

Copyright

by

Tracy Scholz

May 2012

THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM LEARNING LABS AND AN ENGLISH  
WORKSHOP MODEL OF INSTRUCTION ON TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND  
PRACTICE

A Dissertation Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Tracy A. Scholz

May 2012

THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM LEARNING LABS AND AN ENGLISH  
WORKSHOP MODEL OF INSTRUCTION ON TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND  
PRACTICE

A Dissertation for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by

Tracy A. Scholz

Approved by Dissertation Committee:

---

Dr. Cheryl J. Craig, Chairperson

---

Dr. Mimi Lee, Committee Member

---

Dr. Lee Mountain, Committee Member

---

Dr. Richard Olenchak, Committee Member

---

Dr. Jacqueline Sack, Committee Member

---

Dr. Robert H. McPherson, Dean  
College of Education

May 2012

## Acknowledgement

Accomplishments are empty if there is no one with whom to share them. Equally important is acknowledging that one did not succeed alone and that there were many who helped along the way. It is these people I wish to thank.

First and foremost, I wish to thank my husband, Steve, who not only played Mr. Mom willingly and convincingly, but encouraged me when I felt I could not read one more article, write one more assignment, or attend one more evening class working a full day. To my children, Savannah and Chase, thank you for your patience, for giving me those special shoulder massages, and for making me laugh when I needed it most. To my mom, Joan, who helped shuttle kids to and fro and who opened her house often for sleepovers. To my sister, Katherine, and my brother, Charles, I am deeply grateful for all your texts, emails, and phone calls.

I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Richard Olenchak, Dr. Mimi Lee, Dr. Lee Mountain, Dr. Jacqueline Sack, and especially my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Cheryl Craig, with whom none of this would have been possible. Her wisdom and guidance helped me navigate the program with finesse and confidence. Thank you, Dr. Craig, for introducing me to a world of experience I did not know existed.

A huge thank you also goes to the district where I conducted my research and in which I work. To my coordinator and colleagues, who I cannot specifically name (you know who you are!), it is with deepest sincerity that I say I work with the best people in the world.

Finally, I would like to thank my dear friends, Sharon (editor extraordinaire!) for lending an ear and sharing her killer wit, and Lauren and Shaunna for their feedback and friendship as we embarked on this endeavor together.

THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM LEARNING LABS AND AN ENGLISH  
WORKSHOP MODEL OF INSTRUCTION ON TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND  
PRACTICE

An Abstract  
of A Dissertation Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Tracy A. Scholz

May 2012

Scholz, Tracy A. "The Impact of Classroom Learning Labs and an English Workshop Model of Instruction on Teacher Knowledge and Practice." Unpublished Doctor of Education Dissertation, University of Houston, May, 2012.

### Abstract

This narrative inquiry attempts to uncover and discover experiences secondary educators had while navigating a new instructional model, specifically its core concepts and ideas, design and structure, tensions and accomplishments, and did so in a collaborative classroom learning lab environment. The narratives from four participants in the program – two classroom teachers, one campus specialist, and one district administrator – elucidate how teachers' constructed and reconstructed personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985, 1989) over their two-year involvement in the program, and how the experience continued to influence their practices one year after its conclusion. Engaging in the narrative inquiry approach allowed me to burrow deeply into teachers' stories of the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990), excavating how the model had an impact on their instructional planning and how the learning lab expanded their knowledge and practice.

Furthermore, the study shares how the collaborative spirit among educators fostered an environment conducive to creating sustainable growth with the hope that the workshop model components become internalized and continue to flourish, not only in the intentional design of lessons, but in the daily pursuit of expanding knowledge of practice and of self. Understanding the structure and the components of the workshop model (Bennett, 2007), as well as the struggles and successes of enacting the workshop

model in their classrooms and in front of colleagues is important for drawing attentions to how educators grapple with new knowledge in the context of peer groups.

*Keywords:* classroom learning lab, professional development, workshop model, teacher knowledge, teacher practice



## Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
I. Overview .....	1
Current Perceptions of Instructional Design.....	3
The Workshop Model of Instruction.....	5
Classroom Learning Labs .....	8
Building Teacher Knowledge and Practice.....	9
Brief Overview of the Study .....	12
Purpose and Significance of the Study .....	14
Summary .....	16
Content Notes.....	17
II. Review of Literature.....	18
Attitudes and Observations on Instruction.....	19
The Workshop Model – Design and Structure .....	23
The Pillars of Workshop Model.....	29
Collaborative learning.....	29
Inquiry-based instruction. ....	31
Beginning with the end in mind – purposeful backward planning .....	34
Student-time vs. Teacher-time .....	36
Conferring.....	37
The Complexity of the Model.....	38
Ways of Knowing .....	41
Classroom Learning Labs .....	42
Sharing voices and visions.....	44
Narrative Inquiry.....	47
Blurred Boundaries and the Multiplicity of Roles.....	51
Summary .....	53
III. Methodology .....	54
Overview of the Study .....	54

Purpose and Significance of the Study .....	57
Research and Study Questions.....	58
Approach and Methodology .....	58
Selection of participants.....	59
Collection of documentation.....	62
Observation protocol.....	63
Interview protocol.....	64
Written materials protocol .....	65
Document Analysis and Interpretation .....	66
Observational field notes. ....	67
Interviews.....	68
Written materials.....	68
Role of the Researcher .....	70
Summary .....	71
IV. Findings .....	72
The Context of the Program.....	75
Storyed Lives – Living Stories .....	77
Becoming educators.....	77
The researcher’s story .....	78
Mila’s story .....	81
Sean’s story .....	84
Shirley’s story .....	87
Olivia’s story.....	90
Overarching Findings.....	94
Collaboration among students.....	99
Inquiry-based instruction. ....	103
Backward planning – planning with intention.....	106
Student work time .....	111
Conferring with students.....	115
The Impact of Coaching.....	117
The Learning Lab – Learning and Growing Together.....	126
Limitations .....	128
Summary .....	128

V. Interpretations and Implications for Further Study .....	130
Our Stories - Ourselves .....	130
The Workshop Model .....	132
Impact of the Coaching Experience on the Researcher .....	137
The Classroom Learning Lab.....	138
Implications for Further Study.....	139
Closing Thoughts .....	141
References .....	143
Appendix A. Interventionist Job Description .....	152
Appendix B. Planning Sequences .....	155
Appendix C. Classroom Learning Labs.....	158
Appendix D. Classroom Learning Lab Participants .....	160
Appendix E. Sample Classroom Learning Lab Agenda .....	162
Appendix F. Sample Scripting Chart .....	165
Appendix G. Body of Research Studied by Participants in the Classroom Learning Lab Project .....	169
Appendix H. Sample Coaching Letter .....	171
Appendix I. Interview Protocol.....	173

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Characteristics of Effective Teachers .....	39
2. Impact of the Program .....	69

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
1. The Workshop Model Design: Four Basic Parts .....	7
2. Broad Contextual Relationships of this Study.....	13
3. The Workshop Model Design with Planning Details .....	28
4. The Complexity of the Workshop Model .....	40
5. Schwab's Four Commonplaces.....	50
6. Four Commonplaces of the Classroom Learning Lab Program .....	51
7. Cohort Breakdown.....	55

## **Chapter I**

### **Overview**

The Impact of Classroom Learning Labs and an English Workshop Model of Instruction  
on Teacher Knowledge and Practice

*I am sitting with thirty-two other educators in the school's library, waiting, watching the television monitor which shows a wide angle view of Sean's classroom. Students begin filing in, and we get ready to watch Sean in action with the workshop model. He greets his students as they enter, trying to ignore the fact that there are other teachers stationed along the outer walls of the classroom and a camera mounted near his desk from which the rest of us can observe the action.*

*The bell rings and Sean moves to the front of the room to begin the lesson.*

"I was so nervous," Sean would later admit after his classroom learning lab experience. "To have my peers watch me in the classroom...I just really, really wanted it to go well for me and my students."

Such aspirations were typical with the participants in the Bolton School District's (pseudonym) secondary English Language Arts (ELA) Classroom Learning Lab (CLL) program in which participating teachers took turns hosting a lab and where other educators – teachers, specialists, and district coordinators – had the opportunity to observe the lesson, label what they saw and heard, and debrief on why it mattered to student learning. However, taking a risk in front of colleagues is not an easy experience, especially when engaging with a newly adopted instructional model. Because the use of the workshop model, which provides an organizational framework intent on maximizing

student learning through intentional lesson design, was an expectation of the program, participants were able to share in the common experience of learning about and the navigation of an unfamiliar model and in the building of a shared community of scholarship through the learning lab structure. As both researcher and participating district interventionist, whose duties include training and supporting teachers at the secondary level throughout the year in addition to assisting in the development of district and campus instructional materials (see Appendix A for a detailed description of job expectations), I had the opportunity to interact often with those involved in the program and to see the impact that this experience had on teachers' knowledge and practice. Moreover, I witnessed transformations in everyday instructional systems, structures, routines and rituals, shared in teachers' triumphs, frustrations and anticipation, and was able to dig deeper into personal stories through the eyes of participants over the course of the two-year enactment from August 2009 to May 2011. In addition to studying the initial two-year program, I later revisited four of the participants in the spring of 2012, approximately nine months after the conclusion of the program, to determine if participants continued enacting the workshop model's underlying ideas and components (see Appendix B) in the classroom environment.

This study of experience through the use of narrative examines the influence of a classroom learning lab experience and the effect of enacting a new instructional model on one district representative, one campus specialist, and two classroom teachers' knowledge and practice. To establish the framework in which these educators' stories were lived and are told, I briefly outline in Chapter 1 the scope of the study and its parts. In Chapter 2, I give more attention to the body of research supporting current perceptions

of instructional design and the importance of the teacher as part of the curriculum process, the components of the workshop model teachers were asked to incorporate in their classrooms, and I explain the setup of the learning lab – its purpose and goals – and the body of research that supports this kind of learning experience. Furthermore, I discuss research that supports narratives of experience as part of the curriculum process, and I examine how my multi-identities as a district interventionist, classroom learning lab participant, and researcher led to discoveries of the complexities of balance between performance expectations related to my job (role of interventionist) and honoring the stories of co-researchers in the study (role of inquirer). Understanding the frameworks above allows for further realization of how participants were to instructionally design lessons and the organization of the professional environment in which we were to learn.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology of the inquiry, the selection of participants, data collection procedures, and how the data were interpreted. The findings that resulted from the narrative stories and experiences of the participants are shared in Chapter 4, and are further unpacked in Chapter 5 to determine the impact of the workshop model and classroom learning lab experience on teacher knowledge and practice as well as how it may influence future studies and enactments.

### **Current Perceptions of Instructional Design**

According to Schmoker (2006), education is essentially dealing with an image problem. The majority of classrooms he visited in his study are depicted as having “startling amounts of busy work, with no connection to important standards, or a common curriculum,” and where “neither teachers nor students can articulate what they are supposed to be learning that day” (Schmoker, 2006, p. 16). Schmoker (2006) further



lambastes the “irrelevant worksheets and activities” he most often saw in schools he toured in several states, as well as the “glaring absence of the most basic elements of an effective lesson,” which he defines as

an essential, clearly defined learning objective followed by careful modeling or a clear sequence of steps, punctuated by efforts during the lesson to see how well students are paying attention or learning the material. (p.16)

The arguments surrounding the quality of lesson design and learning in language arts classrooms are becoming increasingly more prevalent. Classrooms are consistently described as spaces where the teacher does most of the talking, where students exhibit disengagement, where much time is wasted on pointless and incongruent lessons with no flow or energy, and where there are few, if any, consistent structures or routines (Schlechty, 2002; Schmoker, 2006).

In his book, *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers*, Allington (2001) describes current practice in English classrooms as spending a good deal of time on “stuff” and he states that students “still spent inordinate amounts of time on workbook activities” (p. 27). Though reform and improvement, what it looks like and how to do it, have been the talk for decades (Aoki, 1989; Apple, 1990; Dewey, 1934, 1938; Levin, 1984; Schwab, 1969), real change and sustainability in any sweeping form remains elusive. However, there is some agreement that reform need not be an arduous undertaking. Schmoker (2006) notes that to have a profound effect, continuous commonsense efforts that match effective practice with essential standards would make a difference for students of any socioeconomic level. He further argues that “the changes that will have the most impact on student learning require only reasonable efforts and

adjustment, not more time” (2006, p. 4). In addition, Noguera (2004) points out that “[i]mprovements in teaching and learning can only come from a strategy focused on improving instruction” (p. 30). If reform and change are, as Schmoker and Noguera state, as simple as making reasonable adjustments to efforts and practice focused on instruction, then on which components should we focus in order to improve current teaching methods to maximize student learning?

### **The Workshop Model of Instruction**

Review of instructional model designs reveals many educational workshop models already in existence (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1987, 1990; Graves, 1983, 1991, 1994), most of which are primarily aimed at the elementary school level. However, the existing workshops share common ideas relevant to learning at any grade level, such as student-centered instruction, conferring, independent and group work time, debriefing and sharing.

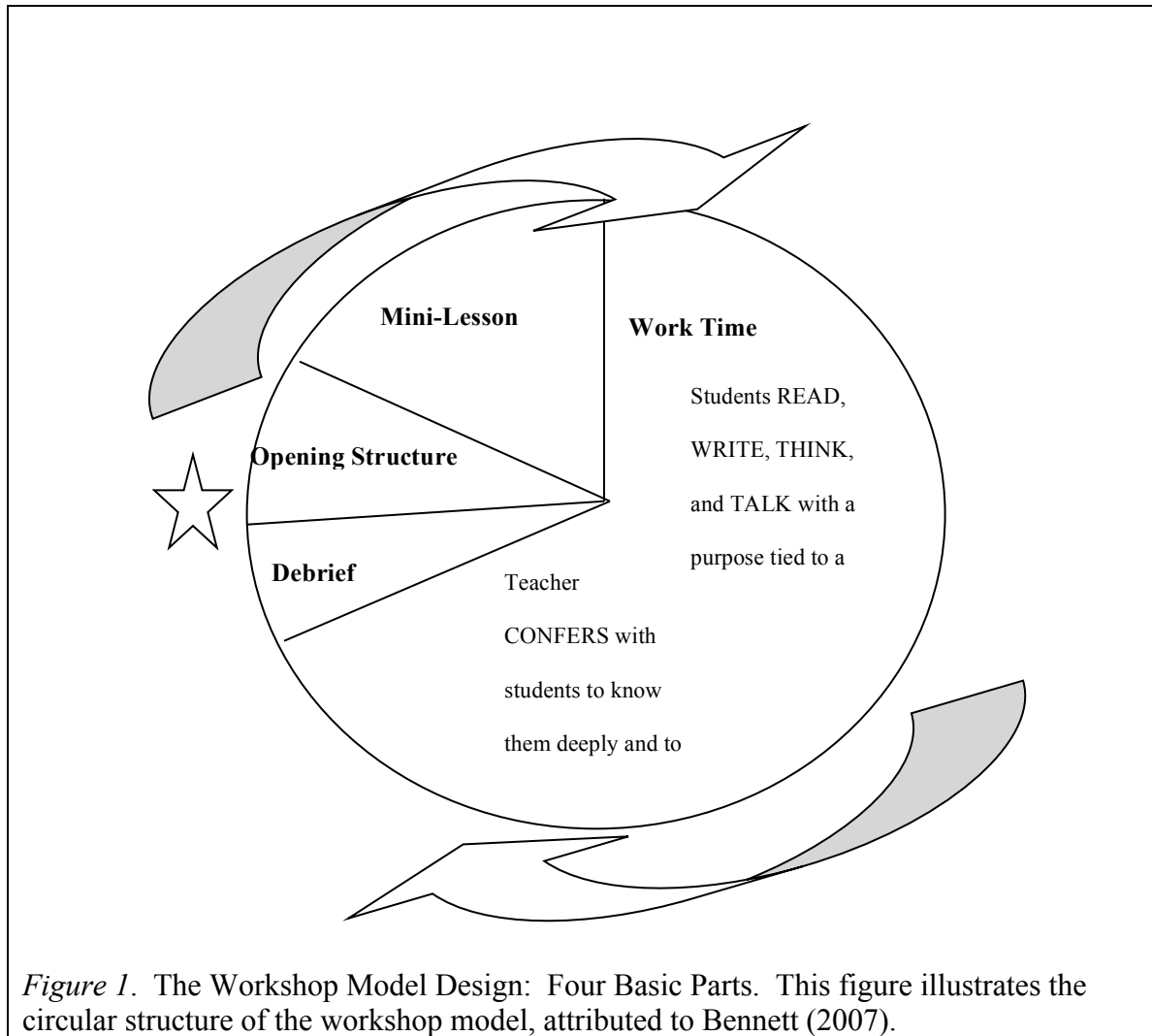
After reviewing the many workshops available, the Bolton ELA coordinator, Maggie Gray (pseudonym), chose to adopt the workshop model as defined by Sam Bennett (2007) in her book *That Workshop Book*, because this particular model included all of the components she felt would help teachers at the secondary level. Furthermore, Gray was already familiar with Sam<sup>1</sup> and the model having had the opportunity to see her in action with teachers from the Denver, Colorado area. During the time this study occurred, Bennett was an instructional coach and a staff developer with the Denver-based Public Education and Business Coalition (PEBC), an organization in pursuit of “cultivating excellence in public schools” through the “intellectual and scholarly practices of educators across the continuum of their professional lives” (Public Education

and Business Coalition, 2011) and an early pioneer in structuring professional learning labs in schools.

Bennett's workshop model of instruction<sup>2</sup> offers one way to break the stigma of how English Language Arts classrooms are currently portrayed and it aims to foster the kinds of experiences students need for achievement. The framework of the model supports the ideas of ample student work time, inquiry-based learning, backward planning, collaboration, and conferring. The framework structures these ideas in a way that intends to promote student learning in a flexible format allowing freedom for teachers to engage in curriculum making and to determine the curricular content of the lessons.

The workshop model's infrastructure consists of four basic parts that happen on a daily basis: an opening sequence or "hook," a mini-lesson, student work time which includes teacher conferencing and student collaboration, and a debrief discussion period (see Figure 1).

Each part plays a role in the success of the workshop model, as well as the design and enactment of these components in the "constant, daily pursuit of understanding important things" (Bennett, 2007, p. 8) that attempt to improve teacher instruction, lesson design, and student performance.



Though there is not much research on the workshop model as defined in this paper, there is much research that supports its collective parts and the ideas on which it is structured – collaboration (i.e., Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1987; 1990), structure of class time and student work time (i.e., Beers, 2003; Bennett, 2007; Levin, 1984), inquiry-based learning (i.e., Burke, 2010; Harvey, 2011; Taba, 1967; Wilhelm, 2007; Wolk, 2008), and teachers conferring with students (i.e., Anderson, 2000; Calkins, 1990; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1991, 1994) – all of which will be more fully elaborated in Chapter 2.

**Classroom Learning Labs**

In my 15-year experience, prior to the introduction of the classroom learning lab, professional development in the Bolton School District English Language Arts department included age-old “sit and get” presentations where little interaction with new material occurred, or where there was little opportunity to observe instruction or collaborate on the information. As a result, new knowledge and the use of newly acquired information from the professional development sessions were rarely fully implemented, nor were teachers held accountable for the new learning to which they were exposed.

In the United States, classroom learning labs used as a form of professional development are a fairly recent phenomenon. Though collaboration is certainly not new, the idea of using teacher classrooms as “labs” for experimentation, for observations, and for learning from each other is. According to Sweeney (2011), Stephanie Harvey and Jill Stedem from the PEBC in Denver, Colorado, are credited as early pioneers in the introduction of learning labs in Denver schools. What they discovered was that learning labs are a powerful tool for providing authentic experiences and opportunities to see curriculum and instruction in action – live and up close. Since then, learning labs have slowly crept into other districts around the country (Houk, 2010; EBEC, 2010).

One of the current practitioners of learning labs is Sweeney (2011), who describes them as frameworks for teachers “to get into each other’s classrooms to learn alongside one another,” so that “teachers [can] observe in model classrooms to develop their skills and reflect with colleagues” (pp. 107-108). Olson (2000) further supports the collaborative environment by saying that

creating and legitimizing professional development spaces that emphasize the valuing, sharing, and examination of teachers' curriculum narratives as an integral part of implementing curriculum as a course of study can assist teachers to better understand their own practices and the practices of their colleagues. (p. 184)

Professional development delivered in this manner lends itself to the kind of learning milieu that fosters internalization and sustainability of knowledge and practice.

Although the teachers were already grouped in professional learning communities (PLCs)<sup>3</sup> for planning purposes, teams still struggled with consistency and agreement on effective classroom instruction, primarily because there was little time for observing each other in the classroom setting or for group reflection on teacher practice. The intent of classroom learning labs is to provide a framework for teachers to learn from each other, to collaborate on deeper levels, and to give insight into their own and others' knowledge and practice in ways they had not experienced before. During the two-year enactment of the workshop model, teachers gathered on scheduled days to observe each other using the model, and then debriefed findings, collaborated on ways to improve, and celebrated things that worked well.

### **Building Teacher Knowledge and Practice**

Stemming from pressures from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) legislation, the expectation to develop and maintain highly effective teachers has never been greater. Accountability measures continue to increase and more pressure is placed at the district and campus level to improve instruction in an effort to reform education. How schools and districts respond to such pressures varies, but the unifying effect is increased national focus and attention on teacher knowledge and practice in the

classroom and the teachers' impact on student learning. "The fact is," Levin (2002) contends, "is that there are wide variations both among and within nations, states, provinces, localities, and individual schools in what is taught and how it is taught to our children" (p. 472).

Research supports that the teacher is the most important factor in student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Farr, 2010; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Schlechty, 2002). Therefore, it follows that time, energy, and attention spent on improving instructional practice and expanding teachers' knowledge of curriculum and instruction is well spent. Dewey (1938) believed in the active and creative role of teachers in curriculum making, an idea echoed through the works of Schwab (1969) and Eisner (1990). Clandinin and Connelly (1992) emphasize this point, saying "that the teacher is an integral part of the curriculum constructed and enacted in classrooms" (p. 363). The setup of the learning lab and the workshop model is important, then, in that both emphasize the act of curriculum-making and teachers as curriculum makers, establishing them as power-agents that affect student achievement and that are integral to curriculum development.

The workshop model has an established structure for use of time in the classroom and for fundamental components to consider when creating a lesson plan, though the model's flexibility with how to use the time and what content to include encourages individual teachers to make curricular choices that best suit their style and classroom environment. Teachers found encouragement and support in deciding modes of inquiry to follow with students, in creating goals and activities they wanted to establish for learning, and then selecting methods they would use in pursuit of accomplishing those goals. The

intent of the workshop model is to provide teachers with a framework that acts as a guide of sorts, offering opportunities to create curriculum (design and implementation of) in their classrooms in a way that strengthens their identities as curriculum makers.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (1992), “Dewey’s (1938) notion of ‘situation’ and ‘experience’ enabled us to imagine the teacher not so much as a maker of curriculum but as a part of it...” (p. 365). The collaborative spirit among educators in the program helped spark new ideas and fresh approaches to instructional planning and practice, in addition to providing the necessary outlet to share in the pursuit of improved student learning. Furthermore, Olson (2000) emphasizes that, “[teachers’] collective stories help us see how [their] narratives of experience uniquely and profoundly shape curriculum stories constructed in classrooms” (p. 169). The stories of the participants in the classroom learning labs are fundamental to the study of the effect of workshop model on their knowledge and practice. It is through the use of teachers’ stories and narrative experiences that lays the groundwork for reclaiming their voices as curriculum makers. Restoring this voice puts the power of teaching and learning back in their control and gives them the “language of empowerment...to act as professionals in their classrooms” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 384). Referencing Jackson’s *Life in Classrooms* (1968) and many other writers who acknowledge first and second-hand accounts of teachers, students, classrooms, and schools, Clandinin and Connelly express the importance of highlighting teachers’ stories and stories of teachers as a way to bring them back to the forefront as curriculum makers.

It is important to note that embracing teachers as part of the curriculum process and the discussions of building on their knowledge and practice prompts considerations



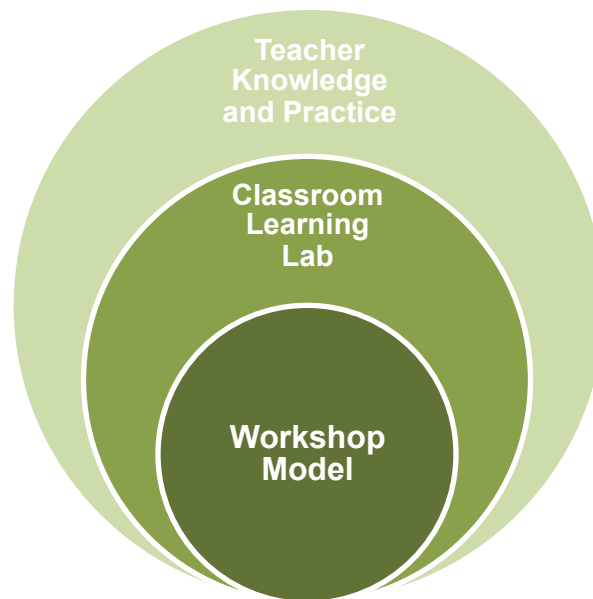
for how one constructs knowledge, how one defines knowledge, and the controversies that surround such inquiries. As Clandinin (1985) points out, teachers' personal practical knowledge is embedded and embodied in teacher practice and it is important to explore the interrelatedness of the two. In consideration of these thoughts, in Chapter 2 I will delve more deeply into Dewey's (1938) ideas of personally and socially funded knowledge, Lyons's (1990) notions of the dilemmas of knowing and "nested" knowing of teachers, and Connelly, Clandinin, and He's (1997) discussions on teachers' personal practical knowledge. In doing this, I hope to ascertain an understanding of teacher and teaching interrelationships between the knowledge they held prior to and the knowledge they gained as a result of participating in the learning lab experience and how the experience shaped their practice.

### **Brief Overview of the Study**

The Bolton School District, a Title I district primarily consisting of a low socioeconomic, high minority population, contracted with lab facilitator and instructional coach, Sam Bennett, from August of 2009 until May of 2011 to pilot the English Language Arts Classroom Learning Lab program using the workshop model of instruction in secondary English Language Arts (ELA) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. Participants included twelve classroom teachers (six middle and six high schools), eleven secondary English Language Arts (ELA) specialists and eleven secondary English as a Second Language (ESL) department chairs from each of the participating secondary schools, as well as eight district ELA/ESL instructional specialists, coordinators, and interventionists from the administration building, including myself. The aim of this program was to improve teacher instructional knowledge and

practice in the classroom setting and to do so in a collaborative professional learning environment (see Appendix C).

The contextual frame of this research begins with a discussion of ideas about reform viewed through teacher instructional knowledge and practice. Figure 2 shows the broader contextual relationships of the classroom learning lab and the workshop model of instruction as subsets within teacher knowledge and practice.



*Figure 2.* Broad Contextual Relationships of this Study. This figure displays the contextual placements and relationships of the workshop model as a subset of the classroom learning lab, both of which are subsets undergirding the impact on teacher knowledge and practice.

From there, I examine the design of the workshop model (Bennett, 2007), its components, and the body of research that supports the structure of its multi-faceted aim to improve the planning of curriculum and instruction. Following this, I explain the

classroom learning lab setup and explore the research that supports professional development of this nature. Finally, it is within these contexts I share the broad-based experiences of the 42-educator cohort, with a deeper inquiry into four participants' experiences – a district representative, a campus specialist, and two classroom teachers – in an effort to illuminate their perceptions of the program's influence on their instructional knowledge and practice during the two-year program, and again nine months later to determine sustainability of the workshop model. A more in-depth description of the program and participants will be given in greater detail in Chapter 3.

### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

This study attempts to uncover and discover the experiences these educators had while navigating a new instructional model – its core concepts and ideas, design and structure, tensions and accomplishments – and did so in a collaborative learning lab environment. The narratives of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990) from participants in the program elucidate how teachers' personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985, 1989) was constructed and reconstructed over their two-year involvement in the program, and how the experiences continue to influence their practices.

Furthermore, the study shares how the collaborative spirit among educators fostered an environment conducive to creating sustainable growth with the hope that it become internalized and continue to flourish, not only in the intentional design of lessons, but in the daily pursuit of expanding knowledge of practice and of self. Understanding not only the structure and the components of the workshop model, but also the struggles and successes of enacting the workshop model in their classrooms in

front of colleagues is important for drawing attention to how educators grapple with new knowledge in the context of peer groups.

The research for this text comes from scribed classroom observations, field notes, belief letters, reflective journaling, audio recordings, interviews and conversations with four participants of the classroom learning lab program. More information regarding the use of these data follows in Chapter 3.

