


EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT: A DEMOCRATIC APPROACH TO  
STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT IN A READING METHODS CLASS

by


Rebecca Sue Anderson

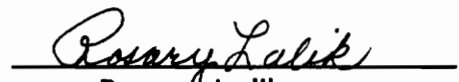
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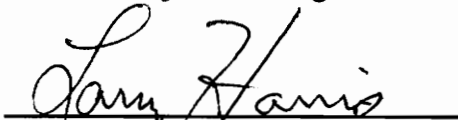
APPROVED:

  
Jerome Niles, Chairperson

  
Katherine Allen

  
Beverly Busching

  
Rosary Lalik

  
Larry Harris

  
Susan Magliaro

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Committee Chairperson: Jerome A. Niles  
Curriculum and Instruction

(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to explore student self-assessment in a reading methods class. The study is the result of my interest in alternative assessment practices in teacher education; specifically, I am searching for ways to eliminate the barriers often found in traditional assessment that inhibit constructive relationships between student learning and assessment processes. I selected an ethnographic method to capture the meaning of student self-assessment as the instructor and the preservice teachers were living the experience. Primary data collection sources included a survey questionnaire, interviews, field notes, various site artifacts and journals. All data were transcribed and coded for themes.

The results of the study illustrate how the instructor's approach to student self-assessment is important as it represents the conditions and context necessary to promote student self-

assessment. The instructor's approach consists of five properties: class climate and management, small group work, task approach, theory and practice, and student assessment. The way the preservice teachers managed and responded to student self-assessment is delineated in the section on the students' approach to student self-assessment. Their approach is defined by four properties: participating in small group work, engaging in ambiguous tasks, receiving and giving feedback, and reporting self-assessment. Finally, the study presents the factors influencing student self-assessment and a model of a democratic approach to student self-assessment practiced in the class.

The conclusions of this study suggest that the students' approach to self-assessment is linked to the instructor's approach in a complex way. The instructor's approach in the reading methods class creates the context in which the preservice teachers integrated the methods class and their field-placement experience, engaged in critical inquiry, generated the criteria for their work, received and gave feedback, revised their work, analyzed their work and participated in a democratic learning environment. The interpretations of this study imply that the alternative assessment practices used in the reading methods class studied represent one way to promote professional learning, since it enhanced the preservice teachers' becoming empowered, informed decision-makers, and independent learners.



## Acknowledgments

I love to play games, and completing this dissertation has been the most challenging and exciting game that I have ever participated in. It is impossible to list everyone that has contributed to my being able to play this game. I am fortunate to have practiced with many people during my life that have affected my learning, yet I acknowledge that without certain team members, this document would not exist. To them I am most grateful.

I promised Dr. Jim Stuart four years ago that I would thank him first. For many months, he faithfully treated me to pita sandwiches every Friday and helped me clarify my future goals. I owe my decision to join this team to him, and for that I am grateful.

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## Preface

"You may receive travel assistance from your agent, J. Niles, at anytime to insure that your adventure is a good experience for you."

The travel agent in this scenario is an instructor providing reassurance to preservice teachers enrolled in a reading methods class. The adventure he mentions involves preservice teachers who are preparing to develop and implement a literacy curriculum project in the elementary classrooms in which they are concurrently completing a field-placement assignment. They had been instructed to identify a problem or something that would enhance literacy development in these classrooms, determine how they might make changes, then carry out this new idea. When the projects were completed, the instructor responded to the preservice teachers about their work:

"What struck me is two major things. One, there is lots of talk, lots of rhetoric going on in education today about changing education, - can it be changed? - or it can't be changed, etc. etc. And what struck me about your work is the way that you analyzed the classrooms very reflectively and then thoughtfully came up with a plan that made sense for that classroom, both in terms in what the teacher would allow you to do and what the literacy needs were. Now, those are two very remarkable pieces of behavior in my judgment. Then you watched what happened and made sense of that and talked



about what that meant for your classroom. Now that is very sophisticated teaching behavior in my judgment.

It is really no different: trying to figure out what goes on in your school's classroom is similar to what many of your teachers think about if they are going to institute changes. 'What will the school division accept?' So it is the same kind of process. You have to figure out what the political environment is in which you institute your change, and then take the risk and do it. And that is what you did. That was very prominent in your projects. It came through, so many of them - how you made adjustments and how it fit the needs, but also, how it accommodated what the teacher wanted or would accept, because it was her classroom, and you all recognized that. The second thing was the changes that you made were not minor. They were substantial kinds of efforts on your part in every case. What struck me about that is what others say, 'hey education can't be changed.' Now here are people in their student teaching stage, actually making significant changes in literacy in classrooms."

Obviously, the instructor is quite impressed with the preservice teachers' adventure. Although the adventure discussed above specifically refers to the last major assigned task the preservice teachers completed for the reading methods class, it became quite clear to me while collecting and analyzing the data for this study that the adventure did not involve just this one

assignment. The entire class was an adventure. The dictionary definition for adventure is: "an undertaking involving risk or excitement" (Random House, 1978, p. 13). It was an adventure for the instructor, an adventure for the preservice teachers, and an adventure for me - risky and exciting for each of us. Here is our story of that adventure.

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

*Whitney listened attentively as Dr. Stuart, the instructor of her literacy education course, reviewed the requirements stated on the course syllabus:*

*25% of grade - Midterm Exam*

*15% of grade - Class Project*

*35% of grade - Final Exam*

*25% of grade - Self-Assessment*

*"What does this mean? I've never been asked in a class to assess my own work before. How can this possibly work? I wonder what I'll have to do?" thought Whitney.*

The purpose of this study is to explore student self-assessment in a reading methods class. I, like Dr. Stuart above, as well as many other educators across the nation (for a sample, see Berlak, et al., 1992; Herman, Aschbacher & Winters, 1992; Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985; Wiggins, 1989; Wolf, 1989) am actively involved in exploring alternative assessment practices. While assessment is traditionally viewed as a means to verify student learning (Bintz, 1991), there is currently a shift underway at all levels of instruction that focuses on assessment for the purpose of facilitating students' learning (Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson & Preece, 1991; Harp, 1991, Johnston, 1992; Perrone, 1991; Roderick, 1991). One of the primary reasons this shift is occurring is because of a reconceptualization of how learning occurs (Gomez, Graue & Block 1991).

Specifically, this shift is based on a different set of beliefs and assumptions about the teaching and learning process than traditional assessment. Learning is now being viewed as an active and intentional search for meaning which is fostered within a "community of learners" (Short & Burke, 1991). Assessment is not considered something that is imposed on the learner, such as an external audit of acquired knowledge. Rather, it is the way active learners monitor what they are doing for the purpose of moving forward in their learning. In this light, "assessment should empower teachers and students to ignite rather than extinguish learning and enable students to reflect upon and celebrate their effort, progress and improvement, as well as their process and products" (Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991, p. 21).

Teachers are currently exploring a wide array of procedures that represent this shift in alternative assessment practices, such as student interviews, portfolios of students' work, and reflective journals. It appears that one common thread among many of these alternative assessment practices is the focus on students' becoming more actively involved in assessing their own work. Many educators believe students are capable of and benefit from reflecting upon their work (Dewey, 1933; Heron, 1988; Rogers, 1983; Schön, 1983). As Goodman (1989) states: "Self-evaluation is the most significant kind of evaluation: pupils and teachers need to have a sense of why they are doing what they are doing so that they may have some sense of their own success and growth" (p. xiii).

### The Researcher's Story

Assessment has always been an intriguing and confusing area for me. Yet my level of curiosity piqued during the past few years for several reasons. First, like Whitney in the opening paragraph, when I returned to graduate school, I was encouraged to reflect upon my work. For example, during the summer of 1991, I participated in the Midlands Writing Invitational Institute and was asked to write reflective responses for each piece of writing I composed. Occasionally, in my classes I was even invited to evaluate my work. I found out that I liked how it felt. I was making decisions and gaining ownership for my own learning in a way I had never experienced before. Prior to this time, assessment was something teachers did "to" me or "for" me. I played the game quite well of figuring out what my teachers wanted me to do and then doing it in order to receive my "A". Much to my chagrin, most of my academic life I missed out on the opportunities to ask myself what I thought was important to learn, to evaluate how well I thought I was learning, and to establish future goals for myself.

The second experience that increased my curiosity about assessment occurred when I was supervising student teachers during the 1990-91 school year. During the first semester, I functioned as a facilitator and supporter of these students' growth. For example, the students and I identified the strengths and weaknesses of a lesson and established future goals to work toward. However, at the end of the semester, I was responsible for assigning

the students a grade, and I became concerned about how this would alter our relationship as we continued to work together during the next semester. I decided to initiate a collaborative assessment conference between the students, their cooperating teacher and myself. The students began the conversation by reporting the grade they gave themselves and the reasons why. Although I encountered problems with one student who felt she deserved a higher grade than the one given by either her cooperating teacher or myself, overall, I found this collaborative assessment conference to be very effective. The students received feedback from others as they would in a more traditional evaluation setting, yet, they were also provided the opportunity to become actively involved in assessing their own practice by drawing conclusions about their performance and supporting them with observational data.

The last experience that led to my current interest in assessment resulted from teaching an undergraduate literacy education course in the Fall of 1991. I made changes in my assessment methods by the middle of the semester because I sensed that assigning grades in the traditional manner would influence the class environment negatively. For example, I questioned whether students who received a "C" on their reflective journals would continue to write their own thoughts or instead try to write what they thought I wanted to hear. During this same time period, I was also a participant observer in an undergraduate literacy education

course in which the professor likewise explored alternative assessment practices for similar reasons.

As a result of these personal experiences, I concluded that in traditional assessment approaches, barriers are created that inhibit students' learning. These barriers result from traditional assessment being grounded in an authoritarian model that prevents students from sharing in the power to control and make decisions about their learning and the assessment of that learning. In my mind, I see this as a big puzzle with two major pieces - learning and assessment - that traditionally have not fit well. I want to solve this puzzle by eliminating the barriers that exist between these two pieces, thus joining assessment with learning (see Figure 1). As a teacher educator, I want assessment to facilitate my students' learning. Since I determined that traditional assessment practices do not do this, I decided to explore alternative assessment approaches. Specifically, I chose student self-assessment as the focus of this study because it embodies so many of the complex issues about learning and teaching that are considered to be vital to building a community of learners in teacher education.

