

Copyright

By

Bethanie Pletcher

August 2013

WRITING TO LEARN:
DIALOGUE JOURNALS FOR MASTERY IN A READING ASSESSMENT COURSE

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

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Abstract

Teachers tend to use the word *assessment* interchangeably with *testing*. It is important that teacher educators share many forms of assessment with pre-service teachers so that they will be prepared to use them in their own classrooms. This study examines the use of the dialogue journal as both an assessment and learning tool in the literacy assessment course classroom.

In order to determine what students wrote about in their journal entries to learn course content, coding and narrative inquiry were used. The researcher analyzed journal entries from 64 students in two sections of a literacy assessment course. Four of those students participated in face-to-face interviews, and the researcher analyzed these transcripts as well. Journal entries and transcripts were coded, and excerpts were categorized by theme.

Analysis of the data revealed several findings. First, pre-service teachers told stories about their own experiences as students to make connections with course content and therefore internalize it. Second, pre-service teachers told stories about their observations in the field and linked these to course content as well. Lastly, students recorded that they valued the dialogue journal as both a learning and an assessment tool and used it as a platform to express themselves and reflect on course material and how it connected with their work with children.

Implications of this study are that teacher educators should encourage their students to explore their own stories, both personal and from field experiences, so that

they can connect these to course content. Instructors can use the dialogue journals to get to know their students as learners and as people. Also, instructors of literacy assessment courses should model aspects of the dialogue journal in order to show their students that, indeed, these are tools for both assessment and subsequent instruction.

Students left this course with the understanding that, just as they want to express themselves and be heard, their future students will want these things as well. Just as receiving individualized feedback from their instructor is important to them, the same is true for those whom they will teach. Also, they were given the opportunity, through writing, to retell and relive their stories for the purpose of learning course content, which might inspire them to do the same for their own students. They understand, at this point, that assessment is not identical to “testing,” that there are many ways to assess students’ learning, and journals are one of those.

The act of writing with my students has helped me understand that learners have to make solid connections between course content and both prior and concurrent experiences in classrooms. They considered their own experiences as students and their observations in classrooms in order to determine what kind of teachers they will be. They relived their stories on paper so that they can revisit and relive them and carry these experiences into their future classrooms.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Went to the corner
Walked in the store
Bought me some candy
Ain't got it no more
Ain't got it no more

Went to the beach
Played on the shore
Built me a sandhouse
Ain't got it no more
Ain't got it no more

Went to the kitchen
Lay down on the floor
Made me a poem
Still got it
Still got it

Things by Eloise Greenfield

Journaling and Blogging

I have many photographs that belonged to my grandmother. On the back of each one, she wrote a story, not only a name and date, but where the person belonged on the family tree and the context of the photo. Had she not taken the time to do this, each one would be just another old black and white photograph that I could have picked up in any antique shop. She wrote these things to help her remember her family as she aged; however, she also shared their stories for us, her grandchildren so that we could retell them to future generations. She understood what Eloise Greenfield writes about above, in *Things*: that when we write something down, we have a part of us on paper that is ours to keep and return to later.

A small notebook has been at my bedside since I was a teenager. There are periods of profuse, nightly writing, and there are probably even more dry spells. In these

notebooks, I talk to myself. I ramble on about my day, what I am thinking, how I am feeling. There is not time here for careful handwriting and perfect grammar and other conventions. This is a space where I can be myself. Every once in a while, I dig through a box of old journals and read some of the entries. This proves to be a sometimes daunting and sometimes hilarious activity.

Facebook has entered our world as yet another forum for storytelling and note taking. I found that my status updates were too long, so I recently began writing a blog. This blog, called “Side with the Seeds,” is where I tell stories about my family and myself. This blog is public, so I expect and want others to read it and write comments. My mother is usually the first one to see my posts, and since she is familiar with many of my anecdotes, she enjoys adding to them. Here, “living, telling, retelling, and reliving mark the qualities of a life” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 187). Going public with our writing is important and a little frightening. Mina Shaughnessy describes writing as “a line that moves haltingly across the page, exposing as it goes all that the writer doesn’t know”; it “puts us on the line and we don’t want to be there” (as cited in Calkins, 1994, p. 13).

In addition to these personal musings, I also keep a professional journal, where I write ideas, quotes, conference notes, and anything else related to the day-to-day business of being an educator. I wish I would have started keeping this kind of journal years ago when I began my teaching career. My notes serve as a record of my learning, and through writing these notes, I make connections with other experiences and learn from these. Having everything in one place and in chronological order is extremely helpful, because when I need to go back and look for something, I know almost exactly where to find it.

There are other kinds of journals I have kept, although at the time, that was not the label I assigned my writing. As a Reading Recovery© teacher, I wrote a short narrative about each of my four first grade students each week. These were what Clay (2005b) calls “predictions of progress,” very detailed notes about each student’s reading behaviors and what he or she needed to learn next and what the next teaching moves should be. As teachers, we are also taught the importance of taking “anecdotal notes” while we watch our students. We eventually understand the usefulness of this practice as it informs our teaching. Frank Serafini (2010) has traded in this term for “observational notes,” for he claims that using the word “anecdotal” reduces this critical task to something quite menial.

Realizing that we all have stories to tell, even when we are little, is paramount. As a teacher, I devoted a large portion of each school day to inviting my children to write. They may have been six years old, but they had something to say. They had experiences every day that, when they put them down on paper, transformed into narratives that became their memories. They were getting practice as writers as well as learning how to tell and remember their stories.

Background of the Study

“I chose a cookbook I found in the classroom library to write about in my journal. I chose it because sometimes I have to cook for my brothers and sisters at night when my parents aren’t at home.” I read these words six years ago in a fifth-grader’s reading response journal, a journal where this young lady recorded her thoughts and wonderings and shared them with me, her reading teacher. I carry these words with me. I tell this story when I teach my undergraduates about reading response dialogue journals and their

power for learning. A dialogue journal is a “written conversation in which a student and teacher communicate regularly (daily, weekly, etc., depending on the educational setting) over a semester, school year, or course” (Peyton, 1993).

This I know:

- 1) I never would have known this about this child if we did not write letters back and forth in dialogue journals.
- 2) She made a connection between reading and her life.
- 3) She made this connection by writing.
- 4) I learned more about her comprehension from a couple sentences in her journal entry than I would have had I given her comprehension questions to answer after she read.

As a doctoral student and teaching fellow at the university, I was invited to teach a course in the teacher education program, a course titled Literacy Assessment for Reading and Writing. In this course, students learn how to assess students’ reading behaviors and how to use this information to determine strategies and interventions to help lift their reading. As I began to sketch ideas for class sessions and peruse the syllabi from other instructors of this course, the word “assessment” glared like a beacon. How would I assess my pre-service teachers in a course revolving around assessment? Other instructors used a series of quizzes and tests, but this somehow seemed wrong to me. I kept asking myself, shouldn’t I use class time demonstrating reading assessments? Didn’t I want them to have this firsthand experience with authentic assessments so that they would see the value in them, remember them later, and want to use them with their future students? My answer was a resounding “yes!” I also wanted them to be engaged in the

course topics and not just learn them in order to regurgitate the information on a test. To most of my students, “[shifting] the emphasis from the transmission of a knowledge base to the exploration of practical professional knowledge” was new for them (Conle, 2000, p. 55). This was part of a master plan to help them realize that they, and all other pre- and in-service teachers, possess a wealth of knowledge about teaching and learning; it is my responsibility to help bring this knowledge forward.

My quest for an alternative assessment led me to the journal, more specifically the dialogue journal. Munby, Russell, and Martin (2001) attribute Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin with pioneering the use of journals in teacher education. I had used this medium before with fifth graders as they responded to texts. I wanted to know how they were processing what they learned during class sessions and be there to teach into any misconceptions and answer their questions. I wanted to hear their stories, so I decided to ask them not to simply write about what they learned and what they wanted to know, but also what connections they had, since class sessions might spark memories of “half-forgotten experiences” (Conle, 1996, p. 301). Inherent in these assignments was the possibility of providing them with an engaging activity (Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007).

The journal, as assigned in my class, was meant to be a platform for “writing [oneself] into academic discourse” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002, p. 425), a perfect place for students to fuse content with their beliefs and experiences. Here, they could also compare what they were learning with what they thought they already knew and, in turn, “question their knowledge” (Elbaz-Luwisch, p. 425) and construct new knowledge. In addition to these reasons for using journals, there is also the advantage that journals offer “concrete

evidence” of learning (Stevens & Cooper, 2009, p. 37). They become places of permanent data that both students and instructors can return to again and again (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, 1993).

I often tell my stories of teaching and learning as examples of course topics during class. By sharing these, I relive them for the purpose of instructing others. My hope was that they would open themselves up by penning their stories. It excited me to think that I could build on their stories, using them as a scaffold for learning course material. I know that building relationships is a crucial part of being an educator and that the dialogue journal could help facilitate this. I could both learn about them through their stories and respond to them in ways to help them think critically about literacy assessment. Conle (1996) talks about how she responded to her students’ journal entries with questions, not only to evoke an answer, but because she was interested in their stories. Students can tell when their instructor is genuinely eager to read their responses. The challenging bit is to ask questions that convey interest, but also extend their thinking (Conle, 1996; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002). Clandinin, et al. (1993) describe their work with dialogue journals in this way:

Whenever we engaged in responding to anyone else’s journal, we entered into a dialogue or conversation that enhanced our connection with the other person. We came to know other people’s thoughts as well as their feelings...we shared our ideas and our emotions, offering encouragement and support. Our responses come from the head and from the heart (p. 52).

This is how I wish to describe the use of journals with my students and how I would like them to describe the experience as well.

The first semester I taught the course, I implemented the dialogue journal as part of the required assignments and began my action research. I have, and will continue to, make revisions to the journaling assignments. Reading students' dialogue journal entries and end-of-semester course evaluations confirm the "need to trust the process" and take a few risks "in the interest of exploring a pedagogical idea to its limit" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002, p. 413). Three semesters later, they have evolved into useful tools for reflection and learning that my students enjoy.

For many, their journals are places to rewrite their notes, rehearsing the information they learned. Their voices show through more and more with each entry as course content resonates with them and reminds them of personal experiences. These entries seem to be the most effective ones. There are some students, as I suppose there always will be, who allow "academic voice" to prevail (Elbaz-Luwisch, p. 417). Their entries come across as more of an assignment than a place for learning through. York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore, and Montie (2001) define reflection as "an inquiry approach that involves a personal commitment to continuous learning and improvement" (p. 3). The ongoing challenge is to persuade pre-service teachers that journaling is a useful activity, as "inquiry is [often] low on their list of priorities" (Conle, 2000, p. 55).

I continue to be captivated by students' stories. I encourage them to reflect on their readerly lives as youngsters, because as future teachers, they will need to empathize with the children they teach by carrying these stories with them. Again, here are a few things I never would have known about my students without the use of dialogue journals.

Take notice of how candid these students are as they tell their stories. Given the time and platform to write elicits this kind of thinking.

One of the read alouds that sticks out in my mind is when my teacher read Where the Red Fern Grows. To this day I still cry when I read this book. As my fourth grade teacher read the book the story came to life in my mind. I have always enjoyed reading and I am grateful to those teachers who encouraged that love of reading through read alouds.

Growing up, I truly never enjoyed reading for multiple reasons, but I think my main issue was I never really comprehended what I was reading. I would always have to reread paragraphs multiple times just to try and understand what I read. I believe that is why I never read books in my spare time and preferred other activities like games and television.

Teachers were traditional and strict and had monotone voices. We barely read storybooks. The teachers made us discuss and break down the stories in graphic organizers or worksheets. I started to enjoy reading books by middle school and high school when my English teachers read aloud to us.

Myself as a person can read anything and be able to most likely understand what is going in the story, but the way I learned how to do that was through making connections in my own life to what is happening in what I just read.

Imagine how powerful these stories will come to be as these students begin to teach children. They will retell them and live them again in novel ways.

Statement of the Problem

Here, a pre-service teacher writes on her feelings about one of her teacher education courses:

One thing that I absolutely admire about you [the instructor] is that you practice what you preach. Too many professors in the...program emphasize student engagement yet they do absolutely nothing but stand there and lecture all day. I like that you gave us a chance to create and play with activities that you want us to implement for our own students.

When practicing teachers talk about their teacher preparation programs, a common theme emerges. They often claim their university programs did not prepare them for what they were to encounter in real-life classrooms. In his book *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Schön states, “what aspiring practitioners need most to learn, professional schools seem least able to teach” (1987, p. 8). He goes on to say that many teacher educators “assume that academic research yields useful professional knowledge” that will ready students for their teaching careers (p. 9). As Clandinin, et al. discuss the beginnings of narrative inquiry, they muse how they “found the language of teacher education...uncomfortable...with its talk of standards, percentages, skills, [and] strategies” (1993, p. 3). Indeed, what may still be missing are the stories of actual children and teachers working alongside one another in actual schools.

Presenting relevant and useful research is paramount in educating tomorrow’s teacher; however, the telling needs to take a backseat to the showing. As the context of this study is a literacy assessment course for reading and writing, the examples used are

related to measures of assessment. The most often reported and discussed current method of reading assessment in many of our schools across the United States takes the form of formal testing. These tests, while useful for the easy reporting of data, have as their core weakness that they do not convey to teachers what students do well and what to teach next. This concept is frequently the topic of discussion in many reading education courses offered at the university. Then, when it is time to assess what pre-service teachers learned, the instructor often administers a test. Similar to what occurs in K-12 schools, students study, take the test, and then forget most of the material, rather than internalizing it for practical use later as they enter real classrooms. Also, instructors collect very little data regarding what their students have learned, making it difficult to determine what to teach next, what to reteach, and what strategies to use.

Read the quote again at the beginning of this section. Pre-service teachers want experience with effective reading assessment practices. They want to see strategies in action not only to enhance their understanding of course material, but also to envision their use in their future classrooms. This is when it is time for course instructors to demonstrate. The old adage, “do as I say and not as I do” becomes “do as I say *and* as I do.” Our students appreciate this. In related studies, pre-service teachers reacted positively to instructor modeling of assessments, noting that this helped them learn how to use them (Allen & Flippo, 2002; Rogers & Riedel, 1999). Other experts in the field of assessment stress the need for instructors in teacher preparation programs to provide students with firsthand experiences (Bachor & Baer, 2003; Brew, Riley, & Walta, 2009; Dunlap, 2006; Graham, 2005; Stiggins, 1995; Stiggins, 1999; Taylor & Nolen, 1996; Volante & Fazio, 2007).

Here is one student's comment about using a dialogue journal as a learning tool in a teacher education course on literacy assessment.

So far this semester, I feel that completing these dialogue diary entries has helped me in my overall understanding of the information and knowledge presented throughout this course and has helped me to reflect on these various skills and concepts. I feel that these entries help me remember the information that was presented in each class session and I look forward to completing the remainder of these dialogue diaries.

There are a handful of studies that address the use of dialogue journals with pre-service teachers. The theme running through most of them is how important they are as a venue for reflection and a tool for understanding. However, in many cases “the traditional class format, which encourages transmission of knowledge rather than transaction is more familiar and comfortable” (Good & Whang, 2002, p. 262) for instructors, so they choose exams over journals. Dunlap states that such traditional assessments make it difficult for instructors to measure cognitive changes associated with pre-service teachers' experiences (2006). Before teacher educators can invest in this shift in paradigm, they first have to recognize that pre-service teachers have stories to tell.

While some researchers have approached the study of students' work with journals, there is a lack of pre-service teachers' discussions about how writing to an instructor in a *dialogue* journal helps them learn about teaching.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose for this study is to update and fill in the gaps in research related to how pre-service teachers enrolled in a teacher education course in literacy assessment demonstrate their internalization of course content through the writing of dialogue journal entries.

In Elbaz-Luwisch's view, teachers are often not afforded opportunities to express themselves (2002). This study also has its purpose to help emerging teachers discover their voices through the stories they write. Even pre-service teachers have school-related experiences to talk about, whether they are their own or those they observe in classrooms during field experiences. This "personal practical knowledge" can be brought forth to assist them in learning course material (Clandinin, et al. 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). These same stories may also help course instructors understand their students better and give them insight as to what and how they need to teach.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do students use stories about their experiences as students to connect to course content to understand the material presented about literacy assessment?
2. How do students use stories about their experiences in classrooms during field experiences to connect to course content and understand the material presented about literacy assessment?
3. Do pre-service teachers value the dialogue journal process? In what ways?

Significance of the Study

In order for pre-service teachers to understand the importance of really listening to their students' narratives, they must have firsthand exposure to the process. Dialogue journals "give students a voice by allowing them to describe – in their own words – the changes they experience and the accomplishments they achieve during learning experiences" (Dunlap, 2006, p. 26). Camicia (2011), Henry (2005), Kim (2011), and Mansor, Shafie, Maesin, Nayan, and Osman (2011) each write about how the act of writing informally to a reader (also a listener) increases students' self-confidence, motivation, and ability to express themselves. Telling stories through written narrative gives students chances to express themselves in ways usually not available to them in the traditional classroom. Just as Conle noticed with her students in 1996, a number of my students express in their end-of-semester journal entries how surprised they are when they return to their first entries. They notice how much they have learned and comment on how little they thought they knew about literacy assessment. They also frequently discuss how something in a class session reminded them of a story from their own lives or an example of a teaching strategy they had witnessed in a real classroom field experience. Conle's metaphor to describe this is "resonance," a process in which "a story reverberates within us and calls forth another in an echo-like fashion, [and] we pull that remembered story out of a previous context and place it into a new one" (p. 301). This is exactly what I want my student to do: connect a part of themselves to the course so that they it will be easier to call up the information later when needed.

Zulich, Bean, and Herrick (1992) discuss the "need [for pre-service teachers] to uncover personal biography" (p. 357) and review how these stories relate to their growth

into teachers. This study builds on narrative inquiry through writing, demonstrating how something so simple to implement in a teacher education course can have positive effects on both students and instructors alike. It is the hope of the primary researcher of this study that college faculty who teach our pre-service teachers will encourage them to tell their stories through writing in order to capture what their students are learning in their courses. Teacher educators may even accomplish something unexpected when reading and responding to dialogue journal entries: a study into themselves (Clandinin, et al., 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Imagine the “bedside manners” of teachers we could help to develop by engaging in real conversation and storytelling and “touching emotions and tacit practical knowledge” (Conle, 1996, p. 321).

Many new teachers enter the field armed with strategies and techniques. They yearn to put these into practice in their own classrooms. Soon, however, their voices are trampled by the demands of stakeholders looking for quantifiable evidence of teaching. My goal is to encourage teacher educators to grow teachers who develop such a strong voice in their university programs that they continue to grow as professionals, be heard, and encourage their youngsters to do the same. By seeing that their stories are important enough for instructors to listen to at the university, they may carry this with them into their teaching lives and relive them for the purpose of teaching children.

Overview of the Methodology

Dialogue journal entries written by students enrolled in a literacy assessment course for pre-service teachers at a large university during the Fall 2012 semester were collected and are archival in nature. Approximately 120 entries will be analyzed and coded for information related to the research questions. Based on categories that will be

created and themes that emerge from this process, interview questions will be developed. Four students will be conveniently chosen from the larger sample to participate in semi-structured interviews. The interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded using codes developed from the dialogue journal entries. Narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) will be used as well to analyze students' stories and to retell their stories in relation to learning course content in the final write-up of the research.