Though not limited to these questions, this research attempts to explore and make known participants' reflections on the following inquiries:

- How has learning about the workshop model and its components had an impact on teacher instructional knowledge? (What they share that they have learned.)
- How has enacting the workshop model in the classroom affected teachers' instructional practices? (What they do.)
- How has participating in the classroom learning lab influenced their perspectives on improving knowledge and practice in this kind of learning environment?

The experiences of these teachers in this particular setting and at this particular time are indicative of and exclusive to the current context in which the experiences take place. Because each teacher brought their own personal knowledge and background to the situation, the experiences that resulted were varied, but several similar themes emerged which are more fully discussed later.

**Summary**

This chapter establishes a context for the discussion of the journey on which Bolton School District ELA and ESL educators embarked to improve curricular and instructional knowledge and practice and to do so using a workshop model of instruction that would be studied through the framework of classroom learning labs. The deliberate focus was to establish contextual ideas around the use of using classroom learning labs as an alternative professional development experience, and for establishing the workshop model of instruction as a curriculum framework to assist in improving lesson design and teacher effectiveness. Through the use of the narrative inquiry research method, it is my aspiration to share the participants' experiences in a way that sheds light on their views of themselves as participants in the program; that is, to allow their stories to reveal the impact of the experiences that resulted from their involvement in the classroom learning labs, their thoughts about the workshop model, and how each shaped and/or reshaped their identities in relation to their practice. In the process, I also reflect on the impact this experience had on my own knowledge and practice, as well as reflect on the implications for my future involvement in the district as a researcher and instructional interventionist.

**Content Notes**

1. For clarification, when referring to Sam Bennett's work, I use her last name, Bennett (2007). When referring to her as the facilitator of the CLL program, I refer to her by her first name, Sam.
2. For clarification, the phrase "workshop model of instruction" or terms "workshop" and "model" as used throughout the rest of this dissertation research shall refer to the model as it is defined in Sam Bennett's book, *That Workshop Book* (2007).
3. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are as described by Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker in *Professional Communities that Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement* (1998).

## Chapter II

### Review of Literature

*“...the single greatest determinant of learning is not socioeconomic factors or funding levels. It is instruction. A bone deep, institutional acknowledgement of this fact continues to elude us”* (Schmoker, 2006, p. 7).

“School reform” is on the verge of becoming a trite phrase. The problem, it seems, is that there are so many perspectives of what reform is, how to do it, and what it looks like, that it renders one immobile from actualizing reform of any kind. Discussions about what curriculum and instruction should (or should not) look like in classrooms across the United States include a plethora of different visions and opinions which also include various ideas about what in education needs reforming. One aspect of reform that has received increased attention is defining effective instruction in the classroom. In other words, how and in what ways do what teachers know and what teachers do have an impact on student achievement?

An advocate for teacher reform, Darling-Hammond (2006) emphasizes the value for promoting reform through supporting and sustaining quality teaching education programs by stressing that “among all educational resources – teacher’s abilities are especially crucial contributors to students’ learning (p. 300). Darling-Hammond (2007) further ascertains that because the teachers’ expertise and qualifications are the “most important determinant of student achievement” (p. 38), greater attention should be given to teacher quality. However, outside of identifying the common characteristics of high quality teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1998; 2007), one is hard pressed to articulate exactly how to train teachers to encompass and internalize these qualities. Consequently,

there is a sense of ambiguity in the educational reform movement in further defining these attributes and training others in pursuit of them.

That does not mean, however, that there is an unwillingness to transform. On the contrary, many educators are open and willing to solicit for change in the interest of improving instructional practice and having a positive impact on student achievement. In an effort to thwart the negative portrayal of how “typical” classrooms are depicted and in an effort to improve front-line instruction, 42 secondary English Language Arts (ELA) and English as a Second Language (ESL) educators from the Bolton School District (pseudonym), under the guidance of the District Secondary Coordinator, Maggie Gray (pseudonym), adopted Sam Bennett’s workshop model of instruction and agreed to study and enact the model over two years in the classroom learning lab framework.

In this chapter, I discuss the literature that examines current pervasive attitudes about the quality of instruction, that supports the components behind Bennett’s (2007) workshop model, that discusses the use of classroom learning labs as a professional development model, and that expresses not only the importance of teachers’ narratives and stories about their experiences with both, but the inherent value in utilizing narrative inquiry as a research method. Finally, I touch on the multiplicity of my identities as researcher, participant, and district interventionist and how the bumping up and crossing over of these boundaries produced both tension and insight throughout the layers of my own experience.

### **Attitudes and Observations on Instruction**

Critical observations of education are abundant, many of which adduce depictions of classrooms where the instruction is primarily teacher-centered, where worksheets and



lectures rule, and where apathy and disengagement reign supreme. As Farr (2010) observes, "...we...have the sense that students may simply be going through the motions of being at school" (p. 3) and I would argue, some educators [do] as well. Unfortunately, current reform policies in education have shifted from improving teachers' professional growth to holding them accountable for students' standardized test scores (McLaughlin, 2011). Therefore, instead of improving the quality of teaching, it instead takes a back seat to a more narrowed curriculum of "teaching to the test" to ensure teachers meet the pressures of accountability measures. As a result, teachers take fewer risks in trying new things to improve their practice, creativity is stifled, and student learning is relegated to how many questions they are from passing the test as opposed to what they really know and can do and how that knowledge and ability prepares them for future learning.

Most of the decisions in education are reactionary, usually to the stimulus of a fear or deficiency of some kind. As proof of this, the release of the infamous controversial report "A Nation at Risk" (1983) highlighting the "rising tide of mediocrity" (p. 1) ignited a wave of reform that continues to affect programs and policies today. As Levin (2002) points out, though, the result has been a contentious divide between those who feel the current system is too traditional (i.e., direct instruction, drilled study of facts, teacher-centered instruction) and those who desire a more progressive approach (i.e., constructivist orientation, problem-solving and thinking skills). Furthering the frenzy, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002* (NCLB) forged a path of reform that, among other stipulations, imposes an accountability system that includes highly qualified teacher requirements solely based on teacher subject matter expertise.

When progressive action does occur, it is usually not the teachers (though it should be) who are at the grassroots of change or from whom reformative educational practice evolves. Apple (1990) laments the fact that those who make the decisions are not curriculum scholars or even teachers in the classrooms. He talks of the “profound mistrust of teachers, administrators, and curriculum scholars” (p. 343) who dominate the curriculum-construction conversation, and also highlights that teachers are not seen as a solution, but part of the problem – an impediment to progress. As a result of these particular views, the “deskilling” effect on teachers becomes evident as program after program and box after box of massive curriculum development and standardized curriculum kits roll off the assembly line. The outcome, then, has a negative impact on the identities of teachers as curriculum leaders and as curriculum makers at the expense of teacher knowledge, as described by Clandinin and Connelly (1992), and Craig (2003).

Schmoker (2006), however, eludes to hope by stating that despite most failed efforts and best intentions in improving instruction, it can be improved “significantly and swiftly through ordinary and accessible arrangements among teachers and administrators” (p. 10). One such “ordinary and accessible” arrangement is through providing, as Dewey (1938) put it, the “right kinds of experiences” in the classroom setting. Progressive education is directly traced to Dewey (1938) and calls for education that moves from learner as a passive recipient with teacher-delivered experiences of curriculum to a more student-centered curriculum in which students engage in inquiry and authentic societal issues and where teachers provide an environment that “presents experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in the subsequent experiences” (p. 7).

The relational aspect of teaching has come to the forefront of reformation in the educational system, but unless there is a clear plan of “what is to be done and how it is to be done” (Dewey, 1938, p. 17), we risk wasting valuable time and resources fiddling around at the expense of learning. The importance of the *quality of experience* as part of the educational plan is what will move educators from the game of playing school to engaging in the act of learning and nurturing future experiences. In outlining his *Five Basic Orientations to the Curriculum*, Eisner (1985) supports the notion of the “right” kinds of experiences by arguing that

for experience to be educational students must have some investment in it – must have some hand in its development – and that without actual participation or the availability of real choices within the curriculum schooling is likely to be little more than a series of meaningless routines, tasks undertaken to please someone else’s conception of what is important.” (p. 69)

Inviting students to take an active role in their experience of learning is a step in the right direction for restoring the meaning and value of what it means to be educated. Inviting teachers to take an active role in their experiences as curriculum makers is also a step in the right direction for restoring meaning and value in what it means to be an educator.

Dewey (1938) emphasized that as simple as the idea of progressive education is in principle, it is by no means a simple process. Although not “current” in reference to time period, Dewey’s beliefs about the inherent connection between education and personal experience are relevant to discussions about reform today. He specified that it is “a much more difficult task to work out the kinds of materials, of methods, and of social relationships that are appropriate to the new education than is the case with traditional

education” (p.19). I would argue, however, that it is time well spent. When we intentionally design lessons to ensure that students receive the right kinds of experiences in the classroom setting, we stand to reap greater rewards on behalf of student success.

Perhaps the complexity of the task is why we face such a challenge for reform. Progressive education takes more time, energy, and attention and the huge barrier is that it is indeed a slow and arduous process. Furthermore, people as a whole are reluctant to deviate from their comfort zones, so change happens slowly, if at all. For reform to occur, educators must shed the prevalent attitudes of traditional frameworks that have failed and are failing. If we are to take Dewey’s arguments to heart and focus on the quality of experiences in the classrooms that students encounter, reform is possible. The need to address rigor, deep thinking, learning, planning, teacher efficacy, pacing, flow, engagement, student work-time, conferring and collaboration in a format that is both teacher-friendly and student-centered has never been so important as it is now in the push for quality education.

### **The Workshop Model – Design and Structure**

The idea of learning in a workshop setting is not a new concept. Early creators of reading and writing workshop models as they are used in classrooms today include Graves (1983, 1991, 1994), Calkins (1983, 1990), and Atwell (1987, 2011). Since its inception, many have used all or parts of the designs, but most have kept the supporting ideas behind the designs intact (i.e., student choice, student responsibility, building in work-time, and building a community of learners).

Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) note that workshop is “a rigorous learning environment that has its roots in the traditional system in which apprentices learned the

skills of their trade by working at the sides of master craftsmen and women” (pp. 2-3). Taking this idea to heart and launching off those who came before her, Sam Bennett (2007) created a “next generation” workshop model that focuses on the “inside” things that happen in the classroom – the “daily systems, structures, routines, and rituals that help children become better readers, writers, problem solvers, and thinkers – truly, the better adults we need to engage in and lead our world” (pp. 4-5). Bennett comes from the Denver area and worked with the Public Education and Business Coalition on staff development and coaching. She is a classroom learning lab facilitator, coach, and workshop model consultant across the country, having recently worked with educators in the Upper Arlington schools in Ohio and with the Denver Project in Colorado. In her book, she explains that it is through her work with educators that she has refined the workshop model to encompass the “intriguing, grueling, exhilarating, life-giving, energy-sapping, heartbreaking, joy-filled, complex, and intellectually demanding work” (Bennett, 2007, p. 4) of learning in the classroom. For purposes of this study, the use of the terms “workshop model” and “workshop model of instruction” shall refer to the model Bennett defines in her book, *That Workshop Book* (2007).

One purpose of the workshop model is to draw focus on the close study of reading and writing as a function of the world. It is not just a “to do” list of books to read, essays to write, and tasks to complete, but is designed to promote a genuine and intentional study of the importance of a text, its influence on society, and its place in the world as a tome of experience. Bennett (2007) more clearly defines the workshop model as a “*predictable* structure, routine, ritual, and system that allows the *unpredictable* work of deep reading, brilliant writing, mind-changing conversations, inspirational epiphanies,

and connections of new to the known – that is, learning – to happen” (p. 11). While the structure, routine, and ritual of implementing the model are deeply rooted in collaborative learning, inquiry-based curriculum, lesson design that involves backward planning (or beginning with the “end in mind”), an increase in student work-time versus teacher-time, and conferencing, it is the combination of the components of the workshop “system” that make it unique. The ambitious scope and complexity of the model’s design also made it challenging for participants to enact all at once, as Chapters 4 and 5 will later reveal.

Another element behind the workshop model is that students take ownership of their own learning by rightfully doing most of the work while the teacher acts as a facilitator and guide of that learning – nurturing the idea that whoever is doing the reading, writing, and talking is doing the thinking. Breaux and Whitaker (2006) reiterate the idea that “we know that whoever is doing the ‘doing’ is doing the learning” (p. 15). The workshop model framework attempts to support the kind of high quality teaching and emphasis on learning that are needed to increase rigor in the classroom, specifically that students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning and teachers are inspired to produce effective lesson plans. The workshop model is designed to support more “real-world” learning environments in which students discover, manipulate, discuss, share, problem-solve, and get messy with information and text *in order to make meaning*. This type of learning helps to build critical reading, writing, and thinking skills because of the applicable nature and experience of learning to which the students are exposed.

What the workshop model does not support is superficial engagement, or ritual compliance. Instead, the model aims to provide authentic experiences that push a student’s thinking, forcing him or her to ask questions and engage in deep conversations

about what the text means, while at the same time encouraging teachers to begin with the end in mind, to plan backwards, and to place the focus not on what they will teach, but instead on what the students will learn, ideas also supported in the work of Stiggins (1997), Stiggins, Arter, J. Chappuis, and S. Chappuis (2004), and Wiggins and McTighe (2005).

Another idea behind the model as it was presented to the cohort is that the students get messy with the learning and there is no teacher “talking head” at the front of the classroom, so little discussion or collaborative learning takes place. Students working collaboratively in groups, discussing their findings with peers, and even synthesizing what meaning they make of texts into writing is a natural way to learn. Students should be given ample time to read, write, think, process, and discuss the selections *with each other* to improve retention and rigor, and to create motivation and engagement when using relevant texts and real-world writing products.

As a structure for curricular and instructional planning, the workshop model incorporates the following foundational beliefs:

- The focus is about learning, not about teaching
- There is less teacher “talk”; students take ownership of learning
- Students are grouped to grapple with literature, articles, lyrics, art, and poetry
- Time is structured to be more student-centered
- Students collaborate to share their reading, writing, and thinking
- “Catch and release” (Bennett, 2007, pp. 10-12) mini-lessons occur throughout.

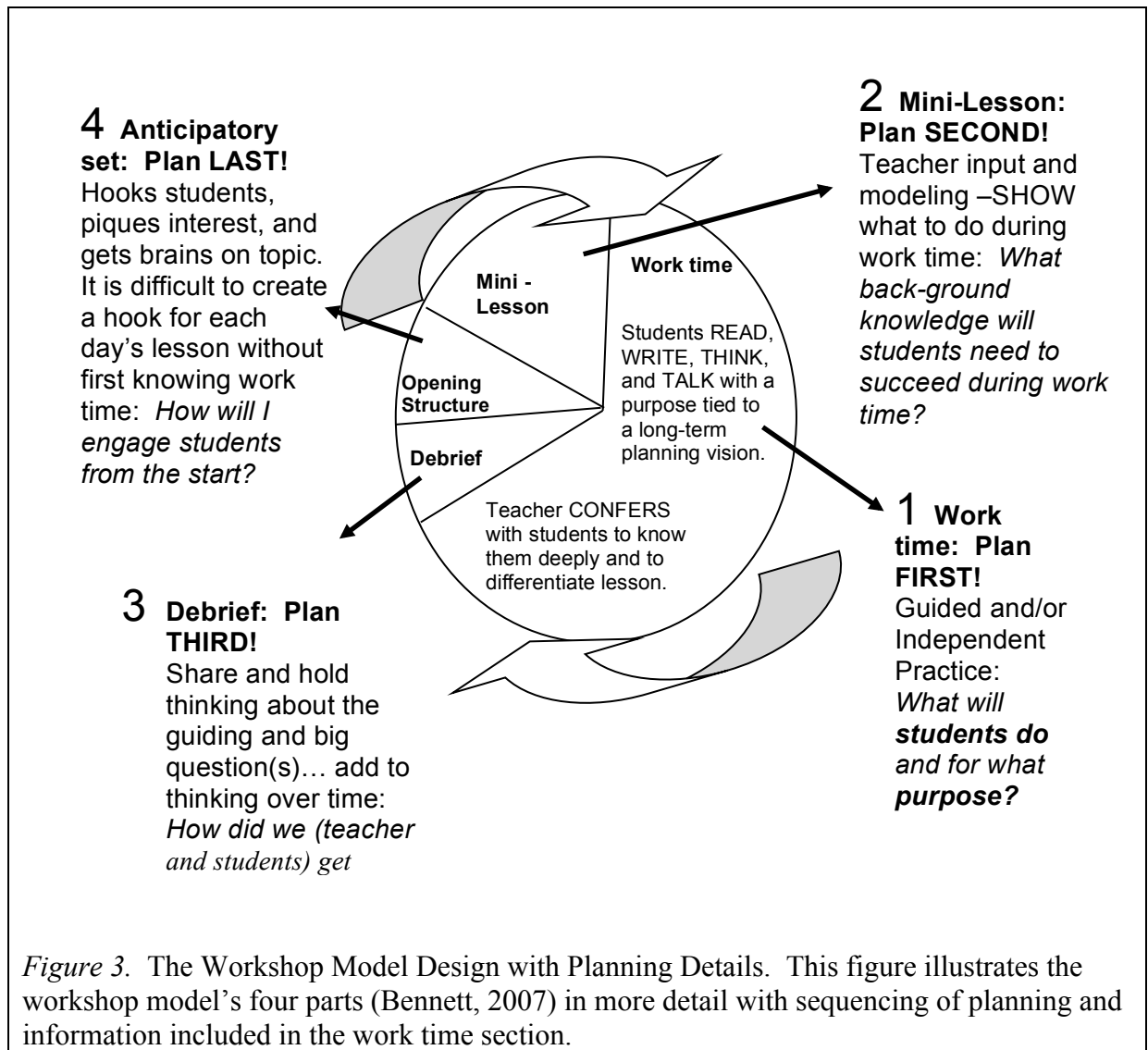
(During work time, the teacher conferences with students to differentiate instruction and to acquire deeper knowledge of the students as learners. If a

need is observed, the teacher can stop, or “catch,” the students, do a quick mini-lesson, or redirection, then “release” them to continue working.)

Because the workshop model in English Language Arts classrooms provides a structure to assist teachers with lesson plan design for both long-term and short-term planning, students benefit by spending their time reading, writing, grappling with big ideas and guiding questions, and discussing and sharing their thinking with each other. Similar to the ideas of experience and education in Dewey’s work (1938), of education as the “lived experience” that Clandinin and Connelly (1992) and Olson and Craig (2001) present, of environment as curriculum that Eisner (1990) portrays, and of curriculum-as-plan that Aoki (1989) illustrates, the workshop model supports more “real-world” learning environments. Within these “real-world” environments, teachers and students discover, manipulate, discuss, share, problem-solve, and get messy with information and text while constructing meaning and building critical reading, writing, and thinking skills necessary for progress.

Though most of the research pertains to many of the individualized *parts* of the workshop model as well as the ideas in which the workshop is grounded, threading several of these practices into a streamlined method of instruction allows the workshop model to capitalize on lesson design and student learning. As mentioned earlier, the major components of the workshop model include collaborative learning, inquiry-based curriculum, lesson design that involves backward planning, or beginning with the “end in mind,” an increase in student work time rather than teacher time, and conferencing (see Figure 3).





Note that work time is planned first. This is because teachers may spend an inordinate amount of time working on the introduction, or the hook into a lesson, but never get to the business of planning exactly what students will be doing (Bennett, 2007). This shift from what the teacher will do to what students will do is a paradigm shift from traditional planning methods.

After planning what students will actually do during class time, the teacher then plans the frontloading aspect of the lesson, or the mini-lesson. This is where, as Miller

(2008) states, the teacher “explains the focus of the lesson, demonstrates a skill or strategy, or makes visible their own thinking” (p. 81). The debrief and the hook are planned third and fourth, respectively. These are the bookends to the time spent in the classroom and open and close the setting for the lesson that day.

### **The Pillars of Workshop Model**

**Collaborative learning.** Collaboration is important in not only learning new information, but in the retention of information. Edgar Dale (1969, p. 43) informs us that we remember:

- 10% of what we read
- 20% of what we hear
- 30% of what we see
- 50% of what we both see and hear
- *70% of what we talk about with others* (emphasis added)

One pillar of the workshop model teachers were asked to enact was that of increased collaboration among students. Typically, information shared in most of the Bolton School District ELA/ESL classrooms was teacher-to-student, or student-to-teacher, but rarely were there student-to-student interactions. The model emphasizes that for more powerful learning to occur, peer collaboration is an important factor. For some, giving control over to students can be uncomfortable for fear students will venture off-task, or become unruly. However, planned well and with intention, collaboration among students can be a powerful way for students to share in their learning.

Collaboration in the workshop model occurs during the student work time, when students work in groups of four or five to discuss, share, and analyze texts to make meaning and deep-seeded observations about the world in which they live. The role of the teacher is one who “apprentices students into doing the discipline” and who “must not only know how to read, write, learn, and converse as an expert, but must know how to assist and support students to do the same” (Wilhelm, 2007). Classroom discussions “reveal a great deal about [student] levels of understanding and their achievements” and have the “simultaneous effect of enhancing both student learning and their ability to use what they know” (Stiggins, et al., 2004, p. 261). Furthermore, Schlechty (2002) notes that “those who advocate cooperative learning must clearly understand the importance of affiliation as a source of motivation for students” (p. 86).

Collaboration is an essential learning component that invites students into the dialogue of learning which exposes them to new and varied opinions and ideas, and encourages them to engage in the acts of discovery. As Harvey and Daniels (2009) assert, “we cannot provide robust, engaged, and differentiated learning unless kids can break into a variety of groups and work together...learning is far too weak if we limit students’ actions, conversations, and thinking to what the one adult in the room can monitor” (p. 37). It is within the collaborative effort that Piaget’s (1929, 1951) theories on assimilation and accommodation transpire – where students take in new information from their environment and work it into their existing knowledge, adding or changing their existing schema. The collaborative effort is also associated with Vygotsky’s (1962) theories on constructivism, which support the idea that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. Constructivism’s basic

premise is that individuals create or construct new ideas and events through social interaction and connect the new knowledge to prior constructed events, thus deepening and or broadening understandings.

Collaborative learning is not a passing fad, but a genuine productive experience that provides relevant, deep, and thoughtful learning. If we are, in fact, inclined to believe in Dale's (1969) assertion that we retain 70% of what we discuss with others, there is no arguing the fact that students need to be talking amongst themselves as a way to process learning and make meaning.

**Inquiry-based instruction.** It is beneficial that when students collaborate they have big important ideas to discuss. Inquiry-based curriculum incorporates close, deep reading and synthesis of thought in writing (within the student work-time area of the circular plan guide), and discussion. Schmoker (2006) shares a glimpse of the potential outcomes of such a curriculum:

Imagine...all students, regardless of socioeconomic circumstance, having spent most of their class time in English, social studies, and other courses closely and carefully reading, rereading, discussing, and writing about the ideas in various texts. Imagine every student graduating from high school having analyzed and imitated excellent examples of adult writing and having written countless close literary analyses, essays, grant proposals, business plans, and position papers on multiple political, scientific, and cultural controversies – after carefully reading and discussing two or more conflicting documents on innumerable engaging issues. (p. 51)

Finding, creating, and exploring modes of inquiry for and with students afforded cohort teachers the opportunity to bring in topics of study not currently addressed in their textbooks. It encouraged teachers in the learning lab to look beyond their current resources and also invited students to participate in the inquiry process by finding other sources of information to assist in the exploration of topics.

Inquiry and problem-based learning has been in existence since the 1590's, when "in the academies of Paris and Rome, students were given authentic problems to solve – such as designing a building or monument" (Harvey & Daniels, 2009, p. 59). Since its early applications, it re-emerged in the works of Dewey (1938) through his emphasis on the social aspects of learning, and is emphasized in Schwab's (1958) ideas summoning the use of investigative inquiry in the study of science. In his work, Eisner (1985) calls for a basic liberal education that "enables students to ask basic questions about life, truth, justice, and knowledge and to read works of individuals who have provided powerful and lasting answers to such questions" (p. 67).

Taba's (1963) research expressed the importance of inquiry and defined the process of learning as "an active organization and reorganization of mental schemata with which to process information and to perceive relationships" (p. 309). In order to organize the mental schemata, Taba further postulated that:

Teaching is directed to [enable] the learner to establish a relationship between his existing schemata and the new phenomena and to remake or extend the schemata to accommodate new facts and events. In doing this the learner has to de-center his current view of the situation or of the problem before him and reorganize his perception of it. He must also build a strategy of inquiry. (p. 311)

A disciple of Dewey, Taba (1963) embraced the idea that students should learn to understand and use new knowledge, not simply remember it. Inquiry or discovery learning, Taba challenged, was “considered the chief mode for intellectual productivity and autonomy” (p. 313) and a must in the educational approach to higher level thinking skills.

Building off the foundation these early pioneers constructed, inquiry-based instruction is currently encountering a heightened resurgence with the research and application of its impact on instruction through the works of Wiggins and McTighe (2005), Wilhelm (2007), Harvey and Daniels (2009), and Burke (2010). Harvey and Daniels (2009) expound extensively on inquiry-based instruction in their work with inquiry circles and, in many ways, have realized the environment that Schmoker imagined. They describe a classroom in which students have choice, topics are significant and important, and the teacher assists, monitors, observes, and confers throughout the process. In this environment, students engage in inquiry with questions that have no finality in answers, but rather “aim to stimulate thought,” and “demand more than just a smorgasbord of activities and bits of knowledge in isolated units” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 106).

In her studies with students in Oakland, CA middle schools, Renzulli, Gentry, and Reis (2004) reported that students need authentic learning situations that challenge their thinking with “everyday problems in meaningful contexts” (p. 73). Through the use of enrichment clusters, students were able to gather, analyze, and report on data pertaining to a range of inquiry topics, from cataloguing historical documents to evaluating the community’s television-watching habits. The findings described students who assumed

roles as investigators, writers, artists, or other types of practicing professionals and teachers who once again found their profession enjoyable, engaging, and enriching – exactly the type of experience the CLL participants hoped to encounter. It is along these paths and through these doorways that the workshop model wanders: to utilize the inquiry-based approach in the lesson plan so that students spend their work-time discussing topics that add legitimacy to their academic learning and dimension to their knowledge of self.

**Beginning with the end in mind – purposeful backward planning.** To know where one is going is to know which steps to take and in what direction. Without a destination, it is virtually impossible to etch a path toward the known. The design of the workshop model incorporates the ideas of backward planning to ensure that time and energy are not wasted in the classroom. Schmoker (2006) explains that arts and crafts are common culprits in how class time is squandered. He observes how “Elaine McEwan, a well-known laborer in this field, describes elementary school students who spent 37 hours – the equivalent of an entire month of language arts – building a paper mâché dinosaur” (p. 91). Oftentimes, teachers spend an inordinate amount of time thinking about what to teach or what project to do, not what students will learn, or will have to show for their learning.

As Wiggins and McTighe explain (in Farr, 2010):

Many teachers begin with and remain focused on textbooks, favored lessons, and time honored activities – the inputs – rather than deriving those means from what is implied in the desired results – the outputs. To put it in an odd way, too many

teachers focus on the teaching and not the learning. They spend most of their time thinking, first, about what they will do, what materials they will use, and what they will ask students to do rather than first considering what the learner will need in order to accomplish the learning goals. (p. 134)

Yet, Farr (2010) continues,

virtually all of the teachers we work with, including those whose students demonstrate dramatic academic growth, attest to the easy temptation to skip past end visions, learning standards, and assessment design and slip into planning that is not driven by student outcomes but is instead governed by what a teacher wants to do. (p. 133)

Because the focus of planning in the workshop model is on the work time – that is, the actual reading, writing, talking, and thinking students will do – teachers are more apt to avoid the draw of the “favored lesson” and the “pointless product,” like a paper mâché dinosaur. Instead, what gets taught is what Marzano and Pollock (2001) describe as a guaranteed and viable curriculum. “When... planning purposefully,” Marzano and Pollock say, “[teachers] are beginning at the end, starting with a vision of the knowledge, behavior, habits, skills, or actions [they] want students to demonstrate at some point in the future...highly effective classroom leaders do not first ask themselves, ‘What should I do?’ but instead ask themselves, ‘What must students learn?’” (p. 135). Once attention and focus of lesson design shift from what *teachers* do to what *students* are doing and learning, educators will make greater strides toward achieving the right academic experiences for student success in the classroom and beyond.



