitation of my study and an opportunity for expanding this research in the future.

Access/Participants

One of the major concerns in the development of my study was how to access participants in an ethical and meaningful way. Freeman (2000) contended that the ways we access participants demonstrates the lenses and biases through which we approach the research (see also Reybold et al., 2012). The ways in which I accessed my participants shaped the responses I received, and thus influenced the meanings that I derived from the data. In essence, this work contributes to the construction of knowledge of the New Literacies Framework (particularly in ELA and in teacher education), so participant selection (among other aspects of the methodology) was of utmost importance (Freeman, 2000; Reybold et al, 2012). The tangible and intangible realities in which I have conducted this study have certainly had an effect on the outcomes (Reybold et al.. 2012).

The first, and potentially most obvious, limitation to my participant selection is that I reached out to former classmates, students, and individuals who participated in the secondary ELA teacher preparation program at George Mason University. Although I have many personal and professional connections that allowed me to advertise this project to many graduates of George Mason University's English Language Arts teacher education program, I did not have access to a comprehensive contact list for all graduates, so the possible participants were limited to the contacts I was able to connect with. The reality is that I had closer access to some individuals in the population than others. For example, I have more familiarity with individuals who have graduated from the program in the last eight years, since that is how long I have been a member of this community. Thus, the participants are not fully representative of everyone who has graduated from the program.

Teachers participated in this study on a voluntary basis; those who were not willing to participate are not included in the data, though their input could have shaped the outcomes. There is a distinct possibility that certain individuals who could positively contribute to this work did not participate in my study for a variety of reasons. For one, as discussed in previous sections, this research may be viewed as progressive or even antagonistic by those who resist casting a critical eye toward current educational systems. Some teachers may have been reluctant to share their stories for fear of reprimands (Adler & Adler, 2003). Others potentially resisted as a result of their views of the educational institution; it is possible that they do not believe educational research has served them in the past, and therefore chose to avoid spending their time becoming involved in it (Dunbar et al., 2003). These concerns address some of the limitations related to the scope of the participants who engaged in this study.

Suggestions for GMU's ELA Teacher Education Program

The results of this study indicate new directions specific to the George Mason University's secondary English language arts teacher education program (though they may be relevant for a variety of teacher education programs). First, the program includes many different projects that engage students in work related to New Literacies pedagogies, and my close affiliation with the program has allowed me to observe that many of the teacher educators bring a New Literacies orientation to their teaching. However, the New Literacies lens is not always clear to future teachers, particularly those who have no knowledge of critical approaches to education. Program leaders and teacher educators should be more intentional about providing a succinct theoretical basis for the

curriculum that grounds the future teachers in an understanding of the impetus for the work they engage in during their time in the program.

Second, across the board, the teachers in this study struggle to create contexts where their students have opportunities to authentically collaborate — both with and without digital technologies. The GMU program should consider focusing on how teachers might facilitate collaboration in meaningful and relevant ways within the bounds of current educational structures (which includes what assessment during collaborative projects might look like). Teachers also complained that students do not know how to collaborate, but also provided few examples of ways in which they (the teachers) play a role in the facilitation of collaborative activities; thus the program also might consider focusing on the need to directly discuss, model, and scaffold examples of what collaboration might look in a given project, including collaboration in digital spaces.

A third and final suggestion for the GMU program is to place a greater emphasis on the incorporation of digital tools and technologies in all classes. The teachers in this study indicated that they disproportionately incorporate digital technology in their classes, with students who are in higher-tracked classes receiving considerably more access to and a higher quality of instruction with digital tools. Literacies involving digital tools and technologies are pervasive in out-of-school contexts, many of which are of interest and relevance to adolescents who historically struggle in school (Moje et al., 2008; Zielezinski & Darling-Hammond, 2016, 2018). Additionally, digital technologies are central to students' futures, and overcoming a second-level digital divide means

providing meaningful instructions in literacies involving digital technologies to all students (Zielezinski & Darling-Hammond, 2016, 2018).

Final Thoughts

The results of this study indicate that teachers who are exposed to the New Literacies framework during their preparation programs are bringing aspects of that orientation with them into their practice. Their stories demonstrate some of the ways in which New Literacies can be molded to fit into the current structure of schools. Teachers and teacher educators have an opportunity to build upon this knowledge and experiment with additional ways to incorporate the paradigm into public teaching in the United States.

Additionally, this research emphasizes the importance of treating teachers as intellectuals, capable of planning, facilitating, and adapting curriculum according to the needs of the students in front of them, rather than technicians responsible for carrying out the mandates of “experts” who are unfamiliar with the realities of the classroom (Giroux, 1988). However, this research also demonstrates that teachers need various forms of support, both from the schools they work in and universities, in order to operate effectively. Supporting teachers means, at a minimum, providing them with quality teacher education and professional development (including clinical experiences during their preparation programs), providing access to resources, and ensuring adequate numbers of support staff (such as reading specialists and literacy coaches). The research highlights the ways in which a lack of autonomy and a lack of support may contribute to an absence of New Literacies pedagogies in schools, even when the teachers have been