Summary

Once the research is complete, there will be evidence that links pre-service teachers' stories about themselves as readers to their learning about how to teach children to be readers as well as their thoughts on how writing dialogue journal entries facilitates this. Also, course instructors in the field of teacher education will understand how to use dialogue journals as an assessment tool.

This chapter has outlined the background and purpose of this study, as well as the research questions and how the study of pre-service teachers' narratives, as written in their journals, will add to the field of teacher education. An overview of methodology, delimitations of the study, and the definitions of key terms have also been presented here.

The subsequent chapters provide detailed information regarding this study. Chapter Two is a review of the literature as it relates to pre-service teachers' assessment literacy and dialogue journal practices. The term "assessment literacy" refers to the "ability to understand the different purposes and types of assessment in order to select the most appropriate type of assessment to meet a specific purpose" (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006, p. 53). Teachers need to be familiar with how to efficiently assess students' learning and effectively apply this information to subsequent lessons.

The methodology implemented to carry out the study is presented in Chapter Three. Chapter Four consists of an analysis of the dialogue journal entries and interview transcripts, and Chapter Five concludes the written report with a synthesis of findings and in what ways implementation might occur.

CHAPTER TWO – REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to understand how pre-service teachers enrolled in a teacher education course in literacy assessment use dialogue journals to demonstrate their internalization of course content and their perceptions of using dialogue journals for this purpose. This chapter provides an overview of the existing literature related to common assessments administered in schools, recommendations for teaching an assessment course, and how the use of dialogue journals might enhance instruction.

At the heart of assessment is a basic tenet that is often missed: it is about knowing our students. Unfortunately, many teachers and students alike equate assessment with testing (Bliem & Davinroy, 1997; Calkins, 1994), rather than seeing it as an integral part of the learning process. Without it, teachers teach blindly. With too much of it, it becomes a “major subject” (Graves, 2002).

In order to place teachers who understand this into school buildings, Siegel and Wissehr (2011) insist that pre-service teachers need exposure to all facets of classroom assessment so they will be “equipped with the skills, beliefs, knowledge, and confidence” of assessment (p. 389). Others agree that knowledge of assessment practices should be a mandatory prerequisite for earning a teaching certificate (Heritage, 2007; Herrington, Herrington, & Glazer, 2002).

The literature outlined in this review supports these statements overall, naming teachers as key players in assessment development and emphasizing alternative forms of assessment.

Section One of this literature review provides a conceptual framework for the study. Section Two lists types of classroom assessment, and Section Three summarizes

findings regarding pre-service teachers' general assessment literacy and beliefs about assessment. In Section Four, recommendations for improving teacher candidates' assessment literacy are presented. Section five details one of the recommendations for the teaching and learning of assessment practices (and an assessment method itself), the implementation of dialogue journaling.

Conceptual Framework – Using Narrative to Scaffold Reflection

Humans have told stories for a long time, whether through drawings or spoken and written words. Narrative inquiry is the “study of the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) through stories. Narratives shared by teachers can be used as a lens into their beliefs and insights. Jalongo and Isenberg assert writing narratives about teaching “contributes to the construction of knowledge” (p. 73) and promotes reflection. Of course, a story has to be authentic in order to be useful. The participants, in this case teacher candidates, are given voices.

Journal writing is all about reflection. Schön (1987) refers to *reflection-on-action*, which is the process of thinking back on our actions. The journal is a “reflection-on-action zone...where professionals can develop the ability to identify tacit, unspoken knowledge that is not typically taught” (Stevens & Cooper, 2009, p. 27). Adding an interactive dimension to the journal creates a low-risk environment, one where the student can learn by doing with the support of an instructor.

Just as readers bring prior knowledge to a text, teacher candidates bring with them experiences in classrooms, as both students and observers. *Schemata* are “like little containers into which we deposit the particular traces of particular experiences as well as the ‘ideas’ that derive from those experiences” (Pearson, 2010, p. 13). Learning takes

place when the learner connects the known to the new. Scaffolds are put in place to help learners achieve this. Vygotsky described this as the *zone of proximal development*, or “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under...guidance” (1978, p. 33).

Working at this “cutting edge of learning” (Clay, 1991, p. 65), the teacher decides what the student understands. In relation to journal writing, Boud discusses how “learning is always grounded in prior experience” and “links must be made” between the new and the known if true learning is to occur (2001, p. 11). He or she can then determine the next steps and with “instructions [and] advice...describe some feature of [teaching]” (Schön, 1987, p. 100).

Types of Classroom Assessment

Assessment of learning.

Two types of classroom assessment exist: *assessment of learning* and *assessment for learning*. Although they may seem similar, they embody two very different approaches to measure and respond to student learning. These are important to include here for several reasons: teachers are expected to use both types, educators tend to favor one over another, and one type is used frequently, perhaps too frequently, in public schools in the United States (Serafini, 2010).

Assessment of learning is usually likened to *summative assessment*, what Johnston and Costello describe as “backward-looking assessments...the tests we most commonly think of that summarize or judge performance” (2005, p. 259). These assessments take place after teaching and learning has occurred and are meant to reduce

what students have learned to one score or grade (Bliem & Davinroy, 1997; Heritage, 2007). Heritage asserts that assessment of learning “covers too long a period of instruction and provides too little detail for effective use in ongoing instructional planning” (2007, p. 140). Summative assessments are completed outside of learning, thus taking time away from instruction (Heritage).

Standardized testing is a common form of summative assessment of learning in public schools in the United States, and educators and stakeholders rely on this form of testing and its easily quantifiable results for ranking schools (Frey & Schmitt, 2010; Heritage, 2007; VanLeirsburg & Johns, 1991). These high stakes tests are used to indicate “how much students have learned, if standards are being met, and if teachers have done their jobs” (Stiggins, 2002, p. 759). Although these characteristics may seem appropriate, Stiggins reminds educators “student achievement suffers because these once-a-year tests are incapable of providing teachers with the moment-to-moment and day-to-day information about student achievement that they need to make crucial instructional decisions” (Stiggins, p. 759). Clay states “when we measure the outcomes of teaching with tests, the instruction of the learners is already over” (2005a, p. 5); once the tests are administered, it is too late to use the results to tailor instruction.

Assessment for learning.

Assessment for learning is often synonymous with *formative assessment* in the literature and is defined by Heritage as “a systematic process to continuously gather evidence about learning” (2007, p. 141) and by Johnston and Costello as “forward-looking assessment that occurs in the process of learning” (2005, p. 259). The main purpose of formative assessment is to continually drive instruction. These assessments

are usually not used to assign grades to students. Teachers are encouraged to embed this type of assessment into the school day (Bliem & Davinroy, 1997; Heritage), rather than disrupt teaching and learning with the traditional test-teach-test method. It should be a seamless way of measuring what students know; so seamless, in fact, that students may not know they are actually being assessed (Routman, 2003). This is assessment “on-the-fly” (Heritage, p. 141) and includes tasks that yield immediately useful results (Clay, 2005a; Heritage; Stiggins, 2002). Teachers must become masters in the art of quickly responding to students’ literacy behaviors and providing meaningful feedback (Frey & Schmitt, 2007; Johnston & Costello; Stiggins) that lifts their learning. It is crucial that teachers rely on this type of classroom assessment to inform subsequent instruction (Stiggins) and play the role of “active assessors” (Volante & Fazio, 2007, p.751). Journal writing can be utilized as not only a learning tool, but also an effective assessment instrument. Teachers read students’ entries to ascertain what and how they are learning and can make decisions regarding subsequent teaching moves.

Students should be active participants in assessment for learning as well (Heritage, 2007; Stiggins, 2002). Stiggins mentions that students are to assess their own learning. Frey and Schmitt (2007) add to this idea by stating that this is “most effectively done when students use the data to adjust their own learning behaviors” (p. 415). This is where the real power of assessment for learning lies: it puts students at the wheel of learning.

What might assessment of and for learning look like in the classroom?

Ideally, a teacher selects the assessment that matches the learning objective(s) and that is the most efficient to implement. The examples to follow can be categorized under

either assessment of learning or assessment for learning, depending on how and when they are used, as discussed previously. It is important to remember: “improving performance on summative assessments requires improving formative assessments” (Johnston & Costello, 2005, p. 262). Therefore, there should be a balance in using both types.

Paper-and-pencil tests and quizzes are widely used in classrooms at all grade levels (Stiggins, 1991). These may include multiple choice, true/false, matching, fill-in-the-blank, and essay items. *Performance assessment* (Brew, et al., 2009) is a frequently used method. Students create a product in response to a real-world problem (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006). Not to be underrated is direct personal communication with students as a way to measure learning (Stiggins, 1995), an example of which is conducting individual informal reading conferences (Routman, 2003). Learning journals can be implemented in all subject areas, as students can write about what they are learning in all content areas.

The aforementioned assessment types can work harmoniously. New Zealand implemented a system that utilizes several methods of assessment to gauge student learning. Students engage in one-to-one interviews and conferences with the teacher, work together on authentic literacy tasks in groups, and complete independent performance and paper-and-pencil tasks (Guskey, Smith, Smith, Crooks, & Flockton, 2006). Stowell & Tierney call these assessment practices ones that are “grounded in real work” (1995, p. 81). Interesting to note is that students are asked about their experiences with the assessments, suggesting New Zealand places importance on students’ enjoyment of displaying their knowledge (Guskey, et al.). This is another descriptor of performance assessment: it engages students.

Regardless of the assessment type chosen, Calkins (1994) suggests asking two questions: “How can [the teacher] collect information that will really matter to [him/her] and to the child?” and “What will [the teacher] do with this information?” (p. 318).

Pre-service Teachers’ Assessment Literacy and Beliefs about Assessment

Much of the research points to the lack of *assessment literacy* that pre-service and in-service teachers possess. Assessment literacy is the “ability to understand the different purposes and types of assessment in order to select the most appropriate type of assessment to meet a specific purpose” (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006, p. 53). Stiggins (1991) discusses the insufficient knowledge of assessment basics. Maclellan (2004) recognizes some teachers may have procedural skills in assessment implementation, but are unable to rationalize their practices. Teachers are infamous for “rely[ing] heavily on mental recordkeeping to store and retrieve information on student performance” (Stiggins, 1985, p. 281), an undependable practice for reporting progress and improving instruction. Student teachers often use assessment methods they see other teachers use or that were used with them as students (Stiggins) and therefore may hesitate to try others (Taylor & Nolen, 1996).

Teachers’ general assessment literacy.

Studies of pre-service and in-service teachers’ general knowledge relating to assessment reveal some areas of strength. Practicing teachers possess a basic understanding of assessment as a means to test students on what they have already learned and make decisions about future instruction, as noted by both Boothroyd, McMorris, and Pruzek (1992) and Graham (2005). Teachers have concerns about “doing [assessment] right” (Bliem & Davinroy, 1997, p. 13) and identifying a specific area to

assess. After analyzing pre-service teachers' written lesson plans, Campbell and Evans (2000) found that these teachers knew to include learning objectives and possible assessment methods as components in their plans. Concerning alternative assessment methods, teachers acknowledge there are many from which to choose (Graham); however, there may be an imbalance in the actual use of these techniques (Volante & Fazio, 2007). More experienced teachers and teachers of elementary aged children tend to use alternative methods of assessment more frequently than their counterparts (Bol, Stephenson, O'Connell, & Nunnery, 1998).

Some studies reveal specific strengths and weaknesses of both pre-service and practicing teachers in regards to assessment. After surveying 67 pre-service teachers, Mertler (2005) found that they were most familiar with how to choose appropriate assessment methods for students. Other areas in which teachers excel are writing objectives, identifying types of test items, and writing test items (Boothroyd, et al., 1992). In Maclellan's report (2004), novice teachers indicated that tests can be norm- or criterion-referenced and that they must be reliable and valid; however, these same teachers did not elaborate on these general statements.

Regarding weaknesses in the understanding of and use of assessment techniques, there is some agreement that, overall, teachers' foundational knowledge of assessment is limited (Boothroyd, et al., 1992; Daniel & King, 1998; Maclellan, 2004) and many misunderstand the concept of assessment, equating the term to testing (Graham, 2005). One study noted, more specifically, that one-third of the participating teachers did not follow appropriate assessment procedures when using a performance assessment; instead, they made an evaluation based on only one observation and failed to inform students of

scoring procedures in advance (Stiggins, 1985). In other studies, researchers report that pre-service teachers are finishing their reading coursework with only a “surface level” of assessment practices in reading instruction (Luttenegger, 2009, p. 299). They have not grasped the importance of assessing students prior to teaching (Graham) or that assessment methods must be appropriate for their students as well as ethical (Bonner & Chen, 2009). In studies of instructional units written by pre-service teachers, there is evidence that many did not include the kinds of assessment that could be used effectively to evaluate student learning (Campbell & Evans, 2000; Siegel & Wissehr, 2011). Pre-service teachers struggle to “establish consistent scoring methods,” according to Campbell and Evans (2000, p. 354), as well as design goals and rubrics (Graham). Establishing validity in assessment methods also proves difficult, as evidenced in Campbell and Evans (2000) and Graham. Two areas of assessment are issues for both pre- and in-service teachers: grading student work (Graham; Mertler, 2005; Plake, 1993) and communicating test results to external audiences (Plake; Rogers & Riedel, 1999)

Assessment literacy: The purposes of assessment according to teachers.

In Siegel and Wissehr’s (2011) study, pre-service teachers gave the following reasons for assessing students: to uncover students’ misconceptions about topics, to check for general understanding, and to discover students’ prior knowledge about topics before teaching. The same pre-service teachers involved in this study had the understanding that assessment should not only help the teacher learn, but also help the students learn.

Although some teachers may view instruction and assessment as “discreet notions” (Campbell & Evans, 2000, p. 354), Popham (2011) and Maclellan (2004) recognize that assessments used in the classroom can become “instruction-enhancing

tools” (Popham, p. 271). Data from 220 teaching certification students’ surveys suggest that they place a high value on assessment practices implemented to inform instruction (Winterbottom, Brindley, Taber, Fisher, Finney, & Riga, 2008). In another study (Duffy & Atkinson, 2001), 82% of 22 pre-service teachers demonstrated in their written assignments that using assessment to drive the instruction of struggling readers is crucial. Campbell and Evans (2000), Luttenegger (2009), Mayor (2005), McNair, Bhargava, Adams, Edgerton, and Kypros (2003), however, each found teachers were able to explain and use assessments; but did not have a clear understanding of how to use the assessments to their full potential and how results “translate into instruction decision-making” (Mayor, p. 167). The latter studies mentioned are causes for concern and point to the need for teacher candidates to not only receive explicit instruction in how to administer assessments, but also in what to do with the results.

Origins of teachers’ assessment literacy and self-efficacy.

Few studies focus on the origins of pre- and in-service teachers’ knowledge of assessment practices. Novice teacher participants in a study conducted by Maclellan (2004) acknowledged that their own experiences as students impacted their philosophy of assessment. In another study (Siegel & Wissehr, 2011), pre-service teachers indicated in journal entries that they learned about assessment from university course instruction and observations in the field. Duffy and Atkinson (2001) found some teachers ignored research and theory taught in their courses when these clashed with what they saw in actual classrooms during field experiences. In one survey, most of the 397 practicing teachers chose a trial-and-error approach as the factor that most affected their knowledge of assessment in the classroom (Wise, Lukin, & Roos, 1991).

Many teachers tend to use assessment methods with which they are comfortable, methods they perceive they are skilled to use (Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003). Some elementary teachers, as reported in McMillan, Myran, and Workman's (2002) study, are "reliant on assessments that are designed by publishers" (p. 212), thereby allowing textbooks to drive instruction. Even though these methods may be comfortable, many teachers express concern about the quality of these assessments and how they support instruction (Stiggins, 1985). These feelings about adequacy in practicing assessment develop during the teacher preparation years. Pre-service teachers identify the course on classroom assessment as one of the places they build confidence in that area (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010). DeLuca and Klinger's survey, which gauged 228 teacher candidates' confidence levels in assessment knowledge, showed they were most sure of their skills in distinguishing between assessment and evaluation, using alternative assessments, and understanding the purposes of assessment. This conflicts somewhat with Volante and Fazio's study of 69 pre-service teachers (2007), which revealed that their self-efficacy ratings were "relatively low" during their teacher certification program.

Assessment tools used by teachers.

In-service teachers report the use of a variety of assessment tools. As is to be expected, classroom teachers often use their own objective tests more than other methods (Stiggins, 1985). Also worth noting is that the majority of these tests are administered in the traditional paper-and-pencil format (Frey & Schmitt, 2010). There are several studies suggesting performance tasks are used often to assess students (Bol, et al., 1998; Frey & Schmitt, 2010; Stiggins; Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003).

Bliem and Davinroy (1997) conducted an in-depth study of one school's implementation of instruction-embedded assessment tasks, mainly *running records* and children's written summaries of texts. A running record is "a tool for coding, scoring, and analyzing a child's precise reading behaviors" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 89). Some research suggests that teachers who hold a view of teaching in which students are highly involved in making meaning are more likely to use ongoing, rather than scheduled, assessments (Rueda & Garcia, 1996). Running records are meant to be used to understand children's reading behaviors; however, once the label "assessment" was attached to these, the teachers wanted to use them primarily for objective scoring of students' reading accuracy rates (Bliem & Davinroy). Something similar occurred with the implementation of summary writing. Originally, the summaries were to be used as an embedded assessment tool to gauge students' reading comprehension and help teach them the qualities of a well-written summary. Again, teachers soon attached the word "assessment" to the summary writing and wanted to use rubrics to create a more formal reading assessment. Some, in their desire to help their students perform well, started to teach to the test, providing more direct instruction on the topic.

There is evidence that teachers use other forms of informal assessment. Bliem and Davinroy (1997) note that teachers engage in one-on-one *reading conferences* with students; however, they are not likely to categorize these conversations as assessments. During a reading conference, the teacher and student sit side-by-side and engage in authentic conversation devoted to enjoying and understanding a text (Boushey & Moser, 2006; Routman, 2003). Other reported informal measures are *anecdotal notes*, which a teacher uses to "hone...powers of observation and make their understandings about

students more meaningful and married to subsequent instruction” (Serafini, 2010, p. 21), portfolio entries (Rueda & Garcia, 1996), checklists, and narratives about student work (Rogers & Riedel, 1999). There is also evidence of teachers encouraging more involvement on behalf of students in the assessment process (Rueda & Garcia; Winterbottom, et al., 2008).

How and when teachers use assessment of and for learning.

Concerning teachers’ use of summative (assessment of learning) and formative (assessment for learning), the literature speaks to teachers’ implementation of both; however, there seems to be an emphasis on assessment of learning in the schools. For both pre-service and in-service teachers alike, these two types of assessment offer challenges when used together because of their differences in execution and instructional application of results as discussed here in the first section. Winterbottom, et al. assert teachers “negotiate a tension between adopting potentially conflicting practices of assessment for learning and assessment of learning” (2008, p. 205).