**Student-time vs. Teacher-time.** Also at the core of the workshop model is what students will do and for how long. The workshop incorporates student work time as the heart and muscle of the class period, which allows the teacher one-to-one instruction time to meet students where they are cognitively. Furthermore, the scaffolding of lessons ensures valid and rigorous “flow” in the classroom setting. The work time, Bennett (2007) says, should be one-third teacher-time (that is, time when the teacher is talking and modeling), and two-thirds student-time (when the students are reading, writing, and talking individually or in groups). According to Beers (2003),

[w]hat you often [do not] see in the traditional classroom is big blocks of time almost every day for students to read, write, and respond to one another about their reading and writing – in other words, a workshop environment. In a workshop environment, students read different texts at different rates and respond to those texts in a multitude of ways. They write in response to what [they have] read so that the reading-writing connection is reciprocal – one informs the other. (p. 58)

Gallagher (2009) further highlights the fact that students are in desperate need of large doses of authentic reading – the kinds of reading we, as adults, do in newspapers, magazines, blogs, and websites. These doses need to come from a mix of reading experiences, from longer, challenging novels and works of nonfiction to ‘lighter’ recreational reading. (p. 29)

Research well documents the use of instructional time (Levin, 1984). Levin (1984), who asserts that the amount and type of instructional engagement relates to learning, points out that recent discussions about the use of time can trace its origins to

J.B. Carroll's (1963) approach in which his model of student achievement was "constructed around two concepts: the time needed for learning and the time devoted to learning" (p. 152). Researchers like Wiley and Harnischfeger (1974) took the study of the use of time even further by studying not only the amount of time allocated to instruction, but also the amount of engaged learning time spent on task. A summary of studies done by Stallings (1980) supported this notion. Her studies concluded that "student learning depends on how the available time is used, not just the amount of time available" (p. 11).

Embedded in these studies are the ideas that students must have the time to grapple with learning, have the time to experience multiple texts and multiple outlets of writing, and that the teacher is responsible for carving out time for the exploration and discovery of the big ideas and enduring understandings of inquiry. Therefore, how teachers utilized and capitalized on instructional time throughout the classroom learning lab program was stressed as a huge factor and focal point in the design of lessons with the workshop model.

**Conferring.** Schmoker (2006) states that the most basic elements of an effective lesson are "an essential, clearly defined learning objective followed by careful modeling, or a clear sequence of steps, punctuated by efforts during the lesson to see how well students are paying attention or learning the material" (p. 16). These "efforts" to check student understanding are also known as conferences. In his book, *How's It Going?*, Anderson (2000) explains that he uses the word "conversation, because even though in a conference we are teachers talking with students, we are also writers talking to writers"

(p. 7). It is in these conferences that teachers get an idea of what their students are learning and what they still need to learn. Tovani (2004), who is known for her “conversational calendars,” sums it up this way:

It is difficult for me to assess students’ reading needs if I don’t know them.

Conversation calendars help me learn about my students’ lives outside the classroom. I then have the background knowledge I need for conversations that allow me to discover their strengths and passions. Once I know what they care about, I can help them see how the work we are doing in class is purposeful and connects to their lives. (p. 107)

Conferring occurs during the student work-time in the workshop model. It is during this time that teachers can differentiate instruction, get to know their students on deeper levels, and check students’ levels of understanding, thus establishing an environment that enables teachers and students to talk about learning and the educational experience.

Not to be mistaken as simply an “information transmission approach” (Wilhelm, 2007, p. 9) or the teacher hovering over students’ shoulders to check on their progress, authentic conferring results in meaningful, purposeful conversations that stretch thinking, assess knowledge and learning, and build relationships. It is, as Allen (2009) puts it, a place “to nurture inquiry” (p. 130).

### **The Complexity of the Model**

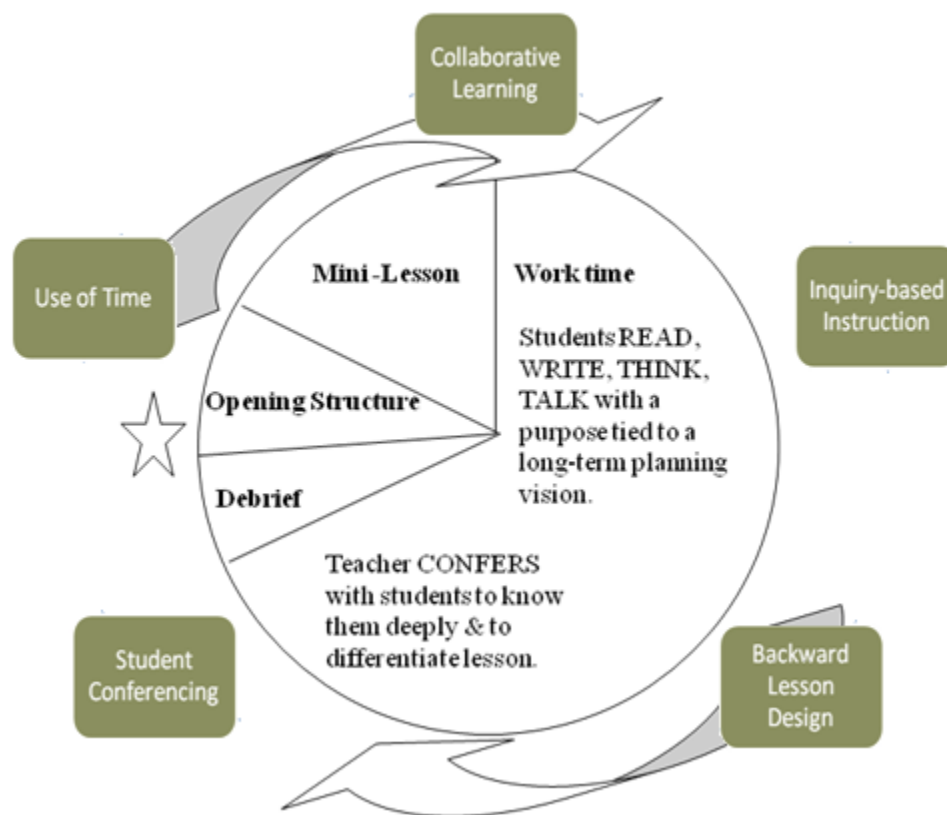
Darling-Hammond (2007) highlights qualities of highly effective teachers that best suit the advancement of student learning. It is an exhaustive list of items teachers

should be able to know and do (see Table 1). In it, however, there are commonalities with the ideas that underscore the workshop model's ideas and structure.

Table 1.
<i>Characteristics of Effective Teachers</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use many tools to assess how their students learn</li> <li>• Use many tools to assess what the students know</li> <li>• Help all students advance from where they are to where they need to be</li> <li>• Carefully organize activities, materials, and instruction based on students' prior knowledge and level of development so that all students can be successful</li> <li>• Know what conceptions and misconceptions students bring with them</li> <li>• Design lessons to overcome misinterpretations of these conceptions</li> <li>• Adapt the curriculum to many students' needs</li> <li>• Engage students in active learning – debating, discussing, researching, writing, evaluating, experimenting, and constructing models, papers, and products in addition to listening to and reading information, watching demonstrations, and practicing skills</li> <li>• Make their expectations for high-quality work clear</li> <li>• Provide models of student work that meet standards</li> <li>• Provide constant feedback that helps students improve as they continuously revise their work toward these standards</li> <li>• Design a well-functioning, respectful classroom that allows students to work productively</li> <li>• Involve parents in the learning process and help create strong connections between home and school</li> </ul>
<p>Note: Adapted from an excerpted copy of “A Good Teacher in Every Classroom: Preparing the Highly Qualified Teachers Our Children Deserve,” by L. Darling-Hammond, 2007, <i>Educational Horizons</i>, 85(2). Copyright 1982-2007 by the H.W. Wilson Company.</p>

Given the complexity of the workshop model (see Figure 4) and the elements surrounding what high quality teaching entails, it is no wonder teachers newly exposed to

the model's design and structure had a difficult time embedding all of its elements in their lesson plans.



*Figure 4. The Complexity of the Workshop Model. This figure displays the complexity of the various components studied and enacted with the workshop model.*

In fact, one of the primary findings at the end of the two-year enactment, and which is supported by the foundational beliefs on which the learning lab is based, is that there is no perfect lesson, perfect student, perfect group or class of students, and no perfect teacher. Instruction and learning are messy endeavors full of surprises, teachable

moments, learning curves, and curve balls that may vary from group to group, even on the same day.

Yet, as in the pursuit of becoming efficient at any task, it takes time, consistency, and practice. There is no better illustration than with the daily pursuit of improved instruction in the classroom. The daily pursuit of improved instruction, however, does bring into question how we come to know whether or not we are actually progressing or not and whether the program has an impact (and of what nature) on practice. Thus, we must look into the construction of new knowledge and how it relates to that which is already known.

### **Ways of Knowing**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, essential to my research is the idea of how the classroom learning lab program and the workshop model had an impact on teacher knowledge and practice. In order to address the case at hand, I was compelled to explore what tacit formal and practical knowledge teachers brought to the table, how new knowledge was personally and socially acquired and internalized, and any dilemmas the participants encountered throughout the duration of the program.

Dewey (1938) believed that passive observation of inquiry was an inadequate means for gaining knowledge and argued instead that active participation in the world (i.e., experience) imparted knowledge. For him, it was insufficient to simply transmit a curriculum of facts and information to the next generation. Knowledge, he envisioned, entailed piquing the natural curiosity of the student, with the teacher acting as a facilitator and guide for that learning – knowledge as a real sense of knowing as opposed to knowledge as a list of products and regurgitated facts.

Directly linked to Dewey's sense of knowing, Clandinin and Connelly (1996) argue that understanding the context for teacher knowledge involves "knowledge in terms of individual teacher knowledge, the working landscape, and the ways in which the landscape relates to public policy and theory" (p. 24). In their studies, they were not only curious as to what was known about effective teaching, what knowledge teachers already embodied, and what knowledge was essential for teaching, but extended their inquiry to include how "the professional knowledge context in which teachers work" (p. 24) shaped teacher knowledge. In this context, experience greatly informs knowledge, but in the teacher's own terms – a point that is further discussed in the Narrative Inquiry section of this chapter.

I held close these ideas throughout my research in the hopes of accentuating and honoring the participants' prior knowledge while showing any growth that may have occurred as a result of their experience with the program. I also attempted to uncover teachers' multiplicity of knowledge, or what Lyons (1990) calls "nested knowledge" (p. 173). That is, how teachers viewed themselves as knowledgeable and how they came to know their students as "knowers." Introducing the learning lab's undergirding beliefs and the models components either validated what participants already believed, or shed light on dilemmas they encountered with their personal conflicting ideologies about teaching and learning.

### **Classroom Learning Labs**

The need to address rigor and deep thinking, as well as learning, planning, instructional practices, pacing, flow, engagement, student work time, conferring and collaboration in a format that is both teacher-friendly and student-centered has never been

so important as it is now in the current push for quality education. The classroom learning lab setup is a form of professional development in which teachers are afforded the opportunity to watch other teachers put the workshop model into action in the classroom.

Houk (2010) describes the learning lab as such:

The lab classroom is an in-house professional development model that takes place in a host teacher's room during the normal school day, framed by a pre-observation meeting and a debriefing session. Like surgical theaters where doctors observe actual operations in progress to hone their techniques, the lab classroom provides an authentic opportunity for colleagues to see ideas in practice. Because the model provides for several sessions throughout the year, teachers have the opportunity to share and discuss the successes and challenges of their independent practice with their colleagues, continually improving.” (What is a Lab Classroom section, para. 11)

The value of seeing the workshop model in action during observations and classroom visits allows teachers to see its benefits, how other teachers adapt the model to their own classrooms, and how we can learn from each other. Farr (2010) also notes, through his observations and discussions with teachers, that “highly effective teachers [actually] seek colleagues who will give them frank and critical feedback” (p. 181). Olson (2000) further extends the idea of shared stories by highlighting that teachers feel validated and better understand their own practices and the practices of their colleagues “when [they] have the opportunity to value, articulate, and examine their curriculum stories with others...” (Olson, 2000, p. 184) As Houk (2010, para. 3) further explains, “teachers need learning structures that empower them professionally and enable them to collaborate with colleagues.” Doing so reiterates the basic beliefs of the workshop model and the learning



lab: that teaching and learning are complex endeavors, that no one needs to go it alone, and that we, are, in fact, smarter together.

A large part of these experiences in the classroom involve a constructivist framework. If part of the progressive experience of learning involves Vygotsky's ideas of constructivism, then teachers need exposure to similarly powerful learning experiences. Therefore, the classroom learning lab program aimed to engage educators in a constructivist manner in order to experience learning in this way, and encouraged them to develop constructivist classroom learning opportunities for their students.

**Sharing voices and visions.** Teachers, like never before, are scrutinized under the accountability microscope and guise of educational reform. The debate furiously centers around determining teacher effectiveness and the impact on student learning in their classrooms. Teacher accountability measures are often increasingly dependent upon a once-a-year standardized test score and vague observation systems to determine whether a teacher exhibits effective, high quality instruction. Interestingly enough, teachers in many states have had little say regarding how they are measured as effective, and, with prescribed curricula on the rise, have little say or freedom in how or what to teach. Unfortunately, teachers bear the burden of "[learning] to do well what the thinkers and policymakers tell them to do" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 379) and are seen as effective only when they comply with mandates. Clandinin and Connelly (1992) wish to remind educators that this was not always the case. Citing Dewey's (1938) ideas of education as experience through inquiry, Jackson (1968) and Schwab's (1969) references to their own experiences in the classroom, and Eisner's (1990) beliefs on the teacher as

curriculum-maker, they eloquently establish the academic bloodlines of researchers who know and understand the creative and central role teachers played in the curriculum.

The workshop model aims to develop the kind of high quality teaching and emphases on learning that are needed to increase rigor in the classroom. But the quality of teaching and learning are not all that the classroom learning lab and workshop model improve upon. The lab and model are key players in helping teachers develop *awareness* of their craft as educational practitioners – with what it is that they say and do that has the most impact on student learning. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3).

Typically when “teachers gather together they are caught up in the ongoing rush of activities and, hence, are engaged in routine types of knowledge transactions rather than the kinds of knowledge creation and sharing typically associated with knowledge communities and their formation” (Olson & Craig, 2001; Craig, 1995a). Craig’s (2011) definition of “knowledge communities” encompasses the spirit and experience of learning labs well. She defines them as:

...safe, storytelling places where educators narrate the rawness of their experiences, negotiate meaning, and authorize their own and others’ interpretations of situations. They take shape around commonplaces of experience (Lane, 1988) as opposed to around bureaucratic and hierarchical relations that declare who knows, what should be known, and what constitutes ‘good teaching’ and ‘good schools’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Such

knowledge communities can be both found and created (Craig & Olson, 2002, p. 116). (p. 27)

Devoid of administratively-driven activities and routine knowledge transactions, the epiphanies and growth that occurred when participating in the classroom learning lab program and in viewing the lessons and student work that resulted from implementing the workshop model were not only numerous, but powerful in what they revealed. I had the opportunity to witness first-hand the expansion of teachers' knowledge as participants in knowledge communities and the impact this alone had on student learning.

Olson (2000) points out the importance of sharing stories and lived experiences, something Bolton School District educators did well throughout the classroom learning lab as their verbal and written responses, belief letters, reflections, and observation notes indicate. Olson proposes that teachers rarely are given opportunities to observe other teachers create lived curriculum with their students. However, I felt the Bolton educators took full advantage of such an opportunity during the classroom learning lab experience and the enactment of the workshop model. Guided by the program's setup, teachers observed other teachers in the classrooms, shared the experiences of what they saw and heard, and collaboratively discussed how to improve instructional practices and interactions with students.

These "curriculum narratives" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990) of teaching-learning relationships and "knowledge landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996), which are the professional knowledge contexts in which teachers live and work, are integral parts of designing curriculum, in influencing professional practice, and in affording educators the opportunity to value and examine the curriculum stories of others. It is my sincere wish

that our experiences continue to shape our curricular choices, our stories, our lives, and ourselves.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

I have always believed that teachers' stories matter a great deal in the shaping of curriculum and in determining the direction of education in general. Because of this belief, I have, on occasion, gone head-to-head with quantitative researchers who came into our district to show us how to manipulate numbers, to train us in how to make data-based decisions (i.e., decisions based solely on numerically measurable components), and who explicitly stated that the story "behind the numbers" does not matter and that "we can only go by what the numbers tell us" (D. Molina, personal communication, fall 2006). I consistently argue for and share teachers' stories with other teachers, administrators, board members, businesses, and consultants to add multi-dimensional qualities to the experience of learning and to examine, as Olson (2000) states, "curriculum and teaching issues from the perspectives of the participants" (p. 169).

It is because I feel that teachers' experiences and stories are so important that I chose to conduct my research using a narrative inquiry approach. Narrative inquiry involves, honors, and sees relationships as a way of knowing (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This significant difference separates narrative inquiry from other qualitative research. Narrative inquiry also looks into how the person perceives what the issues are from his or her perspective. The story starts with these individuals. As I mentioned earlier, I knew that viewing the impacts of the lab and model from my own perspective would only give me limited insight into how the other educators experienced the

program. Therefore, narrative inquiry offered a rich and rewarding research methodology that provided multi-faceted, multi-perspective views of the same events.

Narrative inquiry directly links to Dewey (1938) who believed that education, experience, and life are inextricably intertwined – that to study education is to study experience. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) affirm that relationships form the nexus of what narrative inquirers do:

Narrative inquiry is the study of experience, and experience, as John Dewey taught, is a matter of people in relation contextually and temporally. Participants are in relation, and we as researchers are in relation to participants. Narrative inquiry is an experience of the experience. It is people in relations studying with people in relation. (p. 189)

In the context of experience acting alongside curriculum, Olson (2000) argues that “when curriculum is understood as a dynamic interplay of multiple, ongoing, experiential narratives that are continually reconstructed over time through interactive situations, the value of narrative inquiry for examining stories of practice is apparent” (p. 171).

Likewise, Clandinin and Connelly support that meaningful curriculum derives from understanding ourselves and the ability to articulate who we are and why we do the things we do to direct our energies in a chosen direction. The power, then, lies not only in the shared experience of the classroom learning lab, but in the sharing of experiences prior to, during, and after the program’s existence that influenced and shaped teachers’ curriculum and instruction, knowledge and practice.

According to Connelly, Clandinin, and He (1997), what teachers know and how their knowing is expressed in their teaching has only recently been recognized as central

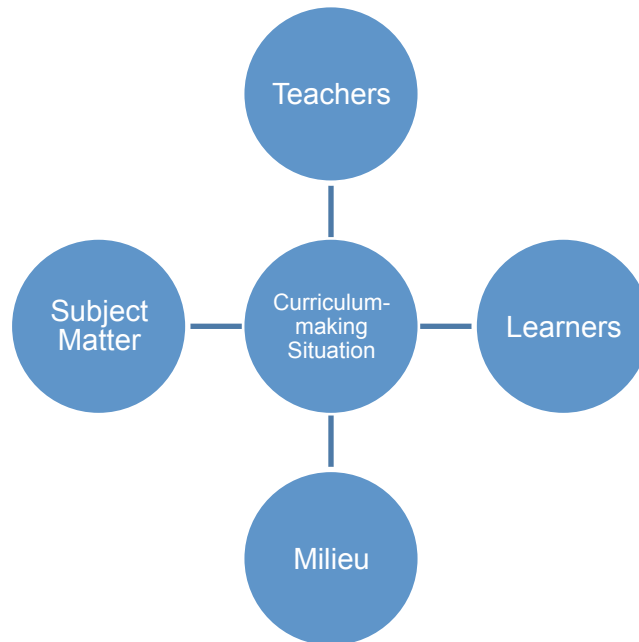
to student learning. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) define the term “personal practical knowledge” as:

A term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher’s past experience, in the teacher’s present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. [It] is found in the teacher’s practice. It is, for any one teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (p. 25)

Because the classroom learning lab endured for two years, personal practical knowledge of the participants was “revealed through interpretations of observed practices over time and [was] given biographical, personal meaning through reconstructions of the teachers’ narratives of experience” (Clandinin, 1985, p. 363). The belief letters (letters that shared what they believed to be true about teaching practice and student learning) that participants wrote were the start of their journey in the program. The belief letters drew on their past experiences, both personal and professional, and for many, shed light on the connections between experience, knowledge, and practice.

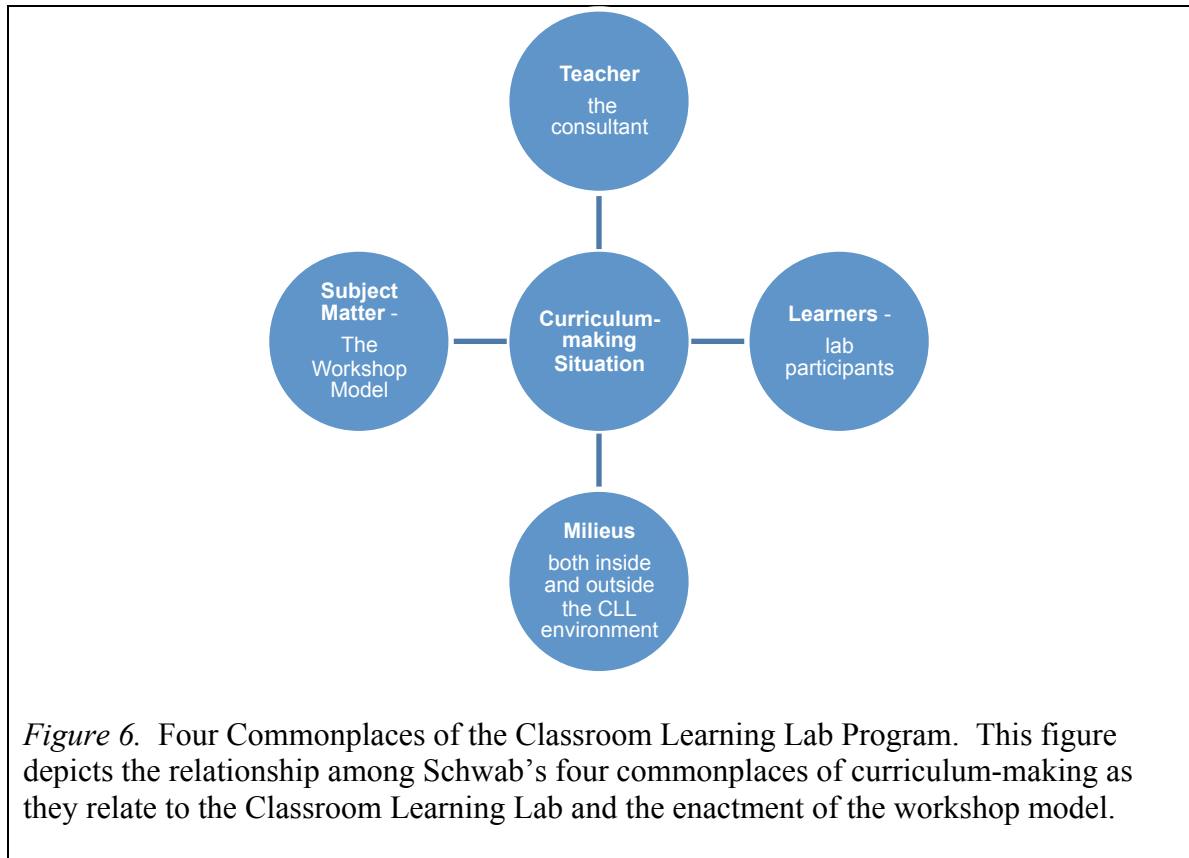
Since teachers-as-curriculum-makers has, at its heart, the idea of teachers’ personal practical knowledge, I was especially interested in observing how teachers’ actions in the classroom exhibited their beliefs, where the two complemented each other, or if there seemed to be a disconnect between what they said they believed and what they did.

When looking for connections between curriculum and teachers' knowledge, it is important to mention Schwab's (1973) belief that any situation can be understood from four commonplaces: teacher, learner, subject matter, and milieu (See Figure 5).



*Figure 5.* Schwab's Four Commonplaces. This figure depicts the relationship among Schwab's four commonplaces of curriculum-making. Schwab emphasized that the commonplaces maintained their theoretical foundations while simultaneously influencing the others.

In the CLL program, we experienced a shift in these commonplaces, whereas the teachers became the learners, the consultant became the teacher, the subject matter became the workshop model and its components, and the milieu became not only the lab setting as it was experienced, but extended to the relationships among those outside the lab cohort as participants shared with others at their home campuses in between lab days (see Figure 6).



Schwab believed that curriculum encompasses lived learning experiences and that these commonplaces of experience must “be represented in the group which undertakes the task of curriculum revision” (1973, p. 502).

Though I could never hope to contrive a generalized conception of teacher knowledge, I instead aimed to paint portraits, or detailed accounts, that illuminated the effects and evolution of teachers’ experiences.

### **Blurred Boundaries and the Multiplicity of Roles**

One of my greatest concerns with research is the fact that my role as English Language Arts Interventionist muddies the line between my role in accomplishing tasks for the district and my role as a researcher whose participants are primarily within the



district. On the one hand, I am genuinely interested in sharing teachers' experiences and stories as they pursue instructional effectiveness. On the other hand and by nature of the job title, I am often asked to work with lower performing teachers or to introduce and conduct training on instructional models and professional development sessions directly related to instructional improvement. Thus, when I approach a teacher to work with him or her, there is the assumption that I am there because he or she is not doing something right. Tensions rise when teachers do not entirely know the intent of my visit, or the extent of my involvement with them. Distinguishing the differences among roles has proven to be both a curse and a blessing in that I have direct access to my participant teachers on a daily basis, but have to strive to discern the purpose of my work to maintain trust in my relationships with those involved.

Clandinin and Connelly (1990) explain that it is in the "telling and retellings that entanglements become acute, for it is here that temporal and social, cultural horizons are set and reset" (p. 4). Entanglements indeed. Clandinin and Connelly further explain that "when one engages in narrative inquiry the process becomes even more complex, for, as researchers, we become part of the process" (pp. 4-5). The question for me, then, became two-fold: 1) will participants see me as a trusted colleague and share with me their authentic experiences, or 2) will participants see me in a power role as district interventionist required to share information at the district level and, therefore, guard what they say about their experiences? These questions flow along the same lines as Craig and Huber's (2007) discussion about the ethical obligations and conscious decisions we have to make as researchers in order to honor teachers' stories and experiences, which also echo in Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) notion of "relational

responsibilities” and Craig’s (2010) research on boundaries and the “bumping up [of] places, the tensions they produce, and the sources from which these frictions emanate” (p. 123). I grapple with and try to make sense of all of these ideas in Chapters 4 and 5.