exposed to the New Literacies Framework. Thankfully, creating autonomous and supportive contexts for teaching is truly a possibility, particularly if individuals from political, university, and K-12 entities more fully commit to collaboration for the purposes of creating equitable and relevant education for all students.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the results of this study demonstrate that literacy instruction varies between lower- and higher-tracked classrooms, with those in higher-tracked classrooms receiving a better quality of instruction than those in lower tracks. Students in lower-tracked classrooms, which are disproportionately filled with minority students (e.g., students of color, special education students, English learners, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds), both need and deserve the same level of high-quality instruction as their higher-tracked counterparts (Domina et al., 2017; Donaldson et al., 2016; Frankel et al., 2018; Giersch, 2018; Hodge, 2019; Smagorinsky et al., 2020). Addressing the issue of lower-tracked classrooms receiving a lower quality of literacy instruction is the responsibility and concern of every stakeholder in education — particularly policymakers, administrators, teachers, and teacher educators. I am ending this work with a call to action to all individuals involved in education; we must maintain a commitment to turning words about equity in literacy education into a reality, including a focus on the issue of how to ensure meaningful, relevant, quality instruction for all students.

Appendix A

George Mason University Secondary English Language Arts Program **Examples of New Literacies Assignments**

Digital Portfolio

Rationale: Understanding your conception of and relationship to teaching is a vital part of your development as a teacher. Articulating these components in your teaching philosophy is often an important step in the employment process, whether it is communicated via your resume, a cover letter, or in a teaching interview. The Digital Portfolio serves as both the culminating assignment for this course and a space for you to begin to formulate your teaching philosophy, a living document that can grow with you through the program and eventually be shared with a future employer.

Description: Students will create their Digital Portfolio in any free online web space (e.g., Google Sites, Wix, Weebly, Squarespace, Adobe Portfolio, etc.). In its final form, it should include the following components, some of which will be part of other course assignments:

- I. Resume II.
- II. Philosophy of Teaching (1-2 pages)
- III. Sample lesson plan (your CLT Lesson Plan project)
- IV. Clinical Experience: Foundations of School Project
- V. Final reflection (2-3 paragraphs)

Component I: Resume

A resume that details education, skills, awards/certificates, and any relevant job or volunteer experiences.

Component II: Philosophy of Teaching Document

In 1-2 single-spaced pages (maximum length), describe and illustrate your philosophical approaches to teaching based on the issues addressed in class. In your paper, respond to a minimum of three of the guiding questions listed below. In addition to these guiding questions, you can add your own questions to answer. You are encouraged to seek relevant outside sources for additional information and guidance, such as articles in journals, chapters in books, essays and writing online, etc. You are encouraged to examine the standards of an effective teacher from InTASC as well as standards of learning for your specific content area in order to help guide you in the development of your teaching philosophy.

Guiding questions:

- Who are you now as a teacher?
 - What learning theories do you most strongly identify with and why?

- What is the role of the teacher with respect to motivation, instruction, assessment?
 - What is the role of the teacher in the community and in society?
- How will you communicate who you are as a teacher with your students?
 - How will we build a classroom community that honors our students' cultures and lives?
 - How do we organize our schools and classrooms to best serve our students and our profession?
- What is/are/should be the purpose(s) of school?
 - What do you anticipate your students' relationship to school will be like?
 - What is the purpose of the subject matter area you wish to teach, to you and to your future students?
 - What are the most important skills our students need to be empowered citizens, and productive members of society?
- What are the myths and assumptions about school you hope to not perpetuate?
 - What are the assumptions our teaching practices and education policies make about our students and their communities?
 - What are the assumptions our teaching practices and education policies make about school organization?
 - What roles will you and your students play in considering, contributing to, and challenging education policies?
- Who do you want to be as a teacher?
 - What is the best evidence of our students' learning?
 - What is the best evidence of your success as a teacher?
 - How will you best be sustained to remain in the teaching profession?
 - How will you continue to grow as a teacher during the first five years of your career? In the years following?

Component III: Sample Lesson Plan

A link to or file upload of the lesson plan you create with your CLT.

Component IV: Clinical Experience: Foundations of School Project

A link to or file upload of your Clinical Experience Project final presentation/report.

Component V: Final Reflection of the Course & Its Themes

In 1-2 single-spaced pages (maximum length), describe takeaways and insights you developed from the course. Your reflection should address any of/all the following essential questions:

1. What is the purpose of school in the past, present, and possibly in the future? A
 1. How do schools work? What are the routines, norms, and challenges currently facing schools and teachers? What social agreements are essential to school functionality?
2. What should the purpose of school be, for students and communities?

1. What roles do teachers play in schools, both in the past and in the present? How do these roles exist both ideally (as intended) and realistically (as enacted)?
2. What roles will YOU play as a teacher? What is your teaching mission? What sustains or impedes that mission? How does your philosophy of teaching inform your mission?