Both DeLuca and Klinger (2010) and Volante and Fazio (2007) found that teacher candidates are more confident when using summative assessment tasks than when using formative assessment tasks and are apt to assess students for traditional purposes. McNair, et al. (2003) made similar discoveries after interviewing 157 practicing teachers. These teachers used paper-and-pencil tests frequently, mainly for summative purposes. They also listed observation as a favorite strategy for gaining knowledge of their students; however, 76% of them used this strategy, again, for summative reasons, rather than using the information to immediately drive instruction. Other research supports the

findings that few classroom tests are used as formative assessments; however this is not common (Frey & Schmitt, 2010).

Even if teachers used summative assessment more often, they tended to place more importance on formative assessment (MacLellan, 2004). In another study, researchers examined work samples of 150 student teachers and noted that when formative assessment was used, it was mostly in the form of listening to student talk and observing student behavior (Kohler, Henning, & Usma-Wilches, 2008). Graham (2005) writes that student teachers gained knowledge of how to adjust their lesson plans based on assessment for learning.

Teachers' beliefs about assessment.

Understanding the beliefs of pre-service and in-service teachers is vital because their assessment practices are influenced by those beliefs and “act as a lens through which they view their practices” (Bliem & Davinroy, 1997, p. 3). Their assessment practices, in turn, “influence student learning” (Lenski, Wham, & Griffey, 1998, p. 218). Campbell and Evans (2000) confirm this, calling the assessment and evaluation of student learning “a major component of teaching responsibilities” (p. 354). Helping teachers develop awareness of their beliefs may shed light on the differences between the assessment practices they value and the ones they actually implement in their classrooms. They may find the two are inconsistent with one another (Lenski, et al.).

Herrington, et al. state “a complex mix of influences and environmental factors impact...teachers' use of assessment strategies in their beginning teaching” (2002, p. 7). This would make sense, as new teachers often employ techniques with which they have experience, both as students and teachers (Bliem & Davinroy, 1997; Graham, 2005).

Some pre-service teachers and new teachers often witness traditional assessment practices during their field experiences that reaffirm what they did as youngsters (Herrington, et al.). This can be problematic if these reaffirmations result in the continued use of assessment techniques that do not yield significant information about students' learning.

There are methods available for learning about teachers' beliefs regarding literacy assessment and how this relates to classroom practice. These are beneficial for teacher educators and pre-service and practicing teachers alike. The Literacy Orientation Survey (Lenski, et al., 1998) invites teachers to reflect on the origins of their beliefs. Its creators emphasize the way a teacher assesses his or her students should match his or her beliefs about learning. Also, writing journal entries, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, makes students "aware of connections and/or conflicts in their construction of knowledge from theory, practice, and personal [beliefs]" (Francis, 1995, p. 231). In other words, this practice helps them mesh these aspects in order to be more effective in their teaching.

Recommendations for Developing Pre-service Teachers' Assessment Literacy

When assessment is "given the emphasis that its role in teaching demands" (Wise, et al., 1991, p. 37) in teacher preparation programs, it sometimes may not be addressed in the most effective manner. Wise's study found that student teachers usually receive training that is unrelated to what their daily teaching will entail; instead their training focuses on standardized testing. Taylor and Nolen (1996) report assessment concepts are sometimes taught in a one- or two-week unit as part of another course. Even if an entire course is dedicated to the subject, it is "hard-pressed [for pre-service teachers] to

overcome 16 to 20 years of being inappropriately assessed” (Taylor & Nolen, p. 86). It is no wonder that teachers will choose not to take a course on assessment when given the choice (Stiggins, 1985).

Before teacher educators can design the content of an assessment course and work toward producing assessment-literate teachers, they first need to investigate and refine what it means to be literate in this area. Siegel & Wissehr (2011) define assessment literacy as “knowing how to assess student learning” as well as understanding the “purpose[s] for assessing student learning” (p. 372). This definition may oversimplify a complex undertaking; however, it is succinct and carries with it the goals of understanding where students are in their learning and how to use a variety of assessments to move them forward. Worthy of noting is the Assessment Literacy Inventory (ALI), created to measure teachers’ “knowledge of and abilities to apply assessment concepts and techniques to inform decision-making and guide practice” (Mertler & Campbell, 2005, p. 16). Graham (2005) and Mertler and Campbell agree that assessment should be a prominent piece of a teacher’s professional development. ALI results can be used to inform schools of areas where faculty may need professional development, as well as in teacher education programs for the same reason.

Several authors have noted the central role teacher education coursework plays in teachers’ knowledge of measurement (Heritage, 2007; Popham, 2011; Shepard, 2004; Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003). Many teacher candidates seem “predisposed to rely on traditional approaches they had likely been exposed to as students themselves” (Volante & Fazio, 2007, p. 761). This is common because often their own experiences as test-

takers are often the most prominent memories of measurement they have upon entering college.

In order to help teachers value meaningful assessment of their students, a good portion of a course in this area should focus on how to embed assessment practices into daily classroom instruction (Duffy & Atkinson, 2001; McMillan, et al., 2002). It is imperative that pre-service teachers gain the understanding that uniting instruction and assessment, rather than holding them as separate entities, may help them use assessment to drive instruction in their future classrooms (Bliem & Davinroy, 1997). Although formal testing separate from instruction is important, teachers spend more time assessing their students throughout each day (Johnston & Costello, 2005, p. 261; Mayor, 2005; Stiggins, 1985). Measurement training that does not include sufficient training in this area “leave[s] teachers ill-equipped” to engage in informal assessment methods (Stiggins, p. 272).

In the past, assessment courses have had as their foundation a “very narrow definition of assessment – i.e., large-scale, standardized, paper-and-pencil test formats” (Stiggins, 1991, p. 536) and have neglected providing training that exceeds mere grade reporting (Stiggins). In addition to these traditional methods, Stiggins, (1995) emphasizes teaching pre-service teachers how to choose assessment methods that match their purposes and how to combine alternative and traditional assessments in the teaching of literacy (Rogers & Riedel, 1999). These methods should include teacher-made tests (Frey & Schmitt, 2010), how to draw inferences from student responses (Heritage, 2007), and performance measures. Regardless of the assessment method used, teachers need training in how to critically examine their quality (McMillan, et al., 2002).

Related more specifically to reading instruction, Johnston and Costello (2005) stress using leveled books to assess students' reading. They also ask the million-dollar question related to literacy assessment: Is our focus as teacher educators to teach pre-service teachers to be able to discuss a child's "literate development...in terms of ...interests and engagements, what [they] have accomplished, how [they] approach literate activities" or " what [they] are unable to do [and their] normative standing?" (p. 260). Inviting students to write in reading response journals is another effective method of informally measuring student comprehension (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

Method of delivering course material.

Authors of the studies mentioned in this section present a strong case for the explicit teaching of assessment practices to teachers. Specific courses with a focus of "direct assessment education" (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010, p. 435) should begin sooner rather than later (Heritage, 2007; Stiggins, 1985; Volante & Fazio, 2007) because future teachers need to experience their first taste of assessment before entering the field.

Teacher educators often encounter the issue of pre-service teachers' lack of classroom experience (Lukin, Bandalos, Eckhout, & Mickelson, 2004; Zhang and Burry-Stock, 2003). The challenge is how to provide assessment training and make provisions for teacher candidates to apply what they are learning when assessment courses are usually taught separately from field experiences and student teaching (Taylor & Nolen, 1996). While many university programs now require pre-service teachers to participate in various field experiences throughout the education degree program, it is usually a situation where they are observing many teachers for abbreviated periods—certainly not enough time for assessment practice. Lukin, et al. suggest pairing pre-service teachers

with practicing teachers early on in the teacher development program, thus providing the assessment training simultaneously. There is a caveat to keep in mind here; classroom placements may not offer the kinds of assessment practices the university programs are encouraging (Luttenegger, 2009).

Teacher candidates bring with them prior experiences with different forms of assessment and evaluation, usually in the traditional forms of testing. In order to ensure that they do not “rely merely on common-sense knowledge” (Maclellan, 2004, p. 533), it is prudent that they read a sizable amount of texts written about assessment. This practice also allows them to make meaningful connections to what they are learning in their coursework and what they are seeing in classrooms during field observations (Maclellan). Popham (2011), in fact, calls for an “honest-to-goodness assessment course in which the professor relies on a legitimate assessment textbook” (p. 272). The act of reading enables pre-service teachers to pull together, solidify, and begin to ingrain practices they are seeing and discussing.

Perhaps the most beneficial practice that may be the least implemented in assessment courses is real-life experience with a variety of assessment methods. In a study of undergraduates, Allen and Flippo (2002) reported students commented positively on instructor modeling of actual assessments and regarded this as an effective way to learn alternative methods. Rogers and Riedel (1999) also relate that instructor modeling helped form the assessment philosophies of pre-service and novice teachers. This personal experience (Allen & Flippo, 2002) with assessment can be called *situated learning*, what Herrington, et al. (2002) define as “the notion of learning knowledge and skills in contexts that reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life” (p. 3).

Bachor and Baer (2003) and Brew, et al. (2009) stress the importance of training pre-service teachers in the art of authentic assessment; to not engage pre-service teachers in this type of assessment themselves would be folly.

The Use of Dialogue Journals to Enhance Instruction in Assessment Courses

Students entering into a teacher preparation program bring with them experiences related to assessment, and they need to be “validated as knowing something [and] learning needs to take place based on and within the learner’s experiences” (Stevens & Cooper, 2009, p. 37). Francis (1995) asserts, “pre-service teachers bring...a wealth of life experiences and well-developed...personal and practical theories” (p. 229). The assessment course instructor must acknowledge these students have most likely been assessed in reading and writing for many years. They often have more recent experience with various assessments than do their professors, since many are fresh from the public schools. It is up to instructors to help pre-service teachers understand how these previous experiences “impact their beliefs about teaching” (Carter, 1998, p. 40) and to be given a chance to accomplish this through discourse and writing (Duffy & Atkinson, 2001; Graham, 2005; Maclellan, 2004). Bliem and Davinroy (1997) state, “without considering [teachers’] perspectives and beliefs, [their] changes in...assessment and instruction are likely to be both superficial and fleeting” (p. 1). Without the opportunity to freely “develop a voice” (Francis, 1995, p. 229), the learning of course content may suffer because little relationship between the new and the known will be built (Clay, 2005b). Camicia (2011) and Henry (2005) found that increasing access to writing time encourages students who are otherwise often marginalized to share their observations.

With all the courses and related assignments that come with the territory of being a pre-service teacher, students often do not voluntarily set aside time to write (Francis, 1995). This is one reason for the implementation of a journal as part of a course's assignments. Stiggins notes the importance of students being "queried to determine whether they feel that they are mastering essential classroom assessment competencies" (1999, p. 24). The question that needs to be asked is: Is this best accomplished by administering quizzes and tests? Alternative forms of assessment, just as they are used with students in grades Kindergarten through twelve, "have the potential to evidence authentic academic achievement" (MacLellan, 2004, p. 524). A journal is an informal "sequential, dated chronicle of events and ideas" and includes "personal responses and reflections" (Stevens & Cooper, 2009, p. 5). After carefully reading journal entries, it is up to the course instructor to research, decide, and teach into their students' needs (Calkins, 1994; DeLuca & Klinger, 2010).

Many classroom teachers have implemented instruction that has as its grounding a *constructivist theory of learning*, in which there is "active construction of meaning by learners" (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994, p. 141). This translates to the teacher preparation course as valuing the experiences pre-service teachers bring with them (Ewald, 2006). However, Calkins (1994) and Allen and Flippo (2002) stress that if the instructional methods fall under this theory, so must the methods of assessment. Several studies point to the need for faculty members to model various assessments (Graham, 2005; Stiggins, 1995; Stiggins, 1999; Taylor & Nolen, 1996; Volante & Fazio, 2007). This can be a stretch for instructors who rely mainly on paper-and-pencil quizzes and tests to gauge student learning. Perhaps of even greater importance is that the assessments used in

courses for pre-service teachers are those that can be used in real classrooms (Adams, 1996; Mertler, 2005; Stiggins, 1995) and that teachers “must experience those benefits [of sound assessment practices] firsthand as students” (Taylor & Nolen, p. 87).

Benefits of using dialogue journals with pre-service teachers.

The literature includes studies listing several benefits of pre-service teachers’ use of *dialogue journals*, “multipurpose tools” (Lee, 2004, p. 94) used for the exchange of ideas between a teacher and a student. Adams maintains instructors should be assessing pre-service teachers’ knowledge through “assignments that require reading and writing” (1996, p. 76).

Through writing, students reflect on their beliefs and prior experiences (Bayat, 2010; Carter, 1988; Graham, 2005; Lee, 2004). Stevens and Cooper (2009) discuss reflection as a meaning making process that “starts with discomfort” (p. 21). Students may also learn a little more about themselves outside of the teaching profession (Barkhuizen, 1995) through journal writing. This practice allows them to form connections between these beliefs and experiences, course material, and their practices in the field, thus resulting in an “internalization” of new learning (Good & Whang, 2002; Mayor, 2005, p. 173). These reflective practices, which Bayat terms “productive reflection” (2010, p. 160), become a kind of professional development in that they begin to actually evaluate their own learning and performance in the classroom (Isikoglu, 2007). Dunlap (2006) mentions teachers can revisit their previous journal entries in order to take stock of their own growth as professionals. In this way, “a reflective journal chronicles the story of [a teacher’s] professional life and it is probably one of the best professional development projects [a teacher] can undertake” (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995,

p. 213). After this evaluation occurs, the journaling increases pre-service teachers' "self awareness and confidence which can [then] be transferred to the school context" (Francis, 1995, p. 241) and becomes a place to reflect on themselves as future teachers (Barkhuizen; Dunlap; Garmon, 2001). Dieker and Monda-Amaya (1995) and Lee (2006) report university students' statements that, not only had they become more reflective thinkers; they also planned on continuing this reflective work after the completion of their programs. It is important that new teachers continue this process, using "wisdom of practice...the hallmark of masterful teaching" (Jalongo & Isenberg, p. 127). When students understand this, they will come to see journaling as something more than a just a course exercise (Dunlap; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). In another study, teacher candidates identified reflective thinking as the greatest benefit of journal writing (Graham). Kaplan, Rupley, Sparks, and Holcomb (2007) describe positive correlations between journal passages that contained reflective responses and students' final grades in reading courses. Dialogue journals are a manageable way reflective practice can be realized in teacher preparation courses (Zulich, et al., 1992).

A second important benefit discovered in the literature is pre-service teachers who are involved in some kind of dialogue journaling state that they are more likely to invite their future students to participate in this practice (Carter, 1998; Good & Whang, 2002; Herrington, et al., 2002; Lee, 2004). Adams (1996) notes, "[student teachers] begin to realize that ... they may gather information about children that simply cannot be gathered by looking at a set of numerical grades" (p. 83). The firsthand experience of writing entries in a journal prepares them to know what to look for in their future students' entries.

In several studies (Carter, 1988; Garmon, 2001; Good & Whang, 2002; Siegel & Wissehr, 2011; Watson, 2010), student teachers reported that writing in a dialogue journal helped them learn and remember course content since they were writing about what they had learned through course readings and in class. Students bring a variety of experiences to the classroom, so a dialogue journal facilitates these connections (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Good and Whang found that many students wrote about how journaling helped them construct meaning and understand course material at a deeper level.

Some students indicated that the instructor's feedback on entries (the activity that distinguishes dialogue journals from traditional journals) made them an effective method of individualizing the learning (Lee, 2004). Ewald found that teacher feedback "kept the lines of communication open" and "let [students] know that their journals were being read and taken seriously" (2006, p. 43). Vygotsky's (1978) work with the zone of proximal development, in which learning is supported through social interactions and that one can often do more under the guidance of a more experienced individual than on his own, offers support for use of the dialogue journal. Students are able to ask questions in their entries, knowing the instructor will provide feedback that will be valuable (Garmon, 2001; Lee, 2006). This written discourse between the professor and the pre-service teachers may lead to the formation of positive relationships (Bayat, 2010; Garmon; Lee, 2004), since instructors are "engag[ing] with [students] as learners" (Francis, 1995, p. 230).

Lee (2004) reports 77% of teacher candidates in her course enjoyed journaling and 84% continued writing in journals even when it was not required during the following semesters. This may be because the benefits listed here materialized and they

realized writing helped “relieve stress and reduce tension” (Greiman & Covington, 2007). Also, often an “uncorrected, ungraded format” is a motivator for writing (Holmes & Moulton, 1997, p. 619), as it is a way to ask questions in a risk-free manner (Good & Whang, 2002; Henry, 2005).

Journaling with pre-service teachers also includes notable benefits for professors of teacher education courses, because they can use students’ journal responses as a lens into their own teaching practices. Reading journal entries written by their students is an alternative method of assessing their teaching; what is and is not working in class (Lee, 2004; Mansor, et al., 2011). Instructors can use entries as a tool to gauge student learning (Dunlap, 2006; Garmon, 2001, Good & Whang, 2002) and use this information to improve their instruction. Adams (1996) and Gallagher, Vail, and Monda-Amaya (2008) explain how they adjust their teaching and course content, using students’ written entries as guides. Lee (2004) and Mansor, et al. also mention the spontaneous teaching that can occur in journal exchanges between the professor and students. Through these digital conversations, teachers get to know students better as people outside of the university (Barkhuizen, 1995; Camicia, 2011; Mansor, et al.). As Clandinin, et al. worked with teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers, it so happened that “the distinctions placed between who we were as professionals and who we were as persons blurred as we talked about our lives and the ways in which we worked with children and each other” (1993, p. 2).

These reasons contribute to the notion that student teachers should begin practice in reflection through the art of journal writing as soon as possible. Lee (2006) reminds

teacher educators even university students who have yet to begin their student teaching can and should start keeping journals.

Drawbacks of using dialogue journals with pre-service teachers.

The literature contains few examples of the drawbacks of using dialogue journals with pre-service teachers. For example, Garmon's study (2001) revealed 81% of the students listed advantages and 27% listed disadvantages of this practice.

Time often emerges as an issue (Francis, 1995; Greiman & Covington, 2007; Lee, 2004). Student teachers are busy and preoccupied with the workload that comes with obtaining a teaching degree (Lee, 2004; Lee, 2006). This may cause them to wait until the last minute to turn in their entries. Gambrell (1985) and Lee (2004) also point out that instructors may struggle with finding the time to respond to students' journal entries, an integral piece of the dialogue journal.

Writing down thoughts in a journal that is to be shared with the instructor might be daunting for pre-service teachers because they often put an "emphasis on being right" (Francis, 1995, p. 233) and say things they think the professor wants to hear (Barkhuizen, 1995; Lee, 2004). Francis (1995) reminds the teacher educator that some student teachers possess in their schooling schema the expectation that their ideas will not be congruent with that of their instructors. This is a roadblock that takes time and trust to hurdle and may cause students to adhere to a certain format, such as an entry that mostly summarizes learning in a list (Bayat, 2010; Francis, 1995). Because of this, it is important to consider one's audience, for it can "profoundly shape what [is written]" (Boud, 2001, p. 15). A student writing solely for himself or herself may choose to write in a very different manner than if he or she is writing for an external audience.