### **Summary**

Because of the pressure to close the achievement gap between what students are currently doing in high school and what they are expected to do to be successful in college, the workshop model, which focuses on inquiry-based learning, well thought-out “backward” lesson design, and a majority of class time spent on students doing the reading, writing, and talking, and thus, the thinking and learning, is one way to improve teacher lesson design and student learning. Implementing the workshop model of instruction via a classroom learning lab framework allows teachers the opportunities to observe each other and to reflect upon their knowledge of and action on improving their instructional practices. More importantly, however, is the experience of establishing identities as curriculum leaders and curriculum makers in a time when students need us most. As John Steinbeck (1959/2003) eloquently states in his piece, “... like captured fireflies,”

I have had many teachers who told me soon-forgotten facts, but only three who created a new thing in me, a new attitude and a new hunger... What deathless power lies in the hands of such a person. (pp. 142-143)

It is time for teachers to reclaim and revive the power and purpose of education and to bring meaning and the right kinds of experiences back into learning, and back into the classrooms.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Methodology**

*“When you love your work that much – the only way to get out of trouble is to go deeper in. We must enter, not evade, the tangles of teaching so we can understand them better and negotiate them with more grace, not only to guard our own spirits but also to serve our students well.” – Parker Palmer (1998)*

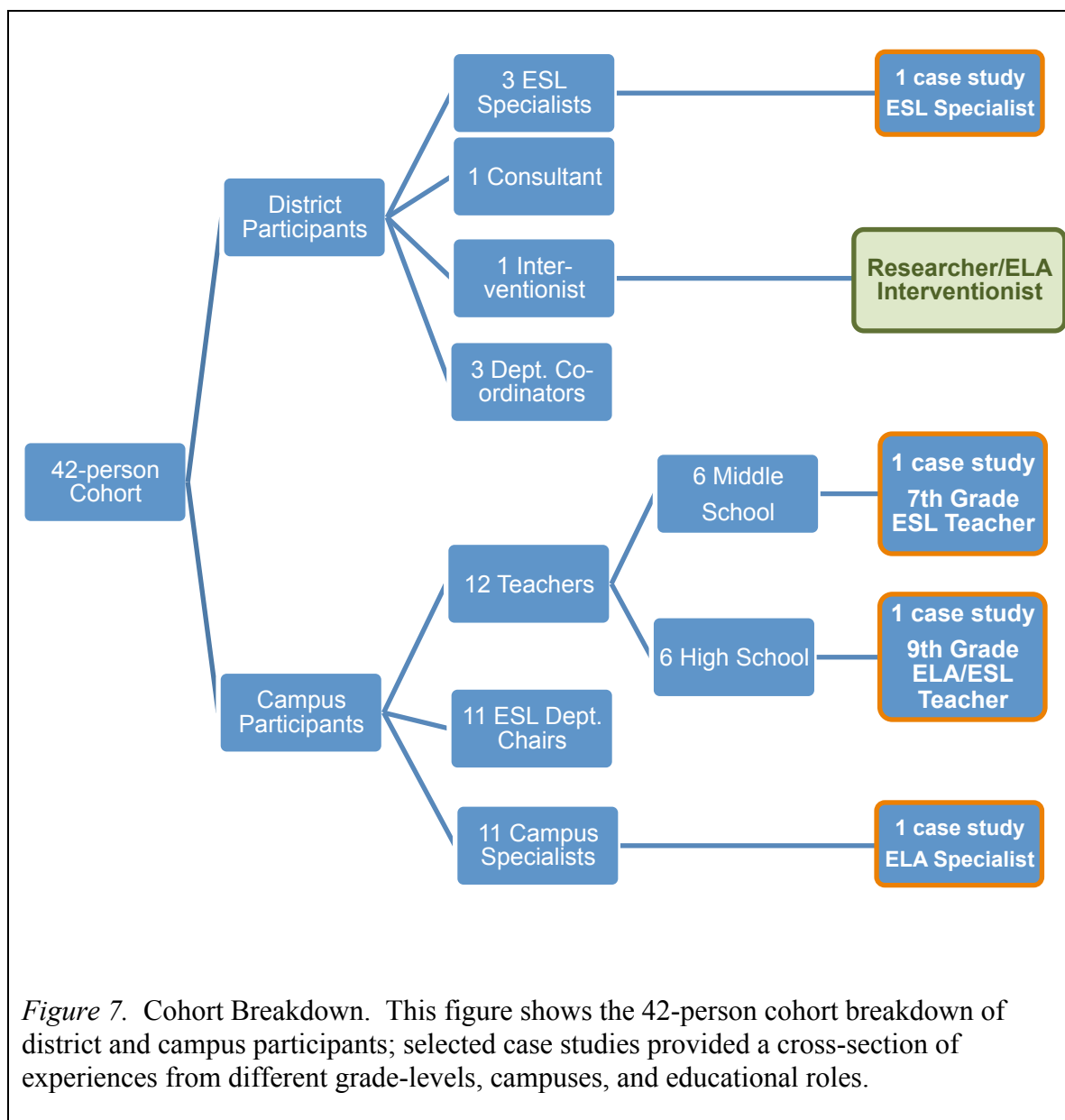
Chapters 1 and 2 laid the groundwork for the purpose, contextual framework, and significance of this work. As these chapters note, the methodology for this research is that of narrative inquiry. The appropriateness and value of narrative inquiry in this study is that it allowed me to uncover, discover, and explore not only the participants’ experiences in the classroom learning lab program, but to reflect on my own experiences through the eyes as a researcher, participant, and district interventionist.

In this chapter, I explicate the methods and procedures of how my participants were selected. I also explain how and which elements of narrative texts, notes, observations, and interviews were collected, discussed, analyzed and unpacked for further study, as well as how I address scrutiny pertaining to the validity of narrative inquiry.

#### **Overview of the Study**

I conducted the bulk of this study from August 2009 until May of 2011. The study consisted of a multiple-case study of four participants (two secondary classroom teachers, one campus specialist, and one district specialist) along with the inclusion of my own experiences from a cohort of 42 educators in the Bolton School District Classroom

Learning Lab program with a focus on enacting Bennett's (2007) workshop model of instruction (see Figure 7).



Though I burrowed into the stories and experiences of the four, I also included my own accounts of events as they unfolded throughout the duration of the study. All participants shared their personal beliefs about instruction, experiences in education, and

learning that occurred as a result of participating in the program. A compilation of various documents was collected through these verbalized accounts (shared stories and discussions), classroom observations of hosting lab teachers (observations notes), in-depth interviews with the four selected participants, and analyses of available written documents (belief letters, reflective journals, coaching letters, lesson plans, and student work). Almost a year after the conclusion of the two-year program, I revisited the four participants to determine if they continued to sustain the underlying ideas and components of the model, and if so, which components and to what extent. Responses to these inquiries could elucidate how and to what extent the program genuinely had an impact on participants' ongoing knowledge and practice.

Throughout the duration of the program, all participants met in each of five scheduled months during the school year (see Appendix C and D) with the first five teacher volunteers taking turns hosting a lab in his or her classroom using the workshop model. Observations by the cohort were made via video teleconferencing, usually in a conference room or the library on the campus, and simultaneous "live" visits (limited to 8-10 educators) to the classroom with the intention of studying the effectiveness of the classroom workshop model of instruction and its association with improved teacher lesson design and student performance in secondary ELA and ESL classrooms. Participants were encouraged to record their observation notes in a T-Chart format (see Appendix F). Following the one-class observation period each day, participants sat in as each host met with Sam in a one to two hour coaching session to discuss instruction, to study student work, to review evidence of learning, and then plan for day two. After the coaching session, all participants reflected on the workshop process and lesson design,

discussed improvements, applauded accomplishments, and reflected on their own practice and knowledge as educators (see Appendix E).

### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study was to determine how participating in the CLL program and enacting a new model of instruction has an impact on teacher knowledge and practice, not only during the two-year enactment, but after its conclusion. One of the foundational beliefs of the program was that once we know better, we do better. One of the goals of this study was to find out if this held true, and if so, in what manner and to what extent. In pursuit of these understandings, I hoped to uncover, discover, and explore the experiences these educators had while navigating a new instructional model – its core concepts and ideas, design and structure, tensions and accomplishments – and did so in a collaborative learning lab environment. The narratives from participants in the program reveal how teachers constructed and reconstructed their personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985, 1989) over their two-year involvement in the program, and how the experiences continue to influence their practices and identities as curriculum-makers after the program's conclusion.

Furthermore, the study shares how the collaborative spirit among educators fostered an environment conducive to creating sustainable growth with the hope that it become sustained and continue to flourish, not only in the intentional design of lessons, but in the daily pursuit of expanding knowledge of practice and of self. Understanding not only the structure and components of the workshop model, but also the struggles and successes of enacting the workshop model in their classrooms in front of colleagues is

important for drawing attentions to how educators grapple with new knowledge in the context of peer groups.

### **Research and Study Questions**

The study attempts to describe, through stories of teacher experience, how the program impacted their knowledge and instruction. Though not limited to these, this researcher attempts to explore and make known participants' reflections on the following questions:

- How has learning about the workshop model and its components had an impact on teacher instructional knowledge? (what they share that they have learned)
- How has enacting the workshop model in the classroom affected teachers' instructional practices? (what they do)
- How has participating in the classroom learning lab influenced their perspectives on improving knowledge and practice in this kind of learning environment?

Responses to these questions can add to our understandings of how reformation of instructional practices takes place and can inform educators as to the development of successful professional learning structures in the future.

### **Approach and Methodology**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has four pillars of education: 1) to teach us how to know, 2) to teach us how to do, 3) to teach us how to live together, and to 4) teach us how *to be*

(<http://www.unesco.org/delors/fourpil.htm>). Narrative inquiry is geared toward “teaching to be”, that is, *to be* wide awake about other people’s experiences. It is through this watchfulness and wakefulness that nuances of relationships come to pass. This allows narrative inquirers to get inside a situation and conduct close observation and attempt to capture that in writing all the while negotiating fearlessness and unpacking it all. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) talk about how narrative is both phenomenon and method; that narrative “names the structures and quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study” (p. 2). For clarification, they establish that the “story” is the phenomenon and the “narrative” is the inquiry. Narrative inquiry is very small, but impactful research. It constitutes a close inquiry into the stories and experiences of participants, owning up to the idea that the familiar can become strange upon closer inspection.

Based on these ideas, the intent of this research was to divulge participants’ thoughts about the workshop model’s components, experiences with the enactment of the model, and reactions to their involvement in the classroom learning lab and to establish how and to what extent this program influenced their knowledge and practice. In order to deepen scholarly understandings of the events, I selected four participants with whom to do a deeper investigation into the events. In doing so, I not only discovered more about their experiences, but added to my own experiences as a participant, a researcher, and district interventionist in the program as well as the crossing over of identity boundaries and the bumping up of these places (Craig, 2010) against each other.

**Selection of participants.** District ELA Coordinator, Maggie Gray (pseudonym) consulted with campus specialists to determine which teachers 1) were open and willing



to enact the model in their classrooms, 2) were willing to work with their campus specialists, who would act as the coach, to enact the model in between scheduled lab sessions, and 3) felt comfortable leaving their classrooms for the five instructional days needed to participate in the program. As a result, twelve teachers voluntarily joined the program for a commitment of two years, which began in August of 2009 and concluded in May of 2011. In addition to the classroom teachers, eleven secondary English Language Arts (ELA) specialists and eleven secondary English as a Second Language (ESL) department chairs from each of the participating secondary schools, and eight district ELA/ESL personnel from the administration building, including myself, also volunteered to participate.

Educators of the 42-person cohort were divided into two groups (see Appendix D). Group one, the coaching support group (i.e., this group focused on how to coach and support their teacher counterparts on campus in between scheduled lab sessions), consisted of specialists, department chairs, and district personnel. On day one of the lab, group one met to observe and debrief the hosting teacher's classroom and subsequent coaching session not only to discuss the strengthening of instructional practices, but also the ways to become stronger coaching supports for teachers. On day two, the remaining eleven participating classroom teachers (group two) joined the rest of the cohort to observe the hosting teacher's second day in the classroom and to join in on the dialogue about strengthening instructional practices to maximize student learning. All participants met in each of five scheduled months during the school year (see Appendix C) with the first five teacher volunteers taking turns hosting a lab in his or her classroom using the workshop model. Prior to classroom observations each day, the groups conducted a pre-

brief learning session which focused on research that supported the pillars of the workshop model (see Appendix G).

For the narrative inquiries, I chose four participants from the cohort with whom to go deeper. In order to provide a cross-sectional perspective, I chose two classroom teachers (one female high school and one male middle school teacher), one campus ELA specialist, and one district representative from the ESL department. I specifically chose the two classroom participants to represent a more seasoned teacher, Mila (pseudonym) from the high school with nine years of experience, and a newer teacher to the profession, Sean (pseudonym) who was in his third year at the middle school.

I chose Mila because she appeared to be, based on her verbal discussions and stories she shared with the cohort about her classroom practices, an already knowledgeable educator. Therefore, I was curious as to how participating as a hosting teacher would either validate, or call into question, her current beliefs and practice.

I specifically chose Sean's experience as a case study with whom I wanted to burrow more deeply because his two-day hosting lab and coaching session not only provided some profound differences between what he did on day one and on day two, but because his coaching session with Sam resulted in tense exchanges that were perceived on various levels of interpretation. I hoped to discover and uncover more about his experience, specifically to see if what I thought he had experienced, and what others' perceptions of the events were, corresponded in any way with what he felt he had experienced.

I chose a campus ELA specialist and an ESL district representative, both with whom I had an already established personal and professional relationship, to provide

varied perspectives of experiences based on their areas of expertise. My hope with all four chosen participants was to create a cross-section of experiences that would provide insight into various perceptions of the program's impact from the viewpoints of different roles in education. A more detailed account of my relationship with the participants as we embarked on this journey together as well as a more thorough account of our personal narratives follows in Chapter 4.

**Collection of documentation.** The majority of the documentation collection occurred between the start of the program in August of 2009 and its conclusion in May of 2011. The documents consist of an array of field texts including:

- field notes (consisting of three observations each of the two participating teachers in the classroom – two in the context of the lab setting, one in the context of their regular classroom setting after the program's conclusion; and observations of each of the two teachers' subsequent coaching sessions during their two-day hosting period),
- scribed semi-structured research interviews (between myself and each of the four participants),
- belief letters which share teachers' personal beliefs about instruction and student learning,
- coaching letters (see Appendix H) which share observations and feedback for classroom teachers
- written accounts of teacher stories (about their educational experiences),
- reflective "take-aways" which are thoughts, ideas, and insights participants share at the end of a learning lab day both verbally and in written form, and

- lesson plans, assignments and student work.

I have categorized materials collected 1) during the program (agendas, foundational beliefs of the program, sample lessons, and publications), 2) materials collected from all participants (belief letters, journal reflections, or “take-aways”, and coaching letters), and 3) materials collected from hosting teachers (lesson plans, assignments, and student work).

In the spring of 2012, approximately nine months after the completion of the two-year enactment, I revisited and re-observed the two classroom teachers for one class period, and followed up with another interview (on the same day) to see if the program created sustainable practices – if they were still using the model, and if so, which components and to what extent. I also interviewed the campus specialist and district participant to inquire as to whether or not they were seeing the model in use by those who participated in the program as they visited campuses and classrooms, and, if so, to what extent. More information about the analysis of these interviews appears in the Document Analysis and Interpretation section of this chapter.

***Observation protocol.*** The primary documents collected in the observations were field notes of shared experiences from the scheduled lab days. These were collected through participant observations in a shared practical setting and one of the primary tools of narrative inquiry work. For the classroom observations, eight to ten participants from the cohort would voluntarily visit the hosting teacher’s classroom while the remainder of the cohort remained in a conference room, or the school’s library, to observe the hosting teacher’s classroom via teleconferencing video equipment in real-time. The focus was studying the effectiveness of the classroom workshop model of instruction and its

association with improved teacher lesson design and student performance in secondary ELA and ESL classrooms. Participants were encouraged to record in their journal what they had seen and heard in the classroom and why it mattered to student learning using a T-chart format (see Appendix F), or other form of graphic organizer. Because this document was fluid and changeable, the design of the observation sheet morphed throughout the program from documenting use of minutes and what was seen and heard to include the “why” it mattered to student learning.

Following the one-class observation period, participants sat in as the hosting teacher met with Sam in a one to two-hour coaching session to discuss instruction, to study student work, to review evidence of learning, and then plan for day two. All classroom and coaching session observations were digitally recorded so as to cross-check content with my typed notes.

A second round of one-hour observations took place in the spring of 2012, nine months after the initial observations in the program. I revisited the hosting teachers’ classrooms to invite them to reflect on their experience in the lab with the workshop model and to determine how the program continued to impact their knowledge and practice. For this visit, observation notes were scribed in the same t-chart fashion, including why it mattered to student learning, and were used for talking points in the second interview that followed the observation.

***Interview protocol.*** Initial interviews were scheduled and conducted with teachers following their hosted labs. Though I constructed questions prior to the interviews (see Appendix I) based on my own observations, I encouraged participants to

venture in their own directions to tell stories and share experiences. Likewise, I asked questions not on the initial protocol in order to clarify, or to continue an unexpected line of inquiry.

Though given the option to opt out, each participant gave me permission to record their interviews and observations. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed to become part of the ongoing narrative record. The purpose of the interviews was to find out how participants thought or felt about the program's impact in general, and to gather more detail about specific events. Another purpose was to provide a check on the researcher's observations. The second round of interviews was used to determine the sustainability of the model – whether or not it has had a lasting impact on instruction and continued to be used in the classroom. These interviews were informal in nature and were instituted with no pre-constructed questions, but instead allowed teachers to freely discuss how and in what ways the model continued to influence their instructional practice. These interviews were also digitally recorded and transcribed, becoming part of the ongoing narrative record.

***Written materials protocol.*** Additional documentation collected also included hosting lab teacher lesson plans from day one and day two, and all participants' belief letters, coaching letters, and reflective "take-aways," which are thoughts, ideas, and insights participants share at the close of each lab day. These documents were used to support observational and dialogical analyses, to provide more information about the experiences of the participants, and to provide hints into the learning that took place.

More information about the analysis of these materials is provided in the Document Analysis and Interpretation section below.

### **Document Analysis and Interpretation**

Document analysis and interpretation consisted of narrative inquiry frameworks (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) including broadening, burrowing, and restorying. To generate understandings from, in, around, and through the shared experiences, I unpacked the data using the tools of narrative interpretation: broadening, burrowing, and restorying (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Broadening involves constructing generalizations of events so as to comment about “a person’s character, values, [and] ways of life, or...about the social and intellectual climate of the times” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 11). Burrowing focuses more closely on the “event’s emotional, moral, and aesthetic qualities...aimed at reconstructing a story of the event from the point of view of the person at the time the event occurred” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 11). Finally, restorying involves returning to past events and capturing how “he or she might create a new story of self which changes the meaning of the event, its description, and its significance for the larger life story the person may be trying to live” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 11).

To further check for thematic understandings from the data, I also used Carspecken’s (1996) reconstructive analysis of observations and interviews to uncover emergent themes within and across participant experiences. In using both methods for analysis, I found that the interim texts created by the reconstructive analysis were validated and complemented by the narrative tools of broadening, burrowing, and

restorying. Finally, to maintain valid and reliable accounts of my research, I employed peer and participant debriefing to check for indications of researcher bias and partiality.

**Observational field notes.** Though I scribed each of the hosting teachers' labs involved with the program, I chose to do in-depth reconstructive analysis of only those two classroom teachers I selected for this study, both during the two-year enactment and after its conclusion to check for sustainability. Observational analysis included reconstructive analysis on classroom observations from day one and day two, as well as the coaching sessions that followed with Sam during the 2009-2011 school years, and followed up with a second observation of the classroom teachers in the spring of 2012 to check for the workshop model's sustainability. From these transcripts, I conducted a horizon analysis (Carspecken, 1996) to reconstruct the three types of validity claims: objective (claims constituted from observation of actual events), subjective (claims of which meaning is reconstructed through making inferences and checked against observed events), and normative-evaluative (claims that reflect on what the social group accepts as appropriate). Reconstructive analyses helped me make sense of meanings in the themes that emerged and the analyses provided a more trustworthy account of inquiry.

As coding schemes, or themes, emerged I kept a running list of them. As it turned out, some of the themes clearly revealed how the model and lab had an impact on knowledge and practice and the observations lent themselves to some rich coding schemes. One of the things that helped me was color-coding my original observation data. When a theme first emerged, I highlighted it in a certain color and then gave it a label. As I continued to read through the observation text, I highlighted other areas where that same theme emerged. It was extremely helpful when pulling all the themes



together for my coding scheme. Organizing the coding schemes really allowed me to ruminate on the documents, helped me answer some of my research questions, and also helped me formulate some of my interview questions. The observational data were also helpful in that they functioned as consistency checks for my interviews.

**Interviews.** I conducted initial interviews of the two classroom teachers after they hosted their labs. Initial interviews of the campus and district participants were conducted at the conclusion of the two-year program. Follow up interviews for all four participants were conducted in the spring of 2012.

I recorded and transcribed both the initial and second interviews with the two classroom teachers, the campus specialist, and the district representative for analysis. Analysis procedures of interviews were two-fold: 1) the interview transcripts were taken through the reconstructive analysis procedures the same way as the observational scripts were (horizon analysis and coding schemes), and 2) stories and experiences were used to cross-check the meanings and perceptions I had gleaned from the observational data. I then share information with each participant so that researcher bias and partiality were checked. In other words, I wanted to ensure that I had heard my participants correctly and was not misrepresenting their experiences in any way. Including them in this process validated their experiences and gave them a platform from which to share their stories.

**Written materials.** Analyses of other written materials helped create a multi-dimensional understanding of how the program had an impact on knowledge and practice. These materials included the hosting teachers' lesson plans from the two lab days and the follow-up spring visit, the belief letters and reflective "take-aways" all

participants wrote at the end of each day of the lab, and coaching letters written all participants wrote and which were used in conjunction with the observational and interview records to triangulate the data. Table 2 neatly breaks down the data collected and analyzed and the manner in which they will be used to show the impact of the program on knowledge and practice.

Table 2.	
<i>Impact of the Program</i>	
Impact on Knowledge and Practice	Evidence Collected and Examined
<b>Workshop Model</b>	<b>Workshop Model</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increased student collaboration</li> <li>○ Inquiry-based instruction</li> <li>○ Backward planning – beginning with the end in mind</li> <li>○ Use of time</li> <li>○ Conferring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Classroom observations</li> <li>○ Interviews</li> <li>○ Lesson plans</li> <li>○ Group discussions</li> <li>○ Supporting research articles</li> </ul>
<b>Classroom Learning Lab</b>	<b>Classroom Learning Lab</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ As a professional development experience to improve classroom instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Coaching observations</li> <li>○ Belief letters</li> <li>○ Reflective take-aways</li> <li>○ Interviews</li> <li>○ Group discussions</li> <li>○ Supporting research articles</li> </ul>
Note. This table shows the evidence collected and examined to determine the impact on knowledge and practice in each of the sub-categories listed under the Workshop Model and the Classroom Learning Lab.	

Again, though I have the written materials from all participants and use the information to generate an overall consensus of the program's impact, I focus on the analysis of

materials from the four chosen participants in this study to construct and develop a more thorough account of the impact of the program on them personally.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The multiplicity of my roles in this project as researcher, participant, and district interventionist, gave me a unique perspective on the events as they unfolded.

Distinguishing the differences between roles proved both challenging and fruitful in that I have direct access to my participants on a daily basis, but have to work hard to discern the purpose of my work to maintain trust in my relationships with those involved. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the question for me became two-fold: 1) will participants see me as a trusted colleague and share with me their authentic experiences, or 2) will participants see me in a power role as district interventionist required to share information at the district level and, therefore, guard what they say about their experiences? I knew many of the high school and district participants prior to the program, but not Mila or Sean. Working alongside them in this study was the first time I had interacted with them on this level and this often. The district representative, the campus specialist, and I already had an established collegial rapport and considered ourselves good friends. The familiarity of our relationship provided a trusting milieu which led to some comfortably robust conversations about our experiences in the program.

The narrative I bring to the table consists of seventeen years in education and my experiences as a classroom teacher, campus specialist, district interventionist, and now as researcher. My hope is that teachers see me as a reliable colleague – one who has changed positions in the district, but not my focus on supporting teachers.

**Summary**

In the quest to meet the demands of the current accountability system, investing in quality classroom instruction and improved teacher effectiveness is one way to address current perceptions and concerns with reform. The purpose of this study was to determine through the narratives of four participants – two classroom teachers, one campus specialist, and one district administrator – how the enactment of a new model of instruction within the framework of a classroom learning lab had an impact on teacher knowledge and practice. The study took place from the fall of 2009 until the spring of 2011, and was revisited in the spring of 2012, approximately nine months after the program's completion. I re-interviewed all four participants and I re-observed the two teachers for one class period in an effort to determine the sustainability of the program's fundamental components in practice.

The following chapter burrows into the narratives of the participants which shed light on their experiences with the program and how these experiences connected to the broader narrative of the entire cohort. I, too, share my own experiences throughout the process: the ways in which my own knowledge and practice were affected and influenced and how my story, and those of my colleagues, intertwined in our endeavor.

## Chapter IV

### Findings

*“Every young person in the United States has a constitutional right to education. Yet, that student’s education is meaningless if it does not actually increase the student’s ability to use his or her intelligence to make sense of and engage with the world. Our youth are truly free only when they are fully literate. Only when we give all students the skills to access learning and to access power in society will they experience a ‘liberating education,’ in which work is challenging, knowledge is relevant to students’ lives, and analysis is essential. Literacy is not just a desirable ideal; it is a social imperative. Such literacy enables students to have a voice, take a stand, and make a difference -- it gives them power. Every secondary teacher plays a role in developing students who can think well and are literate at high levels. [We] must make this work central to [our] mission”* (Plaut, 2009, pp. 1-3).

The purpose of this study was to present detailed accounts of experiences from two classroom teachers, Mila and Sean, one campus specialist, Shirley, one district specialist, Olivia, and myself as researcher, district interventionist, and Classroom Learning Lab (CLL) participant to determine how learning about the workshop model and its components had an impact on teacher instructional knowledge, how enacting the model affected teachers’ instructional practices, and how participating in the CLL program influenced their perspectives on improving knowledge and practice in this type of learning environment. This chapter shares a broader picture of the context in which

the study took place, as well as the experiences of those involved and which themes emerged when looking across the collection of data.

In this chapter, I first establish the context in which the program took place. Then I share how each of the participants, myself included, entered into the education profession – stories, I argue, that continue to shape and influence our basic beliefs about teaching and learning and, thus, our knowledge and practice. After establishing familiarity with the participants, I then explore the impact and influence of the workshop model on each of the participants' knowledge and practices in general, and then burrow into the impact of each of the components. I not only traverse into this inquiry during the model's enactment in the district, but include the model's impact nine months after the program's conclusion. Doing so helps shed light on the sustainability of the model.

In addition to excavating the model's impact, I unpack how the classroom learning lab's environment influenced our perspectives on improving knowledge and practice in a collaborative learning environment of this nature.

In pursuit of these inquiries, I discovered connected patterns in the perceptions and experiences of the participants' knowledge and practice as they enacted the workshop model, particularly in the use of time in the classroom and in the difficulties with enacting all of the components simultaneously. For example, both Mila and Sean found it difficult, though not impossible, to enact all of the components on a daily basis. However, each conceded, as I will later show, that they were able to grasp some components more easily while still working to improve the others. Furthermore, as lab participants shared their experiences with the learning lab and the workshop's components with their campus grade-level teams, they, too, began to enact if not the

model in its entirety, than at least parts of it. This was especially evident in the shifting in the use of time (teacher-time versus student-time) and the spread of inquiry-based curriculum.

I also uncovered differentiated perspectives on certain events as they were experienced, primarily in the telling and re-telling of the coaching aspect of the program, which Mila and Sean found to be stressful and intimidating when conducted in front of an audience of peers. Olivia, too, felt that the coaching aspect of the program was too public, leaving the hosting teacher who was being coached too vulnerable. As for me, the coaching aspect was an important learning experience because I was expected to coach teachers in our district, yet had not been fully trained to do so. The opportunity to observe the coaching sessions and to listen to how the participants perceived them gave me good information about what to do, or not do, when I worked with and coached teachers throughout the district. Of all of the different working parts of the CLL program, the coaching element was by far where the most tension surfaced. More detailed accounts of these findings will emerge in the course of presenting the experiences in the various selections of this chapter.

The value in sharing these accounts from this inquiry is beneficial in understanding and creating future classroom learning lab programs that focus on enacting the workshop model of instruction. Familiarizing ourselves with the stories of these case studies allows us to reconstruct the program in ways that could benefit the next generation of learning lab participants who enact the workshop model to improve teacher knowledge and practice.

**The Context of the Program**

Bolton School District is an urban school district centrally located within several larger surrounding school districts in the fourth largest city in the United States. Though its demographics consist of a low-socioeconomic, high minority population, the district, which serves a population of approximately 45,600 students, has progressed from a Texas Education Agency (TEA) Academically Acceptable district in 2009-2010 to one that is TEA Recognized as having met all category criteria for state standardized testing and accountability in 2010-2011. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) measures accountability each year in the following categories: all students; African-American, Hispanic, and White subpopulations; economically disadvantaged; completion rates (graduation in four years); commended levels (which indicate advanced success in both reading and math for all students and economically disadvantaged students); and the English Language Learner (ELL) progress measure (Texas Education Agency, 2012).

As exciting as it was to become a recognized school district for 2010-2011 by the TEA guidelines, ELA and ESL educators across our district often discussed in district and team meetings as well as during the CLL days throughout the year the pressure they felt from both administrators and from themselves to maintain the ranking. In many of these discussions, conversations inevitably turned to how we could continue to improve the learning environment without sacrificing accountability to the state standardized exam. Though the district automatically kept the recognized rating for the 2011-2012 school year because of the implementation of a new state standardized test, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), there was the hope that the continuation of enacting the workshop model would further advance on-going



improvements in teacher knowledge and practice, resulting in a positive effect on student learning that ultimately led to success on the state standardized exam. Though there is no direct evidence linking the enactment of the workshop model through the CLL program to improvements in standardized ELA scores, the program and model apparently did not impede our success with the state's accountability measurement.

Case study participants of the CLL program came from various campuses and locations around the district. Mila was located just two blocks from the administration building in one of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade centers which houses approximately 900 freshmen. Sean is located across the street from the administration building in one of six middle schools that includes just over one thousand 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Shirley is located at another high school on the other side of the district from the administration building and bumps up against the district line of another major school district in Texas. Her campus houses approximately 2,800 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Olivia and I come from the administration building which is more centrally located within the district and that houses the business, community, human resources, and instructional divisions. Although Sam was an out-of-state consultant from the PEBC in the Denver, Colorado area, it is important to re-emphasize that she was the major facilitator and coach with our CLL program in our attempt to enact her model of instruction.

I would also like to add that of my case study participants, I had already worked with, and knew well, both Olivia and Shirley. I was not introduced to Sam, Mila, and Sean until our participation in and my inquiries into the CLL. However, over the course of the two-year program and through the inquiries of my study, we became, and continue to be, close colleagues and friends.

The following sections continue my inquiry into events that occurred during the enactment of the program and after its conclusion.

