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A SELF-STUDY OF A SPECIAL EDUCATOR'S TEACHING PRACTICES IN A PRISON SETTING: PROMOTING THE SELF- EFFICACY FOR LITERACY TASKS OF ADULT LEARNERS WHO ARE INCARCERATED

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A SELF-STUDY OF A SPECIAL EDUCATOR'S TEACHING PRACTICES IN A
PRISON SETTING: PROMOTING THE SELF-EFFICACY FOR LITERACY TASKS
OF ADULT LEARNERS WHO ARE INCARCERATED

By

Brandon Selling

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SIGNATURE APPROVAL FORM

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Abstract

For students and teachers in prison classrooms, success with reading and literacy tasks does not come easily. To teach within the correctional setting, an educator must get used to teaching with tension. These tensions must be balanced for the teacher to continue focus on instruction and to continue proper teaching practices. For students, reading proficiency is necessary for passing the 2014 computer version of the GED test. Passing the GED test is an exit goal of corrections education. The purpose of this qualitative self-study was to explore and describe my teaching practices to better understand how to apply my knowledge of special education and reading instruction to motivate incarcerated adults to develop basic literacy skills and to work toward Adult Basic Education and General Education benchmarks. Data were collected over a three-month span and iteratively explored and analyzed using Creswell's (2013) data analysis spiral. Findings detail changes to and development of my instructional practices over time, attention while teaching, connections I made, and the role of reflective practice in developing confidence and independence as a professional educator who teaches with tension. Implications for my own practice as well as for students and other professionals in the prison are offered.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On my last day of my student-teaching assignment in 2012, my future principal called to ask if I was interested in working for him at a state prison in the Midwest. I proceeded to complete the requirements for the application to work in a very unique prison classroom setting. During my college preparation and student teaching placement, I was unsure where I was going to teach when my preparation was complete. Looking back to the beginning of my work on this thesis, I see how my background in criminal justice assisted my development towards teaching in the prison system. In addition, I had experiences with students deemed “at-risk” or those already on juvenile probation. Such experiences included supervised visits, observation, tutoring, and supervision within a youth home. Thus, I knew I had the propensity to work with students within the court system. Further teacher preparation taught me about students with emotional impairment and behavioral issues. However, during my teacher preparation program, I started to feel comfortable within the traditional school setting and wondered if I would seek employment as a traditional classroom teacher. Eventually, I made the decision to go forward with the interview process, and I was hired as the special education teacher at the nearby prison located in the Midwestern United States a few months later.

When I started my teaching preparatory program, I struggled a little with reacquainting myself to going to school again. My wife cut out some inspirational words from a magazine in attempts to help. The two words that stuck with me were *grit* and *zest*. They basically equate to strength and enthusiasm. During my first few years of teaching, learning the intricacies of educating incarcerated adults was a daily act of professional and mental survival. I used grit and zest to help in my “survival.” As time

passed, the daily work routine within the classroom became repetitive, much like the rest of prison routines. In some ways, routines are good and predictable, but I did not find fulfillment in mundane practice. The adrenaline of teaching—the hallmark of fulfillment—manifests in student excitement, engagement, and success. The routine tasks were not positively engaging students, and therefore, my excitement and enjoyment were dwindling as well. I did not sense the full feeling of professional accomplishment each day.

Tensions are important in self-study research. Berry (2007) gives tension in the educational setting a definition by stating these tensions are the “feelings of internal turmoil” that teachers experience as they find themselves “pulled in different directions by competing pedagogical demands” in their work and the difficulties they experience as they learn to recognize and manage those demands (p. 119). Prior to this self-study, I attended trainings and conferences, but I was never motivated enough to implement any of the new information properly. However, when I began my master’s program the tension became harder to bear. I felt tension between the desire to apply the research-based teaching and learning approaches I was learning about and the reality of the prison education setting in which I was working. In response to my coursework and communication with my professors, I wanted to implement change in my instruction and to share any insights I might garner with other prison educators.

The one place where my classroom routine could not exist was within my one-on-one interactions with students on my special education caseload. These students had the opportunities to separate themselves from the distractions, pressures, and repetitiveness of classroom work. Part of my job involves general teaching of Adult Basic Education

(ABE) and General Education Development (GED) preparation. The other part of my job involves providing special education services to students who qualify for special education under federal guidelines set forth by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Students on my caseload are just beyond their days as juveniles. Many of them have histories of being sentenced to juvenile programs or facilities. Some committed their felonies still as juveniles, while others as legal adults. These students may have received services while in juvenile facilities or may have gone years without proper special education services. Students who qualify for special education services within the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) currently fall under federal guidelines, rather than state guidelines. Under federal guidelines, students are provided a free and appropriate education (FAPE) through the age of 21 (IDEA, 2018). In a one-on-one setting, I saw a change in how students behaved; they were more responsive to instruction and seemed open to giving a concerted effort to learn. A spark formed. I saw signs of motivation—both in their learning and my teaching approaches. In the one-on-one setting, I was able to try out the methods I learned during my time in my master's program, specifically as a prospective reading specialist. Initial one-on-one interactions with my students led me to think that they could be “free” to focus on instruction without the social pressures in a prison classroom setting. Outside the routines of the prison classroom and the diverse learning needs of the group of students, I discovered freedom to focus on using what I knew about instruction to respond to my students.

Statement of the Problem

In the MDOC classroom, the number of students allowed in one classroom can range from eight to fifteen. Class size depends on the security level of the prisoners. The

ages of students in my classes may fall anywhere from 18 to 65. With the variety in need, age, maturity, ability, motivation, and willingness, students who struggle with their literacy skills may feel the need to bow to peer pressure, resulting in a visible lack of effort to participate in class, try to learn, or to acknowledge their learning limitations or special needs. Reading skills are a priority for the 2014 computer version of the GED test. I feel the demands of the test require a greater focus on reading skills. The test requires students to comprehend long passages, make inferences, draw conclusions, find main ideas, and make connections for vocabulary words. The test has an emphasis for reasoning and reading ability in a timed format. Each test has different time allotments based on the subject area and vary in number of test items provided. Success does not come easily. Unfortunately, in my prison classroom setting, many students can be unwilling to risk their peers seeing them as deficient or as a “failure.” Often, these students would rather pretend to be ready for the test or refuse to learn than be seen asking for help in reading instruction. Keeping up the ruse of can affect a student’s self-efficacy and can possibly affect the quality of their learning or willingness to learn.

One-on-one opportunities are the “best-case scenario” for literacy instruction within the sociocultural environment of prison education, which includes diverse and often vocally-opinionated students. However, these opportunities are hard to create based on the structure of my schedule and the number of students who can benefit. My schedule requires a specific amount of planned instructional time per week. After consulting with the students, I had to provide time for the one-on-one opportunities. I adjusted my schedule to organize the meetings appropriately. Instead of the same planned classes five days a week, I created time once a week to visit students one-on-one and used the

remaining time to provide further classroom instruction to other students who required resource room time or volunteered for further time in the classroom. The students who are ideal candidates for one-on-one instruction are those whom correctional officers have placed in segregation because of their exhibited behavior or need for protective measures. Working with students in their segregation setting allows them to be taken out of the influential realm of the prison classroom. A student can often be his truthful self and look towards reaching his potential without the judgment of other prisoners. Here, a learner's literacy needs can lead instruction. In the one-on-one teaching opportunities, I wondered how I could engage and motivate incarcerated adults to complete literacy tasks. Further, I wanted to know what more I could learn from implementing my preparation as a literacy and special education teacher.

Within the prison academic setting, there are no procedures for Response to Intervention (RtI), a common researched-based model for instructing students who struggle with a specific skill, like reading. However, the framework of RtI can sometimes occur informally in academic classrooms. In general, most of my students have success or relative success with the foundations of the classroom approaches, lessons, and strategies. These students follow the academic and behavioral expectations. A secondary group sometimes forms. This group requires more attention through repeated directions, additional help throughout the class, and reminders of appropriate behavioral expectations. Further assistance can occur through specific time spent with the teacher or tutor. However, nothing is formally done to identify the student except in the case of special education. Therefore, the potential for one-on-one literacy opportunities are not always taken advantage of in this setting.

Purpose

While working with students in a one-on-one setting, I realized the potential for motivating students to learn based on how I provided and communicated the instruction within the given setting (Christophel, 1990). I felt assistance provided through one-on-one reading instruction would be beneficial towards my students' success (Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017). Currently at my prison school, opportunities to work with students one-on-one in the prison setting are generally limited to a segregation setting or during a smaller class size setting, and one-on-one teaching situations are hard to juggle when other academic teaching requirements are involved. Like any academic program, adult education in prison has its goals and set requirements, including contact time with students, yearly completion goals, and limited access to the students. Some prisons restrict contact with prisoners in certain confinement settings. These leave some students short of the assistance they require. In order to garner the most success with incarcerated adult learners, I realized that I needed to maximize the opportunity to motivate and instruct them within a one-on-one setting. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe my teaching practices, so that I may better understand how to apply my knowledge of special education and reading instruction to motivate incarcerated adults to develop basic literacy skills and to work toward Adult Basic Education and General Education benchmarks.

Theoretical Framework

My inquiry is guided by a constructivist theoretical framework. In a constructivist learning theory, a learner integrates new knowledge with existing knowledge when they engage actively in the learning process (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Williamson (2006)

notes “Constructivist researchers investigate constructions or meanings about broad concepts such as cultural values, or more specific issues or ideas” (p. 85). Further, the “approach enables the meanings or perspectives of participants to be studied in-depth and their particular words to be used to convey their meanings directly to the reader” (p. 98). Constructivism melds well with the realm of learning within the prison system. It works well general employee survival, as well as within the education setting. For general prison “survival,” a learner is anyone who walks within the prison perimeter, such as a prisoner, corrections officer or even a teacher. Employees are provided classroom and computer-based trainings on prison culture, safety, self-defense, overfamiliarity, communication, general paperwork, and more. They generally will have to use a combination of prior experience in these areas, as well as the everyday “training” of learned experiences while working. Each member makes a personal construction of what they know from their experiences in order to “survive” in their own ways (Williamson, 2006). For me, the constructivist perspective provides the most adequate understanding for teaching and providing literacy instruction to my adult students. I acknowledge that all my students have lived a life prior to their incarceration. Their lives likely included time spent in various educational settings. Understanding their previous lives provides a foundation for some of their formal learning they bring to the classroom. Other life experiences may play a role in their ability to learn new information within the adult education curriculum. Literacy, in the constructivist perspective, involves making sense of the reading and acknowledging the meaning through marks (writing). (Ensar, 2014).

While working in the prison, I was involved in the Reading Specialist Master’s program within the School of Education (SoE) at the local university. The SoE’s own

conceptual framework helped shape my thought process. The framework involves a definition of education and a summary of the school's belief in what teacher education is. It also provides derivatives that the teacher should look to accomplish: Habits of Judgment and Development of Character; Teaching as Artistry; Subject Matter Content as Medium; Race, Culture, and Social Justice; and Technology (Northern Michigan University, 2017). Although each of the derivatives influenced my own personal and professional development, the habit of making sound judgements held more importance to my teaching practices in the prison classroom setting. My evolution as an educator and student relies on the habit of making quality judgements throughout a given day. I must be aware of what is best for me as a teacher and for my students. Further, habits can be made with content as a medium. The content I use to teach and learn from, allows me to “emphasize self-directed, lifelong learning through conveying high expectations, encouraging risk taking, and creating a climate of mutual respect” (Northern Michigan University, 2017, p. 5).

Research Question

Through this self-study, I seek to better understand my teaching practices and how I can continue to learn from teaching. The following questions guided my inquiry:

- How might my teaching practices in the one-on-one segregation setting motivate incarcerated adults to engage in literacy learning by completing literacy tasks?
- What can I learn about being a general educator in the prison setting from studying my teaching practices?

Definition of Terms

One-on-one teaching practices. For this study, one-on-one teaching practices refer to the strategies and instructional methods used by the instructor.

Self-efficacy. In this study, self-efficacy refers to a person's belief that he possesses the abilities or capabilities to achieve specific goals or the ability to do so (Tracey & Morrow, 2012; Woolfork, 2007). The instructional time spent during the one-on-one sessions focused on improving students' self-efficacy.

Motivation. For this research, motivation is known as "the natural human capacity to direct energy in the pursuit of a goal" (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 22).

Engagement. In the context of this study, engagement refers to "the quality of a student's connection or involvement with the endeavor of schooling and hence with the people, activities, goals, values, and place that compose it" (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009, p. 494).

Literacy tasks. Literacy tasks are specific academic tasks that relate to the work a student must accomplish in the realm of literacy (Woolfork, 2007). For this study, literacy is the ability to make sense of a text and produce a response a meaningful way (Draper & Siebert, 2010). Generally, literacy tasks need to be accomplished to meet standards or expectations. A literacy task (e.g. answering a question related to the reading, pronouncing a vocabulary word, reading a selection aloud, making text-to-self connections, etc.) was completed in every session.