I have spent a great deal of time trying to figure out how student self-assessment fits into the teacher education program. I believe that we all are active learners who naturally think about and analyze our actions and make decisions based upon our own judgments. I also believe preservice teachers can benefit from becoming more conscious of this process as it relates to their

# SOLVING THE PUZZLE

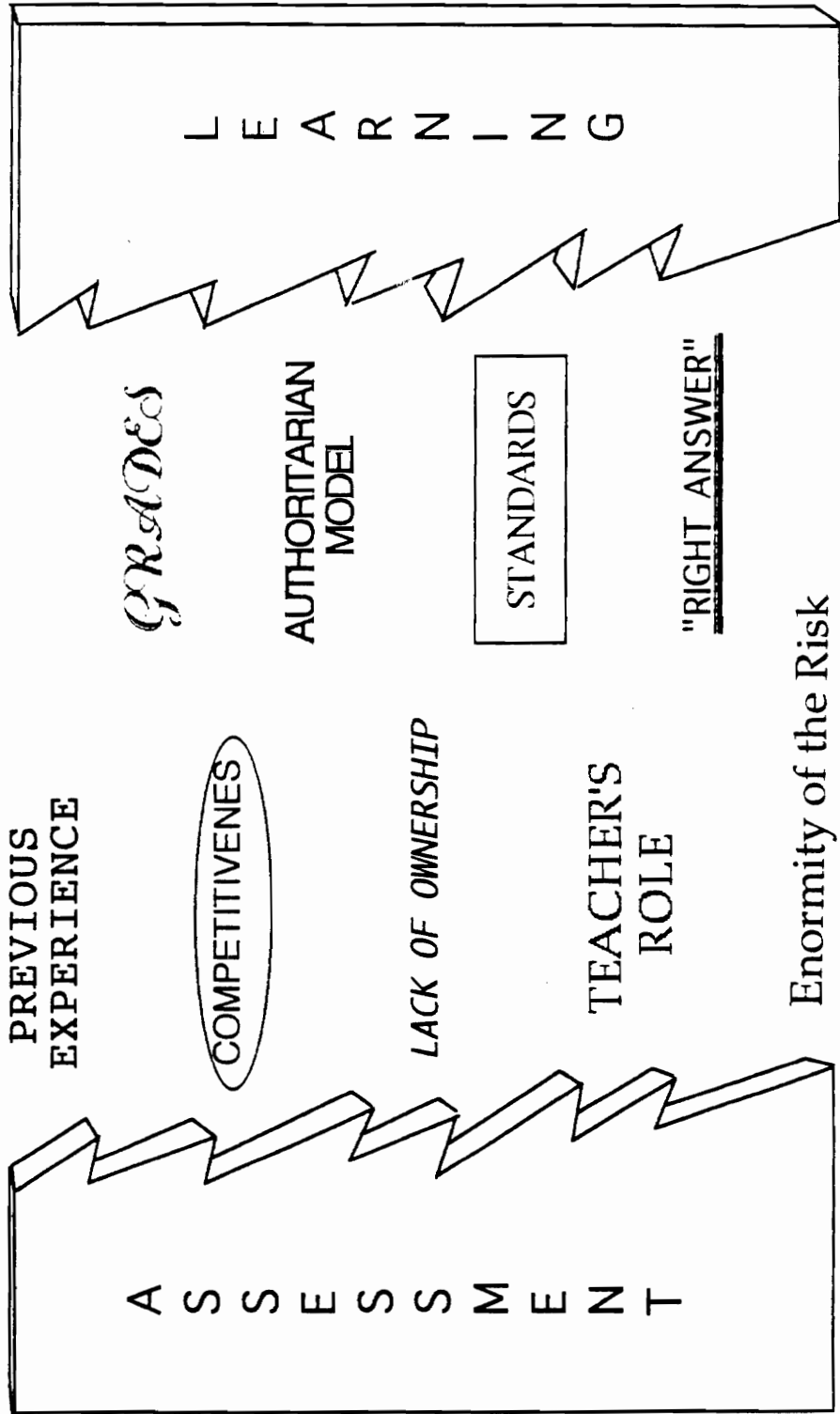


Figure 1. Barriers Between Assessment and Learning.



practice. As a teacher educator, I argue that preservice teachers should be encouraged and invited to participate in student self-assessment practices.

### Purpose and Rationale of the Study

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore student self-assessment in a literacy education class. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to develop a description of both the instructor's and the students' approaches to student self-assessment in a reading methods class.

Proponents of student self-assessment (Boud, 1990; Heron, 1988; Rogers, 1969) state that the ability to assess one's own learning is a major goal in education. Boud (1990) claims self-assessment can facilitate learning and should be cultivated if students are to engage effectively in lifelong learning. When learners establish which criteria are important, what goals to achieve and the extent to which these goals have been achieved, then they take responsibility and ownership for their own learning (Rogers, 1969). Self-assessment is also an aspect of reflection (McLaughlin, 1991) which is clearly related to the development of professional competence (Schön, 1983). In practice, this focused and critical reflection of one's own behavior enables individuals to make intelligent and informed decisions (Dewey, 1933).

Traditionally, assessment has been viewed as a means for verifying student learning (Bintz, 1991), with the teachers deciding upon the criteria and making the assessment of their students

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(Heron, 1988). Self-assessment, on the other hand, implies students make judgments about their own learning. In the past, "self-assessment has been considered to be of little value" (Barber, 1990, p. 216) and therefore preservice teachers and students have traditionally had little or no experience with it. Recently, however, there has been a surge of interest in the topic (Johnston, 1992; Routman, 1991; Tierney, et al., 1991). That interest is perhaps most evident in the area of writing instruction (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1991; Graves, 1983), whereby students help one another revise their work and conference with their teacher about the strengths, weaknesses, and goals of their writing. Nevertheless, since student self-assessment remains a new experience for most preservice teachers there has been little opportunity to study the perceptions of either students or teachers toward the process of student self-assessment.

It is well-documented (Clark & Lampert, 1986; Floden & Clark, 1988; Good & Brophy, 1987) that throughout the day teachers are constantly forced to assess and make decisions about what is going on in a complex classroom. As a rule, teachers function in a context of isolation from other adults and must rely primarily upon their own judgments. The fast-paced and unpredictable nature of the teaching and learning process, coupled with the lack of response from others, is possibly what led Lortie (1975) to find that 64% of the classroom teachers had difficulty in assessing their own work. It is also possible that these experienced teachers had difficulty in

assessing their work because they were not adequately prepared to be self-reflective about their practice.

These concerns have led many teacher educators to believe there is a need for preservice teachers to become reflective about their practice and participate in student self-assessment experiences during their training (Lalik & Niles, 1990; McLaughlin, 1991; Ross & Kyle, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). However, expecting preservice teachers to assume this reflective stance may be problematic. Unlike in other professions, preservice teachers from their many years of being a student, often enter their programs with preconceived and rigid ideas about what comprises good teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Featherstone, 1992). These ideas may interfere with their ability to question and assess their work in a different way. Yet according to McLaughlin (1991), preservice teachers need to be provided opportunities to self-evaluate their work, and teacher educators need to find out more about how the students act on these practices.

The focus of reflection or self-assessment may depend upon many factors, but interaction with others is paramount in the self-assessment process (Johnston, 1992). Indeed, the context in which we assess ourselves determines what and how we see. As Johnston (1992) states: "different contexts make self-evaluation more or less likely to occur and alter the focus of the evaluation in important ways" ( p. 36). Raven (1992) agrees with this assertion, and argues: "The need to describe the situation or context in which individuals

find themselves must be an integral to the assessment process (p. 91).

The reading methods classroom serves as an important context for the study of student self-assessment because there is currently a nationwide interest in educational restructuring (Newmann, 1993). The specific interest in examining the reading methods classes exists partly because "it has become increasingly obvious that university teaching should exemplify the type of innovative instruction recommended for teaching reading" (Commeyras, Heubach, Pagnucco & Reinking, 1992, p. 1). Often, preservice teachers are told in their reading methods classes to teach reading in the elementary schools by an integrative, holistic approach. They are encouraged to use an interactive teaching model and alternative assessment practices. While, ironically, their reading methods class is being taught by a transmission model of instruction, and the preservice teachers are assessed by traditional methods.

The reading methods class in this study is also an important context to examine because the preservice teachers are concurrently participating in a field-placement experience. Often preservice teachers are encouraged to be reflective about their practice when they are not situated within a context that represents the practices they are supposed to reflect upon. A description is needed of the teacher education context where preservice teachers engage in reflection and self-assessment practices that more closely resemble the context in which their future work will take place.

A study that focuses on the instructor's approach to student self-assessment in a reading methods class and how the students mediate this approach can provide new insights about the nature of student self-assessment. From these rich descriptions, teacher educators can have a better understanding about what student self-assessment can be and learn how to enhance preservice teachers' self-assessment processes in the future.

### Research Questions

In this study of an instructor and preservice teachers in a reading methods class, four questions guided the research:

1. What is the instructor's approach to student self-assessment?
2. How do the students approach self-assessment?
3. What common factors influence student self-assessment in a reading methods class?
4. What issues and concerns do the instructor and the students have about self-assessment?

### Conceptual Framework of the Study

I grounded the conceptual framework of the study in the political and cultural aspects of the assessment process, the promotion of student responsibility for learning, the development of professional competence, and learning as a social process. To better understand the politics of the assessment process, I turned to the work of Heron (1988). According to his argument, the traditional and prevailing model of assessment has been an authoritarian one.

Generally, teachers alone are privileged to decide the criteria and make the assessment of the students. As such, assessment is a political issue, with teachers having the power to make decisions about the students. Heron (1988) advocates a mixture of self, peer and collaborative assessment to replace the existing unilateral model:

The time is ripe for an alternative, democratic model: that of equal human capacities which mutually support and enhance each other - intellectual capacities for understanding our work and ourselves, affective capacities for caring for and delighting in other persons and ourselves, conative capacities for making real choices about how we want to live, relate to others and shape our world. (p. 83)

In essence, this model would mean that the redistribution of power in decision-making related to students' learning is needed. The issue is who decides what about whom in regards to the educational process.

Like Heron (1988), Bowers and Flinders (1990) emphasize the political issues entailed in the learning process, while also viewing classroom relationships in a much broader context than Heron to encompass pedagogical and cultural aspects. They borrow the metaphor of ecology to describe these interactive classroom patterns and challenge the Cartesian tradition of teaching, which views the student as a culture-free individual. Instead, they illuminate classrooms where thought processes are believed to be

culturally embedded patterns communicated through social relationships. Professional decisions are made with a sensitivity to how this ecology of relationships reflects cultural differences. As Bowers and Flinders (1990) point out, "Faced with a classroom of students who are continually communicating about their feelings, moods, attitudes, understandings, and expectations, teachers must be able to make prompt assessments of what is being communicated and respond either on an individual or group basis in a manner that maintains a supportive educational environment" (p. 24).

The commitment to a supportive educational environment is also advocated by Noddings (1991). According to Noddings (1991), these environments are created when teachers and students value friendships and care about others. In this context, teachers and students do not necessarily agree, but they nevertheless listen to and respect each other. Dialogue is "guided by an attitude that values the relationships of the reasoners over any particular outcome, and it is marked by attachment and connection rather than separation and abstraction" (Noddings, 1991, p. 158). When contexts are created that are "a familylike setting in which interpersonal reasoning is to be developed" (Noddings, 1991, p. 168), then teaching strategies such as small group work can be used to provide teachers and students with opportunities to care for each other.

In order to understand the promotion of student ownership and responsibility for learning, I turned to the writings of Rogers (1969) on assisting students in learning how to learn. Rogers (1969)

advocates a learning environment with a human climate, where attitudes and feelings can be expressed, where the student can choose from a wide range of options, and where the teacher serves as a facilitator of learning. Rogers (1983) believes that students should evaluate their own progress:

The evaluation of one's own learning is one of the major means by which self-initiated learning becomes also responsible learning. It is when the individual has to take the responsibility for deciding what criteria are important to him, what goals must be achieved, and the extent to which he has achieved those goals, that he truly learns to take responsibility for himself and his directions. For this reason, it seems important that some degree of self-evaluation be built into any attempt to promote an experiential type of learning. (p. 158)

To better understand the development of professional competence, I turned to the writings of Dewey (1933, 1938) and Schön (1983, 1987) concerning the reflective practitioner. The idea that professionals should be reflective about their practice is not a new one, but rather one that has grown more prominent over time. Dewey (1933) views reflection as a specialized form of thinking which:

Emancipates us from merely impulsive and merely routine activity. Put in positive terms, thinking enables us to direct our actions with foresight and to plan according to ends in



view or purposes of which we are aware. . . . It enables us to know what we are about when we act. (p. 17)

Proponents of reflection claim the focused and critical assessment of one's own behavior enables one to make intelligent and informed decisions.