“Perspectives on Reading or Writing” Project

One of the grandest notions with which we will operate in this class—one with both curricular and pedagogical implications—is that our students are some of the best experts on teaching. One of the other realities we will challenge and one of the gaps we will try to bridge is the fact that many of us have had very different experiences with school and reading and/or writing than our students. One of the “truisms” about teaching with which we will function is that teaching is always about building relationships between us, young people, and content. Guided by these ideas/acknowledgments, you will first explore your own perspectives on reading or writing, answering these questions with images and words: 1) How did you learn to read or write and who and what influenced your relationship to reading or writing, in and out of school? (slides 2-3) 2) What do you believe are the purposes of reading or writing, in and out of school? (slides 4-5) 3) What supported your ability to read or write and your interest in reading or writing, in and out of school? (slides 6-7) 4) What impeded your ability to read or write and your interest in reading or writing, in and out of school? (slides 8-9) Then you will work with a young adult (likely of your choosing, certainly of the age you would like to one day teach, and perhaps from one of our partner schools) to help her/him answer these same questions (the same questions you answered)—again in words and pictures: 1. How did this young person learn to read or write and who and what influenced her/his relationship to reading/writing, in and out of school? (slide 10-11) 2. What does this young person believe are the purposes of reading or writing, in and out of school? (slides 12-13) 3. What supports this young person’s ability to read or write and her/his interest in reading or writing, in and out of school? (slides 14-15) 4. What impedes this young person’s ability to read or write her/his interest in reading or writing, in and out of school? (slides 16-17) In addition to illustrating your own and your student’s responses to these questions, in your final project you must describe (and illustrate) the intersections and tensions between your own, this youth’s perspective (slides 18-19), the information you encountered in our course and our readings, and the perspectives/experiences of some of the young people in your clinical experience school, then draw some conclusions about your own future teaching based on your completion of this project, particularly related to reading or writing instruction (slide 20). In the interests of exploring relevant, multi-modal forms of composition, I will ask you to create your final project using a technology tool that you might call on your future students to use to compose a project/presentation. The original form of this project was a “pecha kucha,” which is typically a video (an MP4 file or the like), consisting of 20 slides (the 19 listed above plus a title slide)—half of images and half of text and accompanied by your recordings of your own and this youth’s voice. But you can use whatever technology-based presentation tool you choose

(best to get it approved by your instructor!). Other options include Nearpod (www.nearpod.com), Emaze (www.emaze.com), and Haiku Deck (www.haikudeck.com/). Take risks, be creative, and embrace the freedom that this project provides. Check out <http://www.pechakucha.org/> to learn more about this compelling text genre. Note: The images you include in your presentation/video **MUST** be ones you and the young person with whom you worked took yourself—not images you found.

“20 Minutes of Wonder” Teaching Demonstration

Co-Teaching with Technology and “High Leverage” Practices: Completed in small groups of students — As noted above, the “20 Minutes of Wonder,” The “Readings Roundtable,” and “10 Minutes of Wonder” are all teaching opportunities through which you will practice the pedagogical skills you are learning and that you might implement with your future middle/high school students. The “20 Minutes of Wonder” teaching demonstration nudges you to consider research-based teaching strategies, incorporate new digital and multimedia genres into your practices, moving beyond the kinds of codified, text-only genres we studied in school (e.g., research papers, book summaries, 5 paragraph essays, PowerPoint presentations) or the kinds of academic-style texts that are privileged by high-stakes testing. Students will co-facilitate—with two or three peers—a maximum “20 Minutes of Wonder” teaching demonstration, addressing two readings that focus on a core issue they believe central to the teaching of English and suitable for further discussion in class:

- one reading must be from the assigned readings for the class session when you are facilitating your “20 Minutes”
- a second reading must be an article highlighting a research-based teaching strategy that you are testing out with our class (which can be related to the “high leverage” practices presented later in the syllabus), assigned to us ahead of time
Your demonstration must include:
- a presentation of at most 5 minutes reviewing the topic and the strategy you are sharing; you are invited to synthesize and/or challenge the readings and to include reflections on how your clinical work in your partner school classroom highlights or informs the core issue;
- a “before-during-after” (“BDA”) reading strategy and tool that you provide our class;
- a specific discussion facilitation strategy;
- an interactive digital platform to engage your “students”; this platform must be one that no other “20 Minutes of Wonder” group has used, and one that you believe you could use with your future middle/high school students (sample platforms are listed below); In a 15-minute model lesson related to the topic and the readings on which you are focusing, be sure you enact examples of the following “high leverage/core practices” (listed later in our syllabus) and that you believe you and your peers could implement in your future classrooms.
- Modeling

- Eliciting students' thinking
- Groupwork (including an intentional/intelligent grouping strategy you have chosen ahead of time)
- Formal assessment of student engagement and learning

Each group will provide our class with a digital copy of the research-based article they've identified and a maximum two-page handout (bring sufficient copies for all class members and your instructors) listing the readings on which you've focused and key information about the topic from the readings, describing/illustrating your BDA, detailing your discussion facilitation strategy, and summarizing your digital platform. You should also offer very brief descriptions of your "high leverage" practices. You will also reflect on your teaching highlights, questions, suggestions, considering these questions:

1. How do the strategies and digital platform you chose compare and contrast with those you've used before? How do they compare and contrast to your natural teaching instincts?
2. How was this lesson and demonstration influenced by your graduate studies and/or clinical work?
3. What would you change or modify the next time you use these strategies and digital platform? What are you unsure about and what would you like feedback on?