Segregation setting. The segregations setting is an alternative placement from the general population housing of a prison. The prisoners within this setting are confined to their cells except for limited movement for showers, enclosed exercise, and specific

needs. Prisoners may be in the segregation setting for administrative reasons, punitive reasons or protective reasons. The administrative segregation and punitive segregation settings house prisoners who have violated prison rules. The protective segregation is for prisoners who may be assaulted by others for various reasons (Michigan Department of Corrections, 2018).

Assumptions

When I started my research, I assumed I would learn from the self-study of my teaching practices. The participants were not coerced to participate. There were no added benefits to their participation. Their willingness to participate was a result of a new approach outside of the regular prison classroom setting. Prior to this study, students in segregated or limited settings were only able to meet cell-side and were not removed from their cells. Further, the students had no knowledge of the self-study.

Limitations

Teaching in a prison setting is rife with limitations. Some limitations are physical, like what the classrooms or cell blocks look like. Others are environmental or procedural. These limitations include limited access to knowledge and limited communication. For instance, students cannot know about their potential movement ahead of time or information about other prisoners. Researching my teaching practices with learners who are incarcerated was limited by the prison environment. The students were limited in their movement throughout the study. One student consistently moved with shackles and handcuffs during his transfer from his cell to the meeting room. He was often left like this even in the meeting room's cage. The other was handcuffed on occasion during his trip from his cell to the meeting room. Both found themselves in a cage within an office

during the one-on-one visits throughout the study. The cage allows the prisoners to sit down or stand up but restricts their movement. It allows non-custody staff to speak with the prisoners without the presences of a corrections officer. The meetings were restricted to the prison's movement plan, and I rarely altered from early afternoon visits after lunch had been served. Each visit with the student was under an hour to accommodate the limited movement plan and to match the schedules of the correctional officers. My knowledge of students' personal experiences was limited; therefore, I had no sense of what they knew ahead of the study. As this is a case study, my findings are limited to the case and should not be generalized to larger populations. The case study allowed for insight into my teaching practices in one-on-one settings. However, data on student achievement related to those practices were not collected. Thus, the academic effectiveness of the practices is empirically unknown. Additional follow-up case studies focused on student achievement connected to specific practices would be necessary to ascertain the quantifiable effectiveness of the practices deemed successful as a result of this study.

Delimitations. The intent of this study is to focus on my teaching practices within my given settings and situations. Although I discuss prisoners as my students, the role of motivation in completing reading tasks, and the fact my students are eligible for special education, none are the focus of the study.

Chapter Summary and Brief Overview of the Study

The pathway for this self-study of my teaching practices started with my bachelor's degree in criminal justice. I gathered momentum for this study with my teacher preparation program. I finalized the idea for this self-study with my involvement

in my master's courses as a Reading Specialist. The one-on-one teaching practices portion of the self-study has basis in the practice of a Reading Specialist (Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017). In addition, I sought to understand the given research questions and to learn how I could engage and motivate incarcerated adults to complete literacy tasks in a one-on-one setting. Further, I looked know what more I could learn from implementing my preparation as a literacy and special education teacher. The literature will establish insight into prison education, black males, andragogy, and one-on-one instruction, as well as provide studies related to self-efficacy, motivation, one-one-one literacy, and engagement. My methods will talk about the two students involved in the one-on-one segment of my inquiry, how I structured my study, and information on data collection and analysis in self-studies. My findings display what a prison educator discovers when he looks for specific means within a self-study of his teaching practices. Finally, my implications in the final chapter detail what the findings mean in relation to my problem and research questions, as well what the results mean to me, my students and my profession at large.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As a prison educator, I believe it takes time to find comfort with the job. Not only are the normal stressors of teaching present; awareness and knowledge of how each prison functions are also important. After time passed, I felt I was not doing my best to help my adult learners with their literacy education. A desire to improve what I was doing led to my self-study. The purpose of my self-study was to explore and describe my teaching practices in order to better understand how to apply my knowledge of special education and reading instruction to motivate incarcerated adults in developing basic literacy skills and while working towards Adult Basic Education and General Education benchmarks. I sought to understand (a) How my teaching practices in the one-on-one segregation setting might motivate incarcerated adults to engage in literacy learning by completing literacy tasks and (b) What more can I learn about being a general educator in the prison setting? The object is to review my teaching practices and to avoid focusing too much on the students' as prisoners themselves, the role of their special education eligibility, or the role of motivation. This literature review covers prison education, the role black males play in prison educator, the concept of andragogy, one-on-one instruction, self-efficacy, motivation, and engagement.

Prison Education

Prison education has been in place in the United States for over 200 years (Messmer, 2011). The roles prison education plays in the lives of prisoners have varied over time. Areas of focus include high school equivalency completion, vocational training, employment preparedness, and participation or completion of college programming (Michigan Department of Corrections, 2017). The priorities for different

types of education continues to evolve in Michigan's prison system, as funding and support come from state and federal legislatures, state governors, and even the President of the United States. Noteworthy studies occurred over time in both juvenile facilities and within the walls of prison (Allen-DoBoer, Malmgren, & Glass, 2006). Teachers must be cognizant of how unique the prison setting is. In some instances, a teacher can teach using multiple methods or instruct in any situation. However, caution should be used when attempting to generalize the results of studies related to what worked in traditional settings (Rose, 2002).

Black males. Despite being a minority in total population in the United States, African American males are overrepresented in state prisons at a rate of 5.1 times that of white men (Nellis, 2016). Part of this is due to what is known as the “school-to-prison pipeline,” which is brought on by various racial, social, structural, institutional, and legislative factors (Brissonette, 2016; Brownstein 2015; Brownstein, 2015; Massey, 1993: & Sumner, 1969). My average class roster is a microcosm of the overrepresentation seen throughout the United States. The prison has its disparities of racial imbalances and my classroom seems to magnify those disparities. The one-on-one portion of my study focused on two black males in segregation. However, I tend to have classes made up of 88% men of color and up to 75% black males on given occasions throughout the academic school year.

Andragogy. To properly address my students' needs, I believe further understanding of andragogy is necessary. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2012) define andragogy as “any intentional and professionally guided activity that aims at a change in adult persons” (p. 58). In more concise terms, andragogy is “the art or science of teaching

adults” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). In contrast to andragogy, Knowles et al. (2012) define pedagogy as “the art or science of teaching children” (p. 35). A proper understanding of andragogy includes the development of the andragogical principles, which display the main differences between andragogy and pedagogy. The principles are: the need to know, the learner self-concept, a learner’s experience, the readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and the motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2012). In general, adults have more lived experiences to rely on when in learning situations. Also, most adults experienced life in a pedagogical setting at some point growing up.

One-on-one instruction. Providing direct instruction one-on-one has advantages over group or whole-class instruction and one-on-one instruction can be an effective way to accelerate literacy skills (Houge, Geier, & Peyton, 2008). One-on-one instruction is not always possible, given a teacher’s schedule and responsibilities, but it can be “vital to student growth” (Brown, 2016, p. 20). Therefore, many classrooms, programs, schools, and facilities use a well-trained tutor to assist teachers and reading specialists implement proper reading instruction, using researched-based strategies. In a study by Houge, Geier, and Peyton (2008) sought to improve literacy skills of adolescents through use of a tutor at a reading clinic. Tutors conducted timed sessions which included rereading for fluency with comprehension questions, phonetic instruction, sentence dictation, guided oral reading, writing exercise for predictions, and reading aloud. While no quantitative data was present, the reading practices they use are supported by research (Houge et al., 2008). To continue success, Houge et al. (2008) state tutoring programs must “include instructional practices that maintain the direct, explicit, and systematic fiber needed to

accelerate literacy skills while maintaining constant awareness of the adolescent's progress so as to adjust instruction accordingly” (p. 948).

In the sessions, 12 students were pre-taught selected words that were practiced in isolation with their tutor. Then, the students orally read the selected readings while the tutor corrected errors. Finally, the preselected words were then retaught at the end of the session. The tutors kept track of the words the students said correctly or incorrectly. Sessions varied based on the length of stay of the students and varied from five to 48 sessions with an average of 21 or about one month of instruction. The intervention was assessed through the Gray Oral Reading Test, third version (GORT-III), using two forms for pretest and posttest measurements. The GORT-III is standardized and nationally normed. It sought to find reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension. The average passage reading score went up about 9.0 months in terms of grade-level ability. Comprehension also went up about 9.0 months. Students were also able to gain about 3.57 words a week through the vocabulary instruction. The study was limited by using people from outside the prison staff to administer the intervention. The length of stay and ability levels of the students also played a role. The structure of the intervention and the one-on-one sessions may have each played a role in the significant growth (Coulter, 2004).

Self-efficacy

Motivation and self-efficacy are essential for success within most forms of education, including prison. Self-efficacy will not be assessed in my study. However, as a prison educator, I argue a student's self-efficacy may be reflected through participation and engagement in a one-on-one setting. I feel if a student is at least willing to

participate, then he must feel good about his potential participation. Jones, Varberg, Manger, Eikeland, and Asbjørnsen (2012) looked at the reading and writing self-efficacy of 600 adults incarcerated in Norway's prison system. The participants were those who responded to a Reading and Writing Self-Efficacy scale within a larger questionnaire. Both low and high security levels were included. A representative sample of 145 prisoners were selected to take part in a reading and spelling test with 92 completing the test. Men and women were part of the study. Men took up 93% of the prison population. According to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, (2017), men in the United States make up 93.2% of prisoners, where women account for up 6.8%. Participants were not formally diagnosed of any disabilities beforehand, but 16% did self-report having dyslexia. The mean age of the participants was 34 years of age, with no participants under the age of 18. The mean level of education was over 10 years. Assessments included the Reading and Writing Self-Efficacy Scale, the reading and spelling test for college and university students, a test on nonsense words, a test for reading speed, a test on spelling, and the Matrix Analogies Test Short form (MAT-SF). Overall, the study found that the self-efficacy of inmates with documented low reading and spelling skills was affected by their results on the reading and spelling tests (Jones et al., 2012).

Within the confines of the previous study, Jones, Manger, Eikeland, and Asbjørnsen (2013) approached the information from a different perspective. They sought to see if participation in education was influenced by reading and writing self-efficacy or actual skills of the same 600 incarcerated adults. The data used in this study focused on the results of the Reading and Writing Self-Efficacy Scale, a reading speed test, and a spelling test (Jones et al., 2013). The other tests from the 2012 study were not considered.

Because this study focused on participation rather than just the reading and writing self-efficacy in general, “independent t-tests were used to calculate the group differences between the prisoners who participated in education and those who did not” (Jones et al., 2013, p. 48). Results showed writing self-efficacy was significant in predicting participation in education, whereas reading self-efficacy did not. Reasons for this may be due to the more obvious difficulties in writing compared to reading (Jones et al., 2013). Jones et al. worked on a larger scale with those self-identifying rather than be tested by school psychologists or social workers to be made eligible through the special education process.

Motivation

Motivation is “the natural human capacity to direct energy in the pursuit of a goal” (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 22). Because motivation is a construct, the behavior one can observe is the performance towards a set goal (Schlesinger, 2005). Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) programs require motivation, too. What motivates adults, and how adults stay motivated may vary depending on the people involved. Their reasons for motivation may be external or internal. Wlodkowski (2008) adds that “being motivated means being purposeful” (p. 3). Although prisoners are their own special population, they are adults by majority and legally. Generally, adults want to learn more to make themselves better people (Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006). Mellard, Krieshok, Fall, and Woods (2012) researched what dispositional factors affect adult motivation for learning. The study used a retrospective design to find significant individual measures from a previous, larger study, which included 13 Midwestern ABE/ASE programs. The participants had to be 16 years

old or older, have withdrawn from formal secondary education, and be U. S. citizens. A stratified grouping of randomly-selected participants from the ASE level and volunteers from the ABE level took part with a 41% male and 59% female representation.

Dispositional factors like goal-oriented thinking and goal-directed actions were taken into consideration along with the NRS scale, education gains, educational functional level gains, and other background characteristics. Participants were given a 44-item background questionnaire. Although educational gains of one year did show some signs of differences, most of the dispositional factors remained the same between one-year differences. Program goals may not necessarily match up with motivations of the students. These vary from attaining a GED to getting or maintaining a job, or “another reason” altogether. People’s goals depend on where they are at in their education.

Attendance supports further growth and gains as provided by the experiment, but it also depends on where a student starts out initially (i.e. ABE-low vs. ASE-high). Those who view themselves higher see their skill-level least affected. The study has limitations that do not allow it to make further cause-and-effect claims due to the lack of further research with the participants after their participation in the programs (Mellard et al, 2012). The MDOC uses part of the NRS scale through the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to help identify where students are at initially and how much they have gained through their time in academic programming. However, students in restricted settings cannot take the TABE. I still sought to promote literacy skills and encourage its importance without the MDOC’s formal assessment tool. Students enrolled in my classroom rosters usually have their TABE scores updated twice a year.

Engagement

To complete literacy tasks, I believe a student's engagement in those tasks is necessary for success. Engagement tends to refer to "the quality of a student's connection or involvement with the endeavor of schooling and hence with the people, activities, goals, values, and place that compose it" (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009, p. 494). Wlodkowski (2008) states that "without engagement, learning does not have a chance to have meaning" (p. 228). Continued engagement may lead to success on tasks. However, continued engagement requires interest. Interest may be "the most powerful influence on adult learner engagement (Wlodkowski, 2008, p. 228). Further, learning is "the portal for meaning" (Wlodkowski, 2008, p. 232). The interaction of engagement allows us to increase the complex nature of an experience. Doing so, deepens our understanding and furthers our values or purposes through learning (Wlodkowski, 2008).