Argyris and Schön (1974) began to use the term "theories of action" while assisting in a project of training educational administrators to become more effective in initiating school reform. They report that people's ideas about how things work, what they called "theories of action," are central to the development of professional competence. They argue that leaders do not need to learn new skills, but rather new "theories of action." In later work, Schön (1983, 1987) purports that people learn these "new theories of action" by being reflective about their own practice. When practitioners consciously interact and assess their present situation with past experiences, they take an active role in shaping their professional growth. This self-assessment or reflectiveness enables an individual to become an empowered and informed decision-maker as well as an independent learner.

More recently, the burgeoning literature on learning as a social process (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Newman, Griffen & Cole, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) has provided educators with a new understanding into the reflective assessment process. Vygotsky (1978) argues that we make meaning out of the world in which we live through language and we do so in interaction with others. He

says that "every function of the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p.57). In other words, through our interactions with others, we not only help each other learn, but we also each construct our own version of the world in which we live.

Even though these social learning theories are not new, their connection to the assessment process is. According to Johnston (1992), "evaluations are not simply outcomes, they are part of the process and product of social activity" (p. 19). How we go about learning and how we provide evidence of that learning is as important as what we learned. In other words, assessment is part of the curriculum, not separate from it.

Exploring a social model of learning is also an important way of bringing about curriculum change (Short & Burke, 1991). According to Short and Burke (1991), curriculum so obviously involves both students and teachers that it should be built collaboratively between them. In this way, contexts may be constructed which empower both teachers and students. This conceptual framework, based on the work of Dewey (1933, 1938), Heron (1988), Rogers (1969, 1983), Schön (1983, 1987), Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and others, provides an appropriate point of departure for studying alternative assessment approaches in a teacher education context.

## Traditional Assessment

In the past, assessment was viewed as a means of verifying student learning (Bintz, 1991) and was something that occurred after learning had already taken place:

Traditionally, evaluation has been seen as an outside force that is imposed upon the curriculum generally and the learner specifically. It has been externally imposed because of several assumptions - that the questions which drive the curriculum must be supplied by outside recognized experts, that the vast majority of what is to be learned is already known, digested, and organized, and that there are acknowledged correct responses to the curricular questions which are to be asked.

(Short & Burke, 1991, p. 60)

These assumptions are firmly grounded in the belief that "anything that exists at all exists in some quantity, and anything that exists in some quantity is capable of being measured" (Michaels & Karnes, 1950, p. 2). This assumption remains true today, according to Glasson and Lalik (1992). They argue that assessment has been profoundly influenced by a "Cartesian" or "positivist" epistemology that assumes one can achieve objectivity and consequently uncover "truths" about the real world. The goals of the curriculum are to teach students these "truths" by employing a transmission model of instruction and in turn to assess whether students have learned these "truths."

## Philosophical Beliefs and Theoretical Assumptions

Traditional assessment is based on an interrelated set of philosophical beliefs and theoretical assumptions. These are further outlined and compared with the philosophical beliefs and theoretical assumptions of alternative assessment in Figure 2:

Assumes knowledge has universal meaning. One assumption of traditional assessment is that knowledge has a single consensual meaning (Berlak, 1992). It is possible for everyone to reach a consensus about meaning because essentially knowledge has "the same meaning for all individuals everywhere" (Berlak, 1992, p. 13).

Treats learning as a passive process. In traditional assessment, the metaphor of "empty vessel" has often been used to talk about learners. Students are treated as if they do not possess prior knowledge about a topic and it is the teacher's role "to 'fill' the students by making deposits of information which the teacher considers to constitute true knowledge" (Freire, 1990, p. 63). It involves learning about something rather than learning how to do something. This passive process involves students' (novices) memorizing the knowledge dispensed by the text or teacher (expert).

Separates process from product. Generally what is evaluated in traditional assessment is the final product of students' work and is usually based on some sort of test (Bertrand, 1993). The final outcomes of students' efforts are assumed to be representative of their learning. The how and why of student learning is not taken into consideration.

**Traditional Assessment**

**Alternative Assessment**

Universal meaning

Multiple meanings

Passive process

Active process

Separates process from product

Emphasizes process and product

Discrete, isolated bits of information

Focuses on inquiry

To document learning

To facilitate learning

Cognitive abilities as separate from affective and conative abilities

Connects between cognitive, affective and conative abilities

Views assessment as objective, value-free and neutral

Views assessment as subjective and value-laden

Hierarchical model

Shared model

Learning as an individual process

Learning as a collaborative process

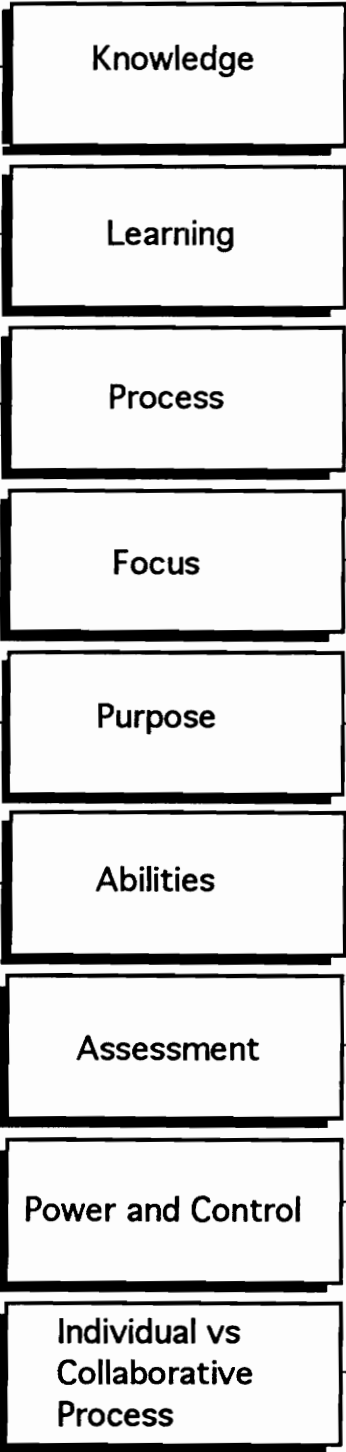


Figure 2. Philosophical Beliefs and Theoretical Assumptions of Traditional and Alternative Assessment.

Focuses on mastering discrete, isolated bits of information.

These bits of information basically represent lower-level thinking skills (Herman, et al., 1992). These skills are believed to exist in a hierarchical form, and students are expected to master and demonstrate specific skills at one level before moving on to the next.

Assumes the purpose of assessment is to document learning.

Typically, traditional assessment is used only to monitor students' learning. Under this model, students who "do" know are separated by those who "do not" know. In other words, it creates a system that classifies and rank orders students (Berlak, 1993).

Believes that cognitive abilities are separate from affective and conative abilities. The focus of traditional assessment is primarily on cognitive abilities. The values and interests that students have about the activity being undertaken is not considered to be connected to their competence in carrying out the task (Raven, 1992). There is little, if any, attention given to the students' disposition to use the skills and strategies or their ability to apply them (Herman, et al., 1992).

Views assessment as objective, value-free and neutral.

Traditional assessment assumes that facts and values are distinct and separable entities which can be measured objectively (Berlak, 1992). Decisions about what to teach and test are not considered to be value-laden.

Embraces a hierarchical model of power and control. In traditional assessment, generally the teacher alone has the power to make decisions about what is learned and how it is assessed (Heron, 1988). Students do not participate in making decisions about what is important for them to learn or in determining how well they are learning.

Perceives learning as an individual enterprise. Traditional assessment focuses on an individual student's performance. Generally, students are expected to accomplish tasks without the assistance of others or it is considered cheating. Students often work against one another in a competitive manner. "In competitive contexts, learners do not consider their own performance, and they concern themselves less with the process than with the outcome" (Johnston, 1992, p. 37).

### Alternative Assessment

#### Philosophical Beliefs and Theoretical Assumption

The underlying assumptions of traditional assessment are now being challenged by advocates of alternative assessment practices. Alternative assessment is based on an entirely different set of philosophical beliefs and theoretical assumptions than traditional assessment (these are further outlined in Figure 2):

Assumes knowledge has multiple meanings. One assumption of alternative assessment is that knowledge has "multiple realities with their accompanying multiple meanings" (Roderick, 1991, p. 3). It is impossible for everyone to reach a consensus about meaning

because each individual brings his or her own diverse interpretation to an ever-changing situation.

Treats learning as an active process. "Learning is a natural, integral and ubiquitous part of living" (Bintz, 1991, p. 309). It is not something that is given to someone else. Rather, students actively search for new meanings in order to transform their present understandings (Greene, 1988). In other words, learning entails "*producing*, rather than reproducing knowledge" (Newmann & Archbald, 1992, p. 72).

Emphasizes process and product. In alternative assessment practices, the process is valued as well as the product. What, how, and why students learn is taken into consideration (Johnston, 1992).

Focuses on inquiry. The focus of alternative assessment is on developing real-world problem solving skills which will lead people to observe, think, question, and test their ideas (Herman, et al., 1992).

Assumes its purpose is to facilitate learning. The purpose of alternative assessment is to enhance students' learning (Short & Burke, 1991). When students gain feedback about their learning, they gain new direction and are able to continue forward in their learning. Clearly, its purpose is not to sort or classify the students.

Recognizes a connection between cognitive, affective and conative abilities. When students care about the activity they are engaged in, they are more likely to invest their time and effort into it and, as a result, they learn more from it. An assumption of



alternative assessment is that "it is meaningless to attempt to assess a person's abilities except in relation to their valued goals" (Raven, 1992, p. 89).

Views assessment as subjective and value-laden. Advocates of alternative assessment practices believe that decisions about what to teach and assess are subjective and value-laden. "Indeed, value systems not only influence decisions about what assessment questions get answered, but also about what assessment questions get asked in the first place" (Bintz, 1991, p. 309).

Embraces a shared model of power and control. An assumption of alternative assessment is that teachers should share the power with students to make decisions about what they learn and to determine how well they are learning. Alternative assessment embraces a democratic decision-making process (Heron, 1988).

Perceives learning as a collaborative process. In contexts that use alternative assessment practices, students and teachers are co-learners, freely expressing and testing their ideas together. In these social milieus, collaborative learning is valued and teachers and students "are intellectually responsible to each other for creating a substantive curriculum in the classroom" (Bintz, 1991, p. 311). Advocates of the social constructivist theory of learning view assessment as part of the curriculum; they believe assessment should be guided by the same principles that guide our work in developing curriculum (Glasson & Lalik, 1992, 1993; Johnston, 1992; Short & Burke, 1991).

### Curriculum and Assessment as a Social Process

To better understand curriculum and assessment as a social learning process, Short and Burke (1991) developed a curriculum model consisting of three components: the natural learner, a community of learners and the collected learner (see Figure 3). The process begins with the understanding that learning is synonymous with life. As learners, we are naturally motivated and curious about what we do not understand and, as such, learning is an active and intentional search for meaning (Dewey, 1938; Smith, 1981; Short & Burke, 1991). We go about gaining new meaning through interactions and dialogue with others (Vygotsky, 1978). As we receive feedback from others, we are able to borrow their understandings and experiences and extend, modify, and expand our own meanings of the world.