Sample Platforms

Online Share Shows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.slideshare.net (upload PPT or Keynote, then share in Google Hangout)
Recorded Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.authorstream.com (turn your slideshow into a video) • http://present.me and http://vcasmo.com (video-record yourself talking next to your slides) • www.slidespeak.com
Video/Multimedia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://voicethread.com • http://littlebirdtales.com • www.pixorial.com • www.wideo.com
Digital Posters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://edu.glogster.com
Interactive Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.capzles.com • www.timeglider.com
Word Clouds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.wordle.net • www.tagxedo.com
Infographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://visual.ly • www.easel.ly • http://infogr.am • www.piktochart.com • https://www.canva.com/
Sketching/Whiteboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.educareations.com (IPad) • https://cacoo.com (works in Google Hangouts) • www.scriblink.com • http://cosketch.com • www.scribblar.com • http://flockdraw.com • www.scribd.com
Screencasting and Screencapture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.techsmith.com/jing.html • www.screencast-o-matic.com • https://www.screener.in/ • http://evernote.com/skitch

Multi-Genre Project (MGP)

The objectives of and ideas behind this assignment are numerous and ambitious. Undergirding this project is the idea that the best teachers of writing know themselves as writers. In order to know oneself as a writer, one must engage in writing—and, more broadly, composition—processes. A second idea upon which this assignment is founded is that all teachers are social justice activists: formal education is as an equalizing force in any society, and teachers should both know their own notions of justice and be able to guide students toward a more complex understanding of justice. One could argue that we can only know justice through its absence: injustice. Thus, you will begin this assignment by drafting—then revising multiple times—your own “Story of Injustice.” Ultimately one of our goals for writing these stories is to consider how our teaching work can help to make the world a more just place. This project is also grounded in the notion of “multi-literacy.” That is, we are all literate in many “text” forms, well beyond traditional types of text such as books. Given the fact that our students are fluent in these multiple forms of text, we should be willing—and, more importantly, able—to teach through and to a variety of text genres. This project will help you purposefully choose and explore genres beyond those traditionally used in the classroom, and help you notice how the

composition process changes across genres. To help us be ready to teach about justice, know ourselves as advocates and activists, and consider multiple forms of text in our future roles as teachers, we will create our own justice-focused multi-genre project, using a variety of composition and revision structures. While your project will begin with your “Story of Injustice,” you will eventually also compose at least two more types of text (a research essay and a poem) that illustrate the justice topic depicted in your story. In summary, this project is an exploration of a justice-related topic related to English instruction you want to learn about during this course and share with your future students. Modeled after the multi-genre research paper designed by Tom Romano, the paper consists of at least TWELVE different genres of writing/composition—at least three of which you will compose yourself and some of which will be required (indicated by a plus/+ below) and at least two of which must be used in your “Mini-Unit Plan”:

- “Story of injustice” you have authored+
- “Classic” and contemporary novels, young adult literature, short stories, or poems+
- Research essay you have authored+
- Visual element+
- Poem you have authored+
- Social media+
- Website(s)+
- Research/news report+
- Repetend+
- Picture book
- Research papers/articles
- Essays
- Textbooks
- Picture book
- Journal articles
- Powerpoint, Prezi, or similar presentations
- News reports
- Autobiography
- Personal vignette
- Plays or dramatic presentations Letters
- Narratives
- Photo essays
- Interviews
- Infographic
- Tactile/physical art (fabric- or thread-based, beading, mosaic, etc.)

Finally, we will begin our exploration of the notions of “justice” and “injustice” through our reading of *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*. The description and rubric for this project will be provided separately.

Reading Groups

Students will engage with peers in focused study around young adult books from the categories listed above. There are three main elements of these groups' interactions:

1. Prior to beginning class on June 1st students will:
 1. review the lists and select your top three book choices from each category and submit to your instructor. Based on these selections I will assign you to small groups-four across the five weeks of our class.
 2. Each week you will meet with a new group to read the selected title from a particular category (i.e., your group might choose realistic fiction and all members might read *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen).
2. Each week your group will be given time during class to meet and design a plan for:
 1. reading and discussing the text via a technology-based or "virtual engagement" means
 2. presenting the text to your peers via a product that showcases the book you read and the possibilities for its use in the classroom.
3. Each week your group will also present your discussion method and your product (in a format described in the separate Reading Group project handout), modeling and highlighting the alternatives to literature circle discussions through which you engaged. This product must include a reference to a research-based article related to your group's discussion method or use of your book with students.

Purposes of Reading Project (POR)

This assignment will ask you to think about, explore, and document your own and one student's relationships to and experiences with reading. You will have to identify and connect with a young person of approximately the same age and demographics as the students you are teaching or you hope to teach. Your primary selection criteria is the relevance of your "informant": is this individual someone who you think could give you insight into why we read and how you might better teach young people to engage with reading? You will answer seven questions-each with reflections/writings and texts:

1. How did you and this young adult learn to read and who and what influenced your relationship to reading, in and out of school?
2. What do you and this young adult believe are the purposes of reading, in and out of school?
3. What supports your own and this young adult's ability to read and your own and this young person's interest in reading, in and out of school?
4. What impedes your own and this young person's ability to read and your own and this young adult's interest in reading, in and out of school?
5. What are the similarities and differences between this young person's experiences with reading and your own experiences?
6. What are some conclusions about this young person's experiences with reading that have given you insight into your own development as a reader and your approach to teaching reading?
7. How do these similarities, differences, and conclusions compare with specific research-based insights from materials we've read in our class?

The final project must take an illustrated form that you consider relevant to your teaching; please be sure to include written text addressing the project questions to support the visual form. Take risks, be creative, and embrace the freedom that this project provides.