Students, regardless of the environment, may display their engagement or disengagement inwardly or outwardly. Meaning this can happen through emotional or behavioral means. When students emotionally display their engagement or disengagement with a learning task, those closest to the students can pick up on the emotional observations before the behavioral observations become evident (Skinner et al., 2009). In my experience, my students tend to vocally show their dissatisfaction rather than misbehave, but I still observe remnants of behavioral dissatisfaction. Thus, I had to keep the students interested and challenged throughout the one-on-one study and within the classroom overall. They had to be satisfied emotionally and behaviorally to continue to be engaged.

Taken together, the research studies and collaborating resources provide evidence for the foundation for my self-study. Whether it be the role of setting goals in adult learners, the effect of scores or participation in prisoners in Norway, or the improvement of vocabulary through one-on-one tutored lessons, these studies show that students can be successful when they are given goals to look forward to, are given the chance to feel good about their abilities to read or write, and are given focused one-on-one instruction. However, the literature does not provide information on the role a teacher plays in the one-on-one setting or classroom setting to achieve these successes. The literature also lacks information on the practices prison teachers regularly use from the perspective of the teacher. Therefore, I intended to explore and describe my teaching practices within the prison setting as I looked to better understand how to apply my knowledge of special education and reading instruction by seeking to answer the following questions A) How might my teaching practices in the one-on-one segregation setting motivate incarcerated adults to engage in literacy learning by completing literacy tasks? and (B) What more can I learn about being a general educator in the prison setting?

In the next section, I will describe the methods I used to conduct my self-study. This will include the methodology used, information on self-study practices, the research participants, the context of the study, information on how the data was collected, and information on the data analysis.

Chapter 3: Methods

This self-study was based on my opportunity to review my teaching practices in a one-on-one setting. I wanted to see how my teaching practices in this setting motivate incarcerated adults to engage in completing literacy tasks. Further, I also wanted to take a closer look at what I do within the regular classroom as a general educator in the prison setting. What would the process of a self-study reveal? I sought to better understand how to apply my knowledge of special education and reading instruction to motivate incarcerated adults to develop basic literacy skills and to work towards Adult Basic Education and General Education benchmarks. The following chapter will talk about the methodology, the research participants, the context, the data collection, and data analysis included in my self-study.

Methodology

To answer the research questions, two qualitative methodologies were employed: case study and self-study (Creswell, 2007; Samaras & Freese, 2006). In this section, I describe each methodology and a rationale for such research.

Case study. This is a case of my roles as a special education and literacy teacher at a prison and how I gathered information through one-on-one sessions with incarcerated students on my caseload. As Creswell (2007) states, case study research “involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 73). The issues are explored through multiple sources of information like observations, summaries, and reflections (Creswell, 2007). The issue at hand in my cases involve tensions faced as a prison educator. How do I balance all that I do as a special education and literacy teacher while working at a prison? How do I provide adequate one-on-one

reading instruction without having any similar experiences prior to this study? How do I do so without losing quality instruction within the classroom? Further tensions built up as I became more entrenched with my study. I detailed my case through various means. During each observation I noted the student's behavior, disposition, and performance. Some observations included statements by the students. Performance observations related to how the students read words, how the students answered reading questions, or how the students navigated the pronunciations and meanings of vocabulary words. The summaries condensed the one-on-one visit into a few sentences. My reflections took place after I stepped back, briefly, out of the teaching role to assess the progress each student made. The findings present the case in detail.

Self-study of teaching practices. Self-study is a qualitative process of ongoing discovery in which each moment of research is part of the process of discovery leading to the complex interactions that occur during the learning and teaching process (Samaras & Freese, 2006). The purpose is to improve teacher education through findings derived from studying one's professional teaching practices. Self-study involves a teacher's continued monitoring and adaptation of his practices throughout the study. A teacher should use his reflections and analyses of data to improve teaching practices (LaBoskey, 2004). A teacher will use himself and his practices as text used to study (Samaras & Freese, 2006).

LaBoskey (2004) articulated the following five characteristics of self-study: it is self-initiated and focused; it is improvement-aimed, it is interactive; it includes multiple, primarily qualitative, methods; and it uses exemplar-based validation. The study is started by the teacher and focuses on the teacher's practices. (LaBoskey, 2004). For each

characteristic, I intend to connect how the methods of my self-study connect to LaBoskey's characteristics.

Self-initiated and focused. LaBoskey (2004) states “the self” is “both who is doing the research and who is being studied” (p. 842). Further, for teachers, the goal of self-study research is to “better understand their practice” and “to generate knowledge about teaching” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 844). I started this self-study to find out what I could learn and improve regarding my teaching practices. I used an opportunity to generate what I thought I knew about myself into finding out more about what I do as an educator.

Self-study methodology is improvement-aimed because it is “designed to understand and improve out professional practice” as we, as teachers “aim to prove our practice based upon careful and thorough understanding of our settings, which in turn results in enhanced understanding of that practice” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 845). This study is improvement-aimed as I sought to see how my teaching practices motivate my students to engage in literacy learning. I want to improve my own teaching practices and be aware of what worked in my given setting.

Interaction. The interaction in self-study can “take many forms” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 848). LaBoskey (2004) identified four specific forms. Two of the four pertain to the type of interaction also found in my study. The first is that self-study researchers “interact with their own students in a variety of ways” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 848). My students provided information formally and informally. This allowed me to make necessary adjustments to my teaching practices. The second is that self-study educators “interact with ‘text’ of various kinds in varying manners” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 849). For

my self-study, “text” was not always the written word. Draper, Broomhead, Jensen, and Siebert (2010) state that text can be expanded to “include all objects that are imbued with meaning” (p. 4). In my self-study, reading selections were obvious forms of text.

However, so was body language. A portion of my day is spent on reading body language correctly to avoid danger or to recognize potential engagement in a student. When done properly, the interactive relationship between a teacher and a student becomes recursive.

Multiple, primarily qualitative methods. Self-study uses multiple, primarily qualitative, methods (LaBoskey, 2004). This does not mean all self-study research must use multiple methods at the same time. Nor does it mean only qualitative methods may be used. Qualitative methods are used more often due to the specific procedures and epistemological implications (Smith, 1983, as cited in LaBoskey, 2004). This self-study is qualitative in nature. I used case-study methodology within self-study teaching practices.

Finally, self-study provides exemplar-based validation (LaBoskey, 2004). Exemplars are used to address the problem of how claims for trustworthiness is made and evaluated. Exemplars are the documentations of a teacher’s regular practice within the self-study researcher’s community. The validation is complete when study is viewed sufficiently trustworthy (Kuhn, 1970, as cited in LaBoskey, 2004). By laying forth my study, there may be others within the correctional education community that may benefit from the findings or the procedures used. This study may provide the methods for someone to replicate what I have done.

Rationale

I knew students in prison systems struggled with reading. Teachers bring it up at academic conferences, advisory committee meetings, or individual school staff meetings. Prisoners within the prison education system declare this to be true (Moeller, Day, & Rivera, 2004). However, I wanted to see what my teaching practices revealed in relation to the struggle students have within the Adult Basic Education and GED curriculum. Investigating myself through case study methodology seemed to be a way to check on my practices. How did I get here though? When I interviewed for my current position, I used my “ask the interviewers” questions to inquire about the current reading programs within the MDOC. I envisioned one day I would initiate a reading program that is specifically designed for a prison population. However, it did not take long before I realized how unprepared I was for the reality of creating and implementing a made-from-scratch program. Nevertheless, my goal was still alive, and thus, I started a master’s program to learn how to better support students who have limited literacy experiences. The next step was to reflect on my own practices as a teacher of literacy. I envisioned this self-study of my teaching as a precursor to identifying the feasibility of such a program. I was especially interested in student engagement and motivation in a one-on-one the setting. The one-on-one setting, as opposed to the typical classroom setting, allowed for greater attention to the teaching practices that foster or hinder student participation. In order to gauge how student participation differed during one-on-one instruction, my research questions focus on my teaching practices and the influence such practices have on student participation: (a) How might my teaching practices in the one-on-one segregation setting

motivate incarcerated adults to engage in literacy learning by completing literacy tasks?
and (b) What more can I learn about being a general educator in the prison setting?

Self-study allows for the reflective inquiry necessary to answer my research questions, as self-study is “intentional, systematic inquiry into one’s own practice” (Dinkelman, 2003, p. 8). Close inspection and exploration of my teaching practices has helped to illuminate practices that support student engagement with and motivation for literacy learning. It is my hope that this nuanced analysis will provide a rich foundation for a future development of a reading program.

Research Participants

As a special education prison educator, providing special education services comes in many forms. The most convenient and most common form is supplemental assistance within the general education classroom. However, because of various status restrictions, usually due to behavior exhibited outside the classroom, some students are not allowed to meet inside the classroom. My case is like the least restricted environment found in the public-school setting. Segregated settings mimic a self-contained classroom, or another setting found off school grounds. The students I worked with in my self-study were housed in a segregation setting through administrative, punitive, or protective means. They had an active individualized education program that required 30-60 minutes of one-on-one instruction. Low-level literacy skills were not necessarily the focus of this study. At the beginning of the study, only two students were eligible. More could have been added, but none became available. The two students who were eligible lasted the entirety of the study. Both are black males between the ages of 18 and 21. For this study,

I gave my participants the pseudonyms of “Carl” and “Idris.” I will present their roles in my findings in Chapter Four.

Context of the Study

My caseload includes students who qualify for special education services and students who are placed within my four academic classes. Students on my caseload may be placed in one of those four classes, if eligible by movement policies. Placement depends upon the prison’s behavioral version of least restrictive environment. Students who cannot attend the classroom are usually those who are placed in segregation for administrative reasons, punitive reasons, protective reasons, observation, or protective care. I visited the two eligible students twice a week. The visitation schedule resembled how I visited other students confined to their cells in the past, which will be described below. The visits for this study were done with the distinct focus of noting my regular teaching practices and their effects on the promotion of self-efficacy and motivation. I worked with both students prior to the study. However, neither were given one-on-one reading exercises prior to the study. Both received services cell-side for there to six months prior to the beginning of the study.

Visit overview. The first visit of the week involved 5-15 minutes at the prisoners’ cells. It included a brief instruction to a reading selection or assignment that the students were able to do with minimal to no assistance. Any questions or problems from the first visit was addressed at the second visit. The second visit came two or three days after and lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. The two students were taken from their cells to a visiting cage held in the office area of the respective segregation cellblock. Most visits came after lunch was served within the cellblock. On rare occasions, due an altered

prison movement plan, visits occurred before lunch. There was not a set order on which prisoner I saw first or second. It was based on the availability of the cellblock officers and the readiness of the students.

Basic communication. Upon each visit, I asked how the student was doing and if he had any issues since our last encounter. I showed an interest in what the students had previously talked about. We also discussed any issues he may have had with prison staff members, specifically the corrections officers he saw on a regular basis. When it came down to the academic portion, the students had a choice to read aloud or have the reading selections read to them. I asked questions before, during, and after the reading selection. Reading selections were based on interest and availability of topics. The reading selections were taken from websites for reading in adult education and the popular Lexile-based news site, Newsela. Once I found the selections, I printed copies, and one copy was given to the student to read. I kept the other copy to follow along with the student. I helped correct or pronounce specific words per request or when I felt the student needed assistance.

I conducted self-study research on how the students responded to types of questions posed and the adjustments I made toward specific types of questions based on their answers. I based the reading selections on interest and availability of topics. I took reading levels into consideration and adjusted the reading levels based on the material covered. I gave the two students higher reading level selections during the one-on-one segments. In the one-on-one sessions, the students received more assistance with vocabulary words and prompts for the questions involved.

Data Collection

Data were collected using qualitative modes: field notes, summaries, reflections, and memos. Each week, I met with each student individually for two sessions, one “one-on-one” session and one “cell study” session. The one-on-one session included reading aloud and discussing one to two reading selections. During cell study, I left learning tasks with the students and collect artifacts at the next session. The one-on-one session was documented for this study. The cell study visit was to keep prolonged engagement and to remind the students another visit was coming soon.

Field notes. During sessions with students, I took detailed field notes in the margins or in other areas of my notebook or readings (Huberman & Miles, 1994, as cited in Creswell, 2013). Notes included descriptions of students’ demeanors, brief outlines of the lesson sequences as they unfolded, quotes from students, and information regarding the students’ understandings of the materials and observed engagements with the content.

Reflection notes. Following each session, I wrote a dated summary of the visit as well as reflective notes regarding my teaching practices (Huberman & Miles 1994, as cited in Creswell, 2013). In addition, by requirement of my position, all my visits are officially logged, documenting the cell-lock, date, name of teacher, reason for absence, in this case, segregation, materials covered, and times visited. I also wrote memos detailing my teaching practice. Together, these sources of data create a detailed picture of each visit.