A community of learners, the second part of the Short and Burke (1991) model, is characterized by risktaking, reflection, and collaboration and is propelled forward by inviting new learning opportunities within the community. As previously pointed out, we are curious learners living in a world of ambiguity and multiple interpretations. Because we interact with others and expose the interpretations of our intentions, we are often at risk of erring, and thus, learning becomes a risky venture (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Short & Burke, 1991; Smith, 1985).

Functioning within a community of learners increases our awareness of our own learning. When we have models with which to

MODEL DEVELOPED BY SHORT AND BURKE (1991)

What are the characteristics of natural learners?

What are the relationships of learners in a social context?		
THE NATURAL LEARNER	A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS	THE COLLECTED LEARNER
M	I	E
O	N	M
T	V	P
curiosity	risktaking	tension
I	I	O
V	T	W
A	A	E
intentionality	reflection	reflexivity
T	T	R
I	I	M
O	O	E
		N
socialability	collaboration	connected knowing
N	N	T

Figure 3. Understanding Curriculum as a Social Learning Process. From Creating Curriculum: Teachers and Students as a Community of Learners, by Kathy G. Short and Carolyn Burke, 1991, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, a Division of Reed Publishing (USA) Inc. Reprinted by permission.

compare our work, we begin to question that work in new and different ways. It is important to note that while these models may be different, they are not necessarily better. Johnston (1992) sees this juxtaposition of one's own practice against someone else's as the catalyst for consciously thinking about the things we normally do automatically. Or stated another way, we learn to stand outside ourselves and look at an event from both our own perspective and that of someone else. This process enables us to view our learning through the lens of others, an act which is believed to be the basis of reflection (Johnston, 1992; Short & Burke, 1991). As we reflect, we become aware of alternative options available to us. This in turn increases our ability to prioritize, make decisions and be in control of our learning:

Reflection generates and supports our sense of authority concerning our engagements in the world. Being an authority does not make us reflective thinkers. Instead, being reflective thinkers in a community of other learners allows us to develop our own authority. We are in control of ourselves and of our intentions. We have a sense of our future because we have an understanding of our past. (Burke & Short, 1991, p. 23)

Different contexts make reflection and risktaking more or less likely to occur (Johnston, 1992; Wood, 1992). Relationships or collaborations in these contexts are characterized by the ways members think, respond, and work together. These relationships exhibit the features of common commitment, valued diversity, equal

value of contributions, fluid roles, and shared vulnerability (Short & Burke, 1991).

The third part of the Short and Burke (1991) model focuses on the collected learner. Learners have working hypotheses based on current knowledge, experiences, language, and values (Johnston, 1992), yet the ambiguities and unknowns involved in the learning process act to throw learners off balance. "This act of re-establishing equilibrium, of re-collecting one's self is characterized by tension, reflexivity, and connected knowing" (Short & Burke, 1991, p. 27).

Tension results from the acknowledgment that knowledge is tentative and ever-changing. Tension is a positive force that propels learners to take new risks and stretch themselves towards greater understanding. Reflexivity enables learners to move one step beyond reflecting on a specific experience to begin to generalize their understanding and knowledge to a broader context and to future experiences. Connected knowing enables learners to create a story out of their experience by establishing a new equilibrium and a new set of beliefs and by becoming empowered learners who act with authority (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Short & Burke, 1991). "We pursue our own questions and answers with the support of other learners to find the connections that make our work meaningful and our thinking productive" (Short & Burke, 1991, p. 31).

According to Short and Burke (1991), learning and inquiry are the same process, and evaluation is what allows the inquiry to move

ahead. In this light, evaluation is not something imposed on the learner or something separate from learning but rather a reflective stance taken by the learner. Learners automatically monitor what they are doing and make value judgments for themselves for the purpose of moving forward in their learning. In other words, they are actively engaged in assessing their own work.

### Nature of Student Self-Assessment

The terms "self-assessment" and "self-evaluation" are quite often used interchangeably in the literature. In fact, there are a plethora of other terms such as "self-rating", "self-perception" and "self-reflection" used to denote students' making judgments about their own learning. For the purposes of this review, the term employed by the authors whose study is cited will be used to describe their work. Otherwise, the term "self-assessment" will be used.

I borrowed heavily from the work of McLaughlin (1991) to develop my own personal definition of self-assessment. At the beginning of the study, I defined self-assessment as an aspect of reflection that entails identifying, observing, and analyzing one's actions; establishing criteria for one's actions; and determining the most appropriate methods for judging the effects of these actions for the purpose of making future decisions about one's learning. It is important to note that we cannot automatically assume students will develop the disposition and skills to engage in systematic analysis of their own work (Biott, 1983). As Dewey (1933) points out,

there are three prerequisite attitudes to reflective action: open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. Simply stated, students must be committed to listening to more sides than one before they can consider the social, political, and economic consequences of their actions. Two key ingredients to opening up this "arena of the problematic" (Tom, 1985) are keen observation and reasoned analysis undertaken by the student (Zeichner & Liston, 1987).

Historically, student self-assessment has not been a major focus of research efforts (Barber, 1990). During the last 10 years, however, there has been more interest in self-assessment. Primarily, the focus of these studies has been the "accuracy" of student self-ratings. Those researchers grounded in the authoritarian assessment model believe that if student self-ratings are identical to the ratings of their teachers, then student self-assessment may be an acceptable assessment method. However, if students have the freedom to assess themselves and view their work as passing when the teacher views it as failing, then a real dilemma exists. In fact, some suggest this is the very reason self-assessment was not more popular in the past (Stanton, 1978).

Yet Boud and Falchikov (1989) contend that the primary intent of research on self-assessment is off-target because the "accuracy" of student ratings is not the most important aspect of student self-assessment:

Indeed, it can be argued that to focus on this issue is to be educationally misguided. Effort which is directed towards narrowing the gap between student and teacher ratings might more profitably be directed towards developing ways in which systematic formative self-assessment activities can be incorporated into courses to improve student skills in making sensitive and aware judgments on their own work. (p. 532)

Nevertheless, research on student self-assessment has traditionally focused on the reliability of student self-grading, so the researchers have employed quantitative research methods. These studies identified several trends in student self-assessment (Boud & Falchikov, 1989). For example, we know that high achievement students tend to underestimate their performance, while low achievement students tend to overestimate their achievements. Students in later years of courses and graduates appear to be more accurate in assessing their work than students in introductory courses. The studies also suggest that if students grade themselves on effort rather than achievement, then the students' reports are reasonably consistent with the teacher's.

There are also several descriptive studies reviewed for this document that focus on the relationship between student self-assessment and learning. A theme running throughout these studies is a confirmation that student self-assessment does facilitate students' learning. Regrettably, the majority of these "findings"



should be regarded cautiously, since the studies' analysis methods were not mentioned.

Studies were also reviewed on teacher education and student self-assessment. The majority of these studies involved a comparison between student teachers' ratings and their supervisor's ratings. The conclusions of these studies are consistent with the ones reported earlier, that students' "accuracy" varied from one situation to another. Recently, there have been many educators advocating the need for research that focuses on teachers who themselves engage in "systematic self-reflection." A detailed literature review of these studies on student self-assessment is provided in Appendix A.

## CHAPTER 2

### Description of Methodology

In this chapter, I first provide an overview of the research theory of this study. Next, I describe both the different procedures used to collect the data and the data analysis process. Finally, I describe the reading methods course, the participants, and the context of the study.

#### Theory

##### Ethnography

To conduct this study, I selected an ethnographic method because "it represents a viable means for capturing the meaning of everyday human activities" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 2). The purpose of the study is to capture the meaning of student self-assessment in a reading methods class as the participants are living the experience. To meet this goal, it is necessary for me to become an ethnographer, who according to Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) "participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned" (p. 2). Since ethnographies provide "analytic descriptions or reconstructions of intact cultural scenes and groups" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 2), it seems the logical choice of method for this study.

There are specific philosophical beliefs supporting ethnographic research which also contributed to the decision to use an ethnographic method. The purpose of research, according to a positivist or empirical paradigm, is to test theories or discover "truths" that are assumed to exist. Ethnographic research, however, is grounded in very different assumptions about "truths." According to Ely (1991), "Those who work within the naturalistic paradigm operate from a set of axioms that hold realities to be multiple and shifting, that take for granted a simultaneous mutual shaping of knower and known, and that see all inquiry, including the empirical, as being inevitably value-bound" (p. 2). I believe this assumption and it represents another reason that I chose an ethnographic method.

### Transferability

One of the most frequently cited concerns of social and natural research is generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The assumptions of generalizability imply that what is found to be true for one holds true for all. Indeed, discovering these "universal truths," which can be predicted and replicated in other settings, is seen as the purpose of inquiry. Cronbach (1975) contributes powerful insights into this issue when he argues that there are many unique, local conditions - time and context for example - that make it useless to try to generalize. Lincoln and Guba (1985) add that there are even differences within the same situation over time:

It is said that a Chinese philosopher, upon being asked whether it is possible to cross the same river twice, replied that it is not possible to cross the same river even once! Constant flux militates against conclusions that are always and forever true; they can only be said to be true under such and such conditions and circumstances. (p. 124)

Instead of the term "generalizability," Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest "transferability." An assumption of transferability means that research findings are not conclusions but rather hypotheses which other qualitative researchers can use as good starting points for research in similar contexts. According to Geertz (1973), if research is indeed to generate future inquiries, then researchers must provide "thick descriptions" (p. 5) which entail everything a reader would need to know to completely understand the findings.

The reading methods class was certainly a highly specific context, and naturally, I was concerned about the issues of transferability. What I have attempted to do is provide "thick descriptions" of the study which will hopefully provide new insights as well as a point of departure for teacher educators in other contexts who are interested in studying student self-assessment as it relates to teacher education.

### Trustworthiness

Throughout the study, I paid close attention to trustworthiness and its components of credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I followed the advice of

Lincoln and Guba (1985), who state all researchers must have prolonged engagement in the field, do persistent observation, triangulate, search for negative cases, determine referential adequacy, experience peer debriefing, and check with the participants of the study.

During this study, I felt it was my responsibility to check with the participants consistently and collect a variety of data that would provide safeguards in making sure it was the mutually constructed interpretations of the participants that I was reporting rather than just my own. Nevertheless, I totally agree with Lather (1986), who states that "there is no neutral research" (p. 257); it is impossible for research to be judgment-free. For example, the very questions we select to research reflect our concerns and values. Yet I followed the measures cited above in the hopes that the findings of the study will be, in the words of Lincoln and Guba (1985), "worth paying attention to" (p 43).

#### Researcher Status Position

It is important to note that the instructor of the class is also my major advisor. During the two years prior to the study, I was a full-time doctoral student with assistantship responsibilities which he supervised. Thus, we had worked closely together during this period and developed a professional relationship grounded in trust, care, and respect. Even though I am aware of the power that he has over my professional life, the power issue was never a concern of mine during the study. I cannot recall any instance when I was

reluctant to ask him questions or voice my opinion because of our relationship. However, there were a few occasions, such as when I asked him questions about my selection of the five focal students, when he refused to disclose his opinion. He expressed concern about gaining inside knowledge from the result of my study that could influence his treating the students differently. He also did not want to give me advice that he suspected was the result of his teaching the class when it should have been the result of his role as my advisor. I feel that on these few occasions, he was overly conservative in his conversations with me, such as when I asked him for feedback on the issues I planned to discuss during the second interviews, and he stated that he preferred not to be aware of what I was going to ask. However, I always respected his concerns and heeded his advice by consulting other faculty members on my committee on the two occasions when I felt that I needed guidance on matters he did not feel comfortable addressing. Overall, I did not perceive our relationship to inhibit the success of the study in any way. From my perspective, I saw it as a positive aspect because I felt comfortable and supported throughout. My major concern was that I was often insensitive to my advisor by asking him questions and seeking advice that created uncertainty for him. His perception of this situation, at least in part, can be found in the Epilogue.