Recommendations for the use of dialogue journals with pre-service teachers.

After surveying students and analyzing their comments as well as their journal entries, some course instructors have provided tips to help others use dialogue journals effectively with pre-service teachers. First, instructors need to understand that there are several types of journal writers (Barkhuizen, 1995). There are those who thoroughly enjoy writing and always produce meaningful entries and those who are not interested at all and never give the journal a chance. Some students are enthusiastic at the beginning of the semester but become less enthusiastic as the semester continues. Others are skeptical at the beginning of the course, but begin to enjoy journal writing after they have tried it. There is also the group of students who are not sure how to write in a journal and end up penning summaries of voiceless class session content. It is quite possible that instructors will meet students who fall into one or more of these groups.

The issue of time can be addressed by providing students time in class to write in their journals (Lee, 2006) and co-creating a creative and flexible schedule of due dates with the class (Lee, 2004). Dialogue journals can be turned in on a weekly basis or less frequently, depending upon which works better for students and instructors (Lee, 2004). Another possibility is providing less structure in regard to due dates for journals; students would write in them and turn them in as needed. Greiman and Covington (2007) report students with whom they worked often opted for this choice. Also, keeping track of journal entries may be more efficient if students write and submit entries online (Lee, 2010).

In order to encourage students to step outside the box and write about issues that matter to them, Adams (1996), Carter (1998), and Lee (2004) suggest asking them to

make connections between the lectures and their own experiences, both as students and as observers in the schools. There is also evidence that giving students prompts will engage them to write more reflectively (Bayat, 2010; Lee, 2006). Still, some students and instructors feel that assigning specific topics may be too restrictive (Greiman & Covington, 2007; Lee, 2004) and that allowing students to choose their own topics is motivating (Holmes & Moulton, 1997). Either way, pre-service teachers need to know that they can react genuinely to topics and step out of their comfort zones (Bacon, 1995; Stevens & Cooper, 2009), as this creates a platform for open and honest communication. Dunlap (2006) and English (2001) also suggest that course instructors explain to students why they are being asked to dialogue in journals and respond to questions. Outlining the journal assignments in the course syllabus will help to ensure that students know what is expected of them. Stevens and Cooper propose a set of characteristics that instructors should include in the course syllabus. This includes how the journal will be formatted, how it will be used, who will be reading it, and how and when it will be collected and graded. Along with the syllabus description, instructors might engage students in a discussion around journal writing during the first class session of the semester in order to help students be more open to writing in a journal. Topics such as students' prior experiences with journal writing and how course objectives are fulfilled through journal writing will hopefully help students understand that the journaling done as part of the course is necessary for learning course material.

The literature contains other ideas for keeping up the momentum of journaling throughout a semester-long course. As mentioned earlier, since students are usually concerned with doing things the "right" way, they might benefit from observing the

professor of the course write a sample journal entry while thinking aloud and demonstrating the process of reflection (Dunlap, 2006; Fenwick, 2001; Goldsby & Cozza, 1998; Kaplan, et al., 2007; Lee, 2004; Lee, 2006). Instructors can assign guiding questions at the beginning of the semester to help students stay focused as they write and later change the format and content of the questions to prevent boredom. Bringing in sample journal entries from past students can also be helpful; Fenwick noted after she did this with her students, they let go of any anxiety they had over turning in their journal entries. After students begin to develop their own voices in their journal entries, Dunlap recommends removing scaffolds and allowing students to work on entries at their own pace and on their own time, as reflection is not something that should be rushed during the last few minutes of class. Fenwick suggests inviting students to bring their journals to each class session. Some students may use them for note taking or reflecting during and immediately after class. The instructor may also choose to use class time for journal writing, a time when everyone is invited to write, even the instructor. Peer sharing of entries can be implemented so that teacher candidates can internalize course content as well as see examples of other journal entries (Fenwick; Good & Whang, 2002; Lee, 2006). Another way to keep things interesting is to invite students to print their journal entry collection and place it into a teaching portfolio for later use (Lee).

Bintz and Dillard remind those who wish to implement journaling that there are “peaks and valleys” to be expected (2010, p.143) as students navigate their way through writing to learn. Implementing a variety of journal writing techniques (as mentioned above) and returning to the many ways journals can be used during and outside of class can keep the energy going throughout the semester.

Whether or not to grade the dialogue journals is another issue. Dunlap (2006) suggests simply giving credit for full completion of the journal assignment, acknowledging students' effort and time. If instructors do choose to grade for more than completion, it is best to base the grade on thoughtful reflection, rather than just content and grammar. Stevens and Cooper (2009), who have used journals with their students for many years, state, "a good journal entry is judged more by its willingness to take risks, to voice confusions, to explore undeveloped ideas and the degree to which it furthers the development of voice" than by conventions (p. 6). Instructors should recognize that assigning a grade to a journal entry or set of entries may affect students' writing, so care should be taken (English, 2001). Boud (2001) maintains students will most likely want to turn in journal assignments that show their instructors their best thinking and hide what they are unsure of in fear of being judged. This may impede true reflection, as true reflection is all about risk-taking and uncertainty. What an instructor definitely wants to avoid is marking a student's journal with a grade and neglecting to provide any comments or feedback, an act Fenwick describes as "insensitive" (2001, p. 43).

The success of dialogue journals hinges on the expectation that there is two-way communication between the professor and the student. Most of the time, students are going to do their part in turning in the entry because they are required to do so. Then it is up to the instructor to promptly follow through with "comments, suggestions, and answers to questions that [students] may have" (Adams, 1996, p. 78). Lee (2004) stresses the importance of the promptness and thoroughness of professors' responses. Students appreciate personal and thoughtful replies given in a timely manner. Professors are encouraged to provide feedback in the form of posing questions to stimulate thinking

(Kaplan, et al., 2007; Lee, 2006; Taylor & Nolen, 1996), as this creates yet another learning opportunity for the students. It is important to pose genuine questions (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001), yet refrain from overemphasizing the use of questions, as this can turn the instructor's role into that of an interrogator (Bintz & Dillard, 2010). A supportive instructor scaffolds students' writing by encouraging deeper responses (Bacon, 1995) and modeling quality replies (Werderich, 2010). Students feel they are being heard and that the instructor cares about what they have to say (Ewald, 2006; Fenwick, 2001; Goldsby & Cozza, 1998; Lee, 2010).

A written journal is usually one-sided; an online journal may encourage more collaborative learning as the instructor strives to keep the discourse going (Bacon, 1995). In order to create a safe forum, he or she also uses the student's name in his or her reply, reads entries carefully, and steers clear of making corrections and meaningless comments (Bacon, 1995; Henry, 2005). Above all, Fenwick (2001) asks instructors to remember that reading and responding to students' journal entries is a "privilege" and a task not to be rushed.

The journal can be likened to a "writer's journey" (Calkins, 1994, p. 324), and in this case, a pre-service teacher's journey of learning about classroom assessment.

This review of the literature on classroom assessment has covered the variety of assessment methods commonly used in classrooms, how assessment is taught in university teacher education programs, the beliefs and knowledge of pre-service teachers regarding assessment, researchers' recommendations for improving pre-service teachers' assessment literacy, and how using journals with teacher candidates can accomplish this goal.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to update and fill in the gaps in research related to how pre-service teachers enrolled in a teacher education course on literacy assessment demonstrate their internalization of course content through the writing of personal narratives in dialogue journal entries. In order to understand this dimension of teacher education, the study addresses three research questions: (1) In what ways do students use journals to understand literacy assessment course material presented in class? (2) How do students use their stories and connections to course content to understand the material presented about literacy assessment? and (4) Do pre-service teachers value the dialogue journal process? In what ways?

This chapter will describe the study's research methodology, including the research sample, summary of information needed, research design overview, journal entry and interview transcript collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness, and limitations of the study.

Because the purpose of this study is to understand how pre-service teachers tell their stories in writing in order to learn course content, qualitative methods were called for. More specifically, the researcher used coding schemes to organize and analyze journal entries and interview transcripts. This fits with the present study because the material collected consists of students' stories as written in dialogue journals, as well as those told to the researcher.

Theoretical Framework of Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is "much more than the telling of stories (Clandinin, et al., 2007, p. 21)"; it involves working with others' stories in a sensitive and compassionate manner.

Stories are told and retold for a reason; in the case of this study, they are told in order to make connections to new learning so that internalization of this new learning might occur. According to the guidelines of this research methodology, the researcher reads and listens to those stories, collects them, and writes them in a document, blending them together in a way that presents the phenomenon studied (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Participants' experiences, when they are told as stories, involve many of the same elements as literary fiction: characters, plot, and setting (Conle, 2000). Through this kind of storytelling, teacher educators and pre- and in-service teachers can improve their practice through the reflection and connecting of their stories. Also important to this methodology is the relationship between the participants and the researcher. The participants are aware that they are sharing their stories with an audience, whether orally or through writing. It is necessary that this relationship is a comfortable one, one with rapport and trust.

The phenomenon being studied here is how pre-service teachers use their own experiences as students and observers in the field to learn content about literacy assessment. In order to study this phenomenon, students' dialogue journal entries were collected, as well as transcriptions from interviews with four of these students. Narrative inquiry was chosen over other methods because of the research questions being investigated. In order to learn how students are using their experiences to learn course content, it is essential to take a close look at their writing and locate relevant evidence. Interviewing students about their use of the dialogue journal provides participants the opportunity to elaborate on their writing and provides the researcher with a deeper look into their thinking. Their stories cannot be analyzed using numbers, and this method is

different than “approaching [the] ‘subject’ with instruments, such as checklists and scales, followed by statistical manipulations and comparison” (Conle, 2000, p. 52).

The Research Sample

The participants involved in this study were undergraduate students enrolled in a curriculum and instruction course titled Literacy Assessment for Reading and Writing, which is taken in partial fulfillment of an initial teacher certification program. This course is offered at a large university located near the center of a sprawling urban city in the southern part of the United States.

Students represented diverse backgrounds, were classified as sophomores, juniors, or seniors, and ranged in age from 20 years to 40 years old. A purposeful and convenience sampling method was used to determine which journal entries to analyze, based on these students’ past enrollment in Curriculum and Instruction (CUIN) 4332 during the Fall 2012 semester. These methods were chosen because of the nature of the research questions; therefore, “a sample from which the most can be learned”, as well as one based on location and availability, was chosen (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). Table 1 includes the demographic characteristics of the 64 students whose journal entries were analyzed.

Table 2 includes the demographic characteristics of the four students who participated in face-to-face interviews. These students were also chosen based on a convenience sampling method, according to their availability to participate in interviews on the university campus during the interim period between the spring and summer semesters and during the summer semester. As this sample was drawn from the larger,

original sample of 64 students, all four interviewees are female Teaching and Learning junior and senior students.

Table 1

Journal Participant Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>
Gender	
Male	6
Female	58
Undergraduate Standing	
Sophomores	2
Juniors	8
Seniors	54
Ethnicity and Race	
Hispanic or Latino	15
White Students	44
Black or African American	2
Asian	3
American Indian or Alaska Native	0
Undergraduate Degree Program	
Teaching & Learning	59
Human Development and Family Studies	2
English with Education Minor	2
American Sign Language	1

Notes.

Hispanic or Latino refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.

White refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Black or African American refer to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

American Indian or Alaska Native refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

Asian refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. (United States Census Data)

Teaching and Learning. Students enrolled in this degree program are studying to teach children from early childhood through the eighth grade or Special Education at all levels.

Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS). This program includes studies of the intellectual, emotional, social, and moral development of individuals and families. Students enrolled in this degree program may pursue careers in Social Work, Psychology, and Education.

English with a minor in Education. Students enrolled as English majors with a minor in Education are pursuing high school teacher certification.

American Sign Language Interpretation. This program prepares students to be professional interpreters in such settings as K-12 classrooms, governmental agencies, and public sector venues.

Table 2

Interview Participant Demographic Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Undergraduate Degree Program	Year
Participant 1	Female	White	Teaching and Learning	Senior
Participant 2	Female	White	Teaching and Learning	Senior
Participant 3	Female	White	Teaching and Learning	Junior
Participant 4	Female	White	Teaching and Learning	Senior

Note. See notes under Table 1 for definitions of ethnicities and degree programs.

Overview of Research Design

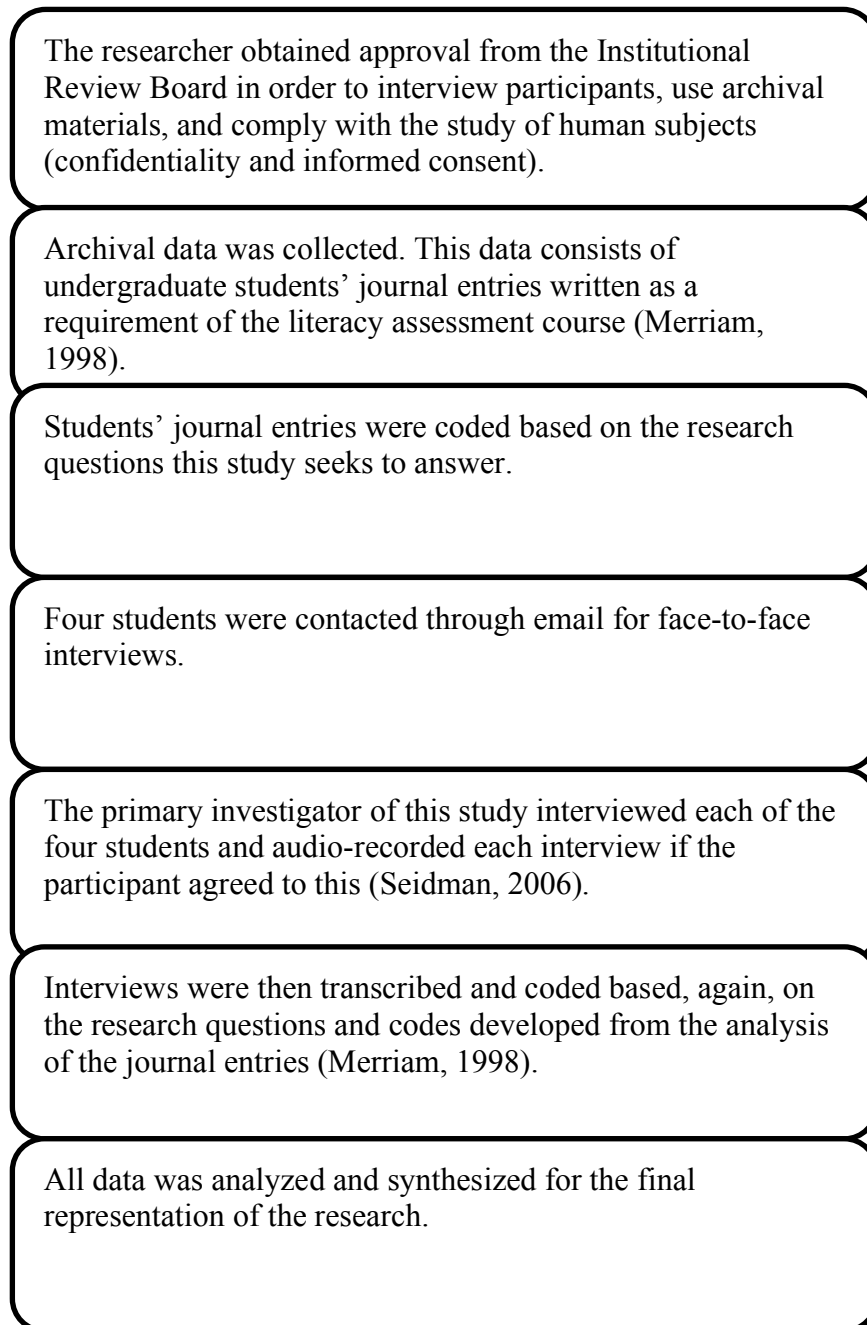
This study focused on undergraduates enrolled in a literacy assessment course.

Certain information was needed to answer the research questions including:

- Participants' perceptions and explanations of how they used dialogue journals during the course in order to learn course material.
- Demographic information of participants, including age, gender, ethnicity, and degree program.
- A continual review of the literature to support interpretations made from the material collected as well as recommendations suggested.

The following is a list of steps that were used in conducting this study. The next section explains each step in further detail.

Figure 3.1 Overview of Research Design



Institutional Review Board Approval

The researcher submitted a full IRB (Institutional Review Board) application, which consisted of the purpose of the study, problem statement, research questions, research sample, and how dialogue journals and interview transcripts were to be collected and analyzed. The university IRB approved this application (see appendix D).

Methods for the Collection of Journal Entries and Interview Transcripts

Journal Entries

As part of requirements for the literacy assessment course, students wrote and submitted journal entries. The course instructor provided guiding questions for these journal entries in the course syllabus and at the conclusion of each class session. Guiding questions were usually similar for each class; however, depending on the class session, new questions were added (see appendix A for sample question prompts). Questions were related to material presented during class sessions. Students were asked to reflect on their learning by discussing new knowledge, connections, and wonderings. Students were also asked to discuss their attitudes toward using journals as a learning and assessment tool. The course instructor invited them to use the journal as a tool for reflecting on each class and for sharing their thoughts and ideas related to course topics. Entries were submitted in sets of three online through the Blackboard Learn course website. Time to write in their dialogue journals was provided at the end of each class session; some students chose to utilize this time, and others preferred to complete their entries at home. The course instructor responded to entries with comments and questions. A rubric was available for the dialogue journal assignment on Blackboard Learn (see appendix B for rubric).

Entries were collected for 64 students enrolled in the course during the fall semester of 2012. These entries are archival in nature as they were completed as a course assignment. The researcher has access to journal entries via the Blackboard Learn course site. Each entry was printed out for coding and analysis.

This method of material collection was chosen based on the nature of the research study. Since the researcher is interested in uncovering pre-service teachers' knowledge and beliefs about, as well as connections to, literacy assessment, it was decided that actual journal entries written by students would provide a good amount of accurate information. They are a form of narrative, a "powerful way for individuals to give accounts of their experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 102) and important as both "process and product" (Conle, 2000). The journals were a good starting place to "broaden", or generalize, the pre-service teachers' use of them as learning tools, (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This is a starting place; however, more information will be needed in order to drill down into how students use their stories to learn.

Using journal entries has both advantages and disadvantages. The journals are archival and "concrete evidence" of learning (Merriam, 1998, p. 116). The researcher, who is also the course instructor, has easy access to the entries. There is a plethora of journal entries, as students were required to write entries for most class sessions. At the same time, however, there exists a large amount of written material to sift through. Also, some students may not have written much or turned in some of the assignments, resulting in missing work.

The researcher took measures to ensure that all material related to the study is safeguarded, confidential, and anonymous. All electronic and printed journal entries will

be housed in a secure location after the completion of the study. When students' entries are referred to in subsequent chapters, names will not be used.