### **Storied Lives – Living Stories**

**Becoming educators.** I have always believed that stories matter – that educators bring with them to their current teaching lives past experiences and stories that influence and shape the decisions and actions we perform. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) call these “teacher’s stories and stories of teachers,” an important idea to acknowledge because the stories elucidate and “bring about theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived” (p. 3). Somewhere along the continuum of our stories, each of us decided to become educators. Perhaps for various reasons, but the decision to become a teacher was fueled in many ways by the past life events we had experienced.

Because the narratives I collected during this study represent only a partial telling of the storied lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990) of the participants across a continuum of experience, taking the time to include these stories is important in understanding not only the experiences that led us to our present educational endeavors, but how these experiences both shape and influence our current teacher knowledge and practice. Giving attention to these stories honors the participants’ past experiences while further illuminating possible reasons why they make the instructional decisions they make in the classroom, how they experienced the program during its enactment, and whether they continue to feel its influence after the conclusion of the program.

*The researcher's story.* I enjoy sharing my story with how I first came into the educational profession. It caught me by surprise, actually, because my initial plans in life were to become an astrophysicist and work in an observatory. Early on, I had a natural curiosity about the universe and its mystery. My initial plans, however, were hindered by a dour physics professor.

My goal was to fly high above the world as an astronaut conducting important space research. That dream ended with the Space Shuttle tragedy. In high school, I decided to keep my feet on the ground and use telescopes to study the cosmos as a world-renowned astrophysicist. I was already imagining the many new comets, stars, and solar systems I would be responsible for naming, and the unimaginable breakthroughs in discovery I would uncover. That dream ended in college with a skeptical, judgmental, unsupportive science advisor who felt scientists should not be blond and perky. (T. Scholz, journal entry, June 9, 2011)

In retrospect, I am disappointed that I allowed one professor to stand in the way of my career pursuit. Had I allowed my highly competitive nature to take over, I would have seen his cynicism as a challenge and proven him wrong. Instead, I let his pessimism take root and ended up in a very different line of work – I ventured into the communications field and began working on music videos, commercials, and movies as a freelance production assistant, and satiated my scientific yearnings with a subscription to “Astronomy” magazine. However different this new venture was, I embraced it with vigor.

I loved the fast, ego-busting, mind altering state of working with producers, directors, actors, and actresses all becoming larger than life for the purpose of

producing a masterpiece, or at least making connections that secured my next job. I learned the game quickly and learned how to finagle my way into anyone's good graces - an important trait to have if you're going to get hired for another job before the end of the month. Plus, I did good work. (T. Scholz, journal entry, June 9, 2011)

The next excerpt pinpoints the exact moment I knew I wanted to become an educator. Not only was the experience powerful at the moment it was experienced, but to this day it continues to drive my energies as a professional. What I didn't expect was the change that would take place in my life during a police show taping that brought the camera crew to a shooting at 3:00 a.m. on Houston's southeast side.

The call brought us to a neighborhood in the city I never knew existed. The faded brown one-room houses that lined the street lacked electricity, except for the street lights, where an alarmingly large crowd of people could be seen pushing against the line of police officers already there trying to hold them back. In the middle of the street was the shooting victim. I'd never seen a serious crime scene this close before, but I have to say that I had already pre-judged the guy wondering what sort of horrible thing he had done to deserve such a fate.

As we walked to the tape barrier that marked our boundary, I saw the small body of a young boy. My heart caught in my throat and my eyes widened. There would be no signature required. The blood from the bullet wounds had stained the concrete and it was obvious there were no signs of life. Even the ambulance and the EMTs, arriving immediately after we did, seemed to move too slowly in placing him on the stretcher and driving away.

Suddenly, everything around me, all the cameras, the crew, the lifestyle, seemed out of touch to me. I felt out of place – like I was sticking my nose where it shouldn't be.

That poor kid, I kept thinking. His life was over, over before it even began. How old was he? Thirteen? Twelve?

“Nine,” the officer in the front seat told me. “Gang shooting.”

Nine. Nine. I kept repeating it thinking about what I was doing at nine, and then at ten and eleven, and all the years that followed. It was hard to comprehend or to even try and pretend that my life had ended at nine.

After crying all the way home, my disbelief gave way to anger, and then a deep sadness penetrated my whole body. These kids needed help. What could I do to help send a message of hope to these kids who may not experience it on a regular basis?

Teaching was the answer. I decided right then and there, I wanted to be a teacher. I knew that if I could just help a few of these young kiddos at a time, influence them positively and help get them and keep them on track, then I would be more satisfied than with any recognition I could have received for the work I was currently doing. (T. Scholz, journal entry, June 9, 2011)

I share this story because it was a major turning point in my life, a dominant part of my narrative, and because it partially explains why I am so passionate about education, learning and reaching out to students. This experience not only guided me into the teaching profession, but also influenced the behaviors I exhibited with students in the classroom. When I was on the brink of losing patience while working with a student, I

needed only to return to the street that night to remind myself that I had a purpose in the classroom, and I was able to redirect my attention to the benefit of the student. This is true even today as I work with teachers and teams of educators. I feel that I have the right balance of patience, sagacity, and empathy to allow me to connect with colleagues as we work together.

Because this experience influenced my knowledge and practice in education, both directly and indirectly, and steered the direction of my professional life, I took time to inquire with the other participants what experiences they had that might have resulted in just as profound an influence.

***Mila's story.*** Mila is a seasoned teacher who has nine years of experience and currently teaches regular English Language Arts (ELA) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to ninth graders on her campus. Like Shirley, Sean, and me, Mila did not start her career in education. Below, she recounts not only her educational experiences as a student, but also how those experiences influenced her later decisions in life:

I started elementary school knowing exactly what I wanted to be: a lawyer. And I bet every one of my elementary/middle/high school teachers would agree wholeheartedly. I was the five-year-old class-talker, question-asker, equal rights-for-students leader. I talked all the time in class. Sometimes my conversation related to classroom instruction, but most times it did not. My parents were often called into school for parent teacher conferences, and the conversation always started with “Mila is very bright, if only she would....” After a while, I kind of

tuned out all the way through middle school, vowing to become a lawyer so I could sue those “mean” teachers who labeled me.

In high school I calmed down a bit (boys I guess). However, I continued to study on the social sciences/pre-law track. High school became a better experience for me and the labels dropped. Now, I was a “responsible” student and a member of the student council. I remember taking a career assessment and it pointed me to the social sciences.

I started college with pre-law in mind until I took my first psychology class. That class hit a spark. I was inspired and intrigued about the complexities of the mind and what makes people tick. I graduated with a Bachelors degree in Psychology and then went back for a Masters degree in Counseling Psychology as well.

However, the job market was tough when I graduated, and the social science field just did not pay as much as I thought I would need to survive. It was while I was working as a child protective services worker that my supervisor mentioned that the public school system had a shortage. I found out later that the Baltimore City School System was giving teachers a \$2000.00 sign-on bonus. That was all I needed to hear. I decided to switch to teaching temporarily until I could get something I really liked.... and that was over eight years ago. Baltimore City Public School System paid for me to go back and get the credit that I needed to become a qualified teacher. That is how I ended with a second Masters degree in Education.

Teaching is my passion now. I love teaching kids. I really love the fact that I can inspire young people to learn and become so much more than they could imagine. (personal communication, March 1, 2012)

What is evident in Mila's story of becoming an educator is that she, too, had early influences in her beliefs about education and learning. For one, she did not allow the labels that her teachers gave her impede her academic achievement. In fact, their labels ignited her desire to study harder, albeit as more an act of revenge. The change in behavior in high school to becoming a "responsible" student, and her fervent interest in psychology in college, play a part and are evident in the belief statements she shared with the CLL cohort prior to hosting her lab. From her belief letter, she wrote the following:

Simply put, I enjoy helping others! Okay, so I know that sounds really cliché, but it is the truth. I think what I really enjoy is the fact that I can influence another person's life with knowledge that he or she may not have been otherwise privy to. With that being said, I keep myself open and teachable so that I can gain knowledge from others as well. I believe that each student can and should shine in the classroom in his or her own way, and at his or her own pace. I believe that my students should feel included and encouraged. I believe that my students should know that the classroom is a "safe" environment where we can grow and learn from each other. (belief letter, September 27, 2010)

That Mila takes into account the importance that her students feel "safe" in the classroom is a nod to the fact that she did not feel that security in her early educational experiences; therefore, she tries to make it a top priority for her own classroom. Furthermore, Mila believes that she must keep herself open to continual learning, an asset for someone



agreeing to participate as a host in the CLL program and enact a new instructional model in front of her peers.

*Sean's story.* What makes Sean's story so intriguing and so powerful is that he is an immigrant himself to America and, thus, shares a common experience with all of the ESL students he teaches. He came to the United States from Pakistan when he was ten years old, and shares how he had to deal with differences in cultures from an early age:

Well, when I came here back in 1991, the education system was much different than it is now because of NCLB. I began fifth grade at \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary here in Bolton School District. Back then the community was predominantly Caucasian and the teachers were not sensitive to different cultures. During the first few weeks of school I had two not so great experiences which affected my perception of schools in the U.S. First, I called a teacher "teacher" instead of calling her Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ and she became very angry with me, yelled at me in front of the class and said, "I am not 'teacher.' I am Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_." Back in Pakistan, it is considered disrespectful to call a teacher by his or her name. I didn't know any better because I was new, but we learn from our mistakes and I really cannot blame her for what she did because she didn't know any better.

(personal communication, March 1, 2012)

I pause and reflect because Sean's comment that both he and the teacher "didn't know any better" explains a lot about why he works so hard in his classroom so he and his students know better—know each other better and know each others' stories better. As evidenced later in this chapter, Sean takes time to allow students to share their experiences, both personal and educational, with each other so that "they learn to

appreciate each other.” As if one bad experience was not enough, Sean goes on to share a second, with the same teacher, that had a negative impact on his views of education in America and, thus, his behavior:

The second experience occurred in the same class when the teacher asked me a question. I stood up to answer her question and she got angry because that was not what she wanted. Again, in Pakistan you stand up to answer questions to show respect for your teacher. Anyway, I was so turned off during the first few weeks of school that I was a horrible student the entire year. I was a trouble maker in the classroom. I didn't follow directions, school sent notices home to my parents, I was sent to SAC [special assignment class], and constantly visited the principal's office. Finally the year was over! (personal communication, March 1, 2012).

There is good news in Sean's story. As with many who enter the educational field, Sean had at least one teacher who was able to help him turn his academic success around and which continued to influence his teaching career.

I started 6<sup>th</sup> grade at \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School and started working hard, however my behavior was still bad in my ESL class. My ESL teacher, Mrs. V, never gave up on me. She mentored me after school and provided me with the support I needed despite my bad behavior. At that point, something sparked within me and my attitude completely changed. I tried to make all As and Bs, but I was not able to do so in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I always made a C in one of my classes. Then came seventh grade, the first 6 weeks, I made honor roll which started my honor roll streak and lasted until I graduated from \_\_\_\_\_ High School. I am here today because Mrs. V never gave up on me; hence I don't give up on my students that easily. I always

share this story with my difficult challenging kiddos. I have looked for Mrs. V, but was unsuccessful in finding her. I am told she left the district a few years back. (personal communication, March 1, 2012)

That Sean desired to keep in touch with Mrs. V shows the powerful influence she had on his educational experience and the connection he felt to her because she refused to give up on him. During my observations of Sean's classes, he exhibited the same persistence and patience with his students that Ms. V shared with him. Also, Sean's story as a new student in America sheds light on how he establishes relationships with his own students in the classroom. There were multiple times in Sean's classroom that he connected his experiences as a new student in America with the students' experiences and stories. Not only did he express to me that it was important to him to connect with their lives while sharing his own, but it was important that he continuously developed and improved relationships with his students to ensure their learning experiences and environment were positive and enriching. These ideas are ever present and validated in the belief letter that Sean shared with the CLL group:

I believe that as a teacher I have the responsibility to share my enthusiasm, goals, knowledge, and challenges with my students so the path to learning is an enjoyable hike for both student and teacher. The walk may not be easy for everyone and, at times there will be stragglers, but by joining forces and providing benches and sceneries in the form of interventions, learning will be accomplished. Whenever possible, I will bring in real life experiences to connect to their learning...especially resources that they are familiar with and come from their native countries. As a former ESL student who learned about the American

customs and holidays from his ESL teacher, I feel that it is my responsibility to introduce them to American holidays and customs to help them integrate to life in the United States. (belief letter, December 7, 2010)

The powerful influences of Sean's past experiences are the driving forces behind the knowledge and practice he shares and enacts in his classroom.

Though education is not initially Sean's first chosen field of study (he majored and worked in corporate communications and psychology fields), the nudging to become an educator was undeniable. While working in the corporate world, he decided to enroll in the Alternative Certification Program (ACP) to obtain his teaching certificate. Shortly thereafter, the middle school in which he currently teaches in the Bolton School District hired him.

***Shirley's story.*** Similarly, Shirley had not intentionally followed a career in education, nor had the thought occurred to her. On two occasions, other educators commented that she should consider it, but she shunned the idea both times, until later, after much deliberation, she decided that it would be something she would like to try.

It all came about... let's see... it probably didn't start until college when I was going to [the university]. I tutored kids for the TAAS test at the time and it was some program at the University and I don't even know. I applied for it and I would go to [a local] high school to work with individuals and groups of students. And I remember the teacher....the lady who was overseeing the tutorial said, "You know you'd be a really good teacher," and I was like, "Oh really?" I just kind of dismissed it. Later, I remember I did a presentation in one of my courses and the professor said, "I think you would be a really good teacher," and once

again I just kind of dismissed it. So I graduated from college and I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I spent a lot of time doing some soul-searching because I did not want to be in a job or a career or a field that I hated. You know? I felt like I watched my mom and stepdad go to work and my stepfather hated his job and I just felt like I was going to spend such an enormous amount of time at work that I just want to make sure I'm doing something that I've been called to do. So I spent a lot of time really in prayer just thinking what it is that I'm supposed to do. And so, probably, after sitting out of school and working for about a year, I felt like I had confirmation that teaching was the route that I was supposed to take, so I ended up going back and getting my teaching certificate from [the University] and that's how I started. (personal communication, January 10, 2012)

Her first year in education seventeen years ago was as an English teacher in one of the high schools in the Bolton School District. Once Shirley began, however, she felt unsupported by many of the other teachers on the campus until meeting the one teacher who showed her not only support, but helped guide her through the rest of her first year. She recalls her experience as such:

So I started my career there and I just remember when I went in, it was just the strangest thing because I was working with a group of people who didn't really want to share. It's almost like they thought, you know, I don't know, that I was going to come and take their job, or, I don't know. But it was a lot of me spending a lot of my time figuring out what I needed to do. A lot of the things I learned I learned by trial and error. Probably about the middle of the second semester, I met Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, who was the junior teacher. I was teaching

freshman and sophomores at the time and so she started offering me some of her materials. She was not at my grade level, but she was very helpful. (personal communication, January 10, 2012)

Shirley's encounter with the junior teacher encouraged her enough to know that she was not completely alone as she tried to forage her way through that first year. Shirley also conveyed to me that participating in the CLL program brought her back to her early experiences as a first year of teaching and the lack of support and knowledge she was given. She explained that she also used her memories of learning as a high school student to influence how she approached instruction and practice – she knew which kinds of learning worked for her, and which didn't:

Some of [my teaching practice] was instinctive, I think. You know, there were certain things I didn't want to do and when I think about, as I was sitting in the classroom learning lab, I was like, "Wow! You know I followed the structure without even knowing the structure existed." Because I felt that if my kids were truly to learn, they would have to do most of the learning. I thought about my own educational experiences where I sat in classes and listened to teachers, and this was in high school, and they would just talk the *whole* time and in middle school they would just talk from bell to bell. I knew back then that wasn't beneficial. (personal communication, January 10, 2012)

Shirley also knew from early on in her career that she wanted to help teachers become better teachers and to help nurture their careers. She did not want other teachers to experience the lack of support and guidance that she felt prior to meeting Ms. \_\_\_\_\_. In her pursuit to accomplish this goal, she returned to college to receive her master's

degree in education, and eventually enrolled in the doctoral program at the local university.

I have a long-term goal of, okay so when the time is right, I can one day teach future teachers. That's what I want to do because I felt like they inspired me, and I was like...that's it, that's what I want to do. I want to teach future teachers and so that's why I became a specialist thinking, well this will be really good experience. (personal communication, January 10, 2012)

Since becoming an ELA specialist six years ago, Shirley has spent countless hours planning and working with the ELA and ESL teachers and teams on her high school campus. She admits that when working with her colleagues she is “at her most creative” in their common desire to create curriculum and improve instructional practices.

***Olivia's story.*** Olivia's story fascinates me for a myriad of reasons. For one, she was a world traveler before she graduated from high school, having applied for and won a scholarship that allowed her to study abroad. Also, she comes from, as she puts it, a “less than desirable home life” that she had to deal with, balancing emotional turmoil with academic achievement. Furthermore, she tells her story of becoming an educator with such passion and emotion that it is easy to be swept away with inspiration. Her story begins at a very young age, when she knew with conviction then that she would become an educator:

I kind of always wanted to be a teacher. When I was little, I would line up teddy bears and teach them. When I learned to read, I went across the street and taught the girl, who was a year younger than me, how to read, so I kind of always wanted to be a teacher. My family did not want me to be a teacher. My mom gave the

famous line, “Those who can’t do, teach.” She wanted me to make more money than what she felt a teacher would make. She thought I could and should and all of that. I mean, eventually she was very proud of me being a teacher, but was a little disappointed at first. When I was in high school and I said I wanted to be a teacher, she thought I was settling. (personal communication, March 2, 2012)

Olivia credits her conviction to become a teacher with several strong teachers she had as a student. She considers herself “lucky” to have had such excellent guides early on in her life:

I had some wonderful teachers. I mean like State of Ohio Teacher of the Year teachers. I had some excellent examples of teachers in my life. Not only were they good people, but they really showed me that there is a world out there. They believed in me, even when, at times, my family did not. They showed me that I could be something that my family was not showing me I could be. Because of that, I really wanted to be a teacher because I just gravitated toward that. (personal communication, March 2, 2012)

She and I share the same enthusiasm for teaching others that lends itself to countless conversations about our love for the profession and the many ways we can work together to share our energies with others. Yet, she carries experiences that I have never had the privilege of knowing. Her stories of travelling abroad gave her a larger understanding of the world in which she lived, and has forever shaped and influenced her continuing narrative:

One of the things that interested me about the Middle East as opposed to another area of the world was that I won a scholarship my senior year, which sent me to



Jordan. I loved Jordan...loved it and the people. It was awesome. It was wonderful, and I started learning Arabic there. I was fascinated by the culture, by the people, by everything I encountered. My heart was engaged as well as my mind because there were so many problems in the world and these people were so good. It was like, how can this be? I wanted to study that and I threw everything into Middle Eastern studies. If there was a class on Middle Eastern studies, I fought my way into it. [Later] I decided my junior year in college to go to Egypt for my studies, but Cairo was so different than Jordan. (personal communication, March 2, 2012)

Olivia further explained how what she believed to be her destined path of study actually took an unexpected turn. What she thought would be an invaluable experience turned out to be “a nightmare” instead. Taking a class in a course too elevated for her language skills and taught by a professor who did not take into account that students in his class may not understand his colloquial Egyptian, Olivia admitted that it was such a horrible experience that she cried every day after class. Although two of her closest friends decided they could not continue on and returned to the United States, Olivia decided to stay one more semester and ended up volunteering at a nearby church to teach English to Ethiopian and Somali refugees, and Sudanese displaced persons. Her account of this experience follows:

It was life changing and I had a class of about seven students of... I mean just the situations they came from. [All were] refugees. They were trying to learn English so they could go to the West and have a life for themselves. Most of them were also trying to learn Arabic because they were not native Arabic

speakers, or Egyptian, so they were learning Arabic to survive and they were trying to learn English to create better lives for themselves.

I taught the levels high intermediates, which is not exactly the same as our program here, but it means my class was their third or fourth English class. I had one girl trying to read *Pride and Prejudice*. She asked questions about it. As far as the student motivation was concerned, it was just absolutely amazing and inspiring to work with all of them. They appreciated anything I did, and so there was that and just the empowerment. I liked the way I felt when I taught there because I had never felt that way in my life. (personal communication, March 2, 2012)

As if the experiences of having the opportunity to interact and teach her students were not enough, the awe and inspiration she said she felt watching her students graduate is an experience that will resonate with her forever:

Just thinking about it... I'm back in that auditorium and these people were, I mean, I wasn't thinking that it was that big of a deal. I have received, you know, how many times had I received since grade school those certificates, or signed certificates of acknowledgment? All they were getting were these little signed certificates of attendance in the program... no degrees or anything. It was just a certificate of accomplishment for attending a certain number of classes. But these people had come from war-torn areas. They had never been acknowledged for anything and now people wanted to stand up and give them recognition. We called their names, and they got dictionaries. That was their prize. Their prize was the English language dictionary. Not even a translation English dictionary,

just a collegiate Webster's dictionary. I vividly remember the outfits these people wore; they wore their finest clothes and tribal costumes and things you just do not see in normal life. It was amazing that they would walk down this aisle so proud, and I was so moved and it really kind of sank in...the power of education. It just totally changed me and made my second semester and Egypt bearable. (personal communication, March 2, 2012)

In my many discussions with Olivia throughout our friendship, the power of education and sharing that experience with students had always been the central focus. Not until she shared her story about her students in Cairo, however, did I understand the reason why she felt so passionate about sharing that power with students in her classroom.

Knowing each of my participants' stories about how they ventured into the education profession and revisiting my own reasons for doing so has helped me make connections to how we see and come to know ourselves as educators. The stories are powerful in that they reveal "what teachers know and how their knowing is expressed in their teaching" (Connelly, et al., p. 666). Acknowledging this connection assists my inquiry into how the model influences and impacts teacher knowledge and practice in a CLL setting.

### **Overarching Findings**

In general, there were several themes that emerged around the impact of the workshop model on teacher knowledge and its influence on instructional practices. The most noticeable was that of the use of time in the classroom, which seemed to be the easiest idea for the cohort to grasp because it was the most objective – participants could

literally count the number of minutes teachers worked versus the amount of time students worked. That is not to say that it was mastered first, because as Sean admits, he still struggles with dominating the time in the classroom. Instead, it was the most accessibly concrete and also the first component we tackled at the beginning of the program, thus marking it as the component with which we spent the most time and attention.

Participants were able to quickly monitor how much teacher-time as compared to student-time occurred during the class period, with the idea that students received the majority of time to do their work. Also, inquiry-based instruction around big ideas and guiding questions caught on quickly not only with the lab participants, but with the teachers outside the program, proving to be one of the most appealing aspects of the workshop model.

Another theme that emerged was that the complexity of the model and its scope for teachers to learn was, at times, overwhelming to take in. Although the different components were not essentially new concepts when taken individually, framing them simultaneously in an instructional model enacted daily in the classroom was challenging. Despite its complexity, however, case study participants felt they gained confidence and became more comfortable with the model over time. Having the opportunity to read, write about, and discuss the workshop model throughout the classroom learning lab provided the much needed synthesis of its various components and afforded them time to practice and improve.

Shirley summed up her general experience with the model in this way:

When I think about the workshop model...[pause]...I honestly have to say one of the pieces that had the biggest impact was looking at that short-term plan and like

I said, putting it in a concrete form. Because I remember even in the classroom, it was always my belief that, you know if I really wanted students to learn, I couldn't stand up and lecture to them for an hour and a half. I had to give them what they needed to be successful then allow them to do the work while I assisted. Being able to see [the workshop model], I guess, in that concrete form with everything delineated about what we needed to think about, how the structure was supposed to look, I thought it was really powerful and so much so that I continue to use it with teachers today. (personal communication, January 10, 2012)

Another common perception that emerged is that hosting a lab in front of an audience of peers was a huge risk for some teachers to take, as they had never before opened their classroom to so many to observe them in action. Mila had ample opportunity to observe other teachers' classroom observations and follow-up coaching sessions prior to hosting her own lab and gathered a lot of information to guide her in her own experience. Still, no amount of watching it happen to others fully prepared her to have so many educators watch her teach her own students, and then gather to reflect and discuss what they saw and heard. Just after hosting her classroom learning lab, I spoke with Mila about getting herself and her students ready and her thoughts about preparing to host the lab.

"It was very difficult to focus so intensely on what the learning targets and the assessments were going to be for those days," she said. "Not that I hadn't thought them through before, but the stakes are really high when you're being evaluated by so many peers and colleagues. I didn't want to look like I didn't know what I was doing."

“It really begins from the first day of school,” she continued. “I realized when planning for the learning lab that the routines and structures I was utilizing in the workshop model were things that happened on a daily basis in my classroom anyway – not just for the lab observations” (personal communication, February 17, 2011).

What Mila disclosed is what most teachers who participated in the lab experience also felt. Enactment of the workshop model may emphasize, or, as the case may be, expose the lack thereof, those classroom routines, rituals, systems, and structures necessary for a highly functioning classroom. However, enacting the workshop model within the supportive structure of the classroom learning lab allowed other educators to gain exposure to the model and learn from watching it in action. The expectation was not that the teacher enacted the model perfectly, but that the participants were able to observe it play out in the actual classroom – real-time, real-life. Most of those involved agreed that it was the best form of professional development.

At the time he hosted his lab in the fall of 2010, Sean had only been in the classroom for two years, with this being his third. Sean teaches middle school seventh grade ESL students who are considered beginners in learning the English language and relatively new to the country. A newcomer himself to both the classroom learning lab and to the profession, Sean is situated at the other end of the experience spectrum than most of our lab hosts. Sean also shared his thoughts prior to hosting his first lab, which were similar in nature to Mila’s. He too expressed feelings of nervousness, not because he was teaching in front of peers, but because the group was so large.

“I mean, I was okay doing the lesson [in the classroom],” he said, “but being coached in front of so many...that was intimidating.”

His eagerness to participate, however, was inspiring and motivating. Though new to teaching, his energy and enthusiasm benefit his students who are new to the country and still struggling to adjust to American culture. Sean admitted during his lab that his systems, structures, routines, and rituals are still lacking in his classroom.

“There are times when I sit at my desk at the end of the day and ask myself, what in the world did we accomplish?” he confessed to the group. Judging by the knowing nods of heads around the room, it looked as if we had all asked ourselves this question at some point in our careers.

Although Olivia also noted the challenges teachers faced when confronted with the complexity of the model, she expressed her enthusiasm with the workshop model as a viable way to plan:

I remember when it was presented to me. I was like, well that just makes sense. I mean, I knew ‘begin with the end in mind’ from Stephen Covey, and that’s not necessarily new. Still, I’d had problems with Madeline Hunter as a daily lesson plan and was validated when I found out she did too [laughs]. But that was what I was trained on and drilled on – you start at the top and you go linearly. So I remember when I saw the pie graph and the idea that you start planning the student work time first, and then figure out what they need to know, how you know they’ll know it, and how you get their attention, and that the hook is last, that was just revolutionary for *me*. And I loved it and it made so much more sense to me.

I’ve seen that with the other teachers as they come to grasp that. I’ve been there when a few of the teachers and the light bulb goes off and they go, ‘Ah!’

They finally got that and were like, ‘Yeah, that is how it should be planned.’ You know and it’s not the only way. The [workshop model] process is not the only way to plan, but when [teachers] understand the value of that way of planning, it does revolutionize their planning. (personal communication, March 2, 2012)

All of the case study participants, as well as myself, agreed that the workshop model emphasized an organizational pattern of instructional ideas and practices that could be used in the classroom to cultivate an optimal learning environment. Participants also agreed that it took much time and required consistent attention, discussions, and practice to get more comfortable with all of its parts.

These were the perceptions of the workshop model and CLL program in general. However, in pursuit of uncovering other themes in connection with how learning about the workshop model and its components had a more complete impact on teacher instructional knowledge (what they share that they have learned) and how enacting the workshop model in the classroom affected teachers’ instructional practice (what they do), I felt it necessary to illuminate the impact through the various lenses of the model itself: collaborative learning among students, incorporating inquiry-based instruction, backward planning, use of time in the classroom, and conferring with students. I also share case study perceptions and connections on the coaching sessions that followed each hosting lab, and more detailed accounts of the CLL as a structure for collaborative learning. The following sections attempt to illustrate these connections.

**Collaboration among students.** Collaboration in the workshop model occurs during the student work time – when students work in small groups of three or four and are given opportunities to discuss, share, and dig deep into text to make observations and



construct meaning about the world in which they live. Collaboration is an essential learning component that invites students into the dialogue of learning to uncover new ideas, and to engage in the act of discovery. As Harvey and Daniels (2009) assert,

we cannot provide robust, engaged, and differentiated learning unless kids can break into a variety of groups and work together...learning is far too weak if we limit students' actions, conversations, and thinking to what the one adult in the room can monitor." (p. 37)

As evidenced in Mila's lab observations, students' conversations were focused on the task at hand and provided insight into how they were constructing understandings and connections with what they were reading.