During the study, I was a participant observer in the reading methods class. Participant observation means "participating in the ongoing work in someone else's classroom while engaging in making

observations on the student and teacher activities, conversations, materials, events, and so on, as well as on your own activities" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 54). It is important to note that my position in the class was as a full participator. I participated in all of the small group activities, contributed to whole group discussions and completed as many of the out-of-class assignments as possible. I thought that it was necessary to participate fully in the class so that the students would accept me as part of the group and be willing to freely express their thoughts with me. The participation was also necessary for me to be able to understand better their conversations during the interviews. As a researcher, though, this position created uncertainty for me. Throughout most of the study, I was concerned that I was missing out on important data that I might be collecting had I taken an observer position. I wrote about this on several occasions in both my own research journal and the dialogue journal exchanged with the instructor. I also talked to the instructor about my concern, and he reassured me that it would be difficult for me to understand the preservice teachers' thinking unless I was fully participating in the class. I certainly felt comfortable and enjoyed participating in the class. Indeed, I shared with the instructor that I would get so totally caught up in the small group work that I was sure that I was not noticing details that were important. However, as time went by, I did gain more confidence that I made the right decision by being a full participant.

My intentions as a researcher were to be a positive influence on the participants throughout the process. My beliefs are in agreement with Gitlin (1990), who claims that a dialogical research approach where all participants work together to understand what he calls "educative research" is needed to alter traditional research methods that "establish an alienating relationship which silences those studied, disregards their personal knowledge, and strengthens the assumption that researchers are the producers of knowledge" (p. 443).

My beliefs are also in agreement with Lather (1986, 1991), who argues that researchers should be concerned with "research as praxis." The research process should enable "people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations" (Lather, 1986, p. 263). There are several examples of how I was committed to "the development of a change-enhancing, interactive, contextualized approach to knowledge-building" (Lather, 1986, p. 264).

First, during each of the interviews with the preservice teachers and the instructor, I encouraged the participants to ask me questions about the reading methods class and the study. Laslett and Rapoport (1975) term this approach the "collaborative interviewing and interactive approach." I used this approach because I thought it would facilitate "the intersection between people's [participants of the study] self-understandings and the researcher's efforts to provide a change-enhancing context" (Lather, 1986, p. 269).



The second example of the interactive research position in the class involves three of the preservice teachers in the class, Kristi, Katherine and Lynez, who were invited to co-author and negotiate the interview questions that I later asked the five focal preservice teachers. The goal here was to enable the participants to become major shareholders of the study rather than just targets of the research because it is important for research to "engage participants in a dialectical process of reflexivity and, ultimately, transformation" (Estrada & McLaren, 1993, p. 32). Nevertheless, I acknowledge this design is not fully interactive because the five focal preservice teachers were not invited to negotiate the interview questions in the same manner.

A third example of how I attempted to follow an interactive research design involved my asking the focal preservice teachers and the instructor to provide a written response to my preliminary interpretations of the data. Specifically, they were asked to critically analyze the interpretations of the study as it related to their understandings of what occurred. My intention was to involve the "research participants in the construction and validation of knowledge" (Lather, 1986, p. 265).

A fourth example of the interactive research stance assumed for the study involved scheduling a group interview with the focal preservice teachers to further discuss the research findings. The goal of this conversation was to provide a forum for "mutual

negotiation of meaning and power" (Lather, 1986, p. 265). I also scheduled an interview with the instructor for the same purpose.

A final example of the interactive research position assumed in this study entailed the exchanges I had with the participants, both in writing and in conversation, which affected their teaching and my research. The focal preservice teachers, the instructor, and I each wrote about these exchanges and our reactions to participating in the study. Our responses are discussed in the Epilogue section of this document.

## Practice

### Data Collection

There was a tremendous amount of data collected during the course of this study. A wide array of procedures was used to collect the data, and in this section I will outline these procedures and provide the theoretical rationale behind each type of data. The procedures used in this study included:

1. Personal narratives
2. Survey questionnaire
3. Interviews
4. Field notes
5. Audio tapes
6. Exit slips
7. Various site artifacts
8. Research journal

## 9. Dialogue journals

## 10. Triangulation

Personal narratives: All of the preservice teachers enrolled in the "Teaching Reading and Language in the Elementary School" course were asked to write personal narratives describing their previous experiences with reading instruction. They were also asked to write personal narratives about what they envisioned their future classroom to be like. Proponents of narrative inquiry claim "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). I analyzed these narratives to determine the preservice teachers' beliefs and attitudes about reading instruction.

Survey questionnaire: A survey questionnaire (see Appendix B) that was developed during a pilot study conducted in April, 1992 was administered during the fourth meeting of the reading methods class to all of the preservice teachers. "Surveys are the most widely used technique in education and the behavioral sciences for the collections of data" (Isaac & Michael, 1990, p. 128). The survey questionnaire was used as a basis for my selection of five focal preservice teachers for use in my study. These five exhibited a wide range of previous student self-assessment experiences, and varying beliefs and attitudes about its effectiveness.

Interviews: Interviews were one of the primary data sources for this study. As Ely (1991) points out, "Interviews are at the heart of doing ethnography because they seek the words of the people we

are studying, the richer the better, so that we can understand their situations with increasing clarity" (p. 58).

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the five focal preservice teachers during the study. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The first interview (see questions in Appendix C) was conducted between the fifth and sixth class, and focused on the preservice teachers' goals for the class, what they were learning, and how they monitored their learning. The second interview (see questions in Appendix D) was conducted between the ninth and tenth class and focused on the preservice teachers' learning, their class assignments, and the assessment of their learning. The final interview (see questions in Appendix E) was conducted at the beginning of the following semester, after the preservice teachers had completed all of their assignments and had received their final grade for the course. This interview focused on the preservice teachers' accomplishment of course goals and their self-assessment. As previously mentioned, there was also one group interview conducted with all of the focal preservice teachers during the late stage of the study. The interview lasted one hour and focused on the preliminary interpretations of the data collected.

The instructor was interviewed every week, starting the week before class began and continuing two weeks after the class was completed. There were a total of 13 formal interviews with the instructor, each lasting approximately one hour; we also conferred informally on a regular basis throughout the study.

Field notes: According to Goetz and LeCompte (1984), "researchers take part in the daily activities of people, reconstructing their interactions and activities in field notes taken on the spot or as soon as possible after their occurrence" (p. 109). As previously pointed out, I was a participant observer in the class and wrote field notes after each class on what was being learned, how it was learned, and the social transactions that influenced the preservice teachers' learning.

Audio tapes: All of the interviews conducted with the preservice teachers and the instructor as well as all of the classes were audiotaped and transcribed. I transcribed the first 68 hours of audiotape and hired two professional secretaries to transcribe the last 4 hours. The class transcriptions aided me in viewing all of the preservice teachers in the reading methods class as a focus group, not just five individual focal preservice teachers. Ely (1991) contends that "audiotapes . . . allow for analysis through repeated studying, as well as checking against log notes and transcripts about the same event" (p. 82). The transcriptions are one of the primary data sources for the study.

Exit slips: The preservice teachers were invited at the end of each class to write an "exit slip" to the instructor or "Dear Jerry" letter, as he called them. Exit slips are informal messages written by students expressing their concerns, questions, discoveries and so on about the class (Anderson & Reid, 1992). These slips provided me

with evidence of what the students were thinking about a particular class.

Various site artifacts: I analyzed all of the class handouts, the written self-assessment documents, and the classroom assignment products completed by the five target preservice teachers. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) point out, "the presence and significance of documentary products provides the ethnographer with a rich vein of analytic topics, as well as a valuable source of information" (p. 142).

Research journal: I started keeping a journal before the study began and continued to do so throughout the research process. It was important for me to maintain a journal because "like a diary, this journal will contain a record of experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, and problems that arise during field work" (Spradley, 1979, p. 76).

Dialogue journals: I recorded my perceptions and reactions about what happened in each class into a dialogue journal that was given to the instructor to read and respond to. The journal provided an invaluable experience for me because I wrote each journal entry prior to transcribing the tape of the class, and as I wrote I gained new insights into the transactions of the class. After the instructor returned the journal to me with his reactions, I continued to gain a greater understanding into what his intentions were regarding that class. Reid and Anderson (1992) used dialogue journals as a research technique to study a teacher education class and found it "to be a

richly generative experience, broadening our understanding of ourselves both as teachers and researchers as well as expanding our knowledge base about the teaching and learning process" (p. 2).

In addition to writing a dialogue entry to the instructor after each class, I also wrote in a dialogue journal to Kristi, one of the preservice teachers in the class. In return, she wrote to me about her perceptions and reactions to the class. Just as writing to the instructor provided me with new insights into the class, so did exchanging dialogue journals with Kristi. From Kristi's journal I gained new understandings about what she was thinking. I often wondered if her responses were representative of what the other preservice teachers believed, so I would often develop new questions generated by her responses for informal conversations or interviews with the other class members.

Triangulation: Triangulation "involves the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving from different phases of the fieldwork, different points in the temporal cycles occurring in the setting, or, as in respondent validation, the accounts of different participants (including the ethnographer) involved in the setting" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 198). The instructor responded to rough drafts of the written research throughout all stages of this study. As previously pointed out, the five target preservice teachers were also invited to respond to drafts during the final stages of the inquiry to add support to or challenge my interpretations.

In addition to the participants, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that one's research be checked by people who did not participate in the study. The purpose of this secondary check is to determine if others can gain insights that are relevant in their own educational context. I had three colleagues who read and responded to various drafts of the study for this reason.

### Data Analysis Process

In qualitative studies, data analysis can be performed in one of two ways: one can collect all of the data before making sense out of everything or one can perform the analysis and collect the data at the same time. Originally, I planned to analyze my data as I was collecting it. Once the study was underway, though, it was a full-time job for me to keep up with transcribing, interviewing, attending class, doing assignments, and writing in the journals. While all of these actions actually entailed a form of analysis, I did not begin formally coding the data until they were all collected. It also needs to be pointed out that during the data collection phase of the study, all aspects of the reading methods class were documented as fully as possible. Nevertheless, when it came time to analyze the data, what occurred in the class was viewed through the focusing lens of student self-assessment. That is, the experience was interpreted from the perspective of student self-assessment as it related to the instructor's approach and the students' mediation of this approach in their learning.



To analyze the data, I followed the five procedures described by Marshall and Rossman (1989): "organizing the data; generating categories, themes, and patterns; testing the emergent hypotheses against the data; searching for alternative explanations of the data; and writing the report" (p. 114).

Organizing the data: As I collected the data, I transcribed the interviews and the classes and transferred notes to the computer in an ongoing process. Engaging in such a process enables a researcher "to focus and refocus observational and/or interview lenses, to phrase and rephrase research questions, to establish and check emergent hunches, trends, insights, ideas, to face oneself as research instrument" (Ely, 1991, p. 140). As Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggested, I read, thought about, and reread the data at least three times before taking notes.