Role of the researcher. In this study, I played multiple roles. I am a generalist in my presentation of adult education, a special education teacher, and a literacy educator. Participation in each role had the tendency to create tensions, as one role demanded more

focus than the others. This focus pulled attention from another role, thus tension resulted. The tensions will be described throughout the remainder of this thesis.

Data Analysis

Overview. My case is qualitative in design, using strategies from Huberman and Miles (1994, as cited in Creswell, 2013) and analyzing data through a “data analysis spiral” (Figure 1) (Creswell, 2013, p. 183). The spiral represents the fact the data analysis is done through analytical cycles rather than a fixed linear approach. The goal of this procedure is to create a narrative of what the data means. The route of the “data analysis spiral” includes the following procedures: data management through the organization of files; reading through reflections or other written notes; describing, classifying, or interpreting the data to categorize, compare, and put the information into proper context; and representing or visualizing the data to form matrices, trees, or propositions. I looked at some evidence for multiple purposes to make different connections. I used other evidence for one specific purpose (Creswell, 2013).

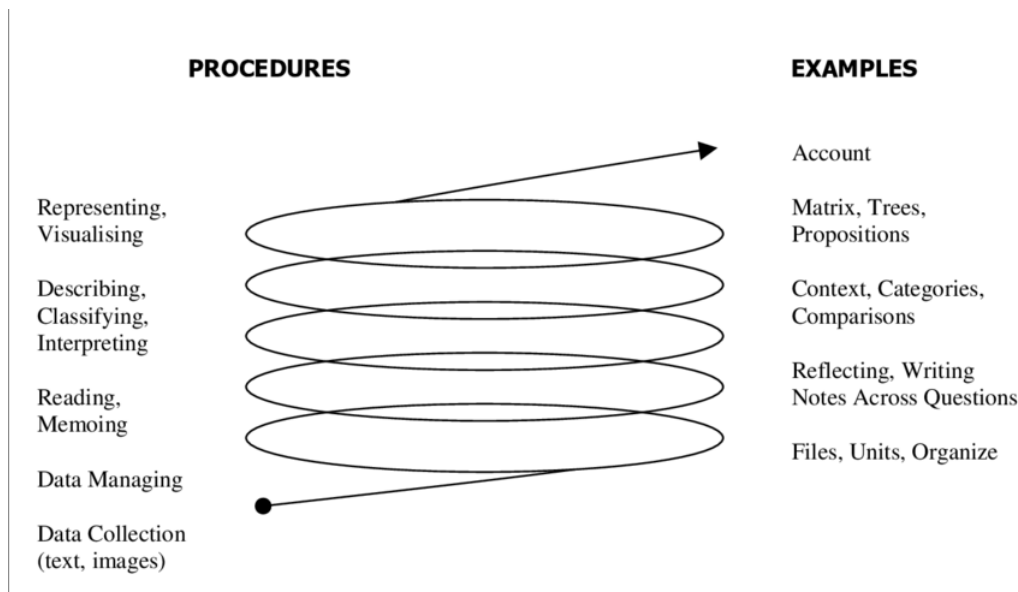


Figure 1: The data analysis spiral (Creswell, 2013, p. 183)

I collected three sources of data: field notes, visit summaries, and reflections. After thoroughly reviewing each source, I looked across the documents to identify patterns and themes. After I accumulated my data from my visits, I followed the data analysis spirals to lead me to identify new qualitative codes or patterns. I based this on what I looked for in each given cycle through the material. I read through my notes, summaries, and reflections to find established patterns and themes through qualitative coding. The results of these methods led to findings within my data. I also used the use of a critical friend to create other findings.

Notes. I took notes in various formats. Some notes were within the document or on a separate sheet of paper. I jotted notes on how the students' dispositions, the prompts I planned to use, observations I noticed, and circled important words. I used the circled important words for vocabulary usage. I wanted to identify words the students may not know, may need to know, or may need help pronouncing (Appendix A).

▲ TEACHER- SPECIAL EDUCATION CONTACT LOG

PLACE THIS IN THE TEACHER'S WORKING FILES. IF THE STUDENT RIDES OUT, THIS IS TO GO INTO HIS GREEN FOLDER.

STUDENT: Idris

TEXT/MATERIAL GIVEN: Newsela articles

LOCK	DATE	TEACHER	REASON FOR ABSENCE (CHOOSE ONE)	ACTIVITY	TIME IN	TIME OUT	CONTACT TIME (CHOOSE ONE)
E--01	1/10/2017	Selling	Segregation Special Education Extension	<input type="radio"/> No Activity <input checked="" type="radio"/> Activity Read MLK's "I have a dream"	1149	1159	Choose an item.
E--01	1/12/2018	Selling	Segregation Special Education Extension	Read MLK'S letter from the Birmingham jail; wants information on whites for racial equality	1152	1200	Choose an item.

Figure 2: Visit Summary

Summaries. The summaries relate to the regular documentation I am required to use when I formally visit any student on my special education caseload outside of the classroom. When each log sheet is finished or when the students transfer, the summary logs go with the students' special education files. The summary samples were altered to keep confidentiality. The summaries are individual logs that document each visit. The information involved includes: the cell-lock of the student, the date of the visit, the special education teacher at the time, the reason for the student's absence from the general education classroom, the activity or summary of the visit, the time the visit began, the time the visit ended, and approximately how long the visit lasted. My visits altered between planned one-on-one visits and cell-side visits. Figure 2 shows an excerpt of Idris's extended log summary.

Reflections. The reflections (Appendix B) are my own thoughts on what happened during the one-on-one sessions. I kept reflections for when I had both students at the same time. Further, I described the case and its context and attempted to generalize what I learned about my teaching in the one-on-one sessions with the selected incarcerated students on my special education caseload, my classroom students, and position overall.

Critical friend. When needed, I discussed my progress and struggles with people close to me or the self-study itself. My relationship with these people formed a critical friendship. Samaras (2011) describes critical friends as "trusted colleagues who seek support and validation of their research to gain perspectives in understanding and reframing of their interpretation" (p. 5). Further, critical friends take time to understand the context of the work and the outcomes that the researcher is working towards (Costa &

Kallick, 1993, as cited in Samaras, 2011). I involved my critical friendships with my colleagues throughout my self-study to have important conversations and to sound out my thought processes. For matters of full disclosure, I used my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Christi Edge, as a critical friend. Her experience with self-study allowed her to know when her role as a critical friend was needed within our meetings. I also discussed matters openly with my wife, JoeyLynn Selling, a doctoral candidate and teacher. Her knowledge of my job and this study allowed her to know when to ask questions and prompted me to clarify information further. I engaged in informal discussions with one of my tutors, “Mr. Charles,” as our discussions during the classroom breaks allowed us to assess how lessons or classes progressed. The critical friendships allowed for me to talk about my teaching practices, to elaborate in response to questions from my critical friends, and to reframe my thinking in light of interactions with critical friends’ perspectives, connections, and wonderings, resulting in my ability to develop intricate and detailed analyses on my teaching practices. A portion of my findings related to memos I wrote and are a result of the discussions I had with my critical friends. The memos were later expanded into the refined results of the study, explained in Chapter Four.

Summary

As my self-study evolved, so did the detail in my methods and how I approached my methods. In order to properly find to answers my research questions, the manner of how to answer them needed to generate meaningful findings. In the next chapter, I will expand on these meaningful results.

Chapter 4: Results

During one-on-one teaching opportunities, I wondered how I could engage and motivate incarcerated adults to complete literacy tasks. Within the one-on-one setting and my general classroom setting, I wanted to know what more I could learn from implementing my preparation as a literacy and special education teacher. In this section, I am closer to answering my research questions of a) How might my teaching practices in the one-on-one segregation setting motivate incarcerated adults to engage in literacy learning by completing literacy tasks? and b) What more can I learn about being a general educator in the prison setting? My findings detail my teaching practices and how I am applying my knowledge as a special education and literacy teacher towards motivating my students. The results show I had one set of themes that related to the one-on-one sessions. The focus of the one-on-one sessions also helped reveal another set of themes that related to my teaching overall. I labeled the results instructional findings, making connections, and reflective practices. Some themes overlapped and allowed me to look at these themes from an individual and classroom perspective. Further, I was able to step out and analyze, reflect, and synthesize what I learned. For the one-on-one sessions, the findings show formal approaches that are often found in any setting and some that focus more towards the specific prison setting where my study took place. The findings that relate to what I do as an adult educator hold some relation to regular teaching and the rest to the specialized world of teaching within the prison system.

Instructional Findings

The first set of findings I classified as BASIC INSTRUCTIONAL FINDINGS. These BASIC INSTRUCTIONAL FINDINGS relate to the pieces of data I found through the course

of the study. These findings connect to how I planned the enacted LESSONS and how I prepared to QUESTION the students. The LESSONS ascribe to texts, vocabulary, as well as the evolution of how the readings evolved over the course of the study with my planning. The QUESTION findings include episodes of how my students evolved in their abilities to answer questions and how I asked questions in relation to their ability to evolve.

Planning the lessons. After reading through the general notes and reflections from the beginning sessions with my students, I was able to decipher my first spiral. The first analysis relates to how I prepared for the meetings. I changed my basic concept of how to approach my student from a material standpoint. I started with books in my possession and eventually switched to non-fiction articles I found online through the school news site, Newsela. I learned about Newsela when I attended an academic conference. The presenter talked about using the site's articles as a supplement for instruction. The site offers the ability to change reading levels for the articles provided. I used Newsela for the first time during the eighth formal visit of this study. During the transition phase of the study, I took topics from an adult reading website.

Attention to vocabulary. In the beginning of the study, I relied on how the publisher, Steck-Vaughn, set up its vocabulary in the content areas of social studies, specifically the Pre-GED Social Studies booklet I had available. The Steck-Vaughn series had ready-made questions and key words, bolded to denote importance. I noted how the book did most of the work for me. As I progressed in the study, I went from noting the words given to me by the texts to words I found on my own. The beginning articles had set words to identify like "superintendent," "balcony," "challenge," "original," and "opponent."

Initially, when I used vocabulary words with the students, I based them on words suggested by the text. As I went on, I pre-picked certain words based on the students' previous patterns of struggle. Relevant words from each article for each student were used. Specific words chosen during this period involved those that were harder to identify within text but were known through receptive vocabulary. Some words of this nature were "fraudulent," "transient," "variations," "assembly," and "consumers." These specifically-chosen words were addressed along with content-specific words like "photosynthesis," "chlorophyll," "foliage," and "tannin." In the middle transition period, the words or phrases were talked about during the visit. For instance, the words "therapist," "distinguish," and "affirmation" were used without formal identification. However, checked on the word meanings in context of the reading selection. During the earlier portions, we attempted to define the words. At the end of the study, we only addressed the words if they appeared to be an area of concern, as each felt comfortable asking what a word meant or how to pronounce a word. I did not want to address words too much in the beginning. I wanted to avoid overloading the students' minds, thus affecting some of the reading process.

Frontloading questions. The frontloaded questions changed during the study. At first, I used the given prompts by the authors of the text. One early observation I noted was on a prompt for an article on the history of basketball stated, "How do you think basketball was born?" I thought the wording was specific to the birth of a sport being compared to the birth of a child. I moved on to connect students with the topic in a more personal way. One instance involved experiences with tornadoes through television or witnessing one live. Eventually, I moved to connect with the lifestyle of the students on

occasion. For instance, I used an article about dying young due to involvement with crime. I asked the students how old they thought they would live to and why. Another time I prepped about a lesson from the previous year about poor teen boys. I came up with questions for different sections and highlighted where the information could be found (Appendix C).

Questions on the readings and student response. How and when to ASK QUESTIONS is another pattern I saw in my self-study. The study also showed how I helped students answer text-specific questions related to the articles. Carl was more reserved in his responses or lack of responses unless the questions related to his personal life. Idris liked to volunteer his answers or opinions more often. During the research, the order of the students varied depending on the circumstances in the cellblocks. The student seen second in the one-on-one visits generally received the benefit of what I did not recognize with the first student. I was able to build on an example from the first student as something a student said.

As mentioned above, questioning and discussion evolved as each student and I got used to the dynamic of the one-on-one sessions. Carl struggled sometimes to answer questions that involved though-provoking questions or discussions. For example, instead of summarizing an answer from the text, he tended to read word for word from the text to answer. In the beginning, he was likely to say “No” or “I do not know” before he gave himself time for the question to sink in. I was unable to find full success with Carl’s responses. I gathered enough information on Carl before transferred to another facility, but I would have liked to work with him again. He had moments where he added further

information, usually when it connected to his personal life, but mostly he struggled to connect with the material.

Carl. One of Carl's best days happened when I brought one reading about Hurricane Maria. This lesson followed a lesson on wind energy and tornadoes. It also happened to be my first use of Newsela. The article gave a general synopsis of the details and aftermath of Hurricane Maria's effects on Puerto Rico. Statements made during reading included that he had a "soft spot" for the people and families dealing with deaths caused by the hurricanes and that he "felt bad." He made connections to the hurricanes that went through Florida and Texas. He stated he watched CNN for the news coverage of the buildup to the hurricane and the aftermath. Carl was able to make a connection to the tornado lesson by understanding that tornadoes may form because of a hurricane weather system. He stated he knew that the overall damage caused by hurricanes was likely to be worse. I did not have to prepare Carl for the information. He made his own connections and reacted to the article.