Figure 3.2 A Student's Electronic Journal Entry

✓ Saved
Seconds ago
320 words

Enter Title

This week in class we discovered the guidelines for selecting texts, performing running records and how to do guided reading. It was interesting all the factors that are considered when teachers, or other officials, assign a level to a book. I enjoyed comparing and contrasting the different author's styles of writing and art work as well as the design of the stories and context. Being able to flip through the various types of books gave me a good foundation for understanding the basics for each level. For example the more basic levels 1 through 3 have a lot of repetition and high frequency words that the child may be more familiar with. They also included pictures which supported the story and gave the student a hint. I enjoyed exploring the artwork and the stories that were portrayed through art and not the writing. Performing running records was a really great experience as I have never had to evaluate before. Taking note of how to mark each error for a child in a running record is much easier than actually performing the task. It takes practice, multi-tasking and concentration to get down the skill of doing a running record successfully. Also putting what I have learned into practice brought to mind many questions which I was able to reach out and have answered in class. I am appreciative of this learning experience and feel much more confident assessing than before. Guided reading is very important because students learn to read by taking in a text and practicing. It is crucial that the teacher understands the child's learning and respects it through her tone and words. Having examples of how and what to say make a world of difference rather than reading from a book that you should be considerate and not have very much explanation. I am excited to do my case study soon and put my skills to the test.

Interview Transcripts

Four students were contacted through email for individual face-to-face interviews in June of 2013. These students were chosen based on availability, as well as their desire to “express thoughts, feelings, opinions, [and] perspectives” (Merriam, 1998, p. 85). Interviews were chosen as a method to capture an additional dimension of how students used the dialogue journals, as well as to offer a venue for conversation and sharing (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Conducting interviews is useful when it is not possible to “observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (Merriam, p. 72). It allows the interviewer to hear the point of view of the interviewee firsthand.

Through narrative inquiry, “the way humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2), the researcher hopes to understand participants’ experiences through their stories. Seidman (2006) asserts using narratives becomes a prominent method in ones’ research when the researcher has an “interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). This is the “burrowing” piece, a time to focus in on pre-service teachers’ stories and get to the heart of how they use their dialogue journal entries to learn about literacy assessment (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Analyzing interview transcripts allowed the researcher to add to insights gained from the journal entries.

These students are part of the original sample of 64 whose journals were analyzed. The student and interviewer (the primary researcher) met in a quiet location so that the interviews could be audiotaped. The researcher reviewed the informed consent form with each participant. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were semi-structured with a short set of guiding questions derived from the analysis of the journal entries and the research questions. (See appendix C for interview questions). The researcher was particularly mindful of the ways in which questions were worded to ensure clarity and also avoided the use of educational jargon. Each participant’s dialogue journal entries from the course was printed for their review prior to and during the interview. The primary investigator transcribed each interaction and coded the transcriptions based again on the research questions, as well as related coding schemes developed during the analysis of the journals. To facilitate this, interviewees’ names were linked to their journal entries.

Accompanying participant interviews are strengths of the method. “There is probing in conversation, in-depth probing, but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening, and caring for the experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 109).

Researchers are able to ask open-ended questions, which participants can answer by putting their attitudes in their own words (Merriam, 1998). Also, using semi-structured interviews allows flexibility for the researcher to respond to what participants say (Merriam). This format also creates space for the researcher to personally involve herself in the interview by laying her stories alongside those of her students (Conle, 2000).

However, there are drawbacks to conducting interviews as well. First, inequality may exist between the interviewer and interviewee, although this can be remedied by providing a comfortable environment. It is crucial to maintain the rapport that has previously been built with the students during their semester in the course and to remain nonjudgmental during the interview. Participants should be reminded that there are no specific or correct answers to questions asked. Second, the interviewer needs to be mindful of how he or she interprets participants’ responses. Carspecken (1996) mentions several types of “claims” that interviewees might have, occurring when the interviewee says one thing, but means another. Third, finding the time to conduct interviews and scheduling meeting times and locations are potential roadblocks to be considered. The researcher needs to be considerate of participants’ time and make every effort to schedule interviews that are convenient for them.

As with the journal entries, all audio recordings and transcriptions will be stored in a secure location after the research is completed. In discussing the results, participants’ names will not be used.

Methods for the Analysis and Synthesis of Journal Entries and Interview Transcripts

In order to analyze this large amount of material and synthesize information learned, the researcher looked for patterns in both the dialogue journal entries and interview transcripts.

Journal entries were analyzed in hardcopy form. Using the three research questions, as well as guiding prompts the students were provided with to write entries, the researcher coded entries by physically cutting out useful portions of text and placing them into preliminary groups on wall charts. For research question one, how students use stories about their experiences as students to connect to course content to understand the material presented about literacy assessment, the researcher found many recurring topics. Students wrote about their own experiences as students related to making connections, running records, round robin reading, differentiation, reflection, reading aloud, independent reading, the gradual release of responsibility, students who love to read, students who do not consider themselves good readers, using journals as alternative assessments to tests, growing up as an English as a Second Language (ESL) learner, comprehension, and grading practices. Next, groups of entries were refined as codes were developed. The coding process involves “assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of ... data so that [the researcher] can easily retrieve specific pieces” (Merriam, 1998, p. 164). Categories that matched with high numbers of responses were retained, categories that matched with low numbers of responses were discarded, and several categories were consolidated. The resulting codes were named to reflect their content and are as follows: standardized testing experiences, the gradual release of responsibility, reading attitudes, and grading student work.

The second question asked as part of this study is, how do students use stories about their experiences in classrooms during field experiences to connect to course content and understand the material presented about literacy assessment? Initial themes found were associated with testing, grading practices, the gradual release of responsibility, working with struggling readers, differentiation, reading aloud, comprehension instruction, working with students who do not like to read, guided reading instruction, reading response notebooks, running records, fluency instruction, and working with students who love reading. Again, the researcher pared down categories based on the frequency of occurrence. The resulting codes are standardized testing, working with struggling readers, and using running records.

For the third research question, do pre-service teachers value the dialogue journal process and in what ways, preliminary topics were feedback and individualized learning, deep understanding of content, reflection, firsthand experience with assessment, difficulty with the journaling process, voicing opinions, and connections. The researcher then refined these categories, which resulted in the following codes: feedback and individualized learning, deep understanding of course content, reflection, firsthand experience with assessment, difficulty with dialogue journals, the dialogue journal as an assessment tool, and having a voice and expressing opinions and thoughts.

The researcher analyzed hard copies of the interview transcripts in a similar manner, using the existing coding schemes developed while reviewing the journal entries. These examples were marked to delineate them from journal entry examples.

Ethical Considerations

The present study utilizes pre-service teachers' stories, stories of their lives that they shared as a way to understand course content. Connelly and Clandinin emphasize that "ethical considerations permeate narrative inquiries from start to finish: at the outset as ends-in-view are imagined" (as cited in Clandinin, et al., 2007, p. 30). Participants come first as their stories are personal and real, some which they have shared through writing. This adds a dimension to ethics in research that is greater than consent forms. As students' stories resemble fiction with characters, settings, and plots, it is important for the researcher to further fictionalize their stories to make them anonymous.

Because the researcher conducted interviews as part of this study, it was essential to protect all participants. Each interviewee reviewed, with the researcher, the informed consent letter and indicated whether they agreed to participate as well as be audiotaped. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants could withdraw involvement in the study at any time. Each participant received a copy of this form.

There were no foreseeable risks to participants. Information used from dialogue journal entries and interviews may be included in professional and/or research journal articles; however, no individual participant will be identified. Only pseudonyms will be used. Stake cautions researchers that they are "guests in the private spaces of [the interviewee's] world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (as cited in Merriam, 1998 p. 214). After the conclusion of the study, electronic and hardcopy materials will only be available to the principal investigator and faculty sponsor.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Qualitative research warrants the use of techniques to address issues of validity and reliability, or trustworthiness. Merriam (1998) recognizes that researchers should “present insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, educators, and other researchers” (p. 199). What follows are issues of trustworthiness that may arise and measures that will be taken by the researcher to address those issues.

The first issue is that of credibility, or “whether the participants’ perceptions match up with the researcher’s portrayal of them” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 77). Multiple methods used to understand participants’ views will be discussed as well as any conflicting findings. In order to ensure that the researcher has made every effort to “represent [students’] voices and stories in resonant ways,” member checks occurred, where the researcher contacted each interviewee. (Clandinin, et al., 2007, p. 30).

Next is the dependability issue, or if readers can “track the processes and procedures used to collect and interpret the data” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 78). To ensure this study’s readers can do this, the researcher provides rigorous explanations of how journal entries and interview transcripts were analyzed.

Rather than wanting results of this study to be generalized to a larger population, transferability is the goal, that “lessons learned in one setting might be useful to others” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 78). In order for readers to determine how this study might make it possible to use similar strategies in their own settings, thorough and comprehensive descriptions of the collected material are included.

Representation of the Research

The researcher has presented findings in relation to the study's research questions. Each question is answered separately, with carefully selected excerpts from the journal entries and interview transcripts as supporting evidence. The focus is not on the pre-service teachers' stories alone, but also on how they made connections to course content through the telling of these stories as pieces of their journal entries. Using quotes as they were written and spoken is imperative here as the researcher wants to ensure that students' voices are heard. Elbaz-Luwisch (2002) mentions allowing participants' stories speak for themselves, while also constructing meaning in them. It is up to the researcher to help the reader of this study along by presenting the information in a way that helps them make meaning and understand why it is important to do so. The audience is ever-present. Even though the researcher was and continues to be involved in the participants' experiences, she must retell their stories as evidence of how they learned about literacy assessment, all while keeping her part in the narrative as well. It would not make sense to write a voiceless report with narrative text at its center. The author must keep a conversation of sorts going with the reader and imprint her "signature" on paper (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 424).

Much care was taken in teaching this course, working with students, introducing the dialogue journal assignments, and reading and responding to journal entries, as well as rereading entries for analysis and listening to students as they shared parts of themselves during the interview phase of the study. So here, too, care must be taken in conveying their stories on paper. This affects the way the final report is written because the researcher is quite vested in these students' lives and experiences; she is not listing a

multitude of tables that portray students as numbers. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) remind narrative inquirers that when they “become characters in [others’] stories, [they] change their stories” (p. 422). They are slightly altered and retold for a new purpose.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher acknowledges several limitations that may exist in relation to this study, as well as qualitative methodology in general, and will address these.

The sample of undergraduate students chosen for interviews is a convenience sample and based on their enrollment in one course at one university. While this creates a very specific group that may not be completely representative of all students enrolled during the semester included in this study, it is the hope of the researcher that the results of this study can be transferred to other courses and locations.

There exists the possibility that students wrote about what they thought the course instructor wanted to hear or what she might think of as “correct.” Some students may have also completed the journal entries as summaries of what they learned, rather than using it as a tool for reflection and the internalization of course content.

Since the four students involved in the face-to-face interviews used the dialogue journals in the course anywhere from four to nine months prior, there is a chance they may have forgotten aspects of the dialogue journal assignments, such as how they were used and what they had written. To address this potential problem, the interviewer provided each participant with a copy of her journal entries. Also, the course instructor, who is the primary investigator, conducted the interviews, which may have influenced the interviewees’ responses. However, the researcher strived to create a comfortable

environment during the interviews by using techniques for authentic conversation such as pausing, paraphrasing, and body language.

It should also be noted that there was not a longitudinal or follow-through study conducted subsequent to the collection and analysis of the material used for this study. At this point, the researcher does not have information on whether students enrolled in this course continued to write journal entries on their own or plan to use journals with their students.

This chapter has presented the research design of this study, including the research sample, journal entry and interview transcript collection and analysis methods, and ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness, and limitations. The next chapter describes the findings that were acquired using these methods.

CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS

It is the middle of the summer in Houston, and I have recently begun teaching my first course for pre-service teachers. I am ready to grade their first assignment, a set of electronic dialogue journal entries that they have written about the first few class sessions. I am hesitant to read the first one, since I am secretly expecting to read 16 entries that begin “this week, I learned...” and continue as a list from there. Instead, what is displayed on my laptop screen is a personal narrative connected to one of the week’s class topics. It reads like a diary entry. It is informal, stream-of-consciousness-like, and full of voice. After reading this student’s entry, I know she has understood the course material that week; I know this without having administered a multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank quiz. And I cannot wait to respond to her. I also plan for the next class session knowing what my students know and how to lift their learning to the next level.

The purpose of this study was to find out how pre-service teachers enrolled in a teacher education course in literacy assessment demonstrate their internalization of course content through the writing of dialogue journal entries. Chapter 4 will explain the findings that emerged after analyzing students’ dialogue journal entries that were assigned as part of the course requirements. Major findings were that pre-service teachers told stories about their experiences as students, as well as their field experiences in classrooms to connect to course content and understand the material presented about literacy assessment. It was also found that these pre-service teachers valued the dialogue journal process.

Finding 1: Pre-service teachers use stories about their experiences as students to connect course content to understand the material presented about literacy assessment.

The first research question is, “how do students use stories about their experiences as students to connect to course content in their literacy assessment course?” Students enrolled in the CUIN 4332 course during the Fall 2012 semester were asked to write about their lives as students, past or present, that related to each class session’s topic. As I sifted through their dialogue journal entries and probed further into the interview transcripts, I searched for these stories, focusing on those that seemed to be revelations for students and those that had possibly helped them understand our course topics at a deeper level. Several themes arose from these stories: standardized testing experiences, the use of the gradual release of responsibility, reading attitudes, and grading student work. Each theme will be presented here along with examples.

Standardized testing experiences.

When writing about their experiences as students, these pre-service teachers often told stories of taking summative assessments, some of which were positive. Upon entering a course on assessment, students usually equate assessment with testing (Graham, 2005), so many of their first connections and stories revolve around standardized tests they took as youngsters. Several researchers indicate that new teachers apply techniques used with them in their own classrooms (Bliem & Davinroy, 1997; Graham, 2005; Herrington, et al., 2002; Volante & Fazio, 2007). Recalling these stories of testing from their own schooling might help them examine these practices. In the

following excerpts, students speak of their experiences with standardized reading tests and attempt to understand children's points of view.

Reading the questions [on the release test] reminded me of how frustrated and confused I used to get during these types of tests when I was younger. Now I can see how a student may end up choosing the "wrong" answer.

I never thought much about how I was tested in reading other than the standardized test we always had to take at the end of the year. I have always been good at reading so reading assessments never really were a big deal because it was easy and I loved it. I now can see how difficult it can be for those students who struggle.

Students also wrote about their test preparation, or lack thereof and what their teachers did or should have done to help them be successful. This led them to ponder the importance of learning how to take a test and how they might help their future students prepare.

I remember my teacher going through different wordings that may come up [on the test] and allowed us to familiarize ourselves with the different vocabularies we would encounter throughout reading comprehension portions. I also still remember her telling us to number our paragraphs and to highlight and label the lines referred to in the questions. I do believe that it is imperative that we prepare the students for the different wordings that may show up.

I do not recall ever being taught how to effectively take a test. The test was handed to me and I was expected to take it-sink or swim. Fortunately, I did not struggle with test taking. However, I have college friends who still struggle with taking tests. I feel these tips would be beneficial for everyone to learn, the earlier the better.

For some students, the topic of testing brought back memories of anxiety and stress. They remembered the emotional toll that testing can have on children. This may help them empathize with their students and find ways to relieve these and create a supportive and comforting environment around testing season.

I remember doing the [state] test and feeling extremely nervous on the math testing days, because math is my weakest area. I would go back and forth on my answers being unsure if I completed the problem correctly. I will apply this learning by being more understanding towards children when they get nervous for a test.

As a student, I took many standardized exams including the [state test]. I personally do not believe I learned anything from these exams. They are poorly written and do not focus on critical thinking whatsoever. I remember my teachers always talking about these tests and how important they were. We would begin preparing for them early in the school year. All they did was cause anxiety and stress towards the teachers and students.

Summative assessments such as the ones students describe here are a fact of life in the schools. Regardless of pre-service teachers' experiences with tests prior to the start of their teaching career, they will be responsible for preparing their charges to take and pass them. By reliving their experiences as test-takers, they put themselves in the proverbial shoes of their future students.

Gradual release of responsibility.

Pearson's concept of the gradual release of responsibility (2010) was a recurring topic during class sessions, as an objective of the course is that students will learn how to meet children's literacy needs by scaffolding instruction. Boud (2001), Clay (1991), and Schön (1987) each address the zone of proximal development. In order to use the gradual release of responsibility as an instructional strategy, teachers must understand where their students are by assessing them formally and informally. Then, they are able to use this information as a starting place for instruction. To further enhance their understanding of this concept, some students described instances in which they had observed this method, even if they were not aware of it at the time. These two students wrote about experiences common to many youngsters, and realized that their parents were scaffolding their learning. They had been encouraged to think about something they had learned how to do and slow down the learning process in order to visualize the steps taken when scaffolding instruction.

My dad taught me the basics of the game [of football]. When I was old enough he took me to football games and we watched it on television. That way I could see how it worked in real life. When I got older I was able to play it with other people

and was able to focus more on the position I played. So it went from individual learning to group learning.

I thought about when my mother taught me how to drive a car. I thought about how I watched her drive over the years, and while doing so she would explain when to use a turn signal or how far to stay behind another car. Then she would question me about when to do certain things while she drove; by doing all of this she was preparing me to get in the driver's seat. When I finally got in that seat, she would remind me of certain things, then she finally let me do it all on my own. After you [the instructor] explained what the gradual release of responsibility was, I was able to realize that was the method my mother used to teach me how to drive.

This student became savvy to his use of the gradual release of responsibility after the concept was discussed in class. He sequentially describes how he teaches a scale on the guitar and how this is quite similar to using leveled texts to teach students to read.

I teach bass and guitar lessons. So the first things I do when showing my student a new music scale is I play it first. Then I break it down into smaller parts. Once I break the scale down into different parts I have the student play alongside with me and help them hit the right notes each time. After that I allow the student to practice without me playing alongside them; however I give my feedback throughout the scale. Then at the end of the lesson I have the student perform the scale without any of my instruction or help. The same thing goes when it comes to

the leveled texts. I will apply this same style process into my classroom when I begin and continue teaching.

These stories may prove to be powerful examples of what it means to truly meet a learner where he or she is and teach from that point. By using analogies, these students internalized an abstract concept that is pivotal in the course and in teaching.

Reading attitudes.

Quite often, students employed their reading experiences in school as an avenue for learning about reading instruction. They reflected on instructional routines their teachers used and how these affected their readerly lives. For many students, our class discussions about balanced literacy practices such as reading aloud, shared reading, and independent reading brought to the surface negative experiences that still influence how and what they read as adults. Others wrote about their love of reading and connected this to what they experienced as young students. By sharing these stories, pre-service teachers are able to take a closer look at how they will treat the act of reading in their classrooms. Bliem and Davinroy (1997) and Graham (2005) recount how teacher candidates use how they were taught as the basis for their own teaching practices. This first set of dialogue journal excerpts show how those students who have always enjoyed reading and consider themselves proficient readers process what this means to them as they begin to teach.

It's funny - I started reading at age four and in Kindergarten, I used to read the teacher summaries in the front of the primers to the whole class. I don't know if it's because reading has always come easy to me that I find it hard to slow down

and really break down all there is to know about teaching the mechanics - the HOW - of reading.

Another student said, “Being an adult that loves to read for enjoyment, I have not really put much thought into the learning that happens when you read.” The preceding two students noticed that, although they have always been strong readers, they might not be completely aware of the complexity behind the act of reading. In the following excerpts, students remember what their teachers did to encourage their passion for reading. Their memories are strong, so strong, in fact, that they may impact their practices as reading teachers.