Generating categories, themes, and patterns: I followed the outline proposed by Ely (1991) for establishing categories: (1) read and think about the data until you feel you have caught their essence; (2) write notes in the column of insights, questions, and topics that keep cropping up; (3) make notes of where there is a change in meaning in the text; (4) identify and label meaning units, using one word or as few as possible; (5) after studying and marking several entries, group the labels that fit together and those that do not - compare and contrast; (6) analyze the next few entries by applying the labels decided upon; and (7) write analytic memos as you go along (p. 87-89).

When I first started analyzing the data, it was a challenging and time-consuming process to establish categories. I had too many, and it seemed like as I continued to analyze, I generated new categories rather than collapsing the ones I already had. To assist with this problem, I turned to the grounded theory techniques advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Following their paradigm of identifying and linking (A) conditions, (B) phenomenon, (C) context, (D) intervening conditions, (E) action/interaction strategies, and (F) consequences, I was able to establish relationships and select the categories that guided the remainder of my analysis.

Testing emergent hypotheses: As categories and patterns emerged, I searched through the data challenging the hypotheses, looking for negative instances of the patterns, and incorporating these into larger constructs. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), it is necessary to "evaluate the data for their informational adequacy, credibility, usefulness, and centrality."

Searching for alternative explanations: As categories and patterns emerged, I searched for other plausible explanations for these data and the linkages among them. Since there are always alternative explanations, "the researcher must search for, identify, and describe them, and then demonstrate how the explanation offered is the most plausible of all" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 119).

Writing the report: Memos and diagrams were kept, as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990), as an ongoing record of the

analytic process. These items aided me in presenting the context in which I had studied as fully and richly as possible. As pointed out by many (Ely, 1991; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; van Maanen, 1990), writing does not enter the research process as a final step or stage but is an ongoing part of the analytic process.

### Reading Methods Course

The course, whose official title is "Reading and Language in a Developmental Program," is a 2 hour required undergraduate course for students seeking certification in Elementary Education. Meeting for 3 hours once a week over a 10 week period, the course's purpose is to assist preservice teachers in building a conceptual framework for creating a constructive literacy learning environment in their classroom. Specifically, the content and context of the course as stated on the syllabus (see Appendix F) is grounded in 4 goals:

1. Building a comprehensive description of a literacy learning environment for an elementary school classroom.
2. Exploring and reflecting on a variety of literacy learning activities.
3. Developing and carrying out a curriculum project that will enhance literacy learning for your classroom.
4. Other class generated goals.

The course requirements are:

1. Class Participation. Your active participation in this class is essential for building a productive learning community. It is expected that you will give freely of your ideas, constructively

react to the ideas of others and offer constructive suggestions for the good of the group.

2. Class Notebook. This notebook will be a clearinghouse for your writing and thinking related to the experiences in this course. It will contain at least writings from classes, field assignment reactions to readings, and other features that we deem important. These notebooks should also include spontaneous entries. You might also want to add significant documents from your work with children.

3. Literacy Description. You will develop a comprehensive description of literacy learning in your classroom. This description will include your view of the present as well as your vision for the future.

4. Case Study. This will be a written description of a learner in your class.

5. Literacy Curriculum Project. You will choose an area to focus on in your classroom that you feel would benefit from your input and develop a project that will make a difference for your students.

6. Self-Evaluation. You will provide a self-analysis of your performance on each of the above tasks and a comprehensive analysis of your work in the course.

Also stated on the course syllabus is the grading procedures for the class: "your final grade will be determined by a combination

of your self-evaluations and my evaluation of your work. I will provide an explanation for your final grade."

### Participants

The participants of this study include the instructor, the preservice teachers, the researcher and three doctoral students at a large university located in the southeastern United States. I asked the participants for permission to use their real names in this document because I am committed "to bringing our subjects into the research as active participants" (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1991, p. 150). Each of them agreed to having their names included.

### Instructor

The researcher and director of the field placement is Dr. Jerry Niles, a professor who has been engaged in teacher education for 18 years. His areas of interest include literacy education and teacher education. He has experimented with student self-assessment practices in his classes for the past four years and most extensively during the year prior to this study. On the first day of class, he shares his conceptual teaching model (see Figure 4) with the preservice teachers. While drawing the model on the chalkboard, he begins by explaining his beliefs about inquiry:

"What we are trying to do here is build thinking teachers. Have you heard people talking about education lately? They are complaining lots about it because we are not building thinking students. Well, one of the things we have done in the past is we have created pretty lousy preparation for teachers, too, and

# Instructor's Conceptual Teaching Model

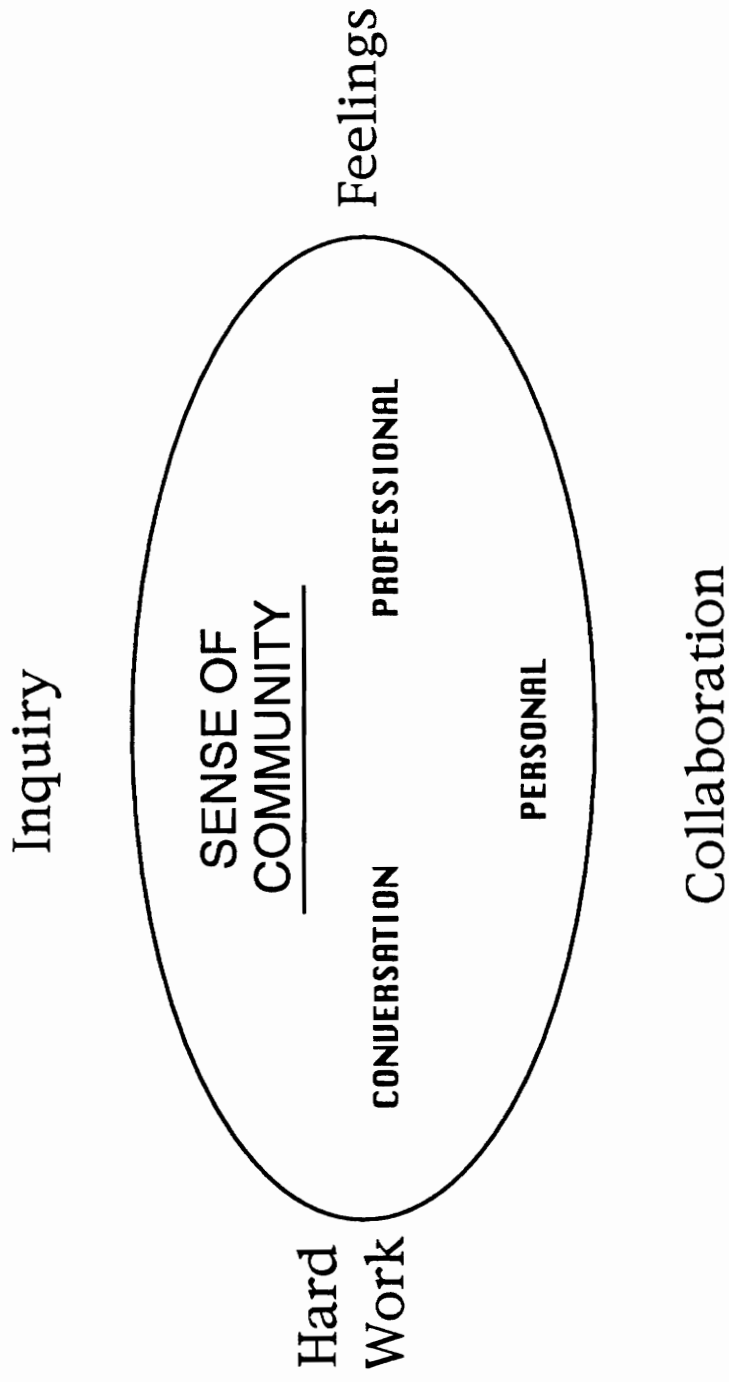


Figure 4. Instructor's Conceptual Teaching Model.

we haven't had them thinking much. . . . So again the objective here is to develop opportunities for you to think about what you are doing. And inquiry is the thing that represents thinking to me."

Continuing his conversation, he next focuses on the importance of collaboration:

"But to learn to teach well is a very difficult process, and that's why I think collaboration is so important. One of the things that helps people with difficult tasks is to have others work on it with them. Collaboration is one way to do that. Another reason I think collaboration is so important in teaching is that so many views need to be considered. Another thing that I know about teaching is there are times that you feel very, very lonely and very sad. When you have others there to share that with, it helps a great deal. I also know that there are times when, more times than the other, when you are very, very happy, and it is great to have people to celebrate that happiness with."

Next the instructor moves from talking about processes to feelings. He states that there are some very powerful feelings, including trust, caring, and responsiveness at the heart of the model:

"We started today to begin to build, or not to begin to build, trust. In my judgment, any kind of good teaching/learning connection is founded on some trust between the learner and the teacher. . . . You don't get it by saying, 'Trust me.' You get it

by behaving in certain kinds of ways. You get it by taking a risk and finding out that people are there to support you. . . . This caring extends out into each person in the model. And I would hope that as we begin to build a community here that each of us can reach out and show caring when it is needed. It is easy to care when you feel real good about somebody. Sometimes it is more difficult to care when you are feeling negative about someone. That carries over into your classroom. . . . Responsive is that ability to take yourself out of yourself and to put yourself in somebody else's place and to understand what they need or what they are saying. Teachers, really responsive teachers, have to become special people because you have to begin to be able to remove yourself from yourself and figure out what someone else thinks you mean. It's responsiveness that says, I'm listening to you, I trust what you are telling me is important and I care that something good happens for you. You begin to develop the ability to assume the very best motives regarding another person's behavior."

The instructor continues by emphasizing that hard work and a sense of community are integral to the model:

"What I am telling you is that in the future, to be a successful teacher, to improve education the way that education needs to be improved, is that we need to begin to consider ourselves as a community of learners in our classrooms, and in our schools in general. You have got to have teachers working together. . . .



But the community of learners means that each of you have a responsibility to this group in terms of talking about what is important to you; raising questions that are important to you, because they might help somebody else think about teaching and learning in a way that they might not have ever thought about it before. That doesn't mean always agreeing with somebody, it doesn't always mean accepting what somebody else has said. What it means is the willingness to raise and consider issues that are relevant to becoming a teacher."

The last words the instructor adds to his conceptual teaching model are "conversation," "personal," and "professional." The personal and the professional are what is inside a person. Questions such as "Who am I?" "How did I get here?" "Where might you go in the future?" and "How do I need to behave to be considered a professional?" are all crucial to this process of becoming a teacher.

He sums up the discussion in a joking manner by saying: "So if you want to say, 'I wonder what Niles thinks is important,' if there is any reason for you to want to do that, these are some of the kinds of things that are so. And actually why I say it to you that way is I certainly have some of my own biases, but trust me, I don't have a problem with people having a different view about what teaching is and what learning is than I have. In fact, I enjoy that [differences] because it broadens my view of the possibilities of what something else might represent. I might disagree with you, but

I think if you can reflect your view in a positive kind of way in terms of the success you are having with that model, then that is fine."

### Preservice Teachers

The 29 undergraduate preservice teachers enrolled in the class are all seniors majoring in Family and Child Development. Twenty-three signed the consent form (see Appendix G), agreeing to be participants in the study.