The Way Forward Book Talk Project and Lesson Plan

Perhaps our world has always needed young people to consider its challenges and identify solutions; in mid-2020, it certainly needs youth to do so now. And maybe literature and art have always offered such reflections and given us potential answers; young adult literature definitely does that now. And maybe teachers have always played a role in giving youths the tools to name these questions and determine these answers-using books to guide them. In an effort to scaffold your work and learning in our course, we have identified deadlines and assessment details (including points) for each element of this project.

For our second day in class, please respond to the following queries:

- What is the history, the present and the future of our world?
- What books give us the best and most accurate view of our past?
- What books give us the most accurate and hopeful view of our present and future?
- Who do young people want to be?
- Who do you want to be-as a person and as a teacher?
- What books offer guiding principles for how young people and you will live your lives and learn and teach?
- What is the type of community you hope to create in your classroom-and what book best illustrates this dynamic?
- Finally, what should be the evidence of your students' learning and their and your consideration of these questions and identification of these answers?

Based on your responses to these questions, your instructor(s) will form pairs of students to work together. Informed by your responses to these questions you and your partner will identify a "big idea": one of the richest and most effective ways to teach-anything, but especially literature-is by identifying a concept (a big idea, a theme) that matters to students and the world and that raises a question that human beings and our societies have been trying to answer for a long time.

Based on this concept, you and your partner will choose two books:

1. A contemporary book: This book must be one that answers at least one-ideally all-of the questions above. This book cannot be one that we have considered as a class or in our small groups or pairs, and it must be one that you would be willing to share with your future/current students. It does need to be a recent(ish) young adult book, but it cannot be a book that is primarily a religious text (e.g., the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, etc.).

2. A canonical book: This book must also be one that answers at least one-ideally all-of the questions above. This book cannot be one that we have considered as a class or in our small groups or pairs, and it must be one that you would be willing to share with your future/current students. It also needs to be a young adult book, but should be canonical or "classic" in nature. It cannot be a book that is primarily a religious text (e.g., the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, etc.).

Note: Too many young adult books-including some of the best and most important ones to which you might introduce your students-are notoriously susceptible to banning, censorship, and challenging by a range of individuals and organizations. Many of these texts have had the greatest impact on who we are as individuals and the nature of our society. At least one of the books you choose for this project must have been banned, censored, or challenged in some context-a school, a community, a library, a state or nation.

With these two books, you will complete two elements of this assignment, submitting the concept, books, question, and draft lesson plans on Google Classroom under Major Assignments.:

- A Book Talk: You must create an authentic product-one that matters beyond you, outside of your classroom-to represent how these books address the concept you've identified, answer at least one of the questions above, and how they "talk" to each other about this concept and this answer. The product of this assignment is intended to be creative in nature, and can take any form. We will discuss possibilities and examples in class. We will check-in regularly as we choose books and craft our projects, and we will share these on our last Monday class session. Take risks, be creative, and embrace the freedom that this project provides.
- Lesson Planning: Finally, each pair of students will use the "backwards design" process to develop one lesson plan-a basis for a unit that actively involves young adults in considering your chosen concept, answers at least one of those questions, and requires reading these two examples of literature and engaging in meaningful learning. These lesson plans will also be shared via Google Drive. These lesson plans must carefully individualize learning to accommodate the diverse strengths and needs of students and provide youths with opportunities to engage in authentic assessment activities. While you will plan just one lesson, your project must include a narrative overview of a unit in which this lesson might be included, the unit's overall goals and objectives (including a minimum of three NCTE standards and three Virginia Standards of Learning), the basic timeframe over which the complete unit might be taught, general pedagogical procedures, a description of the intended learners, planned assessment techniques, and a unit calendar. The lesson plan should make clear connections between stated objectives and planned assessments.

Appendix B

George Mason University Secondary English Language Arts Teacher Education Program Graduates' Current Literacy Pedagogies

IRBNet #1842607-1

Recruitment Letter

Hello, English teachers!

My name is Madelyn Stephens. I am an English teacher myself, and I am also working toward my Ph.D. in Education. Specifically, I focus on literacy and teaching/teacher education. I am currently working on a research study for my dissertation in which I am interviewing secondary English language arts teachers who have graduated from GMU's teacher education program. I am exploring the ways in which you all teach literacy as well as the ways you incorporate technology into your literacy pedagogies. I also would like to talk about ways in which you feel encouraged and/or restricted when you are engaging students in literacy instruction.

Your role in this study would be to participate in three separate interviews (online via Zoom), each of which would take approximately one hour, over the course of 1-2 months. I will provide you with a set of questions I have in mind for each interview in advance. However, the format of the interviews is conversational, and you are more than welcome to bring topics that you think are relevant to the discussion. I will also encourage you to bring any relevant artifacts (e.g. assignments, lesson plans, projects, templates, texts, etc.) to our conversation. I will record the interviews for the purposes of research. However, your participation in the study would be completely anonymous, and the recordings will be deleted shortly after the completion of the study. If you choose to participate, formal consent will be required. I will provide you with an informed consent form for you to read and acknowledge.

I truly appreciate your time, and I hope you will consider participating in this critical work. I would be happy to share additional details if you have questions or would just like to know more. Please email me at msteph15@gmu.edu if you are interested or would like more information!