Mila confessed, however, that collaboration "is challenging to get students to do, and to get them to talk with other" and she found that she had to model for students how to have academic conversations about the current topic of study. "Too often," she lamented, "students have sat in rows all throughout school and either spoke directly to the teacher, or the teacher to them, but there was little conversation going sideways." During her hosting of the lab, Mila shared with the cohort how grouping students in small numbers helped them to help each other and led to more dynamic discussions among students.

Even when I revisited her classroom in the spring of 2012, approximately nine months after the conclusion of the CLL program, it was apparent that students, still situated in small groups, were comfortable with the setup and the expectation that they engage in conversations. She also shared with me during this visit that she continues to

hope to continue improving the discussions her students have, insisting they engage at higher levels of thinking as they converse with one another.

On the other hand, Sean admitted to his realization that he “is a talker” and “loves to talk in the classroom,” and needs to work on releasing his students to do more of the talking with each other. I recall watching Sean’s lab on day one and did, in fact, note in my observation chart that students only conversed with him and not with each other. On day two, though, and after the coaching session with Sam where she, too, pointed out the imbalance in collaboration, he released the students to do more collaborative work. When I first asked him about the change in his instruction, he admitted that he “didn’t think [his] students were capable of doing the work without [him]” and that it was uncomfortable at first. His actions were guided by the feelings that his ESL students needed guidance almost 100% of the class time. However, when he gave them the opportunity to talk with each other on the second day, every student actively and enthusiastically participated. It did not seem to matter that they did not yet have a sufficient number of English words in their vocabulary to express their thinking. They found ways to communicate and to engage in the lesson. Because collaboration occurs during the work-time, I go into a more detailed account of this experience in the section pertaining to the use of time in the classroom.

Visiting Sean’s classroom nine months later, I immediately noticed that students were arranged around the room in groups of three or four and did not hesitate to talk with each when given the release time to do so. Prompted by Sean’s question, “How has your education in America differed from your education in your home country?” students quickly set to the task of sharing their experiences with each other about the differences

and similarities in their schooling. I could not help but smile, knowing how Sean's experiences as a young immigrant to the United States and his own early experiences in American education influenced his decision to spark this conversation with his own students in his classroom.

When asked if they saw more collaboration among students as they visited classrooms, both Olivia and Shirley noted that for some of the lab participants, the change in the arrangement from students in rows to students in groups was not consistent. For those who did enact this part of the model with fidelity, there was a noticeable change in not only the physical structuring of desks and tables in the classroom to make collaboration easier, but also a significant increase in the amount of energy in the classrooms. Additionally, the others who did not immediately embrace the collaborative component admitted to Olivia and Shirley that they were not yet comfortable with idea of releasing students for long periods of time to talk – even if the talking was structured around a task or topic. I also noticed a difference between lab participants who were comfortable allowing students to work in small groups and those lab participants who admitted to knowing the value of allowing students time to hold discussions, but felt that they may quickly lose control of discipline. These teachers tended to use the collaborative component less than their lab colleagues.

Furthermore, with the lab participants that embraced the collaborative environment, I noticed an abundance of conversations in several of the lab teachers' classrooms that were not just teacher-to-student, or student-to-teacher, but “sideways” student-to-student conversations. I was also aware of the types of conversations in which students were engaged in these classrooms. I found that most students were not

only actively engaged in discussions, but were posing questions, defending arguments, and grappling with counter points-of-view. The fact that students were participating in such dialogue should be credited, in part, to the next component of the model: inquiry-based instruction.

**Inquiry-based instruction.** Prior to the program, ELA and ESL teachers in the district typically first chose a piece of literature to teach, then tried to force-align around the text all standards that needed to be taught. What resulted was a fragmented curriculum that lacked the necessary threading of themes across genres and texts to help give the curriculum a sense of direction and continuity. As a pillar of workshop model, inquiry-based instruction is emphasized as utilizing texts and units as modes of inquiry – in other words, read texts that are linked by a big idea with guiding questions that aim to explore texts and that seek to find answers.

Wiggins and McTighe (2005) further support classrooms that are engaged in inquiry with questions that have no finality in answers, that “aim to stimulate thought,” and that “demand more than just a smorgasbord of activities and bits of knowledge in isolated units” (p. 106). Inquiry-based curriculum incorporates close, deep reading and synthesis of thought in writing (within the student work-time area of the circular plan guide), and discussion. Both Sean and Mila utilized the inquiry-based approach in their lesson plans, not only during their time as lab hosts, but they continued to do so when I visited them after the program’s conclusion, so that students spent their work time discussing topics that added legitimacy to their academic learning and dimension to their knowledge of self.

For her lab, Mila used inquiry-based instruction that focused on a high interest topic for her students (should juvenile offenders be tried as adults for committing the same crime?) and relevant articles and stories that her students found engaging and compelling. For Mila, incorporating these practices in her classroom has helped her, in her own words, “make tremendous leaps in improving lesson design and, hopefully, student learning.”

Even after the conclusion of the program, and with test-preparation for the upcoming STAAR exam in full-swing on her campus in the spring of 2012, Mila continued to encourage inquiry in her classroom. Yes, students were working on writing practice for the new state assessment, and yes, students were answering practice multiple choice questions, but Mila had launched her students into these tasks with an inquiry about how some people do things in life for the advancement of society, and some for fame and notoriety. Students were asked to write a response to the question, “Which do you feel is more important: achievement or notoriety?” Many students took one side or the other, but several made the argument that in our society, the two are inseparable. Regardless of their opinions, the rich conversations about the topic prepped students prior to their synthesizing their ideas in writing. Following the discussion and writing assignment, students read a science article on the creator of penicillin, Alexander Fleming, then answered practice multiple choice questions, which in turn prompted more discussions and debate about other events that occurred in history, science, and society that supported or refuted their opinions.

Sean also noted the importance of using inquiry in the ESL classroom. Without the guiding questions, he affirmed, the assigned texts and assignments would lack

cohesion and direction, which is important for beginning English learners to feel as they learn a new language and grade-level content. Because Sean's experience as an immigrant coming to the United States at a young age is something he shares often with his ESL students, many of his topics of inquiry include themes along these experiences. Whether it is how their educational stories differ between their home countries and the U.S., or how the laws are different, or a time when they had trouble adjusting to the different culture and customs in the U.S., Sean always guides his students into inquiry that connects with the duality of their identities.

This particular component of the workshop model particularly affected my knowledge and practice, so much so that I have fashioned two articles and three conference presentations around the topic. I trace this passion back to my early love of science and discovering the mysteries of the universe – of always wanting to know the answer, but finding just as much satisfaction in the hunt of it.

It is accurate to say that inquiry-based instruction exploded in our district as lab participants shared their inquiry-based lessons, which quickly became the norm in classrooms across the district regardless of whether they participated in the lab or not. Not only do Mila and Sean use it in all of their lessons, and not only do Shirley, Olivia, and I see it in every secondary ELA and ESL classroom across the district, but it has become the focus of curriculum planning across all of the secondary teams and campuses.

It is not enough, though, to just have interesting big ideas and great guiding questions. As any educator knows, if a lesson or unit is not well-planned, even the most intriguing topics of inquiry can be unsuccessful with teenagers in the classroom.

**Backward planning – planning with intention.** There are essentially two parts to planning using the workshop model. There is the long-term planning cycle (see Appendix B), which is where teachers select the final product students will produce and then plan lessons and activities leading to the end product, but do so progressing backward across a long-term pacing calendar. Then there is the short-term planning (see Appendix B), which includes daily planning for the various components of the workshop model. For this particular section, I will focus on the long-term planning aspect of the model.

During one of my conversations with Olivia about planning, she joked that in her early years of teaching, she depended on Madeline Hunter because “that is what [she] was trained in,” but as her educational experiences grew, she felt as a teacher she had reached the point where she could “write a couple of ideas down on a sticky note and that would be the lesson.” I chuckle at this because there had been several occasions my lesson plans had also blossomed on a sticky note, or on a napkin, or on the back of a scrap of paper, which begs the question: what are the different ways that teachers write effective lesson plans to serve their students’ needs?

I have been an educator for 17 years and have seen the myriad of ways lesson plans are written and have employed a variety of formats along the way. Whichever way I wrote them, though, the majority of my lessons always started with what happened first and then proceeded to the end of a unit. Oftentimes, I found myself short on time, having spent too much time introducing ideas and concepts, and leaving little time for the actual bulk of the work, which is typically the most important part. Like Olivia, I was unexpectedly surprised with the idea of planning backward and planning first what

students would do. How and why I had never come to that realization on my own, I do not know, but I was intrigued to see how others in the CLL program would receive it.

Intentional backward planning was an expectation for the enactment of the workshop model throughout the CLL program and I wondered how this component would influence teachers' planning and how it would have an impact on teachers as curriculum-makers. On the one hand, it undermined the teacher-as-curriculum-maker in that it dictated that they start with the final product, and then work backwards to create the lesson plan. On the other hand, teachers were given the freedom to choose what curriculum students would study, which end product they wanted students to produce, and the amount of time they spent achieving classroom goals.

It was evident for Mila, who already constructed thorough plans for her lessons prior to being introduced to the workshop model, that making a few slight adjustments for backward planning, or starting with the end product and pacing activities backward to where the lesson begins, appeared less challenging for her. Mila considers herself an "obsessive planner." By her own admission, if there is one thing she likes to do, it is to plan instruction. However, she confesses that long-term planning is not always easy because she must take into consideration the different paces at which students learn:

As the teacher, you know this should take three days to teach and for students to get the ideas and concepts, but then you ask yourself, "What did they really learn? What do they really know?" You have to look at their work each day to figure out who got it, and who didn't. That drives your instruction for the next day, but it can also mess up your long-term plan. Some of my students wish we could spend three weeks on a topic that I've only planned for one week, but, you know



it's hard. I let them be the faces that are looking at me when I plan my instruction. (personal communication, March 1, 2012)

Sean also acknowledged that he begins with the end in mind each time he plans, but his plans do not always cultivate in the classroom, much for the same reasons Mila shared. He explains that his ESL students come from so many different countries and bring with them such a plethora of different learning experiences to his classroom that pacing how quickly they will learn a new skill or concept is nearly impossible to predict. He, too, uses student work to drive his instruction and allows their academic progress to determine instructional decisions on a daily basis. Although Mila and Sean continue to intentionally plan long-term and short-term lessons with the workshop model, they realize that allowing for adaptability with the model is inevitable.

Shirley said that throughout the CLL program and even now, she shares the workshop model and lesson planning component when she works with her teachers and teams. Over time, she explains, they have become more receptive to the idea of the workshop model and of planning with the end in mind. In her experience working with teachers, they were “skeptical at first,” but she continued to share with her campus teachers “bits and pieces of the workshop model” during their planning sessions.

I tried to just give it to them in little bits and pieces at a time, and they started incorporating certain parts of it. I get excited because when we sit down and plan, we are talking about the lesson, and we talk about the workshop model. They obviously do the long-term planning because I see it in the documents they create. We spent time becoming familiar with it and why it was important and why they were encouraged to use it because, and this is not something they necessarily told

me, but they could have seen it as just one more thing they had to do. (personal communication, January 10, 2012)

What Shirley recognizes is that there is always the risk that introducing new models of instruction, new programs, or new curriculum, will be greeted by teachers who reflexively shun the “new” anything because, as Shirley framed it, they see it as “one more thing they have to do.” How encouraging, then, to hear Shirley’s account of how she eased into the introduction of the model and its components over time, keeping it the topic of planning conversations, but not forcing it upon them. It is the reason I believe her teachers will be more apt to accept the model and enact it on their own.

Another factor participants began to notice during the enactment of the model was this kind of lesson planning took an extraordinary amount of time to complete up front. All case studies mentioned that time spent to fully plan lessons that included backward planning the long-term and the short-term lessons was a factor that caught them by surprise. As Mila says,

I remember a long time ago when we use to do the weekly, or two-week lesson plans, we were like, “Okay, that’s done!” But using the workshop model, in and of itself, the whole cycle of the hook and then the purpose for reading, and then the mini-lesson, has just really kept me accountable to my students in a way I was not used to. It’s a bit challenging because what we know is that it takes a lot more time with our lesson planning because we want to put our hearts into it and want more from our kids and ourselves. (personal communication, September 9, 2010)

Despite the amount of time up front it took to create the lesson plans and adjust the pacing of the curriculum to complement student learning, all of the case study

participants agreed that once the plan was created, there was a greater sense of focus and purpose for instruction in the classroom. Even if the lessons did not play out entirely as written and even when making sometimes immediate changes to instruction, the consensus was that once the end product was established, there were many available options and avenues to get there. As Olivia explained earlier, “workshop is not the only way to plan, but when [teachers] understand the value of that way of planning, it does revolutionize their planning” (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

From these observations as well as my own, there are two main ideas I found that undergird this component of the model –the long-term planning, short-term planning, and beginning with the end in mind – and they are these:

- Pacing was sometimes interrupted when teachers used student work to drive their instruction. Teachers found that if they used student work to make instructional decisions about what would happen in class the next day, their plans would remain in a constant state of flux; therefore flexibility with pacing was to be expected.
- Participants found that planning in this manner (beginning with the end in mind, setting up a long-term plan, then focusing on the daily workshop model plans) was very time-consuming, but the reward was a clearer focus on the direction of the curriculum.

Understanding these underlying notions will help better inform others of how to enact and what to expect from this particular component of the workshop model.

When planning with intention and beginning with an idea of which end product students will produce as a result of their learning, how we spend time in the classroom

can have an impact on their success. The next section looks more closely at how the model has an impact on the use of time in the classrooms by comparing changes in teacher-time versus student work time.

**Student work time.** The most noticeable change to instructional design and teacher practice was the structure of the use of time in the classroom – literally, the number of minutes devoted to teacher-talk versus student work time. One of the beliefs of the workshop model is that whoever is doing the reading, writing, and talking is doing the thinking, and that learning is a consequence of thinking. As evidenced in their lesson plans and during the second-day observations, Mila and Sean restructured the time in their classroom to allow students more time to read, write, think, and share.

On the first day of his lab, Sean dominated more of the conversation and left less than a quarter of class time for students to ask questions or collaborate with each other on the tasks at hand. Sean structured his lesson around students being able to use visualization to understand a story or picture and to write about it in English. To open his lesson on visualization, Sean had students reach inside brown paper bags to feel for objects and, without looking, try to describe the object in English on paper. Students spent several minutes talking among themselves about what the objects could be and writing what descriptive words they knew on their paper, which was then followed up with a lesson on the five senses. For this lesson, students had a picture of a snowman on their desks and as each sense was covered, they subsequently drew eyes, ears, a mouth, and two sticks for arms on their pictures. After this activity, Sean introduced the book that the students would be reading. The book, *Seven Blind Mice*, is a children's book with vivid pictures of mice who try to describe what they see. To introduce the book,

Saul showed the students only the cover of the book, which was a black page with a slim streak of red emerging from the bottom. His instructions were to have students visualize what they think this might be, and to draw a picture of what they visualize. Most of the students drew exactly what they saw on the cover. In the last ten minutes of class, Sean had students begin reading the book, but many did not finish by the time the bell rang.

On day two, however, he adjusted the student work time to provide much more time for students to enhance their learning. Sean opened his lesson with a quick review of the previous day's events, modeled to students how to annotate a story for visualization, and then handed out two choices for students to read: they could either continue reading the *Seven Blind Mice*, or they could read another story that was a little more difficult. After several minutes of reading, he asked students to write down two things about their stories that they wanted to share with their group. After sharing their ideas and findings with their groups for several minutes, students were encouraged to add to their thinking by asking clarifying questions or adding their own thoughts to the conversation. Sean continually walked the room and stooped beside groups to confer with students – asking his own clarifying questions and prompting students to push their thinking. In the end, students had just over two-thirds of the class time to read their choice of article, to annotate as they read, discuss what they learned or share questions they had with their groups, and then to share out loud with the whole class how the content of the stories connected to their lives.

When I revisited Sean to observe his classroom and talked with him about the continuing influence of the model on his knowledge and practice, Sean admitted that the student-time is something he still struggled with because he often felt that his newcomers

needed more guidance than what regular students may need. He recalls his thinking while watching another teacher conducting a lab:

I just didn't think it would work with my students so I was definitely not planning on doing anything to that extent when my turn came around. Even later that year, I still had not bought into it completely because I had never done it in the classroom, so I just never thought it would work. It looked good walking into the classroom observing the teacher, but I just didn't think that would work. I was just more used to, you know, just standing in front of the class and teaching and them doing independent practice and I didn't think that that model would work for my class. (personal communication, March 1, 2012)

Yet, when I came for a follow up visit in his classroom, his students were still stationed in groups of three and four which allowed them to easily converse about the topic they were studying that day: the differences between their educational experiences in their home country and the U.S. Students were engaged and animated as they shared their stories with each other, often laughing out loud or raising their eyebrows in disbelief.

Mila appeared extremely cognizant of the teacher-time versus the student-time in her classroom during her lab visits, often times glancing at the clock during the lesson to keep track of how much time students were working. She did not dominate the time, but instead utilized the “catch and release” moments in instruction where she caught students’ attention when necessary to do quick mini-lessons, but then released the students to continue working, ensuring students did most of the reading, writing, and talking throughout the lesson. I observed this not only during her initial lab, but again

nine months after the conclusion of the program. She adapted her instruction in the classroom to ensure that students did most of the reading, writing, and talking. Mila's earlier experience about becoming an educator acknowledges her recognition of herself as "a talker" in her early school years, so it is interesting to see how, now, she intentionally plans for talk time with her students and less talk time for her.

Olivia feels that of all the components of the model, the use of time has had the biggest impact on teacher practice, both with the CLL cohort group and with teachers outside the cohort as the ideas were brought back to campuses and shared. She points out, though, that it is not just the number of minutes that students are given to do the work, though that is often the starting point. It is that she has witnessed several teachers conversing about making the student work-time *meaningful*. She shared a story with me about one particular teacher who gave students "thirty-seven minutes of class time to engage in meaningful work; not something that could take them five minutes, but gave them thirty," which, she continues, can also happen, "but [that *meaningful* element] is a deeper understanding of work time – it's not just the time; it's what they do with it in a meaningful way" (personal communication, March 2, 2012), an observation that connects very closely to intentional planning.

As I mentioned earlier, the use of time in the classroom was the component that was introduced first and therefore, the one with which the participants spent the most time studying and practicing. It was also an easy access point for discussion in the lab and for sharing with teachers outside the cohort, perhaps because it was easily documented while scribing observations (see Appendix F). As participants became more comfortable with scheduling student work time, the question then became, "What do we

do while they work?” The next section shares experiences with enacting the next component of the workshop model: conferring.

**Conferring with students.** What became apparent in the debriefings and discussions early in the CLL program was that conferring did not come naturally to all the participants, nor was the definition or what it looked like fully understood. So that everyone was on the same page, we read and discuss a chapter from Anderson’s (2000) book, *How’s It Going?* He defines conferring as conversations with students, not just “hovering” over their shoulders. I like the word *conversations* to describe conferring because it has an element of casualness and spontaneity. More than simply walking around the room looking over students’ shoulders to see what page they were on, answering brief questions about the reading, or redirecting off-task behaviors, conferring is about “listening closely and developing deep, sophisticated relationships with students” (Bennett, 2007). Olivia, too, offered her own understanding of conferring as such:

I can see a level of conferring where relationship building is not just learning about the student, but also sharing about yourself. True, transparent sharing can validate and create interest; it can also show your trust in the person building his or her feelings of self-worth. (personal reflection, January 18, 2011)

As I mentioned, though, conferring with students took time and practice for some. In Sean’s experience with conferring, he feels that the “more [he does] it, the more impact [on student learning] it has.” He further explains that

[conferring] gives you insights on where [students] are, or what they’re having difficulty with so when you’re planning your lessons, you can base it on what



they said. It helps me differentiate my instruction class by class and student by student. (personal communication, March 1, 2012)

Mila admitted to loving the conferring piece because it allows her time to focus on individual students, but also shared some of the concerns she had with this component.

The challenging part is the gradual release of responsibility. Students expect to do something while I am walking around, but I see anxiety with some of my students because they are expecting me to be right there throughout the whole lesson. It is hard to give everyone attention, but I have to remember, too, to not just go to the neediest kids. The gifted kids need my attention as well. (personal communication, September 9, 2010)

She also shared her concern with being able to speak with every student in a class period, admitting that it was not always possible. She also admitted that, at first, she would gravitate toward the neediest students, but then realized others needed her as well. She addressed her concern by keeping a checklist of those with which she spoke in the hopes of getting to everyone at least once in a two-day period. In both Sean and Mila's labs, they took advantage of conferencing to get to know their individual students better – to determine where each student was in his or her learning and to determine what steps were needed to continue forward. In doing so, they ensured that they were differentiating their instruction appropriately and meeting the needs of all of their students. The conferences also afforded them time to establish relationships with the students, which in turn has an impact on students' motivation for learning.

When I visited with Mila and Sean again after the conclusion of the program, both still agreed that genuine conversations with their students told them more about what they

knew and what their struggles were than any piece of paper they had seen. Furthermore, each noted that it was simply not enough to just “hover” around a group and listen in, but to participate with their students. Mila and Sean walked around their classrooms, each intensely focused on an individual or a group, and engaged in dialogue about the text they read and the meaning and connections students constructed. Conversations were evident in both teachers’ classrooms beyond the program’s duration, indicating that they had continued working on it as part of their daily instructional routine.

### **The Impact of Coaching**

Of all of the working parts to the CLL program and the enactment of the workshop model of instruction, the coaching element tended to provide the most tension in the experiences participants shared. The central issues concentrated around two main tensions: 1) the fact that they were coached in front an audience of peers and did not fully know what they would experience, even after having seen others go through the process; and 2) as they were coached, certain events occurred that left them feeling vulnerable and targeted.

Once each classroom lab observation concluded, lab hosts sat with Sam in a one-to-two hour coaching session in front of the rest of the cohort where they reviewed the lesson plan, observations made in the classroom, student work, and instructional practices as related to the model’s components. Although Mila and Sean’s tensions eased slightly (Mila’s more so than Sean’s for reasons that I will explain later in this section) after the first coaching session and into the second on day two, both expressed their anxiety prior to hosting their labs. Sean reflects on his experience this way:

I was definitely nervous. I was definitely nervous that first day. I thought I was well prepared. I thought I did an okay job. You know we [he and Sam] planned until late that day. We had everything ready. You know I thought that it was good to go. I thought it had been an okay lesson that happened that day. I wasn't at that point thinking about, okay, I need to watch how much I'm speaking and how much the students are speaking. I wasn't concerned about that, you know, and I was not concerned about catch and release at that point. It was more just about, okay, this is the lesson that I'm doing, how am I going to get this across so that the students... to get them to do what they need to do. (personal communication, October 14, 2011)

As Sean continued sharing his recollection of that first afternoon in his coaching session with Sam, he divulged feelings that I would not have known had we not talked about it. Although I felt that Sam's coaching session with Sean was visibly more critical than others she had facilitated, Sean seemed to be holding up under the pressure. However, during his interview, he conveyed very different emotions connected with the session. That portion of the interview progressed as follows:

Sean: At that point, it wasn't a revelation to me. It was just taking in the information. I was like, okay, when can I just get out of here? I think that's, I mean, honestly that's how I felt. It was like, when will this end? When will I just finish talking and having this conversation with her so I can leave because I just felt that everything I did in that classroom was wrong.

R: And you think that she made you feel that way, or because... you said you didn't have the revelation. Is that how she made you feel, or...

Sean: I think so. I think, yeah, and we looked at the student work and the one thing that turned me off was that I obviously had a struggling student in my class that day who can't, I mean, who we discovered later was life skills [special education]. We came across her work while we were talking that afternoon and ... [long pause]... Sam was questioning me. She was asking questions, you know, what could you have done better? Could you do this instead of that, and she was looking at the work the [life skills] student had done. I kind of took out her work that she had done and showed it to [Sam] and what she did was that she kind of put that work right underneath [the stack of student work], and I was just really turned off by it because I felt like she focused on the stuff she wanted to focus on instead of what I wanted to focus on. I really wanted to know what to do with this student. (personal communication, October 14, 2011)

Since speaking with Sean about his coaching experience, I have attended several coaching trainings and also read Diane Sweeney's book, *Student-centered Coaching* (2011). The focus in coaching, according to Sweeney, should be on what the students are doing, not on what the teacher is doing. So to see Sam so critical of what Sean was doing in the classroom was somewhat unsettling and made me uncomfortable. I did not realize that Sean felt that his instructional knowledge and practice had been judged and devalued. His body language certainly did not give this away.

Olivia remembers watching Sean's coaching session and shared her perspective on the impression it left on her:

I really was upset with the way she went after him. She was such a hypocrite. She broke every single rule she said to follow. When she went after him and then justified everything she did in the difference in his teaching the next day was by saying that's what she had to do in order to get him there. Okay, so what you're saying is everything you've been preaching doesn't really work, and you had to do something entirely new in order to get a teacher who was struggling but thought he was labeling everything correctly. I'm not sure he needed that to get there. If he did, then he got what he needed. He survived. He's a big boy, but I didn't want to see that ever again. (personal communication, March 2, 2012)

I had thought the coaching session to be uncomfortable, but what I was hearing from Sean and Olivia's account, they felt it was more of an attack. Their accounts forced me to return to my notes and the transcript from the coaching session that day to determine if I could see what they had seen. Doing so helped me to clarify that I, too, had documented the tense exchange that occurred between Sean and Sam. A portion of that transcript follows:

Sam: Let's look at Brayan's work.

Sean: He likes soccer. He's a fast learner. He's from Cuba. I say he is a fast learner because he grabs new information and retains it easily. Very literate in Spanish, likes mystery books, and he was checking out Spanish/English books from the library.

Sam: What are the implications [for instruction] based on Brayan's work?

Sean: His grammar.

Sam: What makes you think so?

Sean: The verbs don't match up.

Sam: But can we tell what he's saying? Like toward the intermediate level of ESL because it's so far from this [holds up another student's writing assignment]. Do you see that? It's hard for me because you are asking them to visualize from a picture and not text. Brayan got as creative as he could to please you...they love you and want to please you. It gives energy, but the idea of clarity...how are you thinking through your planning? How does this [points to the student work] demonstrate visualization?

Sean: Some can't read [English], so today we'll just see a picture.

Sam: But if that was your goal [she points to the learning target on the board; it reads, "Students will learn to visualize"], Jing got it and Brayan missed the mark completely based on what they drew. Make sure there's a direct link from here's what we're after, here's how we get there, and here's what we get. Let them dig into the text, but not at the end of the period. If your learning target was true, then let's dig into it...go after it. Tomorrow, let's take this really big risk and really go for that visualization. (T. Scholz, lab observation notes, December 6, 2010)

What my account reveals is that my events vary from Olivia and Sean's in the perceived degree of intensity. Sean and Olivia felt a stronger sense of aggressiveness

than I captured, as my notes do not reflect the harsh tone. At the following learning lab the next month, however, Sam admitted to the learning lab group that she handled Sean's coaching session poorly because she focused on what he was doing, not what the students were doing, and had used the student work in a way that manipulated his instruction to fit her interests.

Sean's story, however, does have a bright ending. After a rough first day and long planning session with Sam following his coaching session, I asked him how he felt prior to day two of his lab.

After going through that whole ordeal the day before, I was much more comfortable with the second day. Second day was good. I felt good. We gave them two options. They picked two books. They started annotating. I conferred. I walked in and I actually felt good. It was good to hear the feedback that I received from my colleagues. And the teachers... the sort of feedback they gave was just amazing and really helpful. (personal communication, October 14, 2011)

Sean recalls it humbly, but the way I recorded it in my notes was that after the class period ended and Sean joined the rest of the participants in the conference room, he was greeted with a standing ovation from the entire cohort. The first words out of Sean's mouth upon entering the room were, "I can't believe those were my kids! I can't believe they had so much to say and said it so well." He was beaming with pride (and quite possibly relief) and received excellent feedback from the other participants. Closer observation of Sean's comments upon entering room also indicate that his focus was on what his students accomplished, and not necessarily on what he had done.

When Mila spent time with Sam in her coaching session, student work was the center of their discussions. Reviewing student work as the essence of conversations moved the focus from what Mila was doing to what the students were doing; that is, to know what students *really* understand, just look at the evidence in their work (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005). As the other participants watched, Sam and Mila reviewed events from the classroom: conversations that took place, what students were doing, and how they were participating. What emerged most from this coaching session was the fact that Mila knew her students, and knew them deeply. She knew their histories, their likes and dislikes, how they learned best, and what their strengths and struggles were as learners.