Their year-long program is divided into four phases. During the data collection period of this study, the preservice teachers are engaged in the first phase. For ten weeks, they move as a cohort through 2 methods classes on campus two days a week; they then spend the other 3 days of the week in 7 elementary schools in two neighboring school districts completing a field-experience assignment in K-5 classrooms. Since the school districts are located one hour from campus, car pools provide both the opportunity to cut down on traveling expenses and the outlets for the much needed "teacher talk" time.

The second phase occurs when the preservice teachers participate full-time for six weeks in their field-placement assignment, and concludes the fall semester. Phase three begins the first week of January and is similar to the first phase, except the preservice teachers are enrolled in different methods classes and are assigned a different field-placement. As in phase two, the

preservice teachers conclude phase four by participating full time in their seven week field-placement assignment.

### Five Focal Preservice Teachers

There was a tremendous amount of data collected from this study. To allow an in-depth look at the data, I selected five focal preservice teachers for study. I believed it was necessary to have five focal students to assure that the characteristics of the class were accurately represented. Using the survey questionnaire previously mentioned (see Appendix B), that was developed and administered during the pilot study conducted in April, 1992, five preservice teachers were identified who exhibited a wide range of previous student self-assessment experiences and varying attitudes about its effectiveness:

Michelle Henderson: In previous classes, Michelle acknowledges that learning and making good grades always came easy for her. Nevertheless, she emphasizes that she spent very little time reflecting on her work:

As a student I always was the kind of student who things came to naturally. So my first three years of college, I kind of didn't put much effort into anything and would go in and take tests and get good grades and be happy. And there was not too much reflection going on there.

She further adds that she was always "trying to please the teacher," without giving much thought to "trying to please myself."

Michelle had one previous experience in student self-assessment. This occurred in college and included a checklist and peer evaluation. Overall, she was satisfied with this experience: "I thought it was a good experience, but I feel some truly evaluated themselves while others found it an easy way to receive an 'A'."

Becky Makepeace: According to Becky, she is a very reflective person. She is constantly thinking about and questioning her work. As she explains, this is not a characteristic that has just recently developed: "I have always tried to get out as much as I could out of my classes." She adds, though, that the focus of her reflection in previous classes was primarily on "tests and papers."

Becky's first and only experience with student self-assessment was in high school. She completed a written evaluation of her work, and overall, she was dissatisfied with this experience:

I was very critical about my work, more than anyone else would have been. She [the teacher] counted it as a grade, and most people gave themselves 100. I was not aware that my analysis would "cost" me.

Anne Beth Presson: According to Anne Beth, during her previous course work she would complete her assignments according to the teacher's instructions and then generally not think about the tasks again:

I just more or less did what the teachers told us to do and handed it in, and that would basically be the end of it. The first thing I'd do is look for the grade and then go back and look at

the comments and then just sort of toss the paper to the side. I never really thought about how I could use this paper to make things better.

When Anne Beth describes herself, she explains that her normal disposition is not to be critical:

I am the kind of person that nothing really bugs me unless it blatantly slaps me in the face. Sometimes I think that is a fault. Sometimes I feel like I'm not critical or analytical enough. Sometimes I feel like I should be evaluating this or reflecting on this a little bit more.

Anne Beth's first experience with student self-assessment was in high school. She had also participated with student self-assessment practices in three university classes. The ways in which she had assessed herself included written evaluation, peer evaluation, and video tape. Overall, she was very satisfied with these experiences: "They showed me ways in which I can improve. I was open-minded to assessing myself and having others do the same."

Dottie Shinpock: According to Dottie, she is an "auditory learner" who has "always been a hands-on kind of person." She perceives that her thinking does not change but rather expands when she is able to engage in hands-on activities. Grades are very important to Dottie: "I can tell you right now that when there's a grade involved, that's where I'm going to go."

Dottie first experienced student self-assessment in elementary school. She had assessed her work in four previous classes. The ways she had assessed herself have included teacher conferences, written evaluations, checklists, and peer evaluations. Overall, she was satisfied with these student self-assessment opportunities and adds: "I wish I could get more feedback from peers without them rushing through it to get out of class."

Danielle Zaremba: Prior to the reading methods class, Danielle did not see herself as being a reflective person. As she explains, she had never really thought about assessing her own work before and suggested that "if we didn't have the chance to revise our papers, we would not go back and look at them again." In discussing her previous classes, she states: "I put off things to the last minute with those classes. . . . I didn't see any reason why we should be taking those classes at that point." She did not have the opportunity in other classes to experience student self-assessment.

It also needs to be pointed out that there were three other preservice teachers in the reading methods class who were significant to the study. Lynez Albert, Kristi Krug, and Katherine Taylor participated in a combination of individual and joint interviews. These interviews served two purposes. First, these interviews were conducted prior to the interviews of the five focal preservice teachers. Each interview was followed by a discussion to help clarify or reword questions that were perhaps vague or questions that evoked very little response. This process was

instrumental in revising the questions prior to the three rounds of interviews with the focal preservice teachers. Second, these interviews provided another form of triangulation. The results of these interviews were compared against the interviews of the five focal preservice teachers.

As previously mentioned, Kristi also helped to shape the study through our exchange of dialogue journals. We exchanged our reactions, reflections, and questions we had about the class. These journals provided new insights into the class and served as another form of triangulation. The questions that I had asked her in the journal also proved to be helpful to me when I developed the interview questions for rounds two and three. Many of these same questions were then asked to the five focal students.

#### Researcher and Other Graduate Students

In addition to the instructor and the preservice teachers, there were 4 doctoral students participating in the class. I, the researcher, am a full-time doctoral candidate who was collecting data for my dissertation study. Prior to pursuing my degree, I taught self-contained and remedial reading at the elementary level, worked as an educational diagnostic consultant, privately tutored students of all ages, and taught literacy education courses at two major universities. My research interests have centered on a wide range of topics such as parent involvement in literacy development, the use of computers in teaching the process approach to writing, literacy

portfolios, and the use of collegial dialogue journals as a research technique in teacher education classes.

The other three graduate students, Lisa Earp, Sally Jeffery, and Liz Strehele, are in their first year of course work and were interested in learning how to work with preservice teachers by watching them develop. Coming out of elementary classrooms themselves last year, they had numerous literacy teaching stories to share. Liz Strehele was also currently supervising one-half of the preservice teachers during their field-placement assignment. By participating with the members of the class in all of the whole group and small group tasks and discussions, we actively contributed to the creation of the knowledge being generated rather than merely being recipients of this knowledge. Anne Beth discusses that her teaching was influenced by our discussions and presentations:

I really like it that ya'll are in there because we get a lot from ya'll. Like with the poem today that Lisa did, and when Sally brought in how she did her books with parents; I am using a few of those ideas with my students. And I shared the hotdog and hamburger fold [from Lisa's presentation] with my students.

### Context

At the top level of the Johnson Student Center are two fast food restaurants. Burger King is located on one end and I Can't Believe it's Yogurt is on the other, with tables for eating, chatting,



reading, or day-dreaming placed in between. Sitting here, looking out the glass walls provides an easy access to students passing by on their way to class or for observing those who have paused to sit at the round tables located outside the building. However, if you descend the steps, positioned between the inside tables to the lower level of the Johnson Student Center, classrooms await professors and students. It is here, in room 102, that we assemble for the reading methods class.

Entering the spacious room one sees white walls, tan variegated carpet, 14 long tables with brown wood grain tops with dark blue stacking chairs for sitting and a displaced lectern in the corner. While there are no windows providing views to the outside world, there is a square window located in the back of the room for reflecting audio visual projections onto the large portable screen mounted above a chalk board that runs all the way across the front of the room. The room looks fresh, new, and stark. The building was just completed last year, and this helps account for the professional "spic and span," state-of-the-art appearance. When the participants arrive, however, this starkness is transformed into a setting that is very much alive and breathing. Stories about teaching and learning literacy are the focus of this new form of life.

At the beginning of each class, the instructor provides a handout that specifies the tasks for that day (see Appendix H). Generally, these handouts also provide the field assignment and reading assignment due for the next class. Usually there are also

miscellaneous handouts such as maps to the locations where we will meet for field experience seminars, copies of small group reports from a previous class task, and so forth. Several classes conclude with a self-evaluation form (see Appendix I) for students to reflect on what they learned that day, how they helped others learn, what they could have done differently, and what their future learning on the topic might be. Upon completion, the students place these forms in their class notebook, a clearinghouse containing their writings from the class, field assignments, reactions to readings, and other documents they deem important. Later in the semester, these forms aid the students in providing a self-analysis of their performance on each required task for the class as well as a comprehensive analysis and final grade for their work during the course. At the end of class, invitations are frequently extended to the students to write a "Dear Jerry" letter to the instructor about any concerns, issues, or discoveries they have relating to the class.

In addition to class handouts, materials such as poster paper, markers, transparencies, the textbook Invitations by Regie Routman (1991), other professional texts, and children's trade books are readily available for the completion of various tasks throughout the 3 hour session. Sharing think alouds, visuals on the chalk board, mini lectures, video tapes, whole group discussions, and teaching stories are the standard approaches the instructor employs to introduce or engage the class in a new task. Building on both the major goals of the class and the written assignments due, these in-class tasks are

usually completed in small groups. The groups are formed by school placement, grade placement, random counting off or free choice, depending on the purpose of the task. While the tasks rotate between (1) What is a literacy curriculum like? (2) How do I do it? and (3) What are ways I can think about it?, the changing of roles, groups and tasks provides the opportunity for students to interact and share their own literacy stories in multiple ways. Similarly, whole group analysis is accomplished in a variety of ways, such as one member from each group reporting on the overhead, group visuals being displayed on the wall, or the professor conducting what he calls a "metacognitive analysis" discussion, focusing on the question, what did you learn or think about the topic. However, there are two common threads which echo throughout each class - laughter and stories.

The next two chapters include the data presentation, the analysis, and the interpretations of the study. Because student self-assessment is such a complex and interactive process in the reading methods class, it is impossible to illustrate this process as a single entity. To make the findings more manageable and understandable, the instructor's approach and the students' approach to student self-assessment are both presented in Chapter Three. Chapter Four contains a discussion of the factors influencing student self-assessment. It also presents a model of a democratic approach to student self-assessment practiced in the class. It is important for the reader to keep in mind that even though the findings are

presented in a segmented manner, everything was operating together as a total process in the reading methods class when the participants were engaged in this student self-assessment process. It is also important to note that none of the findings were established a priori, but rather emerged as the analysis proceeded.

## Chapter 3

### Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter describes how the class' participants approach the adventure they are on. The first section of the chapter delineates both the instructor's approach and the students' approach to student self-assessment in the reading methods class. The instructor's approach is important because it represents the conditions and context necessary for the preservice teachers to engage in student self-assessment practices. The students' approach is important because it defines how the preservice teachers manage, carry out, and respond to student self-assessment in the reading methods class.

The second part of this chapter includes a detailed description and analysis of the first major task the preservice teachers complete for the class. This section illustrates the instructor's approach and the students' approach to student self-assessment as the participants in the reading methods class experience it.

The reader should note that while the first section presents the instructor's and the students' approaches to student self-assessment in a linear fashion, the process is highly interactive and recursive as the participants are living the experience.

#### Instructor's Approach to Student Self-Assessment

The instructor's approach to student self-assessment in the reading methods class represents the context and conditions

necessary for the students to participate in student self-assessment practices. Included in the analysis are both the intentional and the unintentional approaches the instructor uses in the class. He does things directly designed to incorporate self-assessment practices in the class, while other actions indicate a more indirect support of student self-assessment. The context for student self-assessment consists of five specific properties: class climate and management, small group work, task approach, theory and practice, and student assessment. This context is illustrated in Figure 5.