As a child I always enjoyed when my teacher read aloud to us. One of the read-alouds that sticks out in my mind is when my teacher read Where the Red Fern Grows. As my fourth grade teacher read the book the story came to life in my mind. I have always enjoyed reading and I am grateful to those teachers who encouraged that love of reading through read-alouds.

I remember specifically in the third grade how the teacher allowed plenty of independent reading in the classroom. We were allowed to go to the library during our independent reading time and check out books of our choice that we found to be interesting. That is the year that I read the most books compared to other grades. I feel that by having independent reading time in the class I gained valuable knowledge. I was exposed to plenty of new vocabulary and since I was an English Language Learner I feel that it allowed me to expand my vocabulary more than if I had just relied on the words the teacher taught.

I can read anything and be able to most likely understand what is going in the story, but the way I learned how to do that was through making connections in my own life to what is happening in what I just read.

A larger number of students reacted to the course topics of balanced literacy instruction and corresponding assessments with candid descriptions of their own reading difficulties. These students wrote how reading felt “like a chore,” how they “struggled...when it came to reading and comprehension,” and how they were not “good” or “fast” readers. Along with these attitudes about reading were statements about not enjoying reading, and understandably, these seemed to go hand in hand. Almost every student who wrote about these feelings of frustration also touched upon how they hope to use them to help their students to not feel as they did about reading.

As teachers, you have to be able to change the minds of the young to enjoy reading so it will better their life and [so they will] not have difficulties later on.

I was not a good reader growing up therefore I personally see the importance that a teacher and their strategies have on their students. I hope that by identifying some of [my shortcomings], I will be better prepared to teach others.

I don't want my students to have the same negative feelings toward reading as I did. Therefore, I want to read to my students daily. Make it fun and inviting for them so that they too want to learn to read and find the enjoyment and satisfaction that comes with it.

Some pre-service teachers relayed specific incidences from their childhoods that affect not only their literacy behaviors as adults, but also how they will teach reading. One student noted that, since she was an English language learner, she was not on the same reading level as her peers. She intends to use this memory to pair children with books they are able to read. Another student remembered her negative experience with Round Robin reading, in which students take turns reading out loud in front of the class. She describes her “fear of making a mistake” and how this is an instructional routine she will not implement in her classroom. Several students discussed their issues with comprehension, noting how they could read words in a text well, but often did not understand what they were reading. They expressed how they wished their teachers would have used some of the assessment and instructional methods taught in the CUIN 4332 course to help them comprehend texts. This student sums up these feelings: “I think the fact that I was never given any techniques and the fact that I struggle when I read will help me to be a better teacher because I am more aware of the importance of teaching kids techniques.” These students experienced what Conle termed “resonance,” or a process in which “a story reverberates within us and calls forth another in an echo-like fashion, [and] we pull that remembered story out of a previous context and place in into a new one” (1996, p. 301).

After a class session that centered around the reading workshop as an approach to teaching reading and matching texts to students, Participant 1 was impelled to tell a story from her childhood. When asked about how she connected her own experiences as a student to course content in order to better understand it, she chose this story and expanded on it.

My teachers always read to us and had books around the classroom. My mother loved books and my grandmother was an English teacher. I didn't have a problem with reading. I came here [to the United States] in fourth grade. I had to meet this many Accelerated Reader (AR) points and now I have to think how much is this book worth and I don't like it but I have to keep reading it because they might ask me a question about the word on the last page. It was awful and I didn't like it. I really hate to say that because I love reading so much. I'm so excited to teach it to kids. But it's so sad that I had that experience, because it totally diverted me from wanting to read. And I just thought it was a terrible system. One day I was under my limit for AR points because I wasn't gonna sit around all day and read these books that I didn't like and had no interest in. So I needed ten more points. My mom was like, "read The Little Prince - it's short." On the test I made a one out of ten because the questions were so high level and that's why it was worth ten points.

After relaying this story of her negative experiences with the Accelerated Reader program, she goes on to talk about how these will affect how she teaches reading.

You get kids who are reading short books that are accelerated for a lot of points that they don't get and it's not benefitting them. And then when they don't get the points and they don't have the party...I don't like that. That stuck with me through middle and high school. I didn't read pretty much at all. I read maybe one book. Now I'm so excited to have had the opportunity...to get that love back...I love opening lessons with read-alouds and hooking the kids' interest. Having a love for

it [reading] is what they need - culturing it, showing them that it's fun, and not put that pressure of crazy tests and points [on them].

She uses her story to decide what kind of teacher she will be. By coupling her own experience of being assessed as a youngster with our discussions in class over alternative informal assessment methods, Participant 1 has come to the conclusion that requiring students to take a quiz after reading a book may not only be ineffective, but also detrimental to their enthusiasm for reading.

Participant 1 also remembered an incident from her childhood that emerged after our conversation in class about comprehension. We had talked about the complexity of understanding texts and how comprehension is not just about understanding what happened in that text, but personally connecting to it as well. Here is what she had to say about this process as she experienced it and how she will use this to teach children to find meaning in texts.

It makes me laugh when I think about comprehension. [We had] an activity where [the teacher] had a quote from a song or book or something. My point of view was always different through my own experiences. It was interesting to see how we took such different things from our different walks of life and our comprehension of what it meant. It has different twists depending on how you think and who you are. I will definitely be more open-minded and I think it benefits me as I'm going to be a teacher of young children to not just put a score and put check or minus because they got the comprehension, and it's not always wrong about what they take from the meaning of something.

Another student, Participant 2, had some realizations about how teaching her future students will be affected by her own reading instruction and attitudes. This is a powerful example of how a pre-service teacher linked course content to her own story as a reader. She understands through experience how getting books into the hands of children, books that they want to read, is more beneficial than requiring them to read inauthentic leveled passages and take a test over each one before moving on to the next.

I hated to read as a kid. Now I love to read. It just took finding the right book. Years ago we had to do [a reading program that used short leveled passages]. All my friends got to the gold color and I never got off of purple. I hated [the stories] because [they] had information in it that I didn't care about. In high school I started buying my own books. Find out what they want, not just what you want them to have.

When asked to read her comments along with the researcher's observations, Participant 3 said, "I think what you wrote quotes my thoughts perfectly."

Grading student work.

Graham (2005), Mertler (2005), and Plake (1993) each found that an issue for both pre- and in-service teachers is assigning grades to student work. Discussions of grading practices in schools uncovered students' past experiences with receiving grades themselves. Here, pre-service write to understand what the purpose of grades are and how to make them meaningful for students. They realize that many assessments take place after teaching and learning have occurred and grades for those assessments are reductions of what students have learned (Bliem & Davinroy, 1997; Heritage, 2007). The following

stories are examples of how students in the course attempted to grasp how children might feel after receiving a letter or number grade without explanations behind it.

As a child, I remember wondering I why I did better on one assignment and did bad on another. When I would go home, my mother would ask me why I got a certain grade. Most of the time, I was not able to tell her.

I can really imagine how frustrating it is for a student who receives a grade, but doesn't receive an explanation for the grade, since I have personally experienced that myself throughout my school years. Constructive and appropriate criticism/corrections will really help a student understand how to do better next time. I know that when my teachers wrote down comments on my papers and essays, I knew what to focus on the next time.

I remember how I would always get work back and most of the time I would wonder why I got a certain grade and sometimes I would just be clueless. I would get all types of grades: letter grades, number grades, and then excellent, or good job or nice try. I always wanted to know why I would get a certain grade.

Here, these same students internalize the feelings they had or have when they receive a grade without knowing why. They turn these feelings into reasons for assessment moves they want to take as future teachers, such as this student did when he wrote, "I would like to know how to better assess or grade students not just with a grade but instead to empower them with knowledge to be able to succeed in life."

I definitely will use my experiences of how I felt when I got graded work back and make sure to provide feedback so that students will have a clear understanding of why they get a certain grade and so they will know what my expectations are. I still want to be given credit for my hard work so I can imagine how children feel.

Finding 2: Students use stories about their experiences in classrooms during field observations to connect to course content and understand the material presented about literacy assessment.

The second research question asks, “How do students use stories about their field experiences to connect to course content and understand the material presented about literacy assessment?” During this second analysis of journal entries, I specifically looked for students’ stories related to their classroom visits. Many students wrote about events that paralleled course topics. The themes that materialized in their entries were standardized testing, working with struggling readers, and using running records.

Standardized testing experiences.

When formal testing was the topic of a class session, several students were prompted to write about what they had seen in schools during their field observations. They noticed what Johnston & Costello (2005), Mayor (2005), and Stiggins (1985) found, that teachers spend more time assessing their students each day, and much of this is formal in nature.

Last semester I was at an elementary school observing the fifth grade. For one whole visit we couldn’t even be in the classroom with the students because they were “practice testing.” These kids were testing all day long. We understood that

these students had to be tested but we wanted to observe. There is nothing to observe when they are testing. By the end of the day these poor students were like zombies. All they wanted to do was to just go home. No more books, reading or filling in bubbles.

I worked at an intermediate school for two years, and two months before the test the students would have to practice tests in each subject so they were taking up to four practice tests in one week. I feel like this would make a student feel burnt out and by the time they took the real test, they would just try to get done with it as soon as possible.

Their frustration with the time schools use for testing and test preparation and practice is evident. They are seeing reality in the schools; however, the act of penning their concerns in the dialogue journal may entice them to find other ways of preparing their future students for formal, standardized tests.

Working with struggling readers.

During field experiences, pre-service teachers enrolled in the course became more aware of not only the number of children who struggle with reading, but also in what ways they struggle. Students learned ways to observe children closely, as well as what to look for, as per course objectives. By connecting this with real classroom experiences, they began to understand that children might have difficulty with not just oral reading, but also comprehension, fluency, or decoding. Teachers have to know how to listen to student talk and draw inferences from what they observe in order to know where students are and teach them what they need to know next (Heritage, 2007; Kohler, et al., 2008;

Routman, 2003). Here, students share their experiences of observing and working with struggling readers during classroom observations.

As I began to do my observations in field experience, I began to see that many students struggle with reading. Several students that I have worked with have difficulties reading and pronouncing words. As I went through this course, I was able to find many strategies that I can use to help students with reading.

During my observations at an elementary school this past week, I have been observing many students with reading difficulties. Most students in the classroom that I am placed to observe in actually have a more difficult time with reading rather than with any other subject. I was quite surprised about the quantity of students that have trouble. As I observed, I remembered a couple of things from this specific course that I used to help other students.

The following quote reveals how this student worked with a cooperating teacher to incorporate what she had learned during the course to help a child with reading.

[The] student couldn't retain hardly anything. He knew the words and was easily reading, just not comprehending. By taking him down to a lower reading level, his teacher and I discussed how this would help him in the future. By asking him questions to reinforce his comprehension, it was easy to see he wasn't ready.

It is clear that some students were surprised when they visited classrooms and noticed that there were many children who had reading difficulties. It was crucial that

they write down these eye-opening experiences so that they can return to them later and review their class notes for instructional strategies.

Using running records.

Two class sessions are dedicated to taking and analyzing running records, which are “tool[s] for coding, scoring, and analyzing a child’s precise reading behaviors” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p.89). These are new to most students, so when they observe them or have the chance to try them in real classrooms, they tend to connect these experiences through writing. Taking running records involves a lot of practice and skill to use the data in the midst of instruction quickly and thoughtfully to lift students’ reading (Clay, 2005a; Frey & Schmitt, 2007; Heritage, 2007; Johnston & Costello, 2005; Stiggins, 2002). It is important that pre-service teachers receive explicit instruction in how to administer running records as well as have many opportunities to both observe and practice them in real classrooms.

When students were prompted to write about their experience with this new task, they spoke about how some teachers provided them with opportunities to observe and administer running records. Students wrote about how they “love[d] having the background knowledge before observing a task” and “finally under[stood] what [they had] seen teachers using in the classroom.” Their excitement of witnessing actual examples of something they were learning about in class is apparent in the following examples.

The best part about learning about [running records] is that I got to see these skills being used in a classroom. I was able to practice alongside the teacher while she did a running record with a child.

Last week during my field experience I was very fortunate to observe my cooperating teacher perform several running records with some of her students. She showed me the form she uses during each reading and also her corrections sheet to help guide her before/after she conducts the running record with an individual student. She allowed me to sit close to her while she conducted several running records and I was able to see how different each student was and what reading level they were currently under.

The teachers pulled the students out at the beginning of the school year to see where they were in their reading levels. I was able to sit in on these and watch the teacher perform a running record. It was quite confusing to me so I was very happy to see that we were able to watch and practice how to do running records in class this past week. It is always so helpful to get first hand experience on what to expect as a first year teacher.

Other students expressed their excitement with stories of how they implemented what they had learned in the course, such as this student: “I had the chance in my field experience to do a running record. It was great. I actually knew what I was doing.” For many, what started out as a frustrating and meticulous experience soon turned into an assessment activity that they were successful with and came to enjoy.

Last week while observing a third grade class I had a small group of readers. While these students were reading I tried to sit there and think of all the things I would be marking down during a running record. Oh my gosh was it hard

to keep up. However by the time the second student read it was easier to point out the errors and self-corrections.

During my field experience I experienced how my teacher does her running records and I had the opportunity to sit down with a student and do a running record. It is actually very neat to put that into practice.

During my field experience last week, my teacher gave me the opportunity to do a running record on a child. I was very excited and happy that I got the real experience of a running record with a child in a classroom environment.

Participant 2 recalls her experience with running records, an assessment that was new for her, and how writing about what she learned in the course and what she saw in a real elementary school classroom helped her grasp the concept.

Having to write about it later. Oh yeah that's right - that's what she did. It was interesting to understand what the teacher was doing and why. And my perspective on it and being able to go back and read it now after another semester; I was like...ok, that makes sense.

This student's appreciation and excitement are manifested in her words. Rather than just learning something new in the course and leaving it at that, she, like other students, had the opportunity to see what she had learned about in action. This is especially important with an assessment method as complex as the running record, which is foreign to the majority of my students each semester. This naturally facilitates the connection-making process, in which students found delight.

Finding 3: Pre-service teachers value the dialogue journal process in several ways.

The third research question is “do pre-service teachers value the dialogue journal process” and “in what ways? As part of the concluding dialogue journal assignment, students were asked to share their thoughts regarding the use of dialogue journals in the course. While looking closely at these entries, several themes materialized: feedback and individualized learning, deep understanding of course content, reflection, firsthand experience with assessment, difficulty with dialogue journals, the dialogue journal as an assessment tool, and expressing opinions and thoughts.

Feedback and individualized learning.

This [the dialogue journal] also gives me the opportunity to have my professor learn about me and how I perceive the concepts she is introducing to me, which I hope is beneficial for the both of us.

Students commented that the dialogue journals were a place for the instructor to provide individualized feedback and instruction. After they submitted their journal entries online, the course instructor read and responded personally with comments and questions. This helped them realize that their journals were “being read and taken seriously” (Ewald, 2006, p. 43). One student mentioned, “the journal really met us where we are,” showing that this was an opportunity for the instructor to use Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development (1978) in order to respond to each student’s individual needs. Other students wrote about how they enjoyed the dialogue journal assignments because they “got personal feedback from [the instructor] on what [the students] thought was interesting or what surprised [them] about reading assessment” and that the

assessment was on a “personal level,” unlike quizzes and tests. The work of Bayat (2010), Garmon (2001), and Lee (2004) supports this with their recognition of how written discourse between the professor and pre-service teachers may lead to the formation of positive relationships.

Interviewees were asked to share more about their attitudes toward the dialogue component of the journal assignments. Participant 1 had the following to say: “What you responded to – it was specific and I could tell that you had read it [the journal entry]. So that really helped me to feel like you cared...like it mattered to you.” Participant 2 commented, “Having feedback on what I wrote was good. I saw someone had actually read it...and was interested in it.” Participant 4 added that the instructor’s feedback had a “more personal feeling to it,” in contrast to “glancing over it and slapping a grade on it.” Their comments suggest that it is indeed important that their work is read and that they have a purpose and an audience. In order for them to feel that their words were valued, the instructor responded to entries with specific comments and questions, rather than generic ones, as Conle (1996) suggested, in hopes of creating this feeling in students.

Participant 1 claimed that the instructor’s responses also helped to “build rapport,” since there is “not enough time in class to listen to everyone’s stories, and not everyone is confident enough to share in class.” As noted in Barkhuizen (1995) and Camicia (2011), course instructors sometimes use the dialogue journals as a venue to become acquainted with their students as people. This student would agree that her dialogue journal was more than just a place to write about what she had learned; it was also a place to be herself.

Deep understanding of course content.

For some students, keeping an academic journal for the course was an effective way to develop deep understanding of course content by reviewing notes and making connections. Their comments support the work of Carter (1988), Garmon (2001), Good and Whang (2002), Siegel and Wissehr (2011), and Watson (2010), who all reported that student teachers indicated that writing in a dialogue journal helped them learn and remember course content. When asked to write about how they felt about using the journals during the course, many students mentioned reinforcement of learning. One student even said, "I think that writing the dialogue diary helped me put the classroom discussions in cement in my mind."

It helps reinforce the information better because we learn the information and then have to think about how it affects as teachers and how we will actually use this information in the future to help us become better teachers.

Information seems to "stick" better when I can explain it in my own words. I would have studied for [quizzes] but I would not have retained the information like I did with the journals.

[The journal] helps keep things in memory more than cram studying for a test or quiz. With the quizzes and tests, all you do is study and memorize the information and after a while you forget everything. I believe that the reflections students write for the journals go in their long-term memory.

For some students, writing dialogue journal entries helped them “process and link” what they were talking about in class and “apply the knowledge that [they] learned about reading assessment” to what is happening in real classrooms. One student commented that the journals gave her “further insight for each topic,” as opposed to taking tests and “only focus[ing] on key facts and try[ing] to memorize things.”

Participant 1 had this to say about the need to story in a dialogue journal.

When you connect what you're learning in class to something that you've done before it makes that connection, that knowledge stays in your brain and makes sense. That's what I've noticed throughout the whole [teacher education] program, it's just kind of connecting the dots. Because I've worked with kids so much, everything I'm learning from teachers...it's like, ok, that's why that works, why that makes sense. The dialogue journals let us put our own scenarios in there and solidify our understanding in an anecdotal form. I relate things to stories. You don't learn to become a teacher in a college classroom. You have to have those experiences with the kids and you have to relate them.

What is important to this student is that she communicates her personal stories in a way that helps her make connections. Humans tell stories to connect to the past and to other experiences they have had; this is the “connecting the dots” she speaks of. Otherwise, there are isolated incidences that are usually forgotten.

Participant 3 talked about how writing journal entries after class “required [her] to look back and review what [she] had done so far.” She added that this allowed her to connect what she was learning to her field observations and internalize the material.

Participant 4 felt similarly, saying that if “we wouldn’t have done this [wrote journal entries], I wouldn’t be able to sit here and talk to you [the interviewer] today. For her, writing about information from class helped her to “remember it longer.” This interview took place approximately six months after she completed the course, and in order for her to be able to discuss the dialogue journaling process that we used as part of the course and refer to her experiences assessing children’s reading in real-life classrooms, it was necessary for her to record what she observed and what she was learning during class sessions. For her, writing and reflecting equaled retention of content. Participant 2 read parts of this chapter that included her comments, and she indicated that they looked “great” and that what she said in her interview is indeed conveyed here.