“The more I confer with my students, the more I learn new and surprising things about their abilities,” she shared during the coaching session. This point was made more clearly as Mila and Sam poured through student work from the day. Using the student work to drive her instruction, Mila was able to determine who understood the learning targets for the day, who still needed extra support, and even what to teach and how to scaffold her lesson for the next day. The following is an excerpt from the coaching session that occurred between Mila and Sam:

Sam    Okay? Okay, and see who’s getting what and so what are those implications for tomorrow as far as where they’re going to go next, what your mini-lesson is going to be, what your purpose for conferring is going to be, who you want to confer with 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup>...because basically what I saw today, you have all the routines down, it’s just adding those purposeful layers and focusing on kids and being intentional. It’s about conferring versus monitoring. I saw you do a little bit of a balance.



Mila Right, yeah (*She looks at the student papers in front of her and nods her head up and down*)

Sam But I want you to be clear on every minute, like I am going to use every spare minute to get to know these guys and make sure each has a year of growth (*Sam uses her hands in tug and pull action*) The only way to do that is to sort of sift and sort and ask who needs what and how do I know. On a scale from 1 - 5 for how they make meaning from text, where would you put Manuel?

Mila Seven. (*Both laugh at the measure she gave on the scale*)

Sam Okay, okay. So on a scale from 1 – 10, he’s making a lot of meaning (*Mila shakes head up and down in short quick movements and continues to laugh*) You’re funny! Okay, so he’s in this 7 category, but in order for him to extend his thinking, right, we want to see him go back to the text, but also give him the chance to write more...” (*Mila nods up and down*) Let’s start thinking...Edgar – what do we know? (*Sam pulls Edgar’s work from the pile and they both look at it*)

By focusing on the student work and reflecting intensely on the events that occurred in the classroom, Mila was able to align her long-term and short-term plan and adjust accordingly based on what the students’ needs were as evidenced by the work they produced.

Mila later shared with me her thoughts on how she felt about being coached by Sam, and in front of such a large group.

“Truthfully, I was nervous at first, but then just really got into the student work and my conversation with Sam and was able to get past that we had an audience,” she said. What she also confessed to was how helpful it was to take the time to look at students individually and wrap her head around what they actually knew, not what she thought they knew.

What I learned from these experiences was that there were two dynamics at play: that of the message, and that of the messenger. Realizing this point also helped me as an interventionist and in my work as a coach for teachers. By nature of my interventionist position in the district, it is an expectation that I work with and coach teachers and teams with curriculum and instruction. Sometimes, teachers are suspicious of my intent to coach them, especially if an administrator has asked me to do so. It creates tensions within my own narratives and across shared landscapes with those I coach and inhibits my “stories to live by,” as opposed to “stories imposed” upon me (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). I find that administrators on campuses are looking for a “quick fix,” or an immediate improvement in instruction with teachers after I work with them. What they do not realize is that I first try to create a relationship with those I coach. Otherwise little, if any, progress is ever made. Building relationships takes time and bridging trust can take even longer. As with my case study participants, I find that teachers eventually enter in a shared working knowledge landscape with me – a place that allows us to explore, to discuss, and to engage in dialogue about curriculum and instruction in ways that promote learning in an asset-driven model, not a deficit-driven one.

**The Learning Lab – Learning and Growing Together**

When I asked each of my case study participants how their involvement with the classroom learning lab influenced their perspectives on improving knowledge and practice, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Despite varying experiences with the coaching aspect of the program, the idea of learning collaboratively in the CLL environment was well supported.

As part of the learning lab experience, participants were immersed in the readings and studies of current research. Drawing on recent work from Wolk (2009), Wiggins and McTigue (2005), Wagner (2008), and Stiggins and Chappuis (2005), Sam introduced the research that supported the different elements of the workshop model, much of which inspired her own work (see Appendix G). Because teachers reviewed relevant research, they added to their repertoire of knowledge of and about their profession. Part of the lab's strength is that research was the backbone for supporting and improving teacher effectiveness, and ultimately student learning. The continuous renewal of information about what other educators were doing was crucial for reflecting on improving our own practice and was therefore highly regarded in the CLL experience.

Another event that transpired was that participants took time to reflect and connect, to celebrate successes, and to ask questions about how we could take what we learned back into our own classrooms. Here, Shirley paints a picture of her reflection on the lab:

I think it did a couple of things. I think sometimes we implement practices and we don't necessarily have the language to describe what we're doing, but [the classroom learning lab] helped us articulate what we were doing, or seeing what

naturally good teachers do and why they do it. One of the things teachers don't get a lot of is the opportunity to watch someone else do the job. If I am in isolation, I can think I am either an amazing teacher, or a horrible teacher, or a mediocre teacher, but having the opportunity to actually observe someone else teaching can be really profound. You can learn so much. Whether it's what you shouldn't do [gives a quick laugh] or what you should do.

I really appreciated the way it was set up – especially the way it was set up for teachers where they had that opportunity to come together in the morning, then to go into the classroom and observe, and then come back and have those conversations about what happened. I think it would be beneficial to all teachers. (personal communication, January 10, 2012)

Even as tough as it was to host a lab, Sean also supports the learning lab as a form of professional development, but recommends that it be more intimate. He notes he “doesn’t do too well in those types of situations where you’re in a room full of people watching our conversation.” He also shared with me that his coaching session with Sam may have been better for him had it not been “on a stage.”

In my own experience, I reflect on my personal journey, the impact it has had on my knowledge and practice, and what it means for my next steps:

The mark of a true educator is the understanding that the learning never stops. There is always more to accomplish, always undiscovered avenues of improvement, always new students to invite into the excitement of learning. This continuous renewal prevents us from going stale, from saying that we’re done, and from resting on our laurels. I plan to continue focusing my energy and efforts

on helping educators maintain their momentum, to continue moving in the right direction and, in so doing, I hope to have an impact on those around me (T. Scholz, journal entry, May 5, 2011).

### **Limitations**

The multiplicity of my roles as district interventionist and CLL participant limited my role as a researcher. Because I work often with teachers and teams on curriculum and instruction, the boundaries between my identity as a researcher and my identity as an interventionist were often blurred. To address these indistinct lines, I worked hard to distinguish identities when working with and talking to not only CLL participants, but others as well. It is also important to note that the tensions and “bumping up” of these roles (Craig, 2010) do not end with the conclusion of the lab program. They remain even today as I continue to balance my own “stories to live by,” in which I am free to choose with whom I work and for which purposes, and those stories imposed upon me by the district and/or campus administrators in pursuit of their own initiatives and goals.

### **Summary**

I personally feel that an entirely new dimension has been added to my professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 1996), which in turn influenced and continues to influence, my practices. For my participants, Sean, Mila, Shirley, and Olivia, I confidently conclude that their knowledge, too, has expanded and the experiences lived and shared within the CLL program will forever shape and influence their practices.

In the final chapter, I discuss the importance, significance, and meaning of the CLL program, the workshop model of instruction, and the experiences lived and shared, followed by the implications of this study and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter V**

### **Interpretations and Implications for Further Study**

In many ways and on varying levels, studying the classroom learning lab program and the workshop model has changed my ways of thinking about instruction, influenced how I conduct my practice, and left a standing impression on my relationships and working in collaboration with colleagues. I am grateful for both the experience as a participant in the CLL program and as a researcher conducting inquiry into its impact, effects, and influence on teacher knowledge and practice. The experiences and narratives shared here are but pieces of the picture of how the CLL program and the workshop model had an impact on what teachers know and do. I hope to continue inquiry into the program's lasting effects on those involved and to follow closely what comes next.

In the following sections, I revisit the events shared in Chapter 4 and determine what narrative interpretations can be gleaned from the experiences and narratives on the workshop model and the classroom learning lab, as well as the impact the program had on teacher knowledge and practice. Then, I discuss implications and recommendations for further studies which attempt to conduct inquiry into any or all of the elements of this dissertation. Finally, I conclude with my final thoughts and reflections on this study.

#### **Our Stories - Ourselves**

The stories we shared about how we entered the educational profession are important frames around our educational narratives. The stories we have as students, as learners, as human beings navigating the world, shed light on the how and the why, and

on the motivational factors that affect our instructional practices as educators. The underpinning of this idea is that past narratives influence and shape the present ones.

This was evident in my story as I expressed my desire to do something more in my life. My passion is fueled by the experience of witnessing a young boy's misfortune, which in turn drives my actions and goals as an educator – the relentless pursuit in positively influencing and making a difference in peoples' lives. Similarly, my interest in studying the mysteries of the cosmos and my fascination with science also nourishes my passion for developing inquiry-based instruction in my work.

That Mila intentionally plans for student talk-time in her classroom can be threaded back to her early learning experiences in which her teachers tried so hard to silence her in the classroom. Her label as “bright, but a talker” motivated her passion for ensuring that she encourages much discussion among and with her students. In her lab observations, the inquiry she had established for students was judicial in nature (should juveniles be charged as adults in murder trials?) and is a nod to her early interests in criminal law and psychology.

The idea that our past narratives influence our present ones is also true for Sean as well. His experiences as a young immigrant new to the educational system of the United States and the American culture provide him a wealth of insight into the lives of his immigrant ESL students. He uses knowledge of his immigrant experience to provide empathy towards and connections to the experiences his students currently endure. I could see in the students' eyes and in the expressions on their faces that they knew he cared.



Shirley's compelling desire to work with teachers was influenced greatly by the fact that, for her first year in teaching, she had very little support from the other teachers on her campus. Though one teacher did eventually begin to share, the experience was enough to encourage her to become the specialist at her campus so that she could provide that instructional support that was essentially withheld from her. That she shares her experiences from the CLL program and the components of the workshop model with her teams and teachers is further evidence she desires to provide instructional and curricular knowledge she hopes will be willingly received.

For Olivia, the experiences she encountered as a student studying abroad provide powerful testimony to her passion for teaching and her compassion for students. She was reminded of the power of education and how it affects the lives of students in that instant of awe as she watched her refugee students receive their certificates of completion for taking her class – a moment she says will not only stay with her forever, but one that has had a tremendous impact on her affection for both students and adults as learners.

We brought our past narratives into the two-year CLL program, itself an experience that became embedded in our narrative landscapes. As we added to the layers of our stories, it was clear with all participants that this new endeavor provided the inertia needed to propel instructional knowledge and practice.

### **The Workshop Model**

Upon revisiting the research questions pertaining to the workshop model, it is necessary to reflect on how each has been addressed through the experiences and stories of the participants.

- How has learning about the workshop model and its components had an impact on teacher instructional knowledge? (what they share that they have learned); and
- How has enacting the workshop model in the classroom affected teachers' instructional practices? (what they do)

One of the major findings with this narrative inquiry was that the workshop model of instruction was extremely complex in nature and included many working parts and undergirding ideas to which participants were introduced. The components were not as overwhelming when individually introduced, studied, and practiced. However, participants in the CLL program struggled with consistently enacting the complex model and its many working parts on a daily basis. Furthermore, not all components improved at the same pace. Some were more easily grasped and enacted than others, and it varied depending on who we observed.

The two components that the case studies shared as the most prolific were planning for the use of time in the classroom and creating lesson plans based on lines of inquiry. As a result, teachers intentionally planned for inquiry-based instruction by creating big ideas and guiding questions, and arranged the number of minutes in the class period to ensure students were given the most time to do the work. Focusing on inquiry-based instruction provided more possibilities to teachers for creating powerful instructional lesson plans that included multiple genres and choices for reading, in addition to increased motivation to schedule appropriate amounts of time to explore the modes of inquiry with students. Participants also realized that they had not given some of their students enough credit as learners and that inquiry encouraged these students to

blossom in ways they could not have imagined. Participants further developed an understanding of how to create curriculum that differentiated instruction to meet each individual student's needs and fostered student engagement. Additionally, educators gained a sense of community as they planned units of inquiry together, shared experiences from the classroom, and continued to embark on their inquiry journeys. More importantly, however, is that the teachers found the energy to teach again as they gradually learned to release the responsibility of learning to the students by giving them more work time to explore the big ideas and guiding questions.

Today, the participants continue to refine, revisit, restructure, and revise units of inquiry, making them more interesting, more thought provoking, and more inviting as they move forward. The hope is to keep the momentum going in the desire to nourish and encourage the learning process.

Though planning for inquiry and more student work time improved quickly, planning for the simultaneous inclusion of all the workshop model components presented a challenge. Participants shared that to include all of the parts (collaboration, inquiry-based instruction, backward planning from the end product, student work time, and conferring) was a challenging task and took an enormous amount of time. Not only was a lot of up-front time needed to thoroughly plan the lessons using the workshop model, but when reviewing student work, participants found that they needed to include more flexibility with their long-term planning and the pacing of the lessons and units, ultimately keeping their lesson plans in a state of flux. They did, however, agree that once a broad overview of planned curriculum was in place, they had a clearer picture of where they were going and what they wanted the student to be able to know and do, even

if it meant making small adjustments along the way. They also agreed that as they became more comfortable with the model over time, the components became easier to enact and they could better determine where their strengths were and which components still needed attention.

If we look at planning curriculum from the “teacher as curriculum-maker” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Craig & Ross, 2008) perspective, teachers had much autonomy in deciding the lines of inquiry they wished their students to follow, with the maneuverability in the pacing of the curriculum, and with the daily lessons and activities that led up to the final product students would produce. Though the model was limiting in that it was a structured framework into which teachers had to conform their curriculum, participants did not feel that their curricular decisions were restricted. In fact, participants expressed that the model validated some things they were already doing, or as Shirley described it, “instinctive” knowledge about how to teach. The model, in turn, gave them a way to label what they were doing instructionally in the classroom. They also agreed that the model provided a structured format that was helpful for planning purposes, especially with the idea that student work time is planned first. Planning for the student work time first enabled teachers to focus on what students should know and be able to do, and not so much on what material should be covered before the end of the period.

As participants shared their experiences and instructional knowledge about the workshop model with their colleagues at their respective campuses, they noted that their peers expressed interest in learning more about the enactment of the model. In Shirley’s case, she shared her experiences with the workshop model and the learning lab with

others on her home campus as she sat with teams and teachers to plan. However, she contemplated that unless a teacher actually sat for the experience and received the information about the workshop model in the same fashion as those who participated in the CLL program, much of the experience was “lost in translation”, and became watered down, or lost its power through second-hand re-tellings. To extend the enactment of the model outside the original cohort and to ensure that others get the full experience of seeing it in action requires attention regarding how the information is presented and the format in which it is received. Doing so will help to nurture the model’s original intent.

Finally, it was evident with all participants that conducting the coaching session in such a public setting was a difficult process, especially in front of a large audience. All participants shared some degree of anxiety and stress prior to hosting their labs, and nervousness when they engaged in the coaching session in front of the cohort. There were, however, varying degrees of interpretations with how the coaching sessions were conducted. Although not all participants were subjected to the criticism Sean received during his session, Sean’s session did leave the cohort feeling uncomfortable in the process. Yet, he stayed with the program because his experiences on the second day of his lab convinced him there was more about the model that he wanted to learn. Furthermore, the encouragement he received from his colleagues motivated him to continue using the model in his classroom in the hope that it would continue to promote positive student learning experiences.

Despite the tensions that simmered in the coaching sessions, there is evidence of sustainability of the model after the conclusion of the program, as Mila and Sean continued to actively enact the model, and continued to work on improving components

with which they were not yet completely comfortable. Shirley, Olivia, and I also continue to share our experiences with those with which we coach and plan.

### **Impact of the Coaching Experience on the Researcher**

I mentioned in Chapter 4 that the experience of the coaching session between Sean and Sam left a huge impact on me as an interventionist and coach in the district. Because one of the expectations of my job is to coach teachers and teams of teachers in ELA and Reading and to assist in their instructional planning, witnessing Sean's coaching experience shaped my knowledge as a coach in the district and how I would like to conduct my own coaching sessions with teachers. In essence, it was my own "discovery-learning" (Bruner, 1961) that allowed me to take in this information and use it to problem-solve during coaching sessions I had with others.

One specific aspect of learning that resulted from observing the CLL coaching sessions is that I am more conscientious about limiting those who are invited to coaching sessions I conduct. Now, I ask the teacher, or team of teachers with whom I work, who they would not mind being present. Most often, the campus specialist is welcome because the specialist oftentimes conducts their own coaching sessions with teachers in the department. However, many teachers like limiting those invited to the coaching sessions, as they admit they feel more comfortable divulging information they deem sensitive in a smaller setting, and they feel less threatened or vulnerable with fewer audience members. They do not, for example, want an administrator to sit in on coaching conversations, or any other person seen as an evaluator. In this respect, I feel validated that teachers and teams with whom I work do not see me as such, but rather as a colleague with whom they can work and trust.

The coaching experience has been extraordinarily enlightening as to the best ways to work with educators. Among these is the shift from focusing on simply covering content and material to focusing on student work – that is what students should know and be able to do.

I also found it useful to coach educators by engaging them in conversations about where they feel they should focus instructional practices in their classrooms, and allowing them the space and freedom to direct the coaching session by discussing what they feel their needs are. It is not about me telling them what to do, or how to do it, but rather it is a shared landscape into which we both are equally acknowledged. It is important to me that educators see me as a collaborator, not as an outside person coming in who imparts elevated knowledge on others. Clarifying my role as interventionist and coach will help me better serve the needs of educators with whom I work.

### **The Classroom Learning Lab**

The third research question I hoped to explore was in regard to the impact of the CLL experience. Specifically, this question asked:

- How has participating in the classroom learning lab influenced their perspectives on improving knowledge and practice in this kind of learning environment?

All of the participants enthusiastically agreed that the classroom learning lab environment provided an excellent structure for educators to cultivate their knowledge and practice. They share that it was invaluable being able to see teaching as it was happening, and having the opportunities to discuss practices immediately afterwards.

Participants further agreed that part of the reason for the success of the CLL program was that it was enacted over time, allowing educators to visit and revisit the workshop model in all its complexity. Mila, Sean, Shirley, Olivia, and I conceded that using the model with ease and juggling all of its components improved over time because of the setup of the lab. It was helpful to meet as a cohort for two days (once for teachers) a month for five months during the school year so we could re-connect and revisit the successes and setbacks of enacting the workshop model.

Furthermore, the powerful conversations, reflections, and sharing of narratives over the two-year enactment of the program provided a rich dialogue and a huge support that did not leave participants to the task of translating the model into everyday practice on their own. We could not. The model was too complex to enact without the assistance of our colleagues and without the length of time it took to improve our instructional practice and expand our instructional knowledge. To undertake such work requires a system that encourages educators to learn from each other, exposing the good and bad, as well as what works and does not work, in a constructive manner that fosters growth and progress. The process takes time, but the participants would argue it is time well spent.

### **Implications for Further Study**

There are important considerations to take into account for future studies and for those who may wish to participate in or create a CLL program using the workshop model of instruction.

Because of the complexity of the workshop model, it would be beneficial to take the time to break it down into smaller parts, study, and practice enacting each component separately before attempting to enact the entire model. Working on each component



individually and over a longer period of time would allow participants time to fully understand the component at a deeper level and would provide them the time to improve their performance of it.

Planning for the enactment of the model takes a large amount of time to do well. Therefore, educators should be given sufficient planning time to fully acknowledge all of the long-term and short-term planning ideas that support the fidelity of the enactment of the model.

Educators involved with a CLL program should be aware in advance of the expectations and goals of the coaching session. Participants of this study noted that conducting the coaching session in such a public environment left them feeling vulnerable and exposed. Therefore, educators should take into consideration the setup, location, and environment of the coaching session. Limiting the number of participants who view the coaching session would also be beneficial to the hosting lab teacher, and would provide a more intimate setting for the coaching conversation.

Because participants acknowledged the value of a collaborative work environment while enacting the workshop model, it is important to allow time for educators to work in collaborative settings and to provide them with opportunities to observe one another in the classroom setting. The lab structure allows educators the space and the place for the continuation of discussions about the model – what is working, not working, and how to improve. Consistent and long-term conversations and sharing of stories is essential to continued progress and sustainability of the workshop model.

Finally, it is important to understand and know how those outside the cohort will receive information about the workshop model and how they will be given the same opportunities for observations and collaboration. If a broader enactment is desired, educators should consider how the information will be shared to ensure proper understanding and training of the model, to ensure exposure to research supporting the foundational framework of the model, and to provide the same learning experiences for those not in the initial program. Furthermore, if the desire is to expand the scope of the classroom learning model enacted in a classroom learning lab setting by inviting a larger group of participants, a mixed-methods study may be more optimally sufficient to capture the magnitude of the experiences during the program's duration.

### **Closing Thoughts**

Enacting the workshop model – in all its complexity – requires multiple visits, multiple trainings, and multiple opportunities for discussions and collaboration in a learning lab environment. It takes practice, like all endeavors in which we desire to excel. Success does not happen in a day, or even a week. At no point did any participant say, “I got it!” Nobody said, “I have it all figured out.” We were continually learning, trying, and trying again, even at the end of the program's run. Was it perfectly executed? Not by any means. Yet, we witnessed small triumphs each day and saw little nuggets of success and growth in practice and learning that empowered and motivated us to continue.

Bearing witness to, burrowing into, and being involved with such an experience had a profound impact on me as a researcher, as a participant, and as a person. What excites me most is that the journey has not ended. This is but one story, one event along

the continuum. I am grateful for having traversed these experiential landscapes: the dissertation, the learning lab project, the relationships with colleagues that I hold dear, the stories and narratives that are known and yet to be known. From these storied experiences, new inquiries have sprouted and flourished, inquiries that I hope to follow far into the future – influencing and shaping that which is of yet unknown.

## THE IMPACT OF LEARNING LABS/WORKSHOP MODEL

### References

- Allen, P. A. (2009). *Conferring: The keystone of reader's workshop*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Allington, R. L. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Anderson, C. (2000). *How's it going?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Aoki, T. (1989). *Beyond the half-life of curriculum and pedagogy*. Seminar held at Barnett House, September.
- Apple, M. W. (1990). Is there a curriculum voice to reclaim? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71, 526-530.
- Atwell, N. (1987). *In the middle*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
- Atwell, N. (2011). *In the middle* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Beers, K. (2003). *When kids can't read*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Bennett, S. (2007). *That workshop book*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Breaux, A., & Whitaker, T. (2006). *Seven simple secrets*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, Inc.
- Bruner, J. (1961). The act of discovery. *Harvard Educational Review*, 31(1), 21–32.
- Burke, J. (2010). *What's the big idea?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Calkins, L. (1983). *Lessons from a child*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Calkins, L. (1987). *The writing workshop: A world of difference*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- Calkins, L. (1990). *Living between the lines*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Carroll, J. B. (1963). A model of school learning. *Teachers College Record*, 64, 723-733.
- Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research*. New York: Routledge.
- Clandinin, D. J. (1985). Personal practical knowledge: A study of teachers' classroom images. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 15(4), 361 – 385.
- Clandinin, D. J. (1989). Personal practical knowledge series: Developing rhythm in teaching: The narrative study of a beginning teacher's personal practical knowledge of classrooms. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 19(2), 121-141.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1992). Teachers as curriculum makers. In P. W. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Curriculum* (pp. 363-401). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1995). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1996). Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes: Teacher stories – stories of teachers – school stories – stories of schools. *Educational Researcher*, 25(3), 24-30.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Connelly, F. M., Clandinin, D. J., & He, M. F. (1997). Teachers' personal practical

knowledge on the professional knowledge landscape. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 13(7), 665-674.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

Craig, C. J. (1995a). Knowledge communities: A way of making sense of how beginning teachers come to know. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 25(2), 151-175.

Craig, C. J. (2003). *Narrative inquiries of school reform: Storied lives, storied landscapes, storied metaphors*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Craig, C. J. (2006). Why is dissemination so difficult? The nature of teacher knowledge and the spread of curriculum reform. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(2), 257-293.

Craig, C. J. (2010). Research on the boundaries: Narrative inquiry in the midst of organized school reform. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 103, 123-136.

Craig, C. J. (2011). Narrative inquiry in teaching and teacher education. In J. Kitchen, D. Ciuffetelli Parker, and D. Pushor (Eds.), *Narrative Inquiries into Curriculum Making in Teacher Education (Advances in Research on Teaching (Vol. 13, pp. 19-42)*. United Kingdom: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Craig, C. J., & Huber, J. (2007). Relational reverberations: Shaping and reshaping narrative inquiries in the midst of storied lives and contexts. In D. J. Clandinin, (Ed.), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Craig, C. J., & Ross, V. (2008). Cultivating the image of teachers as curriculum-makers.

- In M. Connelly, M.F. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of curriculum and instruction* (pp. 282–305). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dale, E. (1969). *Audio-visual methods in teaching* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Dryden Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (February, 1998). Teacher learning that supports student learning. *Educational Leadership*, 55(5), 6-11.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M.W. (1999). Investing in teaching as a learning profession. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the Learning Profession: Handbook of policy and practice* (pp. 376-411). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Sykes, G. (Eds.). (1999). *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice* (pp. 376-411). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21<sup>st</sup>-century teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(3), 300 – 314.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (Winter, 2007). A good teacher in every classroom: Preparing the highly qualified teachers our children deserve. *Educational Horizons*, 85(2), 111-132.
- Darling-Hammond, L., George Lucas Educational Foundation, Barron, B., & Pearson, D. (2008). *Powerful learning: What we know about teaching for understanding*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2007). *The landscape of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.).

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

East Bay Educational Collaborative (EBEC). (June 10, 2010). The highly qualified

leaders' project. Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary

Education. Retrieved from

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/hqlp/Mid\\_Career/EBECLaboratoryClassrooms.aspx](http://www.ride.ri.gov/hqlp/Mid_Career/EBECLaboratoryClassrooms.aspx)

Eisner, E. W. (1985). Chapter 4: Five basic orientations to the curriculum. In *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs* (pp.

61-85). New York: Macmillan.

Eisner, E. W. (1990, March). Who decides what schools teach? *Phi Delta Kappan*,

71(7), 523-526.

Eisner, E. W. (1998). *The kinds of schools we need: Personal essays*. Portsmouth, NH:

Heinemann.

Farr, S. (2010). *Teaching as leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fletcher, R., & Portalupi, J. (2001). *Writing workshop*. Portsmouth, NH:

Heinemann.

Gallagher, K. (2009). *Readicide*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishing.

Graves, D. (1983). *Teachers and children at work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Graves, D. (1991). *Build a literate classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Graves, D. (1994). *A fresh look at writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and*

*culture in the postmodern age*. New York: Teachers College Press.



- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (1998). *What's worth fighting for out there?* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Harvey, S. (2011). Comprehension to what end? In Daniels, H. (Ed.), *Comprehension Going Forward* (111-127). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Harvey, S., & Daniels, H. (2009). *Comprehension and collaboration: Inquiry circles in action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Houk, L. (June, 2010). Demonstrating teaching in a lab classroom. *Educational Leadership*, 67. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/summer10/vol67/num09/Demonstrating-Teaching-in-a-Lab-Classroom.aspx>
- Jackson, P. W. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Levin, H. M. (1984). About time for educational reform. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 6(2), 151-163.
- Levin, H. M. (Winter, 2002). The Gordian knot of educational reform. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 32(4), 471-482.
- Lyons, N. (May, 1990). Dilemmas of knowing: Ethical and epistemological dimensions of teachers' work and development. *Harvard Educational Review*, 60(2), 159-180.
- Marzano, R., Pickering, D., & Pollock, J. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- McLaughlin, M. W. (March, 2011). Shifts in reform influence how and what teachers learn. *Kappan*, 92(6), 67.

- Miller, D. (2008). *Teaching with intention*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishing.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for education reform. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115, Stat. 1425 (2002).
- Noguera, P. A. (May, 2004). Transforming high school. *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 26-31.
- Olson, M. R. (2000). Curriculum as a multistoried process. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 25(3), 169-187.
- Olson, M., & Craig, C. J. (2001). Opportunities and challenges in the development of teachers' knowledge: The development of narrative authority through knowledge communities. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(7).
- Piaget, J. (1929/1951). *The child's conception of the world*. (J. Tomlinson & A. Tomlinson, Trans.). Savage, MD: Littlefield Adams.
- Public Education and Business Coalition (PEBC). (July 20, 2011). Retrieved from <http://www.pebc.org/>
- Renzulli, J. S., Gentry, M., & Reis, S. M. (September, 2004). A time and a place for authentic learning. *Educational Leadership*, 62(1), pp. 73-77.
- Schlechty, P. C. (2002). *Working on the work*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results now*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.