An example of what seemed to be the average week for Carl happened the following week when we talked about chlorophyll's role in why leaves change color. For this reading, I frontloaded him on scientific vocabulary words he may see in the article, such as "chlorophyll" and "photosynthesis." I established questions like:

- What do you know about why leaves change color?
- What do you notice about chlorophyll?
- Tell me what happens to the leaves when it gets cold outside.
- Compare being sugared-up as a human being and as a tree.

He struggled to make connections. Even when I led him to the connections through statements in the text, he stated that he “did not know” or he guessed a word or phrase around the words cited in the text. He said the article today felt like “work” compared to the previous week. His engagement rose when he had opportunities to feel connected or have background on the topic. Other days took effort because he was not able to make the same connections.

Idris. Idris frequently offered unsolicited opinions on areas that were not often related to the reading selections. In the beginning, he needed more redirection to stay on topic with what we read. I discovered during the study that I had to be careful with controlling what he said, because he often would make a good real-world connection amid his potential off-topic responses. I did not want to suffocate his willingness to participate by limiting his responses. Further, his tangents would have been limited more often in a classroom with other students, but I felt allowing him to talk to find his words worked well in our one-on-one sessions. For instance, when speaking about Martin Luther King during a lesson, Idris spoke about Emmett Till to some length. He told me he watched a show on Emmett Till and read a book, although he could not remember the title of the book. He felt very strongly about his views of Emmett Till’s death. He stated about how “unfortunate it was for some young brother to die just for ‘whistlin’ at a white woman.” I did not want to quell his interest in a person relevant to MLK’s work or purpose. Throughout our visits, I learned when he needed redirection and when he needed to talk his answers out. After a while, Idris got used to the routine and was ready to answer questions he believed I was going to ask. He would start to summarize material ahead of time after a section had ended.

Comfort in responses. Idris was more willing to take risks with his responses. He wanted to answer every question he could, regardless if he was making the right connections. Once I learned of his thoughts and attempts, Idris's willingness to participate allowed me to steer him in the right direction. Carl worried about getting the "right" answer before he even attempted to speak. Carl's hesitation left me with less information to use to make my next questioning choice. I had to use more prompts and wait time. I believe these instances are regular examples of what teachers see in many schools or classrooms outside the realm of prison.

Body language. For me, reading body language in the prison setting carries a high priority. It may be the only means of communication that matters in a situation where the words are just words. For instance, I once had a student tell me he would "take me out" during his first week of class. His words sounded threatening. Perhaps they would have been threatening to someone who did not know what to look for in a prisoner. However, his body language rejected the intentions of his veiled verbal threat. He stood with his shoulders relaxed and his hands at his sides. His eyes were not strained, and he had a slight smile on his face. When I work with students, I feel body language and eye contact are good indicators of engagement on the student's part. An instructor's body language and eye contact can also be effective in any teaching setting, especially in prison. The following findings focus on two areas: body language in a one-on-one setting and body language with the classroom setting overall. Body language in the one-on-one setting focused on the relationship between my student's body language, my body language, and the role our setting played in affecting body language. Reading student

body language focuses on how I read body language and my communication within the setting.

Body language in one-on-one setting. The set up to the sessions was an important factor that only happens in prison settings. The way my students arrived at our meeting space differed. The two students were housed in two different segregation segments of the Level-V portion of the facility. The Level-V portion of the facility is the oldest part of the facility, resembling an old castle-like structure with barriers all around the outside. The stone cellblocks form one side of the perimeter with a wall forming most of the rest of the perimeter. The wall is to keep prisoners inside. It is covered by fencing and razor wire. The inside area of the Level-V portion ends up forming a rectangle. There are buildings and other structures within the rectangle. The segregation cellblocks connect in a line with all the other cellblocks. When I arrive at the door of one of the segregation units, I must hit a buzzer to alert a corrections officer to let me into the unit. The click of the lock lets me know the door will open and I will enter. Inside stands three levels of cement cells with bars. All the cells face towards the outside walls, so no prisoner has a good view of another while inside their cells. The office areas for one-on-one visitation and consultation are on the backside of the housing units away from the entry doors.

Carl and Idris were not released and brought over to the meeting rooms in the same fashion. I always felt that set a tone for how either student would be focused. The officers who worked in the unit played a role, too. If a regular officer who had regular interaction with each student was on duty, the student was likely to be more comfortable. A different type of rapport was evident, or not evident, based on these relationships. The

officer also was likely to know what I was doing and why I was there. When the officers released Carl from his cell, he often walked freely. The officers walked behind him as he made his way towards the room where the sessions occurred. Carl was not on any restrictions at the time and his housing unit was technically a re-entry one. Re-entry units generally mimic general population but the prisoners lack direct contact with anyone else in the general population setting. In comparison, officers used belly chains and handcuffs to restrict Idris's movement from his first-gallery cell to the meeting room. He came to the meeting room the same way every time. In my mind, I knew which way I felt was better to arrive for a one-on-one lesson.

In Carl's housing unit, the desk in the one-on-one room faced the entrance to the cage. On only one occasion did he not have handcuffs on during the one-on-one visit. On some occasions, Carl was able to sit across the desk from me, outside of the cage. Most of the time, he sat in the cage without handcuffs. In this setting, I had my materials in front of me within the line of sight of Carl. I felt it allowed us to have a more relaxed setting without pressure of me, a teacher, looking down upon him. With the desk and the cage in the room, there was little room for me to move around. I felt glued to the chair. At times it felt like he was a customer at a bank looking for a loan.

Idris generally remained handcuffed in the cage. The desk in the room was adjacent to the cage against the corner of the wall. His restriction made every visit focused on discussion only. I had to concentrate on keeping eye contact when my materials were not in the line of sight with Idris. I had to be aware of my posture and how I looked at Idris when we read, when I asked questions, and when we discussed the articles. Often, I would slide the computer chair out to a more central location within the

room or stand up and move to a similar centrally located position to talk with Idris during the discussion portion. I concentrated on using the desk area for some questions or note-taking, but I moved throughout the room as if I were in the classroom. I wanted to show I was interested in what he said and stress the importance of what we read.

“Reading” classroom body language. In the one-on-one sessions, I had to “read” my students’ body language to see how comfortable they were in a given session. After a while, I was able to tell if they had a good time or if something bothered them. I looked at them and mentally-noted their eye contact, the amount of time spent on-topic, and the way they stood or sat down. Attending to one student at time helped further refine my skill at “reading” students in the classroom setting. I often have my students in both security levels ask if I am afraid to teach in the higher security level, due to the potentially violent people I am around. I often tell my students I am not a threat to them, so they should not be a threat to me. Further, I add that I will not give them a reason to want to attack me. I jokingly say that I am “not worth” the attack anyway. This usually gets a laugh and eases any further tension.

I would really like every day to run smoothly. I am sure most teachers would agree to this. However, I teach human beings, not robots. Most teachers probably feel this way about their approach to teaching, too. However, I feel the human beings I teach rarely get the same empathy from the rest of society. Society’s views of prisoners can be generalized through policy. The policies in place may reflect public attitudes between rehabilitation and full-on punishment (National Research Council, 2014). Although society tends to want little for convicted felons, my job comes after the trial or plea agreement. I teach human beings who have already been judged. It is not my job to judge

them any further. My only judgement involves how well they are doing in my classroom in terms of behavior, focus, and work ethic. I teach human beings who have been convicted of felonies, so they serve years of a prison sentence. I teach human beings who have been separated from their families, neighborhoods, and friends and transplanted hundreds of miles away. I teach human beings who may struggle to keep their own sanity through abuse, addiction, fear, and disability. I teach human beings who go through bouts of anger, suicidal behaviors, and paranoia. I teach humans who need to be taught.

Making Connections

For me to teach effectively, I feel I owe it to my students to make connections with them. I found making connections involves finding a rapport with students, being involved as a teacher, and paying proper attention to the prisoners as students through observation of small changes and willingness to participate. The prison setting limits some momentum of making a connection. However, building a rapport is still possible. I often observed how veteran correctional officers avoid further conflict with inmates. They do so by building a rapport with different segments of the prison population and then they communicate effectively with these segments. Teachers can do the same inside and outside their classrooms. First, I try to build a rapport. Then, I try to notice small changes. Next, I strive to see if I assisted in the process to turn a prisoner into a student.

Off-topic student response and involvement. For many teachers, building a rapport, or a positive and successful relationship with students, is important, especially early on in students' academic lives (Modi, 2015). I feel rapport in a prison setting can be just as important, if not more. For me, building rapport includes discussing items that may be off-topic from daily lessons. I felt a good gauge as a teacher includes how my

students and I interacted before, during, or after the sessions. Rapport started before the beginning of this study. However, each student started at different points. Carl was added to my caseload upon his transfer. I had to build up rapport with him from scratch, as we had no previous interaction together. Thus, our interactions had to find a foundation first. Idris was a student of mine from a previous year in the academic classroom setting in general population. We remained in contact, but he was ineligible to receive academic services once he left my classroom. A foundation was already established prior to the study. The hardest thing about building a rapport in prison is the limitations of communication between MDOC employees and prisoners. Having too much open conversation with the prisoners can lead to in-depth, familiar conversations, which may lead to favors for each other. Although prison administration place trust in their staff, constant reminders of avoiding “overfamiliarity” are present. Regardless, I was able to build a rapport with both students successfully without going beyond the line of overfamiliarity.

For me, the most sensible way to build a rapport with students is through basic respect and understanding. I try to avoid insincere statements and ill-advised assumptions. This allows me to build a relationship and gauge a comfort level from the students. Then, individual details emerge for me to pick up on and read each student. I notice how comfortable students are when they talk to me. For instance, I attempt to see how much my students are willing to say, unrestricted, without a menacing tone stopping their thoughts. I feel listening can go a long way in establishing a foundation. In my view, another solid piece of the student-teacher foundation is how much information the students are willing to provide without seeking a favor. In my opinion, my

communication style is how positive steps toward rapport occur. For instance, I give each student as much information as they can handle at a given moment. I am thorough, but not too thorough, especially if their cognitive loads cannot handle overly-detailed information. I am upfront with them without providing confidential information. I give them as much information as necessary, without lying or “spinning” them. Prisoners tend to dislike when they are not given the whole truth on something when they can be told more. This can happen without crossing any line or putting anyone in danger.

Carl had a few weeks meeting with me in a one-on-one setting. I had no contact with him prior to his enrollment into the special education program for segregated prisoners. In the beginning, Carl hesitated in his participation, but making connections with me were a little easier. He was respectful and grateful for the services he received. Carl needed to trust that I could help him. For him, I needed to focus our rapport on his confidence. Once I learned about this, I tried to set him up for success. He needed to laugh to ease his tensions sometimes. He would laugh nervously, but not enough to ease his tension. Regardless of his struggles, he kept trying.

Idris was not on my caseload when we first met. Prior to his arrival at my prison, he revoked his special education status. However, another teacher passed along information about him, just in case. Idris was sent to segregation for protective services. Due to his status as a general education student at the time, I had to drop him from my roster, and I moved on to other students. His segregation placement took him away from general population for many months. He contacted me to begin special education services again. This resulted in starting cell-side services several months before the study. Although I had more time, more experience, and more knowledge of Idris, building a

comfort level with him took longer. He needed to have a better experience with reading. Although his main disability is an emotional impairment, he knew he had a “reading issue,” too. I also was aware of this issue. I gave him an opportunity to take on his reading issue head-on. Before we built on successes, we talked about what was going on since our last visit. I showed interest in what he found was important. He liked to watch television shows on CNN, the History Channel, Discovery and other networks. I often asked if he contacted his parents or what was on *Maury* or *Jerry Springer*.

Attention. As a special education teacher, I have always had to pay attention to small changes, rather than big ones. Small changes may look like baby steps compared to leaps and bounds. This is especially true when I see a student once or twice a week. Even noticing day-to-day changes in the classroom is a bigger deal now than it was before I began the study. I am now keenly aware of what my students are doing every day. I log notes for each daily lesson or the foci of individual students. Small changes include noticing the participation level of a student. For instance, a common small change is seeing how a student will go from not participating at all to writing something down on paper. I try to recognize this small change to encourage continued small changes. Perhaps this same student will become one who regularly completes lessons and participates in structured class exercises.

“Turning learners.” Noticing small changes allows me to be aware of a more dynamic move for my students. During my short career, I developed a phrase for when students become more interested in completing schoolwork than avoiding it. I coined it “turning the learner.” Some students do not need to be “turned” because they already want to work and have matured out of avoidance or oppositional behaviors. Carl fit into

the mold of a learner that did not need to be turned. He needed further assistance. He wanted to learn but needed to learn how to learn successfully. “Turning” a learner happens when students become open to learning and discussion. They basically change from doing nothing to doing something. Idris was a learner who “turned.” At first, I believe the main priority of his reenrollment was to get the quality behavior reports for positive action, earn his stipend, and have something to do. He “turned” when he asked for more to read, participated fully in the sessions, and stated how he felt his reading was improving. Having “turned” learners in the classroom makes my job easier. However, I know I will not always have a classroom full of “turned” learners. Therefore, I strive to find what changes their perception.