Reflection.

When the dialogue journals were assigned at the beginning of the semester, the directions indicated that students were to write about connections, new learning, and questions. The instructor did not use the word “reflection” in the assignment description located in the syllabus or when discussing the assignment in class. Yet many students wrote about how the journals helped them “reflect on what [they were] learning in class.” The following dialogue journal excerpts support the work of Zulich, et al. (1992), who maintain that dialogue journals are a manageable way that reflective practice can be realized in teacher preparation courses.

I feel that reflecting on one's learning will help us in the long run instead of cramming at the last minute for a quiz and that we will forget the information as soon as we finish our quiz, therefore, quizzes are not always the best way to measure what students have learned.

I feel like so many of my classes I sit and study reviews and try to memorize the "right answers" and in this class I was really able to reflect back and go through notes and Power Points and really revisit what I learned.

I believe that being reflective on what we have learned and writing in a journal format instead of taking quizzes helped me overall. A big part of becoming a teacher is learning to be reflective on the things we have learned and what/how we teach our students.

It is evident that these students spent the time processing the course material and found that more valuable than simply storing the information in their short-term memories and reciting it on a test.

When it comes to an online quiz or test, I feel stressed out and I just try to process the information that I think will be on that quiz or test instead of really taking in everything that I have learned. When writing a journal entry, it helps me reflect on what we have been learning and connect that to what I hope to do as a future teacher.

I preferred writing journals in lieu of taking quizzes and tests because it allowed me to really process information and reflect on my learning rather than just learning information for a short period of time to earn a grade.

I only ever rarely study or retain what I learn for a test, whereas I was able gain greater insight from the journals and look reflectively at my own learning process throughout the course.

It seems as though these students are serious about the act of reflection. To them, this entails returning to notes taken in class and reviewing those notes so that they can process the information. They also see it as rehearsal for their future teaching careers, since they are aware of the importance of becoming a reflective practitioner.

Firsthand experience with assessment.

One of the assessment methods discussed in the course is the use of dialogue journals and how they can be used as tools to assess students' learning. As the course instructor, I wanted to engage students in authentic assessment methods, rather than just showing them. Herrington et al. (2002) describe this as *situated learning*. I agreed with Rogers and Riedel's (1999) view that instructor modeling helps form the assessment philosophies of pre-service teachers. Several students mentioned that experiencing this method firsthand as part of the course was beneficial.

I feel that hands on, authentic assessment has a greater impact on students than traditional assessment. That is why I believe journals were a much better way to assess what we have learned.

I loved the journals in lieu of multiple-choice quizzes. It was refreshing and validating to experience an education course that practiced what it preached.

Also, I feel that this subject and class are very hands-on so I feel that a traditional

formal assessment would be inappropriate. I like the fact that we were doing something with what we have learned, not just memorizing it for a test and then forgetting it.

The preceding comments from students confirm the work of Allen and Flippo (2002), that taking part in assessments they are being taught themselves is an effective way to learn about these methods.

Difficulty with journals.

Although most students commented positively in regard to the dialogue journals, there were a couple students who spoke of difficulty with the use of journals and had suggestions for improving the assignment. As their instructor, I felt it was essential to the success of the course to attend to their concerns. One student shared the feeling of not “know[ing] exactly what is expected,” and another said, “I never felt that I understood exactly what you wanted me to write about.” Their statements echo the findings of Barkhuizen (1995), Francis, (1995), and Lee (2004), that students want to write what their professor thinks is correct and what she or he wants to hear. One student was upfront about how the assignment could be improved to help students combat the above problem.

I feel that I would have benefitted more had I been given specific prompt. I believe that I would have retained more information had I been asked to explain more information discussed in the class.

The journal as an assessment tool.

After using the dialogue journal for a semester, students recognized that it could be used as an assessment tool. One student wrote, “By writing how we feel and what we have learned, I think you can better gauge our learning.” Dunlap (2006), Garmon (2001), and Good and Whang (2002) indicated similar findings, that often more can be learned by reading students’ journal entries than using a more formal type of assessment. Other students clearly felt the same way when considering the differences between the journal and tests.

It gives us a chance to express what we have learned and really think about it verses a test that is cut and dry, right or wrong.

I do like this way of assessing better than tests and quizzes. I feel as though you can find out what we know from what we write as opposed to deciding whether or not we really knew an answer to a multiple choice question, or if we just guessed.

Students’ comments below show how they not only knew their instructor was assessing what they were learning in the course, but also that she was there to respond.

It also enables the teacher to know if the correct information was learned, which could allow for intervention in the event the student did not get it correct.

With writing journal and dialogue entries it helped me voice to my professor what I understand and what I don’t understand. It also gives my professor better insight to what I am actually learning and what I need to learn.

Adams (1996), Gallagher, et al., (2008), Lee (2004), and Mansor, et al. (2011) support their opinions by saying that reading journal entries is in fact an alternative assessment act that can be used to determine what is and is not working in class and use the resulting information to meet the needs of students.

It is also exciting to read that students saw such value in the dialogue journals that they realize the implications for this kind of assessment in their future classrooms.

I also learned several alternative ways of assessing student learning. One assessment is this dialogue diary. I really like it. I have spent more time looking back through my notes to check my understanding than I would on a multiple choice quiz.

This is a better way to authentically assess the students' knowledge of what they learned that week.

When asked to talk about her experience with the dialogue journals as part of the course during an open-ended interview, the first participant expressed that she liked that “you [the instructor] weren’t evaluating us on what experience we had, but you wanted to check our understanding rather than just grade us [with] a multiple-choice test.” In class, we spent a lot of time talking about assessments that are alternatives to administering tests. Here, this student notices that her instructor is actually demonstrating the use of one of these alternatives.

Voice and expression.

The words “voice” and “express” appeared often in students’ remarks about using dialogue journals as part of the course. Stevens and Cooper (2009) remind university

instructors that students bring their experiences to their courses and that they should be “validated as knowing something” (p. 37). Students’ responses such as “we got to express how we felt about class,” “I get to say what is on my mind,” and “You get to see our perspective of this class,” confirm that this is important to them. Bliem and Davinroy (1997, p. 1) state, “without considering [these] perspectives...changes in assessment and instruction are likely to be both superficial and fleeting.” One student commented, “I am a person who likes to get my voice heard,” indicating that having the opportunity to write freely about the course is important. Other students mentioned that the dialogue journals presented this opportunity and noted that quizzes and tests do not.

A quiz and test will only tell you a limited amount of information, while students doing journals and diaries are able to type everything out and tell you what are the best things they have enjoyed the most and learned the most about. It also gives students a way to express themselves freely and individually about the course.

I feel that writing journals is the best way for education majors to learn. We express our experiences and emotions, as well as relive them. It places more importance on what we are reflecting on and how we are growing as pre-service teachers rather than memorizing facts about reading assessment. It also takes a lot of the anxiety away and makes me feel like I am free to share what I really think or have learned. Helps build that "safe" environment!

The following quotes demonstrate that students enjoyed being able to share their own ideas in their journals, unlike what they would be expected to do on a formal assessment.

I wasn't sure if I'd like writing journals or not, but after having to do it all semester I found that I like doing the journals. Instead of trying to memorize answers to questions it was nice just to comfortably write about my thoughts and opinions about what we're learning in class.

I personally loved having the online journal, since I was able to explain my thoughts more clearly through this option. Quizzes are more "one answer is right" versus the journals being a tool that helps individual students express their own opinions on certain things. I found the journal was effective, and I was able to put my thoughts together better.

I enjoyed writing journals rather than taking quizzes and tests because I got to write down my own experiences and learn about different strategies that can be used in my future classroom. I get to place my own voice into my assignments.

Students who were interviewed said they were able to “freely respond” and “write informally” about how they felt, “just like they were writing [the instructor] an email.” This shows that some students used the dialogue journals as a way to authentically communicate.

It is now August, and students in the summer class have moved on, leaving traces of their stories behind. However, like the writer of the poem, *Things* (see Chapter One), they now have all these thoughts to keep with them and read later when needed. After reflecting on the kinds of writing they did in their dialogue journals, I compose questions for the fall class's entries. These will eventually morph into research questions for this study:

1. How do students use stories about their experiences as students to connect to course content to understand the material presented about literacy assessment?
2. How do students use stories about their experiences in classrooms during field experiences to connect to course content and understand the material presented about literacy assessment?
3. Do pre-service teachers value the dialogue journal process? In what ways?

To respond to these questions, two kinds of materials were collected and analyzed. First, the researcher explored students' dialogue journal entries, searching for a broad range of themes. Next, each of the four students from this group participated in a one-to-one, semi-structured interview with the researcher. These interviews were recorded and transcribed so that the researcher could again code these and expand on the original journal entries. Findings were organized by using the three research questions as headings and occurring themes as subheadings. Quotes taken from participants' dialogue journal entries and interview transcripts are included throughout to provide examples of each theme. Using their actual words provides the results with credence.

This chapter presented the three main findings uncovered by this study: pre-service teachers use stories about their experiences as students to connect to course

content and understand the material presented about literacy assessment, as well as stories about their field experiences to connect to course content. They also value the dialogue journal process in various ways. Within each of these findings, common themes emerged that show how students used the dialogue journals as a learning tool. Findings from the interviews supported those from actual dialogue journal entries.

The first finding to surface in this study is that pre-service teachers wrote about their personal experiences as students in order to understand content taught in the course. Particular topics covered during class sessions were pivotal in sparking memories, such as standardized testing, the gradual release of responsibility concept, reading attitudes, and grading student work. Students remembered that most of the assessment that occurred when they were in elementary, middle, and high school was in the form of standardized testing, and this may be why they entered the class equating assessment with testing. They recalled the many hours spent on test preparation, as well as the stress and anxiety that were attached to these tests. Their stories helped them understand that, although standardized and formal testing is a part of reality in the schools and it is crucial to know how to adequately prepare students for these, there are other methods to assess students' learning. Calling up these experiences may help them examine their own practices with future students.

We returned to the concept of the gradual release of responsibility over and over again during the course. At first, students saw this term and were unsure of its definition and application in the real classroom. However, after being encouraged to ponder how they learned to do something (drive, cook, knit, etc.), they began to comprehend how it pertains to teaching, learning, and assessment.

Many students wrote narratives about their lives as readers. Some spoke of positive reading experiences, others spoke of negative experiences, and some spoke of turning points when they started disliking or liking reading. They wrote how they wished their teachers had used some of the alternative assessment tools with them that we discussed in class. Some students went beyond these stories to say that these experiences will influence the way they will work with their own students, taking care to try practices that made them want to read and trying to not make the same mistakes that their teachers made to deter them from reading.

Grading students' work is a major issue for students in this course. Many of them talk about being bound to their grades as if they were the most important aspect of school. They have memories of receiving papers with grades marked on them in a haphazard manner. They are taking these memories and turning them into a goal of grading student work in meaningful ways.

The second finding to emerge is that students also wrote about their classroom observations. Common topics included here were their noticings about standardized testing, working with struggling readers, and using running records in the real world classroom. They mentioned how they had visited schools only to be told that students would be taking benchmarks tests all day. They also spoke of the anxiety and stress that they had seen in students around test-taking time. These observations affected their thinking about how they would approach assessment in their future classrooms. They wrote about how they wanted to find other ways to assess their students as well as ways to approach necessary formal tests to make them less stressful.

Another theme that ran through students' stories about their time spent in classrooms was working with struggling readers. Students had not realized the different ways children might struggle with reading. Some were unsure how to help these children because the act of reading had always come easy for them. As we talked about the complexities and facets of reading in class, they connected these specific students they encountered during field experiences and thought about how they would help their own students.

Learning how to take a running record of a child's oral reading was a challenge for students. However, writing about the process as well as the opportunities they had to both observe and practice this assessment led to their proficiency with the task. Students wrote about their frustration as they were first learning how and that this feeling transformed into enjoyment after being able to walk into a classroom and assist a teacher with running records.

This study revealed a third finding in students' journal entries. The majority of students valued the dialogue journal process as part of the literacy assessment course. Themes that ran through their discussions about using journals was feedback from the instructor and individualized learning, deep understanding of course content, opportunities for reflection and expression, firsthand experience with assessment, and using journals as assessment tools. A few students also communicated some difficulty with the task.

Students wrote that the journal created opportunities for individualized feedback and learning. The fact that the instructor read their entries and took them seriously was important to many students. They appreciated that the responses were personal and

helped to build rapport. The use of the dialogue journal as an instructional tool became evident to them since the instructor provided specific responses and questions tailored to each student, meeting them where they were at that moment in time.

Writing about new learning and connecting other experiences with topics allowed students to understand course content at a deep level. They developed the habit of reviewing their class notes and writing them down in another format that led to the retention of the many assessment methods and teaching strategies taught in class. Students stated that this approach was superior to taking a test over course material, since they usually studied for tests and forgot the information later.

Most students used the word “reflect” to talk about what they did to write their journal entries and said that this was necessary to be able to record what they were learning. Not only did they have to think about topics presented in class; they were asked to make a connection with these by looking back on their own experiences as students and observers in classrooms.

Because the instructor asked students to keep a journal themselves while also discussing its uses as a literacy assessment tool, they indicated that they were experiencing the process firsthand. This delighted them, because in many of their teacher certification courses, they learn about strategies in theory, but are not afforded the chance to participate. They indicated that, with this method, they benefitted from instructor modeling and taking part in a practice that was covered in class.

The words “voice” and “expression” appeared in quite a few entries. Students enjoyed being able to tell their stories and share them with someone else. They wrote how this is not something that would be possible on tests or quizzes. They basked in the

freedom of being able to express their ideas and opinions about the course and its content and know that their voices were being heard.

CHAPTER 5 – SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The topic for this study appeared by accident and because of a need to get to know my students as learners and as people. My desire was to teach the Literacy Assessment course with everything I had; not solely by imparting knowledge, but also giving a part of myself to my students. This was not an easy task, given that I had 64 students during one semester. However, through writing, I found that I could reach them individually and help them along their journey to becoming sensitive observers of children in the classroom.

I had other purposes for writing with them in dialogue journals. Students had the opportunity to find their stories and share them in new ways in order to understand course content. They were free to express themselves in narrative form so that they could retell and relive their life experiences. They did all of this while getting firsthand experience with an alternative assessment tool.

The purpose of this study was to investigate ways pre-service teachers enrolled in a teacher education course in literacy assessment demonstrate their internalization of course content through writing. Three questions guided the research:

1. How do students use stories about their experiences as students to connect to course content to understand the material presented about literacy assessment?
2. How do students use stories about their field experiences to connect to course content and understand the material presented about literacy assessment?
3. Do pre-service teachers value the dialogue journal process? In what ways?

Statement of the Problem

Teachers tend to use the word *assessment* interchangeably with *testing*. Then *testing* becomes *formal testing*. Assessment, however, encompasses not only testing, but also a myriad of other measures, such as running records, observational notes, and written responses. It is important that teacher educators share many forms of assessment with pre-service teachers so that they will be prepared for the real-life classroom. To accomplish this, literacy assessment course instructors should show students how through demonstration.

Review of the Methodology

Due to the nature of the research questions, qualitative methods were called for. Since the questions were related to how students tell stories to understand course material, narrative inquiry and coding were used. Narrative inquiry involves more than telling stories; people share stories and tell them for a purpose, such as to make a connection or process material.

The research sample consisted of 64 undergraduate students enrolled in a curriculum and instruction course during the Fall 2012 semester. This course, Literacy Assessment for Reading and Writing, is offered as part of a teacher certification program at a large urban university. These students ranged in age from 20 to 40 and were classified as sophomores, juniors, and seniors. They were chosen based on convenience, as they were enrolled in two sections of the course offered by the primary investigator of this study. Four students were purposefully chosen from the original sample to participate in interviews. These students were available to be on campus for face-to-face interviews.

The researcher collected two types of material. For the broadening (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) phase of the study, students' electronic journal entries were used. There were approximately four entries per each of the 64 students who were part of the sample. The university's institutional review board approved the use of these archival entries.

The four student interviews were semi-structured, informal, and conversational in nature. Interviews were audio-recorded so that the researcher could transcribe them afterwards. IRB approval for interviews was secured, and each participant received a letter of informed consent.

In order to analyze the gathered materials, the researcher printed dialogue journal entries and interview transcripts on paper. Excerpts from students' journal entries were coded first based on the three research questions. After posting these in three large categories on a large wall, the researcher then searched for themes within each category and assigned a name to each theme. Categories were then refined by deleting those with few responses and combining those that blended well. Interview transcripts were coded based on the categories derived from the journal entries. This act of burrowing (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) was necessary to add and support to the information obtained from analyzing the journals.

Because the material used in this study was written or told by students, the researcher was cognizant of ethical considerations. Several measures were taken to meet these. Each interviewee received an informed consent letter before her interview. Also, written representation of students' entries and interview responses has not and will not contain names of individual participants. Although interview participants' names had to

be connected to their dialogue journal entries, all electronic and hardcopy materials will be stored in a secure location.

To ensure trustworthiness of this study, the researcher took member checks with each of the four students interviewed. Each student received a copy of Chapter 4 of this study, with their quotes and the researcher's accompanying comments highlighted for their review. They read the material, and each student provided her consent that, indeed, the researcher represented them as they intended. Also, the researcher has taken care to provide rigorous explanations of how the journal entries and interview transcripts were collected and analyzed for dependability.

Summary of the Results

Analysis of the students' journal entries and verbal responses to interview questions reveals several findings related to how students enrolled in the literacy assessment course used their dialogue journals. First, it is clear that these pre-service teachers told stories about their own experiences as students to make connections with course content in order to understand it. Their stories revolved around several themes: standardized testing experiences, the gradual release of responsibility concept, reading attitudes, and grading student work.

Many students had clear memories of preparing for and taking state mandated standardized reading tests. Regardless of whether their experiences were positive or negative, they became aware of the impacts of this kind of assessment and how crucial it is to understand how these will affect their lives as teachers. Some students had teachers who thoroughly prepared them for tests; others had teachers who did just the opposite. Either way, their stories helped them look toward the future to decide how they would

approach formal testing in their classrooms. They also had recollections of being anxious and stressed during test time, which made them think about how they will attend to their own students who have the same feelings.

After learning about the concept of gradual release of responsibility in one of the class sessions, students wrote about how they had learned to do something with the guidance of an adult. Their tales about these instances signaled that they had grasped the concept and what it means to use the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Reflecting on a time when they learned something quite basic, such as driving, helps pre-service teachers slow down the learning process and break it into small steps, therefore applying that concept to something new, such as guided reading or word study.

While writing about what they learned in class each week, a majority of students shared their attitudes toward reading, either as youngsters, adults, or both. They spoke of instructional routines their teachers had used and how these affected their feelings toward reading. Those who wrote that they had always enjoyed reading indicated that they had never thought about the reading process, the complexities surrounding it, and how to teach children who struggle with decoding, fluency, and comprehension. Others, who candidly shared that they did not consider themselves proficient readers and did not like to read, wrote how they would use these feelings to help them be empathetic to and compassionate about their future students who might find reading difficult. Both sets of pre-service teachers said that they would remember what their own teachers did with them and replicate those that were positive and avoid those that were not. These stories were instrumental in helping them work through and write about the kinds of reading teachers they wanted to be.