Thanks so much,

Madelyn Stephens
George Mason University
msteph15@gmu.edu

Kristien Zenkov, PhD
Professor of Education

George Mason University
kzenkov@gmu.edu
703.993.5413

Appendix C

George Mason University Secondary English Language Arts Teacher Education Program Graduates' Current Literacy Pedagogies **INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT**

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

In this study, the investigators aim to illuminate the literacy pedagogies (including those involving digital technologies) of secondary English language arts teachers who graduated from George Mason University's teacher education program, which focuses heavily on New Literacies pedagogies, as well as how the teachers' circumstances and context influences their practices. The investigators will explore the literacy pedagogies of participants through a series of three interviews, each of which will last approximately one hour (so each participant will be interviewed for three hours in total).

RISKS

There may be a level of discomfort if a participant shares negative feelings about his/her place of work.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as an individual participant other than to provide you with an opportunity to reflect on your literacy pedagogy and how your teaching coincides with or deviates from what you learned in your teacher preparation program. The results of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the paradigm of New Literacies Studies from the standpoint of practicing teachers (you) who enter public schools every day. My hope is that this research will contribute to the facilitation of New Literacies more broadly, including discussion and activities for current and future teachers, with the goal of working toward a shift in perspective as to what counts and what is important in literacy instruction.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All data will be maintained on a password protected Dropbox folder for five years, after which it will be deleted or destroyed. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission. A pseudonym will be assigned to each participant by the principal investigator before printing or analyzing any results. Likewise, pseudonyms will also be assigned to all existing data as well. The principal investigator and a doctoral student working with the principal investigator will be the only individuals with access to the key linking pseudonyms and identities. Participants' words and ideas may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, with identifying information removed. Interviews will be conducted on the online video platform Zoom. The interviews will be recorded and saved for 90 days. Only the principal investigator and the doctoral student will have

access to the interview recordings. Transcripts of these interviews will be maintained on a password protected Dropbox folder and deleted after five years. The de-identified data could be used for future research without additional consent from participants.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee that monitors research on human subjects may inspect study records during internal auditing procedures and are required to keep all information confidential.

Those who participate via Zoom may review Zoom's website for information about their privacy statement. https://secure-web.cisco.com/1ljElgUdxlZtfK2XxWGUKxsI8vJRF30aeq2HjNp1CJ_nW7RjsshbBfdVWaYYzY_6NOq468HF9myPW4Z-jKBNK-i9OF5UFZlkJ3_kX9Mi4j7NqgxKf9357jQ6ePB8ZejuuJJPV2wp4Gj80itU4bgh0soaWsjHu-y5L5g4kksp_NZkHPjV_uK9P3_qxOrk2gJkFUD7zBVH_pCsr1x4cuXj7FZ01Azj1Fxf4nJTgBAX0JXnvcr5pvy3x8kRMGmnzXTH_0Oz0pICdFv-utOHXK6wsNYdV9hdZA1vRjQ-Nu4Rr_stAa-qwcGKtBinbFeV-e6XtJpCA1d8cuqO16vl_9QAjYav1A61JxqCyJYNC1YhxldlMhtG9guY7YbYhXmJ38-ZaJpcHmiGGxBrHOVfihFiAKDtP50-xzhQO5f9gq6vi7lFX-1kHD0_-GCWXyiSnsP3/https%3A%2F%2Fzoom.us%2Fprivacy%2F

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. Only individuals who have graduated from George Mason University's secondary English language arts teacher education program and currently teach in the United States can participate in this study. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you for your participation in this study.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Kristien Zenkov and Madelyn Stephens from CEHD at George Mason University. The researchers may be reached at 703-993-5413 or msteph15@gmu.edu for questions or to report a research-related problem. You may contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office at 703-993-4121 or IRB@gmu.edu if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

Consent will be indicated using this Google form:

<https://forms.gle/XFFgyPJwboFZdKwr5>. You will be asked to acknowledge that you have read this form, all of your questions have been answered by the research staff, you

agree to participate in this study, and you agree to being recorded via Zoom during your interviews.

Appendix D

Interview #1 Protocol — For Participant

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your literacy pedagogies. As you read in the informed consent statement, you can stop the interview at any time. I will not keep you for more than one hour's time. Do I have your permission to record this interview? [Wait for response.]

Lead-off question: Can you tell me about a recent lesson you taught that you felt was particularly meaningful, impactful, and/or successful?

Possible follow-up questions

1. Can you walk me through that lesson?
2. What was particularly meaningful, impactful, and/or successful about this lesson?
3. Can you describe an assignment or project you assign that you believe is particularly meaningful/impactful/important?
4. Can you walk me through a typical day in your classroom?
 1. How do you have students interact with one another on a typical day?
 2. How do you interact with students on a typical day?
 3. Would you say that a typical day in your classroom has changed or evolved over the course of your teaching career? If yes, please elaborate.
5. Can you tell me about a text that you include in your teaching that you think is meaningful, impactful, and/or successful? (This could be a major work that spans over the course of several weeks, but may also be a shorter work that you may only focus on for a single class period.)
 1. What other texts do you believe to be meaningful, impactful, and/or successful?
 2. Can you tell me about a text that you have incorporated that you do not feel was meaningful, impactful, and/or successful?
 3. Do you incorporate any “nontraditional” texts in your curriculum?
6. Can you describe one of your formative assessments that you believe to be meaningful, impactful, and/or successful?
 1. What is the purpose of the assessment?
 2. What do the students do for the assessment?
 3. How do you lead up to or scaffold the assessment?
 4. How do you evaluate the assessment?
7. Can you describe one of your summative assessments that you believe to be meaningful, impactful, and/or successful??
 1. What is the purpose of the assessment?
 2. What do the students do for the assessment?
 3. How do you lead up to or scaffold the assessment?