- Schwab, J. J. (1958). The teaching of science as inquiry. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 14(9), 374-379.
- Schwab, J. J. (1969). The practical: A language for curriculum. *School Review*, 78(1), 1-23.
- Schwab, J. J. (1973). The practical 3: Translation into curriculum. *School Review*, 81(4), 501-522.
- Stallings, J. (1980). Allocated academic learning time revisited or beyond time on task. *Educational Researcher*, 9(11), 11-16.
- Steinbeck, J. (1959/2003). ...like captured fireflies. In S. Shillinglaw & J. J. Benson, (Eds.), *America and Americans and Selected Nonfiction*. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc.
- Stiggins, R. J. (1997). *Student-centered classroom assessment* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Stiggins, R. J., Arter, J. A., Chappuis, J., & Chappuis, S. *Classroom assessment for student learning*. (2004). Portland, OR: Assessment Training Institute, Inc.
- Sweeney, D. (2011). *Student-centered coaching*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Taba, H. (March, 1963). Learning by discovery: Psychological and educational rationale. *The Elementary School Journal*, 63(6), 308-316.
- Taba, H. (1967). *Teacher's handbook for elementary social studies*. Palo Alto, CA: Addison-Wesley.
- Texas Education Agency (TEA). (March 1, 2012). Overview of the Academic Excellence Indicator System. Retrieved from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/about.aeis.html>.

Tovani, C. (2004). *Do I really have to teach reading?* Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishing.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (June 8, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/delors/fourpil.htm>).

Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Wiley, D., & Harnischfeger, A. Explosion of a myth: Quantity of schooling and exposure to instruction, major educational vehicles. *Educational Researcher*, 3(4), 7-12.

Wilhelm, J. D. (2007). *Engaging readers & writers with inquiry*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

Wolk, S. (2008). School as inquiry. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(2), 115-122.

# THE IMPACT OF LEARNING LABS/WORKSHOP MODEL

## **Appendix A**

### **Interventionist Job Description**

**TITLE: Instructional Intervention Specialist (Content Areas)**

THIS IS A FEDERALLY FUNDED POSITION. CONTINUATION IS CONTINGENT UPON AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING.

Qualifications:	Appropriate teacher certification to work with elementary/intermediate students (per Texas State Board for Educator Certification) Experience as a Specialist with Language Arts or Mathematics background Campus leadership experience Minimum five (5) years of successful experience in education as a teacher Adept at compiling and analyzing data Strong organizational skills .
Primary Purpose:	To facilitate/support teacher leadership on campuses in meeting the needs of students who are at risk of failing; and assist in the refinement of tools, processes, instructional strategies and procedures to enhance student performance.
Reports To:	Content Coordinator

**PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Facilitates teacher leadership on campuses through collaboration (community building using PLC tenets); book studies; translating theory into practice.
- Coaches' campus intervention staff in the use of effective research based instructional strategies and methodologies.
- Provides assistance/resources for campus personnel to meet the learning needs of students.
- Assists campus intervention staff in the development of effective lesson plans.
- Assists in the development of intervention programs designed to accelerate student learning.
- Works collaboratively with other Instructional Intervention Specialists and the Campus Climate and Behavioral Intervention Advisor.
- Generalizes procedures for at-risk interventions across the district.
- Serves as a resource to campuses on appropriate placement of students, scheduling of interventions and integrating differentiated instruction.
- Meets on a regular basis with campus/district personnel to analyze data/monitor program effectiveness.

- Attends content appropriate coordinator meetings for campus leaders.
- Serves as a liaison between the campus and the district to ensure that the needs of the at-risk students are addressed in all program areas and that the district program and policies are being implemented consistently across the district.
- Develops and presents professional development sessions at the campus and district levels.
- Assists in the development of curriculum, assessment, and supplemental materials.
- Works with various district data system – CCAP and ESP.
- Researches and stays abreast of current research and trends.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

#### WORKING CONDITIONS:

All campuses are temperature controlled with hard surface floors. Job requires physical mobility, standing, prolonged sitting, lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling (10 pound minimum). Job may also require climbing stairs, stooping, bending and reaching over head. Working conditions may be modified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for diagnosed medical conditions.

#### EVALUATION:

Performance of this job will be evaluated in accordance with provisions of the Board's policy on evaluation of professional personnel.

---

Employee Signature

---

Date  
Revised: September 2010

## **Appendix B**

### **Planning Sequences**



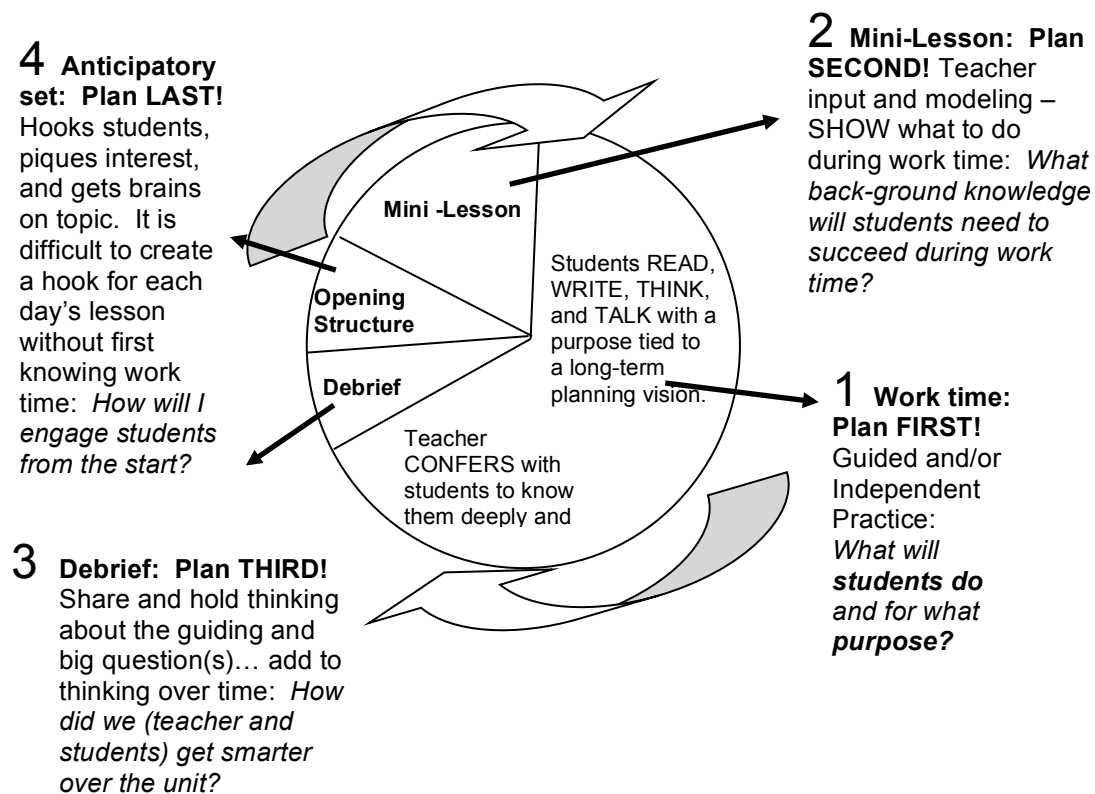
from *Understanding by Design* by Wiggins and McTighe  
synthesized by Sam Bennett – modified by Kaleta Burruto

### Long-Term Planning

1. Prioritize the big ideas of the unit & figure out the in-depth content
    - What are the **big ideas** of this unit? (essential/enduring understandings)
      - “...we might ask [is it] worth an adult’s knowing and whether having known it as a child makes a person a better adult.” ~ Jerome Bruner (1960).
      - These include both goals about the content – heart of the discipline ideas - and the processes of becoming a lifelong learner –habits of the mind.
      - Ask: How will understanding this – studying this – make a student a “better” person? When it is all said and done... ten years from now... what will the student remember and have learned? What really matters – what is essential?
    - What is the in-depth **content** you will study?
      - What is the context for learning? Ex. Using Little Rock 9 (content) to study school integration, civil rights, personal identity/culture (big ideas).
  2. What is/are the **big question(s)** of the thematic/inquiry unit?
    - Is the question compelling and relevant?
    - Does the question have one “right” answer? If yes, rethink it.
    - Does it allow students to **generate** rather than **consume** information?
    - Will it be engaging (juicy) to students? Does it matter to them?
  3. How will students **demonstrate their understanding at the end of the unit?** (Begin with end in mind)
    - What “real world” product will students create to demonstrate their understanding of the big/guiding questions? (letter, OER/thoughtful response, etc.) This is not a school “project”!
    - Is it something that a **real** person would do to communicate in the **real** world?
    - Does it help students demonstrate knowledge, skills, and understanding?
  4. What are the **learning targets (objectives)**?
    - These are the **skills** to learn. See pacing guides!
    - From these skills, you know what mini-lessons need to be taught.
    - These learning targets support assessment for learning and as learning.
    - This creates your rubric for grading the end-of-unit assignment.
- Now:** What is the due date for the final assignment? Mark the due date on a calendar and **plan backwards** from that date. **This becomes your pacing calendar.**
- What work will students need to do?
  - What mini-lessons will you need to teach for them to do the work?
  - When and how will you assess learning along the way?

**Short-Term Planning (for Intentional Daily Practice)**

1. What will the **students** do during the **work time**?
  - *Plan for **work time** 1<sup>st</sup>!*
  - *THINK: **Why** are they doing this? What's the **purpose** for them doing this? Is it meaningful?*
2. What will they need from me/**teacher** to do it with more depth and stamina? (Plan **mini-lesson** and make \*direct\* connection to what students will do during work time.)
3. What will **students** share in the **debrief** so they can show what they figured out/how they got smarter during the work time? (This also helps the teacher know where to go with students the next day – assessment driving instruction.)
4. Now plan the **anticipatory** set. How can I/**teacher** build a \*need to know\* or access background knowledge before the mini-lesson?



**Appendix C**

**Classroom Learning Labs**

**2009- 2011**Purpose

- Strengthen first-line instruction by adding rigor in secondary ELA/Reading and ESL classes
- Prepare ESL students to transition into ELA classes
- Strengthen vertical alignment

Goals

- Provide models of high quality, research-based instructional strategies
- Implement workshop and best practices daily

Expectations

- Participants will commit to
  - learning and growing as a teacher through the coaching model
  - opening their classrooms to others in the cohort
  - participating in the learning lab for the next two years at their current campus
  - reading and learning from professional reading selections
  - meeting with Sam Bennett on the following school days
    - 2009-2010 School Year
      - Sept. 21 & 22
      - Oct. 26 & 27
      - Nov. 16 & 17
      - Jan. 11 & 12
      - Mar. 29 & 30
    - 2010-2011 School Year
      - Sept. 27 & 28
      - Nov. 1 & 2
      - Dec. 6 & 7
      - Jan. 24 & 25
      - May 4 & 5

District Participants

- 12 sites (11 campuses; Administration office)
- 6 middle school teachers
- 6 high school teachers
- 11 Middle school and high school ESL Department Chairs
- 11 Middle school and high school ELA Instructional Specialists
- 3 District ESL Specialists
- 1 District Middle School Interventionist
- 1 Consultant
- 1 Secondary ESL Coordinator
- 1 Secondary Reading and Title 1 Coordinator
- 1 Secondary Language Arts Coordinator

# THE IMPACT OF LEARNING LABS/WORKSHOP MODEL

## **Appendix D**

### **Classroom Learning Lab Participants**

Middle School Campuses			
School	Grade/Subject	Teachers (Attend Day 2 only)	Instructional Support Specialist/Dept. Chair (Attend Day 1 & 2)
A	7 <sup>th</sup> Language Arts and 7 <sup>th</sup> Literature	2	2
B	8 <sup>th</sup> Language Arts	1	2
C	7 <sup>th</sup> ESL	1	2
D	8 <sup>th</sup> Literature	1	2
E	7 <sup>th</sup> ESL	1	2
F	N/A	0	2

High School Campuses			
School	Grade/Subject	Teachers	Instructional Support (Specialist/Dept. Chair)
G	English I	1	2
H	English II; English III; Sheltered (ESL) English III	3	2
I	English IV	1	2
J	Sheltered English I	1	2
K	N/A	0	2

District Representatives	
Department	Instructional Support
Secondary English Language Arts	4
Secondary ESL	4

**Appendix E**

**Sample Classroom Learning Lab Agenda**

*"When you love your work that much – the only way to get out of trouble is to go deeper in. We must enter, not evade, the tangles of teaching so we can understand them better and negotiate them with more grace, not only to guard own spirits but also to serve our students well."*  
 -- Parker Palmer (1998)

### Learning Lab Agenda • Alief ISD • October, 2010

#### Agenda Title/Guiding Questions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Learning Targets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Supporting Targets</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Assessments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can listen closely to the “work” in a classroom and carefully label to uncover the layers of why it matters to student learning.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I can make a connection between research/theory (best practice planning, instruction, &amp; assessment) and classroom practice.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lab notes (individual)</li> <li>• Lab debrief / script</li> <li>• Annotated research connections</li> <li>• Exit ticket (take aways)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can articulate why I’m teaching what I’m teaching</li> <li>• I can sequence and teach a series of lessons that help students get to a long term learning target.</li> <li>• I can sequence and teach a series of lessons that help students to “do the work” --- read, write, and talk to learn.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annotations 1<sup>st</sup> 9 weeks’ unit and lesson plans</li> <li>• Stiggins 7 check list</li> <li>• Long-term planning document (draft of 2<sup>nd</sup> 9 weeks)</li> <li>• Calendar [ongoing]</li> <li>• Workshop daily lessons (ongoing)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can take a risk and apply my “take away” from the lab experience by replicating a pattern of planning, instruction, assessment, and/or culture in my own practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching scripts/coaching letters over time</li> <li>• Planning documents (ongoing / future)</li> <li>• Student work (future)</li> </ul>

#### Foundational Beliefs (Big Ideas) of Our Work:

- Whoever is doing the reading, writing, and talking is doing the thinking. Learning is a consequence of thinking.
- Teaching is personal, not private.
- **Teachers matter most to student learning.** *What we do. What we ask students to do. What we say. How we allow students to talk to each other. How we listen. How we structure time. How we structure curriculum. How we acknowledge students. How we give feedback. How we ask students to think about themselves and their own learning. We determine the weather. You have to trust yourself and feel trusted to help students learn.* It bears repeating: **teachers matter most to student learning.**
- The purpose of education is for students to emerge from school with a good repertoire of knowledge, well-developed skills, and an understanding of the meaning, significance, and use of what they have studied.
- Everyone does the best that they can until they know better and then they do better.
- Teaching is an incredibly complex endeavor. No one has it nailed. There are always ways to get better for students.
- We are smarter together.



*There is no such thing as the perfect lesson, the perfect day in school, or the perfect teacher. For teachers and students alike, the goal is not perfection but persistence in the pursuit of understanding important things.*

Tomlinson & McTighe, (2006, 56)

When	What
8:30 – 8:50	<b>Opening:</b> Reading, introductions, and agenda text walk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• READ agenda and WRITE thinking</li> <li>• Develop a “clear and understandable vision” of our work based on learning targets – infer the title/guiding question of our day</li> <li>• Share out thinking</li> </ul>
8:50 – 10:32 (will include break)	<b>Workshop: Long-term plans</b> (Reflect 1st 9 weeks and begin planning for 2 <sup>nd</sup> 9 weeks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mini-Lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Big Picture Planning Steps</li> <li>○ MODEL thinking on the hosting teacher’s 1st 9 weeks’ long-term plans (using the Big Picture Planning Steps): What she planned, what I wondered, how she/we got smarter</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work time: Reflect to plan smarter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ READ partner’s plan and WRITE I wonders (using the Big Picture Planning Steps)</li> <li>○ TALK: Articulate plans and what learned from the first unit</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Catch: <i>How are you smarter now with long-term planning?</i></li> <li>• Work Time: Plan smarter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ TALK/PLAN: Share drafts of 2<sup>nd</sup> 9 weeks’ plan, I wonders, &amp; talk through/tweak plans....</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Debrief: <i>What are you thinking now about long-term plans?</i></li> </ul> <b>Prebrief: Hosting Teacher’s Letter and Plan</b>
10:37 – 11:27	<b>Learning Lab</b> – Hosting Teacher’s Lab Observation
11:45 – 1:00	<b>LUNCH</b>
1:00 – 1:45	<b>Debrief of Learning Lab</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What I saw/heard and why it matters</li> <li>• I wonders for the hosting teacher</li> </ul>
1:45 – 3:20 (will include break)	<b>Workshop: Daily Connections</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mini-Lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Moving from big planning to daily planning – Connections from Stiggins to Wiggins/McTighe to Workshop <i>How is it all related?</i></li> <li>○ Workshop as a structure</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work time: Videos of Cris – <i>What do you notice about her structures?</i></li> <li>• Catch: How to intentionally plan for workshop to happen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Short-Term Planning Steps</li> <li>○ MODEL Stiggins 7 with daily lesson</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ REVIEW your lessons using Stiggins 7 <i>What do you need to consider in future lessons?</i></li> <li>○ PLAN lesson for future... Share plan with partner</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Debrief -- <i>How are you smarter now about daily plans?</i></li> </ul>
3:20 – 3:30	<b>Debrief: Next Steps, Take Aways, and Closing</b>

**Appendix F**

**Sample Scripting Chart**

Time	Workshop Part	T	S
10:39 – 10:48	<b>Hook (9 minutes total)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ T: As writing warm up, think about big idea about choices &amp; consequences. Take that into consideration as write your wishes</li> <li>○ 10:41 – T: I'll give you a few more minutes to get you learning targets copied down &amp; your warm up completed.</li> <li>○ 10:42 I see some of you w/ notebooks closed which makes me think that you are done. Talk at table about the consequences of your wishes. We'll have 1 person from each group share so be ready. It's OK if you change your mind &amp; change your wishes.</li> <li>○ 10:42 <b>TALK TIME</b></li> <li>○ 10:43 T: Talk about the possible consequences of those wishes. Good/bad?</li> <li>○ STUDENTS CONT. <b>TALK</b> Ex.: Student: I wish for a long life, lots of money, &amp; a good house. T: Can you think of any consequences of a long life?</li> <li>○ 10:46 <b>CATCH (Share out whole class)</b> – T: I heard a couple of good wishes that we can have a great discussion. Annie is going to let me share her wish. Who knew that Annie had a dark side? Wishes that sister disappeared. Consequences.... Troy, can I share your wish? Long life. What could be some consequences? Student – out live family members, lonely, etc. Alright guys –</li> </ul>	3 min	6 min
10:48 – 11:02	<b>Mini-Lesson (14 minutes total)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 10:48 – T: Let's take a look at your learning targets. We are going to identify elements of plot &amp; complete diagram. So what is our focus today? We already know what plot is. We need to go a little bit deeper here. Basic reminder: What does plot mean? Student: Story Student: What's imp. Teacher: Use your references – look around room. Student: What happens in the story.</li> <li>○ I see teacher using Elmo writing Cornell notes. I see most if not all students participating – listening/writing.</li> </ul> <p>10:51 What happens first in the plot diagram? #1 – Student: problem... Student: setting... Teacher: Setting is a part of it. Exposition – because this is where everything is exposed – setting, characters introduced – maybe a bit of conflict. Remember you can write your notes as you need abbreviate as long as you understand. How do we know when the exposition is over? How do we know when we are going up the pyramid? #2 – The first thing – the first action – the first choice – is made. Something happens that lets us know that we are getting in the story now. OK #3 – Climax. This is a hard one to define because people define it differently. Basically it's the OMG moment – everything is coming</p>	12	2

	<p>together &amp; character will make a decision/choice that changes everything. The most exciting (on edge of seat – biting nails) moment. #4 Falling Action – Somebody define the falling action. After that big moment, define what happens next. Student: They solve the mystery or whatever. Teacher: Everything is getting solved. Conflicts starting to be resolved. &amp; consequences – good or bad – are going to be revealed. Don't you hate it when a story leaves you hanging – don't have a conclusion? Student: Like Twilight. Teacher: OK – Have one more -- #5 Resolution. How would you define that Zac. Zac: Oh – It's the end. Teacher: Closed, conflicts solved, maybe celebration. Student: Like Scooby Doo. T: Sure ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 11:00 – Let's open our notebooks back up to page 21. You'll notice from our agenda today's work time to complete a group diagram. <b>Directions:</b> Pick a story – any story – the actual story isn't that important – Pick one you all know – Fairy tale, Disney movie, etc. I'll give you about 7 minutes for you to complete your diagram. I'll come around &amp; listen. OK – 7 minutes.</li> <li>○ 11:02 T: Remember our expectations during work time. We are at Level 2. Your 7 minutes starts now.</li> </ul>		
<p>11:02 – 11:23</p>	<p><b>Work Time – (21 minutes total)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Purple Group: Troy: Asks partner, “We have to write it.” The other boy says no then yes. Troy: Says he was sitting on the wall. #1: What's the 1<sup>st</sup> thing that happens? He falls down? #3: He fell. #1: What was the OMG moment? T: What would you say was the climax.. T: OK.... Maybe your story is a little too simple but that's OK... (I hear her then say the rhyme to help the boys remember the rest of it.) -- Boys name next part. ---</li> <li>○ Group of 3 girls &amp; 1 boy by board. Three Little Pigs. #1 Girl – Ok ya'll -- #3 what are we putting? The wolf came along to the 2<sup>nd</sup> pig &amp; knocked it down. [I see all students at this table writing. Each student is asking &amp; contributing to what the answer might be – coming to a consensus quickly &amp; easily together] Boy: We done – high five. All high five.</li> <li>○ 11:09 – timer goes off &amp; class gets quiet.</li> <li>○ <b>CATCH/Share out</b> 11:10 Teacher asks for a volunteer (??) to share. She goes to Elmo &amp; puts chart up. Student reports out to class to share. Students applaud. Someone from purple group. Who as the neatest one? (This was the group of boys I was by -- #4 goes up – which was the quietest boy before.) Hold on – we'll wait for everyone to get ready. Pens down &amp; eyes up. Boy is sharing – T: Good job. Thanks. Students applaud.</li> <li>○ <b>CATCH:</b> 11:13 OK – So you had some practice</li> </ul>	8 ½	12 ½

	<p>labeling/identifying together. Now... will read “The Monkey’s Paw” Our <b>purpose</b> for reading is to identify plot elements – but keep in mind our big question /idea – will have to do with choices &amp; consequences. Here’s a little background on story. Might sound a little funny because not American – but way they talk might give idea to setting. Don’t let it confuse your brain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>RELEASE</b> 11:15 1 students <b>READS aloud to class</b></li> <li>○ <b>CATCH</b> 11:16 T: OK – Let’s stop right there because can be confusing right away. T puts up text on Elmo &amp; starts with 1<sup>st</sup> sentence. What does this mean “Without the night was cold &amp; wet but in the small parlor of Laburnam Villa.... “ Means outside – then we have these contrasting ideas of outside &amp; inside. Let’s take a look this – the former &amp; the latter. Let’s get out our notebook really quick. Teacher writes notes about former = dad &amp; latter = sons. So in that little paragraph, how many characters have been introduced? 3 – dad, son, &amp; old white lady. Can we make any guesses as to who she is? Students guess. T: Do we have a where? Student: Villa T: Can you describe it a little bit? We are in the parlor. Parlor is fancy for ... Student: Living room. T: Has anything happened yet? ... No, let’s keep going</li> <li>○ <b>RELEASE</b> 11:20 – Student continues reading out loud. Then <b>David reads out loud to class.</b></li> <li>○ <b>CATCH:</b> 11:22 T: Can see that textbook has some things pointed out for us. Plot highlighted in blue in margin – which is our focus for today. Answer this question in your notebook. Don’t have to write the question – just answer it.</li> <li>○ 11:23 <b>WRITE</b> ... T: Once you answer that put in your notebook.</li> </ul>		
11:24 – 11:27	<p><b>DEBRIEF</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 11:24 – Teacher: I have set everyone up on E-Chalk. Look at resources – Download. Will count as quiz grade. Start stacking notebooks. Teacher is handing out document (missed what it was).</li> <li>○ 11:27 – Bell rings. Let’s look at our learning targets to see if hit them. Yes/no</li> </ul>	3	0
	<b>TOTAL TIMES</b>	26 ½	20 ½

**Appendix G**

**Body of Research Studied by Participants in the Classroom Learning Lab Project**

- Allington, R. (2006). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Block, C., & Pressley, M. (2002). *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Keene, E., & Zimmerman, S. (1997). *Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a reader's workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Larner, M. (2004). *Pathways: Charting a course for professional learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Miller, D. (2002). *Reading with meaning: Teaching comprehension in the primary grades*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Pearson, P.D., & Gallagher, M.C. (1983). The instruction of reading comprehension. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8, 317-344.
- Peterson, R. (1992). *Life in a Crowded Place: Making a Learning Community*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Piaget, J. (1983). "Piaget's Theory." In P. Mussen (Ed.) *Handbook of Child Psychology*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Tovani, C. (2000). *I read it, but I don't get it*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Tovani, C. (2004). *Do I really have to teach reading?* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Wiske, M. S. (1998). *Teaching for understanding: Linking research with practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Zemelman, S., Daniels, H., & Hyde, A. (1998). *Best practice: New standards for teaching and learning in America's schools*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

**Appendix H**

**Sample Coaching Letter**



September 27, 2010

Hi -----,

Thank you so much for hosting the lab this go around! It was great to finally see you with your students after hearing stories all last year. I feel like I learned a LOT about you today from your context letter/reflection and from your practice. Here are some things I've inferred:

- You know emotional engagement is key for the learners in your room. You build emotional engagement by giving them time to talk, something important to talk about, physical space for them to face each other, learn each other's names, and practice, practice, practice, practice to get smarter together.
- You gave them time to think and write when they come in, a gentle "easing" into class to get their brains wrapped around the topic and their goals to get smarter using text, writing, and talk
- You understand some key components of structuring curriculum for engagement. You wrote in your letter, "I try to incorporate relevant material that has real life application," and that the ultimate success would be for students to remember the learning from your classroom ten years from now." That tells me you are working hard to make sure you focus and go deep so they can retain the learning. That was evident in your use of the article today, "James Brogden Bashed with Bricks" to get students immersed in the guiding question, "Should juvenile offenders get the same punishment as adults?"

So, the whole top half of this letter has focused on the teaching "moves" you made to structure learning...what I'd like to use our time this afternoon figuring out together is "What impact did it have on EACH student's learning?"

If we believe that EVERY student deserves a year of growth (some a lot more!), what are the implications for us? How can we be more intentional to ENSURE that growth, even when we have 150 students? What does it look like to work SMARTER instead of harder... just like you wrote in your context letter?

So, our guiding questions for our planning session together this afternoon will be, student by student:

- How did each student get smarter today?
- What do they need to get smarter tomorrow?

I'm excited to look at student work with you this afternoon and then tweak tomorrow's lesson based on what we figure out. We are in this together! Thanks so much for your incredible work with students this year. Lucky them. Lucky us.

Thanks,

-----

# THE IMPACT OF LEARNING LABS/WORKSHOP MODEL

## **Appendix I**

### **Interview Protocol**

**Topic One: Conferring With Students***Lead-Off Topic:*

- I noticed you did a lot of one-to-one conferencing with students. Tell me how conferring has helped you in the classroom.

*Covert Categories:*

- Teacher's understanding of the importance of knowing where each student is in their understanding of material.
- Teacher's view of effective differentiated instruction.
- Teacher's views on building relationships with students.
- Teacher's understanding of how to use conferring to drive instructional decisions.

*Follow-Up Topics:*

- Explain how talking with each student drives your instruction.
- Describe good ways for teachers to build relationships with students.
- Explain how you select the students with which to confer. Explain what you do if you do not get to everyone in the same class period.
- Describe how you monitor or track the time you spend with each student. Explain how you usually do it.
- I saw you collect the student work at the end of class. Tell me what kinds of data you collect and how you use the information. Tell me the kinds of information you get and if you find the information useful when working with students. Explain how you use these data.

**Topic Two: Lesson Design***Lead-Off Topic:*

- Tell me about the design and components of the workshop model.

*Covert Categories:*

- Teacher's knowledge of the workshop instructional model.
- Teacher's understanding of the model's components and their purposes.
- Teacher's understanding of classroom systems, structures, routines, and rituals.
- Teacher's opinion of what constitutes effective instruction.

*Follow-Up Topics:*

- Describe for me how this model changed your practice in the classroom.
- Discuss which component of the model you feel is the most crucial.
- Discuss which part of the model is the most challenging. Why?
- Can you think of any others on your team who have been influenced by the model?
- Talk about how often you implement the workshop model.

- Discuss any factors that inhibit you from implementing the model.
- Discuss what supports you have in place for implementing the model.

### **Topic Three: Instructional Coaching**

#### *Lead-Off Topic:*

- Describe revelations or validations that occurred in your practice, in your students, or in your teaching in general during your coaching session with Sam.

#### *Covert Categories:*

- Teacher's perceptions of the coach-coachee roles.
- Teacher's understanding of the process of reflection.
- Teacher's opinion of how coaching affects instructional practice

#### *Follow-Up Topics:*

- Tell me how the coaching session helped you with instructional decisions.
- Explain what aspect of the coaching session was the most challenging to experience.
- Explain what elements of coaching you could utilize with your own students.