There is always serious talk surrounding grading, as there should be. After participating in an in-class activity where students turned in pretend papers and received a “grade” on them without feedback, students wrote about their reactions. This brought up recent and earlier experiences of getting graded work back from their teachers. All students who wrote about this said that their teachers often handed back work with a letter or number grade without attached explanation or feedback. They spoke of being confused and unsure why they received the grade they did, whether it was an “A” or a “D.” These stories prompted them to think about how they would be more thoughtful when assigning grades than their teachers were.

The second finding is that pre-service teachers also told stories about their observations in the field and connected these to course content in order to understand the material presented in class. These stories centered around standardized testing, working with struggling readers, and taking running records. In addition to listing their own experiences about standardized testing, students also wrote about what they noticed during visits to schools. This usually consisted of how much time was investing in preparing for and taking practice and benchmark tests. After they wrote about what they witnessed, many students also said that they hope to find other ways to prepare students to take formal tests without sacrificing a large amount of precious instructional time.

During most class sessions, discussions included ways to work with struggling readers. Many students indicated that they were not aware of the large numbers of students in schools who have difficulty with reading and that students could have problems in different areas of reading. After observing children in real classrooms, they wrote that they were starting to understand that children might have difficulty with

decoding text, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, or a mix of these. Taking what they were learning in class and connecting it to their work in classrooms gave them a solid understanding of what it means to work with students who need supplemental reading instruction.

Taking a running record, a child's oral reading of a text, is a skill that is paramount for teachers to know. When students in the class were first exposed to running records, they wrote about how confused they were and how they struggled to keep up with the coding as they listened to samples of oral reading. However, after practicing the task, they began to feel more comfortable with it. This practice occurred in classrooms where they were able to listen to children read as they either watched in-service teachers administer the assessment or administer it themselves. Their excitement was unmistakable as they wrote about finally understanding what they had seen teachers doing as they sat next to a child and coded their reading. They were thrilled to learn to do something in one of their teacher certification classes that they knew they would actually use.

All but a few students recorded that they valued the dialogue journal as a learning and assessment tool. They used it as a place to reflect on course material and their work with children and to express themselves. Recurring themes regarding their attitudes toward the journals as used during the course were feedback and individualized learning, deep understanding of course content, reflection, firsthand experience with assessment, the journal as an assessment tool, and voice and expression. There were very few students who mentioned difficulty with the dialogue journal; however, their responses have been mentioned in the findings chapter of this study.

Students were aware that their instructor was reading their journals and taking them seriously. Because they received specific comments and questions with each entry response in addition to a grade, they felt that their entries mattered. Many students mentioned that this personal feedback helped build rapport and foster a relationship with their instructor and that this would not have been possible with other measures of assessment traditionally administered in teacher education courses. Also noted were statements related to the instructor being able to meet students where they are and help them move forward.

As students wrote their entries, they began to see their journals as an effective method for reviewing notes they had taken during class. Their commentaries revealed that this helped reinforce their learning, as they were able to take the time needed to process information and connect it to reading assessment as they observed it in real-life classrooms. For them, this was a more effective way of learning course content than simply memorizing a mass of information for a test and forgetting it later. Interestingly, the instructor never included the word “reflection” in the description of the journal assignment in the syllabus or in class. However, about half of the 64 students used the word when writing about how they used the journals. They said that they not only reviewed their notes, they also used the process of reflection to go deeper into the material and to recall their own stories.

In addition to using their journals as a venue for digesting new information, many students regarded the journal as an assessment tool, even before discussing their use for this purpose in class. They communicated that, through instructor modeling, they learned about assessment through participation. Several students said that using journals to learn

and be assessed by made sense for a course on literacy assessment and that listening to a lecture and regurgitating information on a test would not have helped prepare them to assess their students. Through firsthand experience with this type of informal assessment, it is also evident that students knew their compositions were being taken into consideration for future class sessions.

Including voice and personality in their journal entries seems to have been important to students. They saw the dialogue journal as a platform for expressing what was on their minds and being validated for their knowledge. Several students remarked that they could freely respond to course topics and authentically communicate with their professor. These were opportunities that other forms of assessment just do not offer.

Very few students indicated that they struggled with the dialogue journal process. Those who did mentioned that they were not sure what was expected and did not know what the instructor wanted. Their emphasis was on being correct, rather than working through the course material. Another student said that specific prompts would have helped provide some direction.

Discussion of the Results

The dialogue journal is designated as such for a reason. It is a place to write, tell stories, and work through ideas, depending on the writer's purpose. For this occasion, the writers were pre-service teachers writing for an audience, their literacy assessment course instructor. I developed this assignment because I wanted students to experience an alternative assessment method firsthand and demonstrate their new and existing knowledge in a way that would ensure they were learning the course material. During my tenure as a reading teacher in public elementary schools, I did not get to know my

students as readers and as people by analyzing their scores on tests; rather, I listened. Why change my thinking just because the age of my students changed?

Finding 1: Pre-service teachers connect stories about their experiences as students to course content to understand the material presented about literacy assessment.

As stated before, surprise was the first feeling to appear when I began reading students' dialogue journal entries. Next came a sensation of being overwhelmed because of the amount of reading I would have to do. I did not expect them to write so much about themselves, to tell their own stories to a virtual stranger. Students enter teacher education programs with a wealth of personal classroom experiences; for even though they have not begun student teaching, they have been students themselves for many years and have witnessed effective and inferior teaching. They have a fresh perspective on taking state-mandated exams. According to Bliem and Davinroy (1997), teachers use their beliefs as a "lens through which they view their practices" (p. 3). At the same time, these pre-service teachers should not rely on experiences alone; instead, they need to link them up with new learning taken from their courses in order to form new views about teaching, learning, and assessment. They can do this more effectively through writing than taking quizzes and tests. As noted in Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative is a "powerful way for individuals to give accounts of their experience" (p. 102). Indeed, writing regularly in a journal encouraged students in the course to tell their stories, as topics reminded them of "half-forgotten experiences" (Conle, 1996, p. 301).

Teachers often equate assessment with testing (Graham, 2005), as many of these students did when they began the literacy assessment course. They remembered their own

encounters with standardized tests and used these to try and understand what their future students will have to know and be able to do. Bliem and Davinroy, (1997), Graham, Herrington (2002), and Volante and Fazio (2007) write that new teachers usually use assessment methods that their own teachers used with them. The journals gave them the chance to think about their experiences as test-takers and how their teachers prepared them for and used the results of formal measures.

There were many students who took into consideration their own past and present attitudes toward reading. They wrote about themselves because class discussions called forth strong memories. Conle termed this process “resonance” and is when a topic reminds us of something else (1996). Whether they see themselves as proficient readers or not, they will most likely carry their previous readerly lives with them into their classrooms, where they will recreate what favorite teachers did for them and avoid things that made them dislike reading. This is compatible with Bliem and Davinroy’s (1997) and Graham’s (2005) notion of how teacher candidates often employ methods with which they were taught.

Finding 2: Pre-service teachers use stories about their field experiences to connect to course content and understand the material presented about literacy assessment.

Crucial to their comprehension of course material, pre-service teachers wrote about what they had seen during their required classroom visits. Their enthusiasm showed through as they recorded observations of various topics we discussed in class. With each story told, it seems as though they realized that what they were learning in class actually happened in classrooms, and what was happening in classrooms was

discussed in class. Making links between what real teachers do and what is taught at the university is what will help them learn about assessment, as noted by Boud (2001). The journal is, as Jalongo and Isenberg state, “the story of [their] professional life and is probably one of the best professional development projects [they] can undertake” (1995, p. 213).

When students wrote about standardized testing, many talked about how they had seen a considerable amount of testing during field experiences, including test preparation and benchmarks. Their frustration was evident as they saw the amount of instructional time spent on this, which matches Johnston and Costello’s (2005), Mayor’s (2005), and Stiggins’s (1985) findings that in-service teachers spend a great amount of time on formal assessment each day. On a brighter note, many students were able to watch and sometimes participate in the administration of running records. Although learning how to administer this assessment, which involves listening to a child’s oral reading of a text, was challenging at first, those students who saw it in action in the classroom found it easier to do. This supports other research that says learning how to observe students’ reading behaviors involves a great deal of practice (Clay, 2005a; Frey & Schmitt, 2007; Heritage, 2007; Johnston & Costello, 2005; Stiggins, 2002). They also recognized the difference in the usefulness of data obtained from running records versus the data obtained from standardized tests. Students saw the value of using running records as a reading assessment and how they could use the information obtained to drive instruction. Heritage (2007), Kohler, et al. (2008), and Routman (2003) agreed that teachers have to know how to listen to students’ reading and draw inferences in order to know where students are.

Finding 3: Pre-service teachers value the dialogue journal process in several ways.

At the end of the semester-long course, the majority of students declared that they found the dialogue journal assignment to be a worthwhile activity. They liked that the journals were a place for their instructor to provide individualized instruction and feedback. This let them know that she read their entries with care; therefore they knew that what they had to say mattered. This written discourse led to the development of positive relationships, which is supported by Bayat (2010), Garmon (2001), and Lee (2004).

Almost all students reported that their dialogue journals were a learning tool, one that they used to delve deeper into course content. Seemingly, they relished in the act of penning their stories as a way to fuse themselves to what they were learning. Similar discoveries about remembering course content through writing were noted in Carter (1988), Garmon (2001), Good & Whang (2002), Wissehr (2011), and Watson (2010). “Reflection” appeared in students’ entries over and over again as they discussed how taking the time to really think about course topics made them palpable. They most likely used the term “reflection” because of the many exposures to the process in their other education courses. I had chosen not to include it in my written and verbal description of the journal assignment because of this. The word is spoken so often to teacher candidates, that I am afraid it will lose its significance. That being said, it was satisfying to see them use it in ways that helped them learn. Several researchers consider the place of reflection in journals. Jalongo and Isenberg (1995) say that when teachers write narratives about teaching, it promotes reflection. Zulich, et al. (1992) state that dialogue journals are a

practical way for students to reflect on teacher education courses. After perusing these students' journals, one can indeed see the quantity and quality of the manifestation of the literacy assessment course content.

As sublime as it was to read students' own words as they described how they used their journals as a learning tool, even better were their revelations that their instructor was also employing the journals as an assessment tool. Their instructor's demonstration of how to use journals in this fashion gave students firsthand experience with assessment. Herrington, et al. (2002) and Rogers and Riedel (1999) hold this practice in high regard. While journals are a good place to "broaden" their knowledge of themselves as learners (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), they are also a better way for instructors to gauge learning than administering formal assessments (Dunlap, 2006; Garmon, 2001; Good & Whang, 2002). As reported in Adams (1996), Gallagher, et al., (2008), Lee (2004), and Mansor et al. (2011), instructors can use students' entries to decide what is and is not working during class sessions and use this information to refine instruction.

A surprising, yet delightful, theme found in students' journal entries was that they said they liked having the opportunity to express themselves in ways they could not have otherwise. They reveled in the chance to add voice to their writing. They simply wanted to be heard and let their professor know that they had real and important stories to tell. Both Bliem and Davinroy (1997) and Stevens and Cooper (2009) found that course instructors must listen to students' voices and take their thoughts into account when planning subsequent class sessions. Even though there were just three students who indicated that they experienced difficulty writing in their dialogue journals, their voices, too, need to be heard. Their troubles echo findings of Barkhuizen (1995), Francis (1995),

and Lee (2004); they were focused on what they thought their instructor wanted to hear and needed more direction with the journaling assignment.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study are not meant to be generalized to a larger population, as this sample of students is small and specific to this setting. However, the findings presented can be transferred to other teacher education courses. Teacher educators can examine the outcomes of this study to implement new practices or revise existing ones.

First, instructors may want to encourage their students to explore their personal stories, as well as those from field experiences, so that they can link these to course content. By doing this, they send the message to students that their life experiences are important to their future careers as teachers. Teacher candidates need time and a platform in order to story what they know about standardized testing and the gradual release of responsibility. They need the help of their instructors to uncover this knowledge that they may not know is there otherwise. Also, as students in the literacy assessment course consider their attitudes toward reading, they begin to connect these to strategies discussed in class and think about how they would use them with their own students. For pre-service teachers who enjoy reading and to whom learning to read came easily, journaling may cause them to think about how they would emulate what their teachers did with them to encourage this. For those who have never liked to read or describe themselves as struggling readers, journaling may bring to the surface the reasons why, therefore causing them to avoid those same practices with their future students.

Second, teacher educators can use dialogue journals to get to know their students personally, as they offer a kind of communion between themselves and the writer. It can

be difficult to develop relationships with students during a three-hour per week course and with 30 or more students. Students might be more apt to share in a written journal than in front of a whole class. Conle (1996) invites teacher educators to think of how they could help develop the “bedside manners” of future teachers by engaging in authentic conversation with them (p. 321). Another benefit of one-to-one writing is the individualized learning that can occur as the instructor provides specific feedback along with guiding questions. The dialogue journal becomes a tool for both parties involved; one for the student to reflect on class sessions and connect new learning with past experiences and one for the instructor to use these responses to assess understanding, provide immediate feedback, and plan subsequent instruction.

A third recommendation is that teacher education course instructors model all aspects of the dialogue journal. This includes writing sample entries in front of the class, providing prompt feedback, comments, and questions, and helping them to understand how making solid connections helps students learn. As stated in Lenski, et al., teachers’ assessment practices “influence student learning” (1998, p. 218). It is up to instructors to help shape future teachers by allowing them to experience reading assessment firsthand, rather than solely delivering course material through lecture. The best outcome of this practice would be that teacher candidates continue to write in journals themselves and use them in their own classrooms as learning and assessment tools.

Teacher educators are charged with preparing pre-service teachers for the living, breathing classroom. It is my hope to create “professional artists” who gracefully enter the “uncertainty and uniqueness” of the life of a teacher (Schön, 1987, p. 22). It may be a difficult shift for instructors to let go and invite their students to explore their “practical

professional knowledge” (Conle, 2000, p. 55). When students are given the license to express themselves in the written format of a journal, and when they know that someone is on the other side really listening and ready to respond, learning will happen.

Suggestions for Additional Research

After analyzing students’ dialogue journals and interview transcripts, the researcher was able to answer the research questions. However, a few wonderings have surfaced. In what ways would their learning be enhanced had they been afforded the opportunity to share pieces of their entries with peers during class sessions? How would their writing be different if this assignment were not graded? Would they have taken as much time and written so much if they knew their entries would be read but not assigned a point value?

Next steps might be to expand the idea of voice in their journal entries, since this aspect of the journals was important to students. In what ways do students add their own voice to their journal entries, are they aware they are doing so, and how might this be transferred to the teaching their future students? Also, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study with these same pre-service teachers and follow them into their classrooms when they begin teaching. The goal would be to find out if they continued to write in some kind of professional or personal journal in order to have a place to hold their thoughts and tell their stories.

Students left this course with the understanding that, just as they want to express themselves and be heard, their future students will want these things as well. Just as receiving individualized feedback from their instructor is important to them, the same is true for those whom they will teach. Also, they were given the opportunity, through

writing, to retell and relive their stories for the purpose of learning course content, which might inspire them to do the same for their own students. They understand, at this point, that assessment is not identical to “testing,” that there are many ways to assess students’ learning, and journals are one of those.

The act of writing with my students has helped me understand that learners have to make solid connections between course content and both prior and concurrent experiences in classrooms. They considered their own experiences as students and their observations in classrooms in order to determine what kind of teachers they will be. They relived their stories on paper so that they can revisit and relive them and carry these experiences into their future classrooms.

As for myself, I will carry several things into my teaching life. I will listen to my students so that I can provide them with meaningful, individualized, and specific feedback. They enter teacher education courses with varied experiences and need venues for telling their stories. I will continue to retell and relive my stories on paper while I encourage my students to do the same. After all, writing things down means you “still got it.”

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APPENDIX A

DIALOGUE JOURNAL DIRECTIONS AND PROMPTS

Appendix A

Dialogue Journal Directions and Prompts

Each week we have class during the semester, you will reflect on the topics discussed in class as related to assessment. You will be asked to turn in a few entries at a time via the Dialogue Diary link page in Blackboard Learn. (See course schedule for due dates) I will comment on your entries. As long as your writing is thoughtful, related to course content, includes some personal reactions and connections to course content, and is at least half a page in length, you will receive full credit for each entry. This is free writing; however, please address things such as these:

- *What was new learning for you this week?
- *In what ways might you apply this learning in your future classroom?
- *What surprised you?
- *What connections did you have to the topics discussed in class this week?
- *What would you like to know more about?
- *In what ways is the experience of journaling helping you learn course material?

APPENDIX B

DIALOGUE JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC

Appendix B

Dialogue Journal Assignment Rubric

	Levels of Achievement		
Criteria	Novice	Competent	Proficient
Connections to course content	0 Points Missing this piece	1 Points Some connections to course content	2 Points Thoughtful connections to and application of course content
Connections to personal experiences	0 Points Missing this piece	1 Points Some connections to personal experiences	2 Points Thoughtful connections to personal experiences
Connections to future classroom and future learning	0 Points Missing this piece	1 Points Some connections to future classroom and future learning	2 Points Thoughtful connections to future classroom and future learning
Summary of learning experiences for course	0 Points Missing this piece	1 Points Some written summary of learning experiences in the course	2 Points Thoughtful written summary of learning experiences in the course

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Interview Protocol

- In what ways did you use the journal entries to make connections to course material presented in class?
- How did you use your stories (connections about yourself as a student) to understand course material?
 - Connections about yourself as a student
 - Give participant examples from her journal (yellow highlighting)
 - Connections to what you observed during your field experiences or other teaching experiences
 - Give participant examples from her journal (blue highlighting)
- How did you use your stories (connections to what you observed during your field experiences) to understand course material?
- How do you feel about the journaling process?
 - Coming up with ideas to write about
 - Reading instructor responses
 - Submitting journal entries online
 - Enjoyment

○

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL LETTER

Appendix D

IRB Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
Division of Research
Institutional Review Board Application

Generated at: 6/14/2013
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Institutional Review Board 13314-01 - (2225)
 Application ID :
 Title : Preservice Teachers' Assessment Literacy

Approval details for the Application Id: 2225

	Decision	Approver Name	Date	Comment
PI signature	Approved	Fletcher, Bethanie	10/31/2012	
Faculty Sponsor signature	Approved	Hutchison, Laveria F. Dr.	02/01/2013	Approved - as per attached email approval. Mo
Chair/Dean signature	Approved	McPherson, Robert H. Dean	02/04/2013	
Chair/Dean signature	Approved	McPherson, Robert H. Dean	02/04/2013	
DOR signature	Approved	Admin, IRB	02/11/2013	

University of Houston

Division of Research

APPENDIX E

PHOTOS OF WALL WITH COLLECTED

JOURNAL AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT EXCERPTS

Appendix E

Photos of Wall with Collected Journal and Interview Transcript Excerpts