Reflective Practice

Throughout the process of my research, I found the need to reflect on what I did throughout my regular days and weeks in the classroom and as a teacher. The one-on-one research provided individualized and specific means of instruction for an isolated situation. As a prison educator, more reflective practices are needed to keep me going and feeling good about what I do. Reflecting on my teaching and goal of motivating and engaging incarcerated students motivated me to do better. I must continue to find the potential in students to keep me wanting to do more. I should celebrate good days when they arrive and find what made them good. I must be aware of the tensions I have as a teacher in prison, but not allow them to become unbalanced. Finally, I must deal with my responsibilities properly.

Potential of students. I always look for the potential in students rather than focusing on the negative. I believe it makes my job more enjoyable. In prison, focusing

on the negative aspects is rather easy and can become an epidemic for teachers. I always remember my time in my teacher preparation program when professors told prospective teachers to avoid negativity as much as possible as well as the teachers who colluded on these negative attitudes. All people need to vent eventually, so they can get something off their chests. Usually this involves a way a lesson went or how a student behaved in a class. However, I was told to try and avoid consistent negativity from these teachers and look for potential from my students and perhaps even the students “shunned” by other teachers. In prison, negativity lies not just with the teachers, but perhaps with the correctional officers, other prisoners, or other staff members that only focus on the negative aspects of my students. Granted, these people have different job descriptions or requirements, may have had poor experiences with too many prisoners, or deal with a concentrated number of dangerous individuals where threats are directed at them or others they care about. For many, their feelings are understandable, and the additional stressors of life probably compile these attitudes. However, my job is just to teach. I try to look for good days.

Finding good days. In prison, “good” days may be hard to find. Days may be stressful enough for staff members and prisoners. Therefore, the recognition of a “good” day is quite beneficial to my own mental health. A “good” day in prison for me involves my perception of the way a lesson went, how the class interacted, how a small group session gelled, or the feeling I got from the behavior of the overall class. A good day may even be the result of the buildup of the small changes from a “turned” learner in the classroom. His behavior may have finally manifested for display. Recognizing a “good” day may not always be up to just myself. My higher-security level tutor, Mr. Charles, and

I often discuss how each class period goes. Mr. Charles has been in prison for nearly 50 years and has been a tutor for around 20 years. He is educated inside and outside of prison. His length of sentence often commands the respect of all other prisoners, especially those who find out why he is in prison. Nonetheless, I feel his opinion has value when I bounce my thoughts off him regarding the class's direction. I reflect to myself through my daily notes on whether a certain student had a good or bad individual day. I also do it for the class. I state generalities or specific information based on my feelings and observations. My daily analysis is for me to figure out how much or how little of a role I played into the results of the day. I want to make sure I take enough blame or credit. I also want to make sure I maintain balance. I do not give myself too much grief or overinflate my ego.

To recognize "good" days, I have also had to learn to go along with the flow of how the prison operates. The prison has scheduled lockdowns or drills to run each month and so many times a year. During a year, there are also unscheduled issues that arise due to work on the property, prisoner behavior, or weather-related problems. Therefore, I often walk into the unknown. I do not view the unknown of every day as strictly a negative thing focused on me. The unknown may just be what to expect from my students. Teachers "out in the world" face the unknown when their students return from home. Teachers do not always know what happened at their students' homes or with the families. My students go back to a cellblock or dormitory cell. They may come back to class after they found out their mom died, or uncle was shot. Students may also come back to the classroom after a weekend to say they have gotten married or they have new

children. They did not leave the prison to do or witness these things, but these events occurred while I was gone, and these are monumental for the lives of my students.

Teaching with tension in prison education. As an educator to students in a prison, there is inner-tension for me, which can flare up at any moment. One such inner battle is when I try to see what discussions in the classroom are too much and what discussions are just therapeutic for my students. Lesson planning can be difficult based on prisoner security level. I must make decisions on the spot to proceed with a lesson or not. Basically, I need to use responsive teaching to adjust to what I feel is best. One example happened a few weeks ago. I planned a lesson at home for language arts. I was going to have my guys work on identifying details of pro and cons in an article. It seemed simple enough and many teachers have done it. As I started my class with my higher-security group, I felt, based on my own prior knowledge with these individuals and prison in general, the lesson just would not work. The students had been on lockdown for a day and some had not been outside of their cells in almost two days due to the schedule of their yard time. I made the decision to scrap the lesson and just allow the students to work on some of their previous work. The second class had one student fresh out of suicide watch. Therefore, I let the lesson slide until I went to the lower-security level with students who are much closer to going home on parole and have likely led an easier life inside the prison system.

Another instance of inner-turmoil relates to the complex nature of andragogy in prison. Andragogy is the concept of teaching adults as adults. Unfortunately, many of my students are stuck between the adults that they are in a physical and legal sense versus the mental age and overall educational history. Ultimately, pedagogy should give way to

andragogy at a given point in one's educational life (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). For me, this means I must balance my technique and release of responsibility between the realms of andragogy and pedagogy. It is like I am on a spectrum of instruction methodology. For instance, some students need the additional guidance of a teacher. I provide the full-on instruction for the lesson and follow some of the typical methods most quality teachers follow. Other times, I feel some students do not need, what they would term the "out of touch white guy's" opinion on the subject. They need someone they trust to help them first. Students teaching students is a quality concept within the field of andragogy. My job is to oversee it and provide any further support.

A metaphorical storm came to my job during the winter months. Our education manager requested that my teaching partner and I change the structure of our classes in the higher security level. Unfortunately, this left him short of the required hours he needs scheduled in each week. As we put together potential solutions, our full-time lower-level teacher retired somewhat unexpectedly. Although this solved my teaching partner's problem in that he became the new full-time lower-level teacher, it gave me a much larger obstacle to take on. I was now in charge of the entire higher-security level enrollment. I was left to figure out how to find room for students to be enrolled when possible. However, the ability to enroll over 40 students dropped to just over 20 after recent changes. Available classroom spots dropped from 32 to 16. We used to run four classes of eight. With my job responsibilities required elsewhere in the prison, I run only two classes of eight. This is a major problem for a ballooned waiting list of 45 potential students.

Responsibility. I feel responsible for more, now more than ever. I do not believe this is a bad thing though. My profession is about the care and effort I put into the education of my students. The fact that my students are prisoners means they failed or have been failed by more than one sect of society. I, along with many in MDOC, seek to provide these students opportunities to have success for the first times in their lives. We hope that these successes will set off on a lifetime of future successes. Some may not have anyone outside of us that have ever cared about their futures.

My responsibilities as a teacher include more than just academics. Academics are important, and it is the main reason I have the job, but I feel the academics are just a starting point for the overall help or assistance I provide. Help comes in many forms. Help can be the one-on-one reading sessions where I help sound out the words or show how to break down the letter-sound relationships. Help may also be showing where my prison is at in relation to Flint or Kalamazoo. Help may be just taking a moment to understand the situation a student is in within another recommended program or redirecting another prisoner to the proper prison personnel.

I feel responsible to communicate effectively with my students and prospective students. Communication in prison is important. I have to be careful what I say, when I say it, and how I say it. Revealing too much can be bad for safety and may be too close to overfamiliarity. Revealing too little may be “spinning” the prisoner. “Spinning” refers to just directing the prisoner to someone else or delaying the process of a discussion or idea, potentially putting the blame indirectly on someone else. I feel proper communication involves telling what you can with the proper words to the right individual. If a prisoner cannot understand larger vocabularies, do not use larger words or jargon. I fell victim to

too much talk before. A former student, Mr. Wilson, once politely told me to “get to the point” with my directions when talking to certain prisoners because, as he said, I “tend to use too many words.” Within the aspect of communication is honesty. While there are limitations to what prisoners can know and what I can do for them, lying about something that is not worth the lie can degrade positive communication steps. I must be honest on whether a student is ready for a test or where a potential student sits on the waiting list. He may not like what he hears, but he knows that I am honest about the situation.

I also feel responsible to show respect or respect my students. Respect in the prison system can be confusing at times. It is dynamic and carries multiple layers that are often unseen to the average prison employee. A worker’s general definition of respect may not be the same to current, former, and future prisoners. For instance, I often hear people talk about respect being “earned” or the statement “I’ll show you respect when you show me some.” Now, I understand the premise, but in some ways, those are like a chicken-and-the-egg-type of situations. To avoid any chest-puffing or “fronting” within the classroom, I always feel I can show the proper respect to my students first.

Addressing my students as Mr. Jones or Mr. Johnson puts them all on an even level. I feel I have nothing to lose. If they do not choose to return the respect, it is not likely that they are going to give it to me later anyway, especially if I accidentally disrespect them.

Summary

My findings revealed that making connections with my students and building a rapport seem to be beneficial in motivating students to engage in completion of literacy tasks. Further, finding reading selections and topics that interest my students also seems to be helpful. I learned when I discuss or describe my practices with critical friends, I

reveal more about what I do in detail. My own personal descriptors display my recognition of where some students are in their learning processes. There more I stay aware of balancing my inner-tensions and actively seek out probable and proactive solutions for my students, the more likely I feel will have success along with my students.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Summary

Through this self-study, I sought to explore and better understand: a) How might my teaching practices in the one-on-one segregation setting motivate incarcerated adults to engage in literacy learning by completing literacy tasks? and b) What more can I learn about being a general educator in the prison setting? After years of teaching within the prison system, I felt I could do more with my students than what I currently was doing. I looked to review my practices and not just the fact I used motivation with prisoners who were eligible for special education.

When I attended a regional training downstate in the summer of 2017, one of the co-chairs of my special education committee urged the special education teachers within the department to try to meet with our students in segregation more often. In the one-on-one teaching opportunities, I wondered how I could engage and motivate incarcerated adults to complete literacy tasks. Further, I wanted to know what more I could learn from being a general educator in the prison setting. In this chapter, I will discuss the implications for myself as the teacher researcher, my students in prison, and my profession in terms of broader ideas like general and special education within prison and literacy education.

Implications for Myself, the Educator

Although the intent of this study was to be on my teaching in a segregation setting, I feel my overall teaching practices evolved in a positive direction as a result. I wanted to see how engagement and positive attachment to literacy tasks helped improve literacy learning for my students. Success in literacy tasks is important. However, without engagement, they were not likely to have success (Skinner, Kinderman, & Furrer, 2009).

In turn, I feel my confidence level is up as an educator. I believe it is up because of my comfort level with the use of the one-on-one approach and materials. I feel I have a better idea of who I am as a teacher and where I am going with myself and my students. I take pride in how I approach students and where I think they are going.

My view of the day-to-day events in my teaching changed. I use the events and observations of each day as pieces of data rather than seeing them as separate unconnected details of a routine. I have always jotted notes down for what occurred in class, what each student worked on, and reminders for the future. Now, the notes can still be notes for my own reference, but they can also serve as a rating for how my teaching went on each given day. The general routine of self-paced learning remains. However, I use the routine as a safety net for myself and my students. When I want to try a class lesson, I can. The students who are not willing and for those whom the information may not apply are not forced to join on the content-focused lesson. They are free to join if the information intrigues them, but they do not have to be a part of something they do not want to be a part of or feel comfortable with doing. The routine allows my students to use their interest-levels to guide them into taking a chance on learning new information or relearn old information.

For the instances when I go beyond the routine, the daily evidence helps me judge how well I presented the important factors of a lesson or idea. Most teachers may do this, but I feel the research for this thesis made me more cognizant. In the past, I may have chalked up a poor lesson to the behaviors of the students or their lack of ability to understand what I taught. Now, I look for how I presented the anticipatory set or carried through the reason for the lesson. I ask myself questions like: Did I respond properly to

questions? Did the students understand what I even said? Where did I lose them? Why did this lesson work better for one set of students than the others? Who got the lesson off track? Did they affect the others? Who really wanted to learn? Who did not really want to learn? From these questions, I seek to better myself and look for opportunities to better my students' understanding. When I first began, I likely would have allowed some of the pressures and stress to get to me and possibly let the students "win" their fight against learning. Knowing more, I will look to continue to act when my students show the signs of struggle, including the visible signs of poor engagement, lack of self-efficacy, and lack of motivation. I will also need to remind myself that the status quo of the past did not keep continued confidence and enjoyment of my job. I know what steps I can take to do better, and I need to continue to take those steps.

Implications for the Students

The two students in the study were able to see short-term effects based on the one-on-one visits. Most of the data for the one-on-one visits ended when the two students transferred to another prison. I chose not to continue with any other students after I felt I gathered enough data to address my inquiry questions. The short-term benefits for my one-on-one participants may garner longer-term benefits for my classroom students.

After Idris left my prison to transfer to a lower-security level, he was enrolled into a regular classroom setting. I found out that he was able to qualify for his first GED segment. His participation in my study allowed him to feel more confident in his ability to read and make sense of the text he read. He grew from a student who did not want to participate to a potential GED tester. I was not able to see any further information on Carl at this time.