4. How do you evaluate the assessment?
8. Can you tell me about a time where you were intentional about bringing students' interests or skills outside of school into the classroom? Walk me through that.
9. Let's say you have unlimited money and time. Let's also say that you have no benchmarks, such as standardized testing or required final exams for graduation. What would a typical day of work look like, in this setting? How would school change for you?

Lead-off question: Can you tell me about a recent meaningful, impactful, and/or successful lesson in which you incorporated digital technology (or multiple types of digital technologies)?

Possible follow-up questions

1. Can you walk me through that lesson?
 1. What were the intended outcomes of the lesson?
 2. What was the role of the technology in the lesson?
 3. How did students interact during this lesson?
 4. How did you interact with students during this lesson?
 5. How did you evaluate the students during this lesson?
2. What are some other ways you have used digital technologies in the classroom?
 1. Can you tell me about a time where you incorporated digital technology, and you felt that the lesson was not meaningful, impactful, and/or successful?
3. What digital technologies are available to you in your current role? Are there any digital technologies you wish you had access to for your classroom?
4. In what ways do digital technologies enhance your teaching, if at all?
 1. In what ways do digital technologies constrain your teaching, if at all?
5. Let's say you have unlimited money and time. Let's also say that you have no benchmarks, such as standardized testing or required final exams for graduation. In what ways might you use digital technologies differently than you currently do (if at all)?

Interview #2 Protocol — For Participant

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your literacy pedagogies. As you read in the informed consent statement, you can stop the interview at any time. I will not keep you for more than one hour's time. Do I have your permission to record this interview? [Wait for response.]

***Lead-off question:* Between now and the last time we talked, did you have any new insights/thoughts/ideas/examples that you wanted to share that relate to our previous conversation?**

***For those who did not get to this category in interview #1:

***Lead-off question:* Can you tell me about a recent meaningful, impactful, and/or successful lesson in which you incorporated digital technology (or multiple types of digital technologies)?**

Possible follow-up questions

1. Can you walk me through that lesson?
 1. What were the intended outcomes of the lesson?
 2. What was the role of the technology in the lesson?
 3. How did students interact during this lesson?
 4. How did you interact with students during this lesson?
 5. How did you evaluate the students during this lesson?
2. What are some other ways you have used digital technologies in the classroom?
 1. Can you tell me about a time where you incorporated digital technology, and you felt that the lesson was not meaningful, impactful, and/or successful?
3. What digital technologies are available to you in your current role? Are there any digital technologies you wish you had access to for your classroom?
4. In what ways do digital technologies enhance your teaching, if at all?
 1. In what ways do digital technologies constrain your teaching, if at all?
5. Let's say you have unlimited money and time. Let's also say that you have no benchmarks, such as standardized testing or required final exams for graduation. In what ways might you use digital technologies differently than you currently do (if at all)?

***Lead-off question:* Can you tell me about a lesson, project, or assignment that you felt was successful that you taught during the virtual or hybrid learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (or under the most restrictive circumstances you experienced at your school)?**

Possible follow-up questions

1. Can you walk me through that lesson/project/assignment?
 1. What were the intended outcomes of the lesson/project/assignment?
 2. How did students interact (if at all) during this lesson/project/assignment?
 3. How did you interact with students during this lesson/project/assignment?
 4. How did you evaluate the lesson/project/assignment?
2. What aspects of your teaching remained the same during the pandemic? What aspects changed?
 1. How did you facilitate literacy instruction specifically?

2. What was your relationship with students like?
3. How did you use digital technologies during the pandemic?
4. How did you assess students during the pandemic?
5. How did you provide feedback to students during the pandemic?
3. What challenged your ability to be a good teacher during the pandemic?
4. If you would have been able to change anything about teaching during the pandemic, what would you have changed and why (*other than the restrictions related to public health — distance learning, masks, etc — that your school/county deemed necessary*)?

Lead-off question: Can you tell me about a time where you attempted to incorporate a lesson, strategy, activity, etc. from your teacher education program or that was inspired by what you learned from your teacher education program into the classroom?

Possible follow-up questions

1. Walk me through this lesson/strategy/activity.
 1. What did the students do?
 2. What was your role? How did you interact with the students?
 3. What was the outcome or product?
 4. How well did the lesson/strategy/activity go?
2. What is one thing you learned in your teacher education program that you feel has been extremely valuable in your teaching career so far?
 1. In what other way(s) do you feel like your teacher education program did a good job of preparing you for your career in teaching?
 2. Which classes in the program were most helpful to your teaching so far and why?
3. What is one thing you learned in your teacher education program that you feel has not been helpful/relevant/useful in your teaching career so far?
 1. In what way(s) do you feel like your teacher education program did not do a good job of preparing you for your career in teaching?
 2. Which classes in the program were least helpful to your teaching career so far and why?
4. What do you think we should add to the GMU ELA teacher education program to better prepare good English teachers?