My classroom students are separate individuals with their own starting points, backgrounds, and abilities. Becoming a better educator is good for the students, too. When I focus on their respective abilities and starting points, it allows them to feel like the work is geared personally to them. In many cases, students will often repeat the cycle they have done many times. Others may get lost within plain sight inside the classroom. Sticking on this plan is always a work in progress and requires due diligence.

Implications for My Profession

Due to this being a self-study on my teaching practices, I cannot project similar results to all prison educators. Yet, I believe the act of reviewing one's own teaching has benefits and those benefits can be shared with the intent to influence others to better their own teaching practices. I am not a perfect teacher. However, I can continue to try to refine my methods and practices towards being a better teacher. I recommend that other prison educators take time to look at what they plan to do and how they carry out their plans. I recommend they take the time to analyze what they have done and review how their plans affect their students.

While I intend to continue specifically-tailoring lessons to important GED subjects and concepts, I am a different kind of teacher. My background in special education and literacy gives me an opportunity to apply both without necessarily becoming a lecturing content-area instructor. The process of this self-study gave me more confidence. I believe I can rely on myself to instruct, based on my knowledge as a professional, rather than relying on packaged materials. Even within the prison, I want to continue to promote a welcoming environment of literacy. My students need to continue to work at their own pace. If I do not intend to have a mini-lesson for the day, I still want

to make sure I conference with many students on their progress. They need to feel like they are still getting attention from the teacher, rather than left alone because they are not causing any trouble.

With regards to other educators, I was able to share the basic benefits of implementing Newsela in the classroom at a recent special education training with another prison teacher. Without knowing, we each submitted our practice of using the news-collecting student website to our chairperson for one of our best practices leading up to the training. Our presentation noted how to register, navigate the website, find articles, change reading levels, and use the articles purposely in the classroom. One message I presented was to use the articles as a transition tool for the students. Students can use the non-fiction articles to read as they arrive to the classroom. This allows for them to settle into a learning mode without the pressures of GED-level work.

Summary

This self-study demonstrated the importance of reviewing my own practices in more than one manner. I reviewed how teaching practices in a one-on-one setting may impact motivation for engagement in the completion of literacy tasks. I also learned more details about myself as a general educator within the prison system. With consistent awareness of the tensions I face as an educator, the more likely I will be able to stay vigilant to provide opportunities for quality engagement towards the completion of literacy. I will also notice what works and what does not work as a prison educator. Grit and zest are necessary for my continued improvement and consciousness as an educator.

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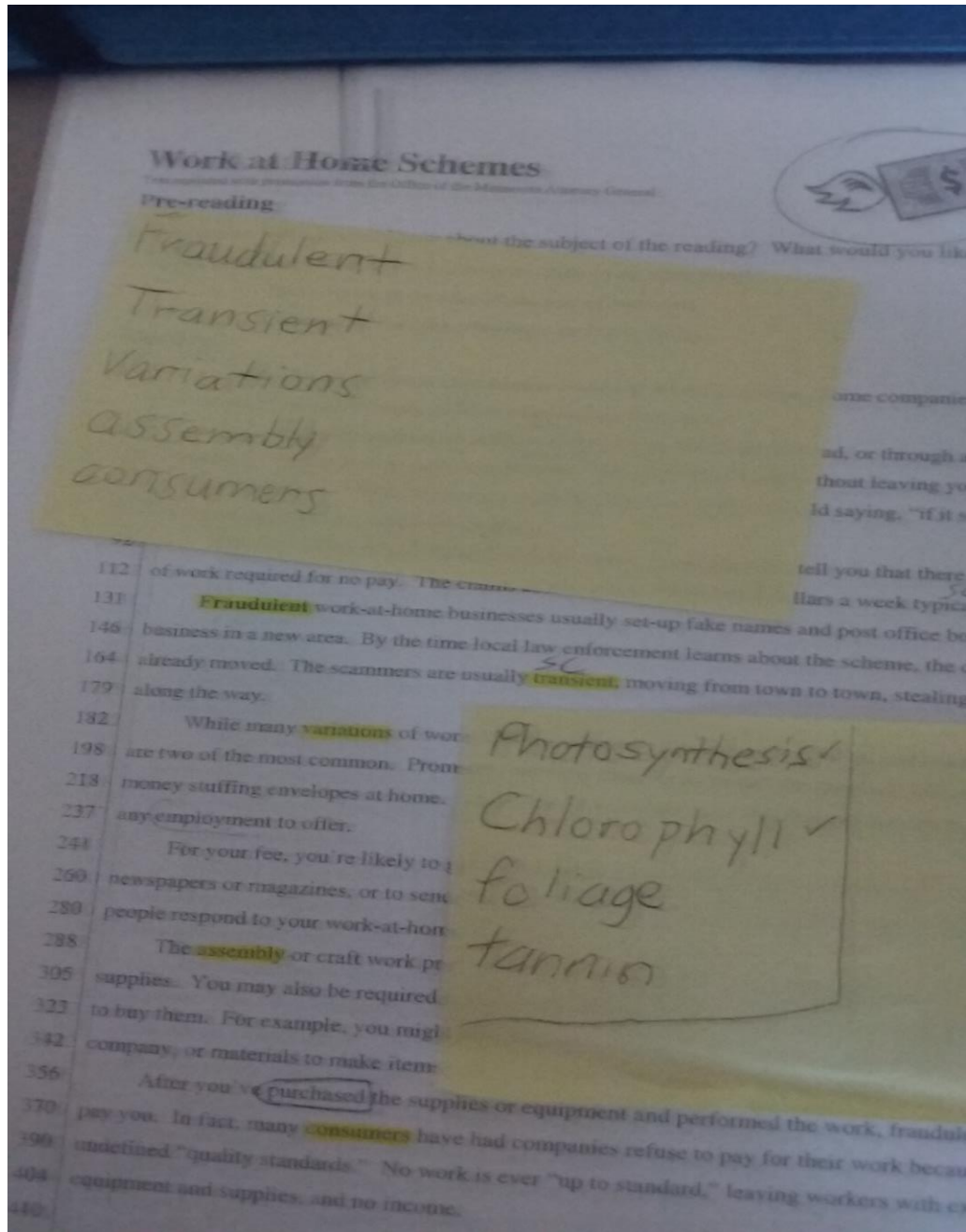
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Appendix A

Vocabulary Words



Appendix B

Reflection Notes

8/1/17

-First session for Carl; Worked on Pre-GED Social Studies lesson; read aloud segments; worked in more of a tutoring role rather than a set lesson plan. Carl made better connections, but no great assessment on my part as the instructor. The book did the majority of the work for me. Bold words were reviewed and reading selections were summarized through a combination of teacher and student discussion.

8/11/17 (History of Basketball/Statue of Liberty)

-First session for Inez; He was given the idea of what the one-on-one sessions would basically be about: read aloud a lesson and answer questions. I took a slower approach as Inez has a speech impediment to go along with his other issues. His tendency to struggle with regular words is something I want to take a look at, as other content-specific or context-specific words can be looked at from a different perspective.

-This was the first session for Carl using general reading selections outside of Steck-Vaughn booklets. I picked a topic he was interested in and threw in a topic related to social studies. He was just told to read aloud and answer some questions at the end. He was able to answer most of the questions. He had a tendency to stall or automatically say "no." He sometimes will repeat an answer word for word from the reading selection.

8/15/17 (Value of Sleep/MLK)

-No Carl

-Two topics were picked for Inez that related to his interests: sleep and Martin Luther King. Inez likes to offer everything he is feeling during the beginning of the lesson. I had to redirect him in the beginning to get stated, in the middle to continue reading, and at the end to focus on the questions after reading.

8/16/17 (Place Value for Decimals)

-No Inez

-Carl needed to understand what place value meant and what it looked like for decimals. He knew some places but could not always identify what they were. I used my notepad to write large numbers and identify through the exact terminology related to each place value. We read numbers aloud to identify what they sounded like and how the way we say them aloud relates to the specific place values involved. Additionally, I wanted to make him realize the place values are usually given away. I used examples and underlined a place value for him to identify. He was given a worksheet to assess for the next meeting.

9/1/17 (Labor Day/Work at Home Schemes)

-With Labor Day on other side of the weekend, I wanted to choose a topic that was current. Therefore, I picked one selection on the origin and evolution of Labor Day.

-For the first time, specific words were picked out to possible help before reading. They were pronounced and repeated. Brief generic definitions were given out.

9/8/17 (Pledge of Allegiance/Susan B. Anthony)

- Two social studies-related lessons were chosen to help both students find out more about famous entities in U.S. history.
- Words were selected again and explained to assist in reading, as not all words gave away the definition within the reading selection.

9/19/17 (Tornadoes/Wind energy)

- Topics were picked related to science.
- Students were prompted on what causes tornadoes and what experiences have they had with tornadoes.
- Students made statements when they heard interesting information. Inez sometimes omitted or mispronounced words. He did self-correct, but sometimes needed assistance.
- After reading questions included: The difference between facts and opinions (the reading included myths about tornadoes.) the most common form of tornadoes, and the differences between horizontal and vertical. I could have used more during reading questions to assess reading as went along with the students.
- Wind energy relied on previous knowledge of fossil fuels and alternative energies. We discussed these prior to reading. Other pre-reading questions involved: What would you like to know? What questions do you have about the topic? Both students made statements about the power of the windmills.
- Generally, they relate to what they have seen on television or in the movies. Most of the television Carl watches is related to movies or reality shows. Inez states he watches a lot of CNN to get his news.
- When I teach Inez first, I generally make adjustments for Carl based on what I see works or does not work with Inez. They do not have the same abilities, but I am able to pick up on what I may have omitted or forgotten with Inez. Specific words may be addressed or not addressed. The discussion generally is different as Inez needs to be cut off from rambling on about his problems. Carl usually needs more prompting for a discussion.

9/29/17

- First use of Newsela (Bug burgers/Hurricane Maria); one current event topic, the other just an interesting world-view topic
- Specific words were made known to both students: nutritious, preserves, leery, broader, larvae, locusts, explicit, void, and cultivate
- Both were taught the same way, but Carl does not seem to get distracted nor does he start to ramble about things. He needs more prompting but asks more specific questions.
- Inez needs more redirection, as he does not need to warm up before talking about anything. He gets encouragement through each week, but often takes longer to read through the whole article. However, he makes quicker connections and makes good statements to connect some vocabulary words. He does struggle with certain words that he mistakes for others. His mistakes may lead to some comprehension issues overall, but he does a good job getting the point.

10/10/17 (Leaves changing color/Columbus Day Pros and Cons)

- Inez was distracted by the growing frustrations of living in segregation. After our initial lesson on the changing color of leaves, I redirected my efforts to keep him calm. The lesson on leaves was introduced as a science lesson and why leaves change colors. Inez was upset about everything that he cannot do, especially the inability to test. Efforts were directed towards behavior management instead. I talked to Inez about how he got to where he is at now. I reasoned with him on how he can get to his next step.

-Carl had a headache and complained about his medication being changed. I prompted both reading lessons with a preview and connection to which content-area to which they belonged. I had before, during, and after questions: What do you know about why leaves change? What do you notice about chlorophyll? Tell me what happens to the leaves when it gets cold outside? Compare being sugared-up as a human and as a tree. However, he did not do well to make any connections. I led him to make connections through the statements made in the text, but he still just gave general guessing answers, which is what we were trying to stop him from doing. The effort was not there as it had been before. Carl was asked about how he normally feels and said he normally enjoys reading to learn new things. He felt today's readings were work and he could not remember what they were about in the end.

10/20/17

Dying Young Article

-No Carl

-I established a pre-reading exercise with Inez to prompt him on the article about committing crime when youth think they will die young. When used in a regular classroom setting, the intention is to have students write down the age they believe they would die at when they were young. How far back is not important, as long as the student(s) think about the prompt. However, Inez is permanently restrained due to his status. Because of his restrictions, I had to discuss the pre-reading prompt with him. He was able to answer towards the suspected theme of the article. His engagement was already evident prior to reading. I had him read aloud. At the end we discussed the information. After certain points, Inez made a comment on how he felt about the reading. He was able to really connect and liked the article. He wants more articles like this that connect to him on a cultural and personal level. He will not be able to get every article like this and some articles are not allowed within the prison.

10/27/17

Social Media Article (Both) | Decimals/Music (Carl)

-Plan: Talk about previous article(s), stop after segments, review overall article

-Warm-up: past social media use to make connection to the article

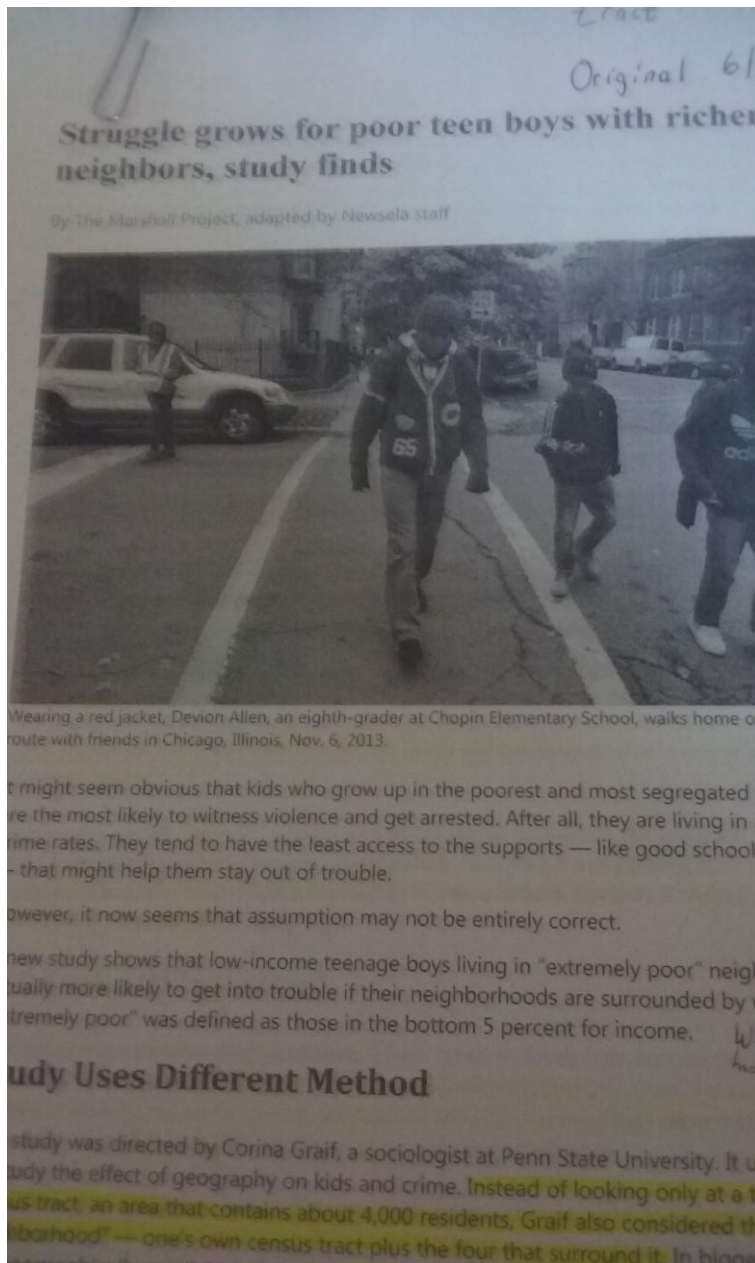
-Carl complained about his vision. He asked if he could be read to instead.

Quote of the day: "Some d**k could start some drama online" and "Real Gs move in silence like lasagna."

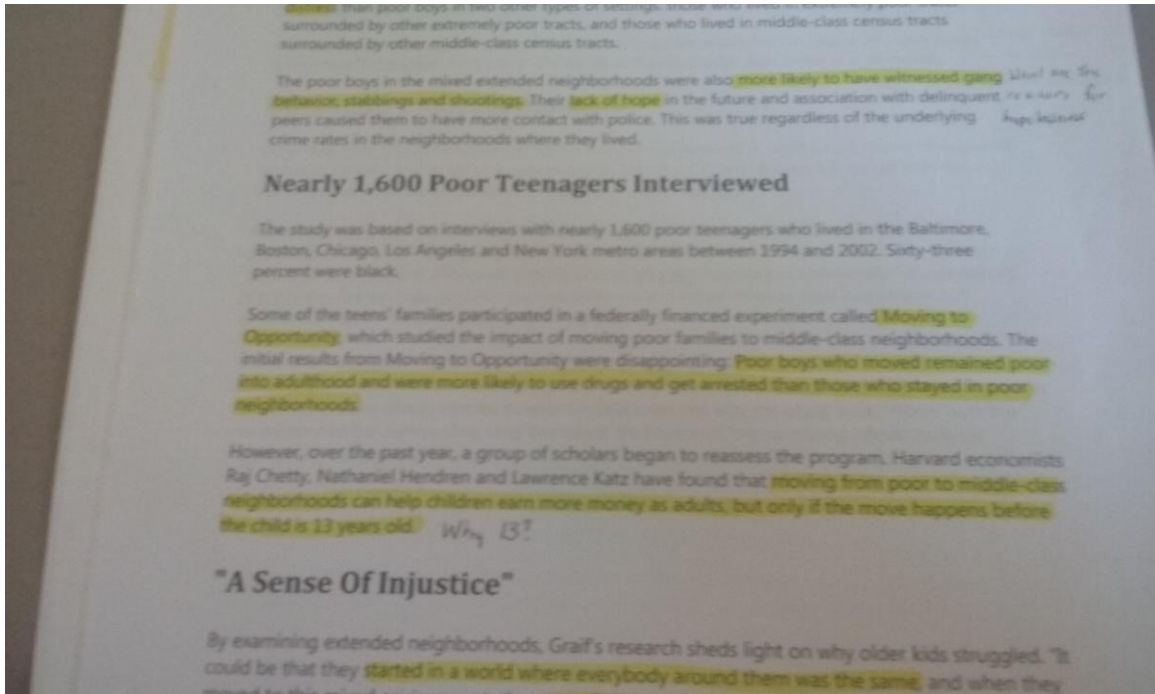
**Carl tends to be either handcuffed or simply escorted to the cell. He does not have any restraints.

Appendix C

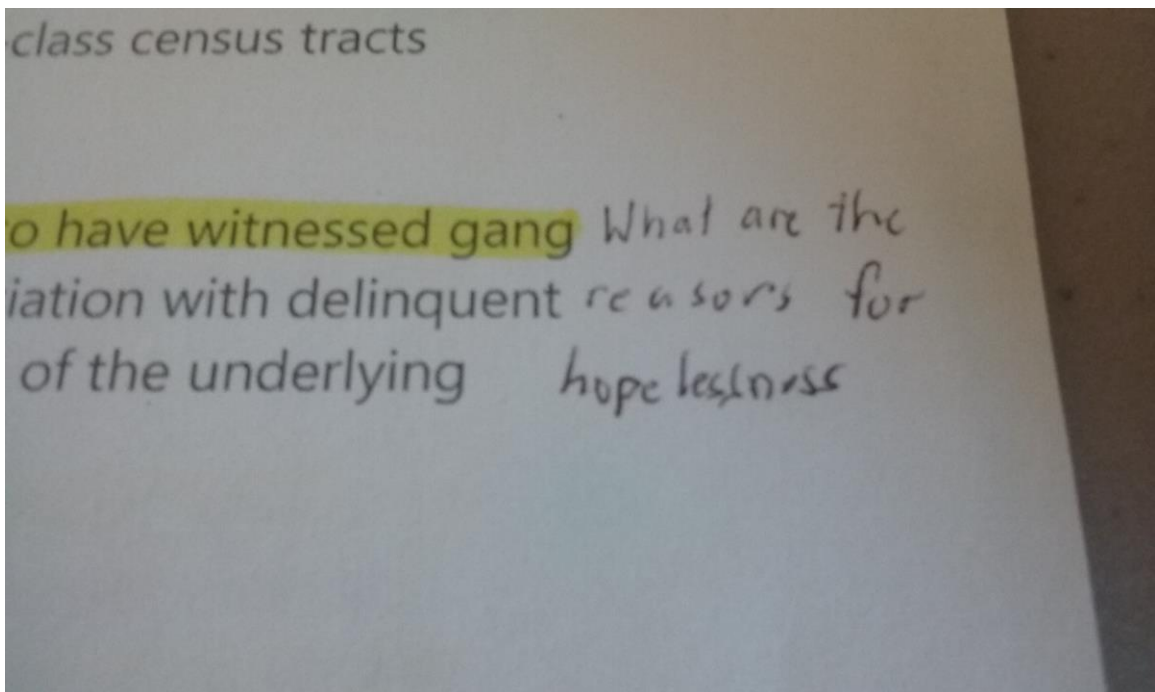
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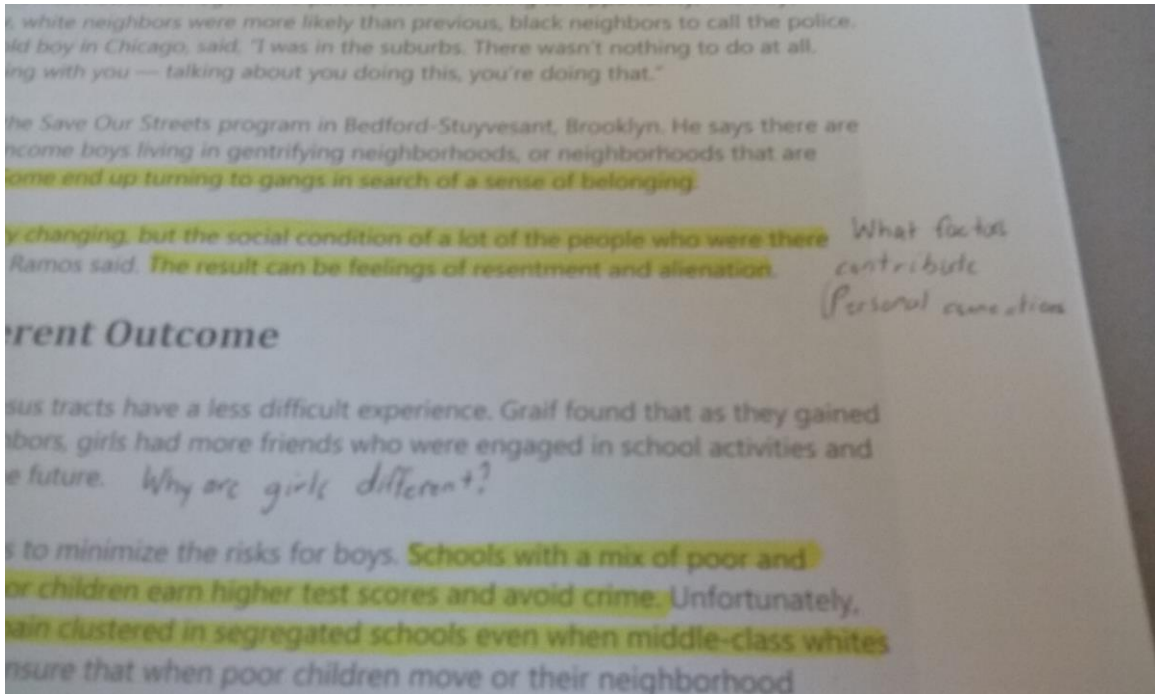
Article on poor teens with the start of highlighted information



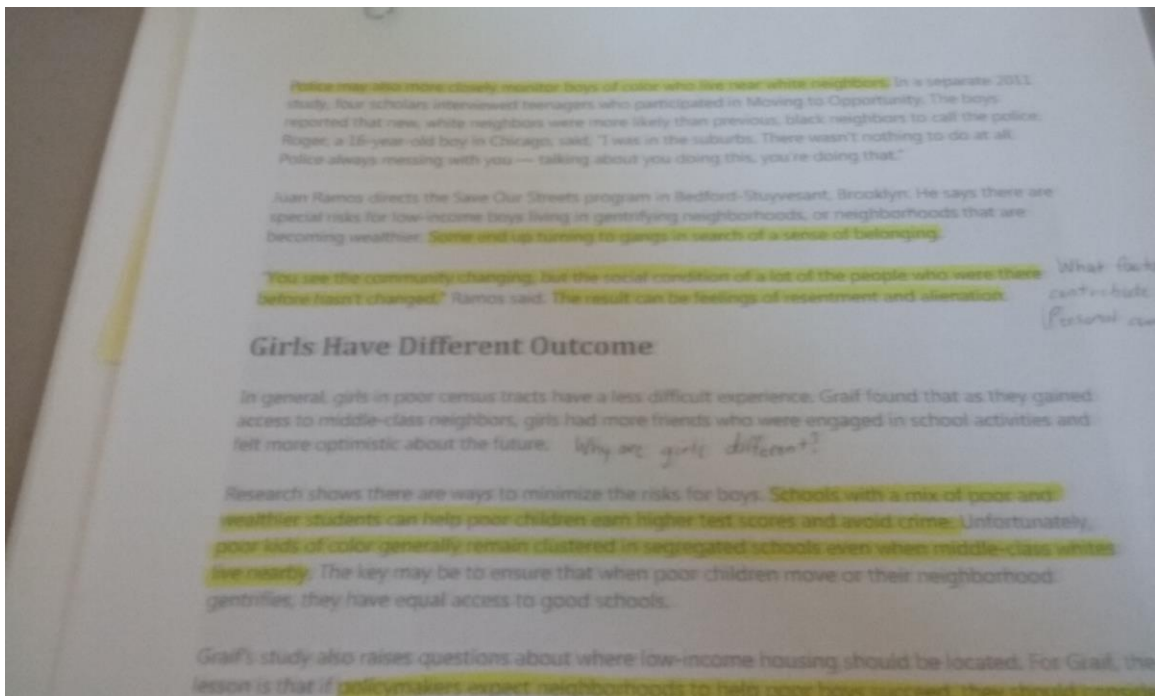
Overview of second page of the article with a focus on different sections with questions



A close-up of one of the questions asked in the first section of the article – “What are the reasons for hopelessness?”



Another closer view of the questions and highlights. One question asks: "What factors contribute to the social condition (with the hope of personal connections)?"



More use of highlighting important information.