Interview #3 Protocol — For Participant

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your literacy pedagogies. As you read in the informed consent statement, you can stop the interview at any time. I will not keep

you for more than one hour's time. Do I have your permission to record this interview?
[Wait for response.]

Lead-off question: Between now and the last time we talked, did you have any new insights/thoughts/ideas/examples that you wanted to share that relate to our previous conversation?

1. Do you feel that you would benefit from additional time to explore digital tools and resources?
2. How much time have you spent with digital tools during professional development sessions?
3. Do you feel that you would benefit from professional development related to digital technology?

Lead-off question: What does it mean to be a “good” literacy teacher?

Possible follow-up questions:

1. In what ways have your initial beliefs about good literacy teaching remained the same since you began your career? In what ways have your initial beliefs changed?
2. What are some of the major ways that you are supported in your venture to be a good literacy teacher?
3. What are some of the major ways that you are constrained in your venture to be a good literacy teacher?
4. To what extent have colleagues and mentors influenced your development as a literacy teacher?
5. Would you say that the school/district that you work in (and past schools/districts you have worked in) has supported you to teach in ways that reflect your beliefs about good literacy teaching? Please elaborate.
 1. Do you think your beliefs about what is important in teaching literacy coincide with those of your school, supervisor, and district? Please elaborate.
6. Were there certain periods of time where you felt it was more difficult to implement good literacy teaching? Please elaborate.
7. What should the main purposes of public education be?
 1. What would you say are currently the main purposes of public education?
 2. Are your views of what should be the main purposes of public education reflected in the current aims of public education? Please elaborate.

Lead-off question: Can you describe a student who exemplifies your definition of literate?

Possible follow-up questions:

1. What does it mean to be literate?
2. Would you say that your definition of literacy has changed over time? If so, how?
3. Please consider the statements in the perspectives activity on the next page of this document and place an X in the box that is most closely aligned with your views.
4. Let's discuss examples from your teaching career that demonstrate your responses to question 7.
 1. Are there any practices from question 7 that you would like to engage in but you feel restricted from? Please elaborate.'

Statement 1	I am much more aligned with statement 1 than statement 2.	I am more aligned with statement 1 than statement 2.	Neutral	I am more aligned with statement 2 than statement 1.	I am much more aligned with statement 2 than statement 1.	Statement 2
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Statement 1	X	X	X	X	X	Statement 2
Literacy is a relatively stable concept and does not change a lot.						Literacy is always changing and evolving.
Literacy can be measured to the extent that we can identify a student as "literate" or "illiterate".						Literacy is a broad concept, so to identify a student as "literate" or "illiterate" is not possible.
Students should spend the majority of their time reading and learning about the texts others have produced.						Students should spend the majority of their time creating and producing their own texts.
Students' knowledge and experiences at home and outside of school are important, but school is about being exposed to new knowledge. Therefore, bringing students' knowledge and experiences into the classroom is not always necessary.						Students' knowledge and experiences at home and outside of school are vital and it is pivotal to bring them into the classroom on a regular basis.
Students should spend all of their time working with canonical literature and traditional texts.						Students should spend all of their time working with modern texts in a variety of forms.
It is not necessary to incorporate digital technologies in literacy instruction.						Digital technologies are extremely important to incorporate in literacy instruction.

Some students are not good readers, and the major goal should be to ensure that they comprehend the meaning of a text.					When reading a text, it is important that all students are not only able to comprehend it, but are also able to critique and analyze it.
Teachers should encourage students to compete with one another.					Teachers should encourage students to collaborate with one another.
Teachers are responsible for controlling the learning of their students.					Teachers are responsible for facilitating meaningful interactions and experiences for students.
Teachers should not be involved in curriculum development, educational research, or other activities that do not involve working directly with students.					Teachers should be considered intellectuals and should operate as such by being heavily involved in curriculum development, research, and other aspects of education that do not involve working directly with students.
Teachers should engage in self-reflection when and if they have time.					Teachers must make critical, consistent self-reflection a priority in their practice.

Appendix E



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

Research Hall, 4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Phone: 703-993-5445; Fax: 703-993-9590

DATE: February 22, 2022

TO: Kristien Zenkov
FROM: George Mason University IRB

Project Title: [1842607-1] NEW LITERACIES PRACTICES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS WHOSE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM FOCUSED HEAVILY ON NEW LITERACIES PERSPECTIVES AND PEDAGOGIES

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: February 22, 2022

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited review category # 5&7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The George Mason University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

You are required to follow the George Mason University Covid-19 research continuity of operations guidance. You may not begin or resume any face-to-face interactions with human subjects until (i) Mason has generally authorized the types of activities you will conduct, or (ii) you have received advance written authorization to do so from Mason's Research Review Committee. In all cases, all safeguards for face-to-face contact that are required by Mason's COVID policies and procedures must be followed.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form unless the IRB has waived the requirement for a signature on the consent form or has waived the requirement for a consent process. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the IRB office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed (if applicable).

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This study does not have an expiration date but you will receive an annual reminder regarding future requirements.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of five years, or as described in your submission, after the completion of the project.

Please note that department or other approvals may be required to conduct your research in addition to IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Wallerstedt at (703) 993-9628 or mwallers@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

GMU IRB Standard Operating Procedures can be found here: <https://oria.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/human-subjects/>

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within George Mason University IRB's records.

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Biography

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