### Class Climate and Management

When viewing the class' climate and its management through the lens of student self-assessment, six features emerge: active participation, freedom of expression, respect of diversity, variety of activities, teacher disclosure, and choice. As written on the course syllabus, the class is structured in a way that fosters active participation, freedom of expression, and respect of diversity:

Your active participation in this class is essential for building a productive learning community. It is expected that you will give freely of your ideas, constructively react to the ideas of others and offer constructive suggestions for the good of the group.

For student self-assessment to occur, students must feel free to express their ideas and have opportunities to gain ideas from others. In the reading methods class, while the instructor and the

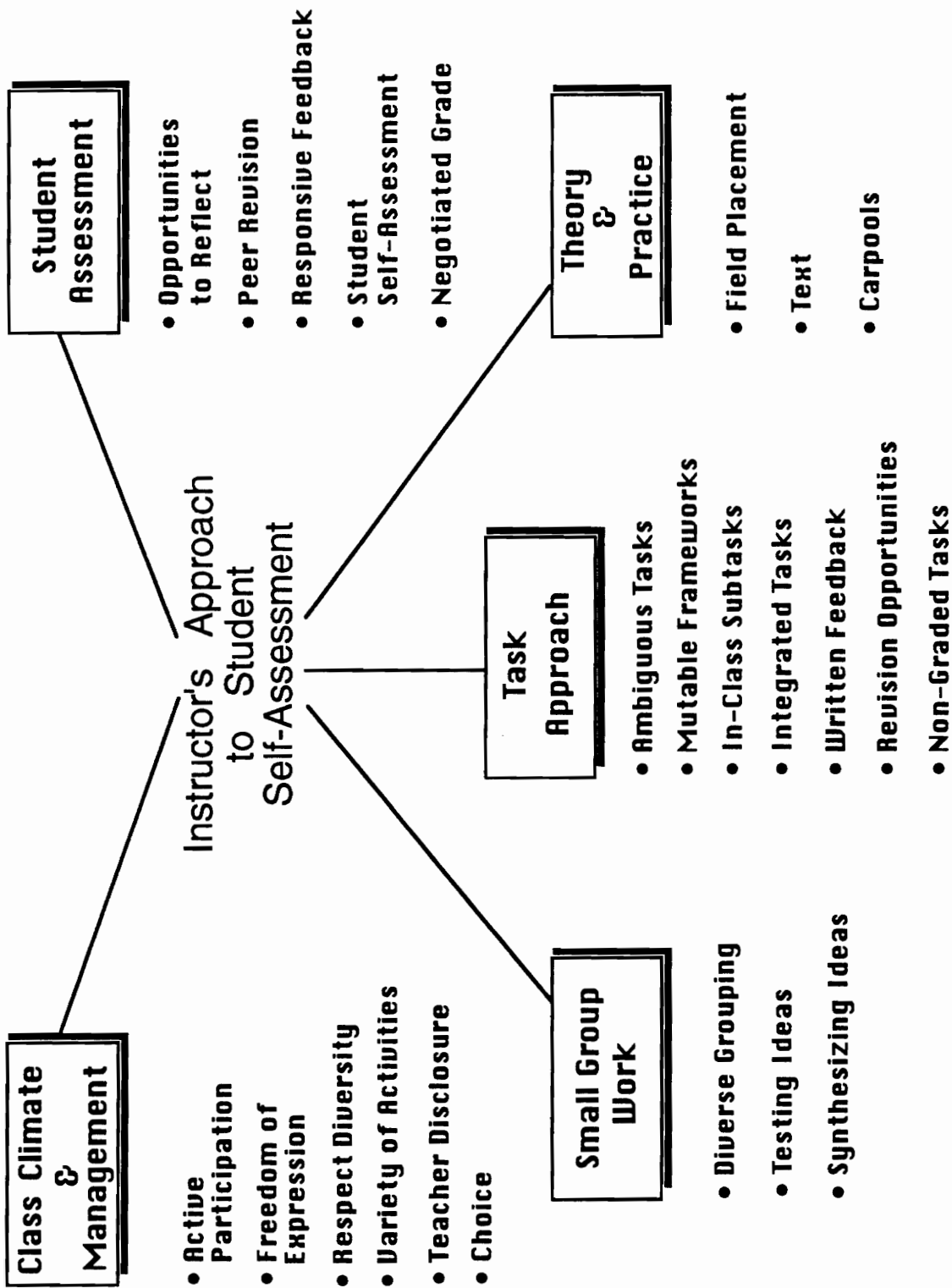


Figure 5. Instructor's Approach to Student Self-Assessment.

preservice teachers spend the majority of their time engaging in whole group and small group discussions, each class is structured differently. In addition to the class discussions, there are a variety of activities. For example, video tapes and graduate student presentations are frequently integrated into the class to provide the preservice teachers with models to compare their work against, which according to Johnston (1991), is a necessary condition for self-assessment.

Additional activities in the class include mini lectures and stories. The instructor uses these tools to make explicit his views, experiences, and expectations about literacy instruction. When instructors share rich and indeterminate stories of their past teaching experiences with preservice teachers, they are exposing their thinking about the complexity of learning how to teach (Carter, 1993; Moore, 1992). From these disclosures, "closer, more authentic student-teacher and student-student relations may develop which allow for more revealing social interaction, more sophisticated learning activities, and opportunities to connect academic learning with the lived experience of students and teachers" (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 107). In essence, stories help create a community and "have the power to direct and change our lives" (Noddings, 1991, p. 157). When students are part of a learning community where teachers disclose their thinking, they in turn feel safe enough to express and assess their own ideas.



The reading methods class is also structured so that the preservice teachers are allowed to make choices. For example, the preservice teachers have the option of revising their major assigned tasks, they have flexible dates for turning in their tasks, and they have the freedom to develop and implement their tasks according to their own format. According to Rogers (1969), students assume responsibility for their learning in environments with a human climate, where attitudes and feelings can be expressed, where the students can choose from a wide range of options, where the teacher serves as a facilitator of learning, and where students evaluate their own work.

### Small Group Work

Because the majority of the reading methods classes include small group work, it is considered an important component of the instructor's approach to student self-assessment. It is made up of three features: diverse grouping, testing ideas, and synthesizing ideas. During each class the group formation rotates by field placements, school placement, grade level, random selection, or free choice. The groups are structured so that the preservice teachers can publicly test their ideas. Finally, when the groups synthesize their ideas, these results are shared in various ways such as on wall charts, on overhead transparencies, or with other groups.

Noddings (1991) argues that when environments are created which are "a familylike setting in which interpersonal reasoning is to be developed" (p. 168), then teaching strategies such as small

group work are used that provide teachers and students with opportunities to care for each other. Similarly, Belenky, Clinchy, Golderger and Tarule (1986) talk about teachers who understand and value their students as using a "connected teaching" approach, where the teacher sees the student in the student's own terms.

In the reading methods class, small group work provides the preservice teachers with the freedom to interact and connect with one another in a "familylike setting." They are working together, helping each other. As Johnston (1992) points out: "Whenever we evaluate, we are engaged in a social interaction" (p. 17). We assess ourselves based on our interactions with others.

### Task Approach

The instructor's approach in the reading methods class focuses on the preservice teachers' completing tasks both in and out of class. Seven features make up the task approach: ambiguous tasks, mutable frameworks, in-class sub-tasks, integrated tasks, written feedback, revision opportunities, and non-graded tasks. All of the four major assigned tasks and the numerous in-class tasks are highly ambiguous. That is, there are various meanings available for the interpretation and completion of the tasks. For example, the first major task asks the preservice teachers to write a literacy description of their field-placement classroom. Naturally, each classroom is different, but the preservice teachers are also free to emphasize what they deem most important and to present it in the manner they prefer. These tasks were adapted from the work of

Doyle (1983), who argues that the characteristics of academic tasks influence the way students think about and approach their work, and they vary in risk and ambiguity. Embedded in the task structure is the reward system, which is directly related to the level of risk that the preservice teachers will take. Injecting student self-assessment practices into the system influences their willingness to take the necessary risks for complex learning. If students engage in tasks with right or wrong answers, there is little need for student self-assessment. Duffy (1991) explains how this approach is also related to educating empowered teachers:

. . . we must go beyond giving teachers the impression that the key to effective instruction is compliance with our favored theories and our favored techniques. We must instead convey the much more complex reality that what is useful usually depends on the situation. Consequently, we must help teachers understand what a theory or procedure is good for, when it might be useful, and how to make good decisions. (p. 15)

For each of the four major assigned tasks, the instructor provides a mutable framework. These flexible outlines are models for the preservice teachers to use when they are completing the tasks. There is also in-class time provided for the completion of a variety of sub-tasks that are connected to the four major assigned tasks. These major assigned tasks are all integrated into the preservice teachers' field placement assignment, and they build upon one another. For example, in the second assigned task, when the

preservice teachers are asked to write a vision of their future classroom, they draw from their first assigned task of describing the literacy classroom. This instructional approach is grounded in the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1988), who view curriculum as "something experienced in situations" (p. 6). This means that all teaching and learning entails the involved persons' looking at them from their own point of view.

For three of the four major assigned tasks, the preservice teachers are invited to make revisions. They receive written feedback from the instructor on their first drafts, their revised drafts, and their written self-evaluations. None of the tasks are graded. It needs to be emphasized that the revision process in the reading methods class does not just focus on making the written product better. Actually, the primary emphasis is on facilitating the preservice teachers' explication of their implicit knowledge about literacy instruction in their field-placement classrooms. For example, the instructor often asks questions or makes comments such as "How do you know that?" "Why is this?" or "Cite an example," if the preservice teachers write an assumption in a major assigned task without providing examples to illustrate it. In this context, the feedback is a tool used to extend and refine the preservice teachers' thinking.

According to Harp (1993), "assessment and evaluation in writing must reflect what we know about the writing process" (p. 44), including opportunities to prewrite; discuss with peers and the

instructor; write; revise; edit; and share. What Harp (1993) is referring to is children's writing, but I believe this principle holds true for adults as well. Through the process of receiving feedback from the instructor and having the opportunity to make revisions on their tasks, the preservice teachers assess their work and establish a plan for going forward in their thinking.

### Theory and Practice

The property of theory and practice is made up of three features: the field-placement assignment, the text, and carpools. Each property reflects a contribution which assists the preservice teachers in making connections between theory about literacy instruction and classroom practice. Even though the field-placement assignment is not officially part of the reading methods class, all of the four major assigned tasks are integrated in these classrooms. For example, to complete each of the assigned tasks, the preservice teachers have to engage in activities such as observing, documenting, and critiquing the literacy curriculum or the students in their field-placement classrooms. These classrooms also provide a context in which the preservice teachers can try out what they are learning in the reading methods class.

Similarly, the carpools are not officially part of the reading methods class. Nevertheless, the instructor encourages the preservice teachers to take advantage of this time together to continue their conversations about literacy instruction. When students gain multiple perspectives about their work, they become

aware of alternative options available, which in turn increases their ability to prioritize, make decisions, and be in control of their learning (Short & Burke, 1991).

Finally, the instructor explains that the textbook for the class was selected to help create a context for the preservice teachers that more resembled the "real world":

I have ordered the text Invitations because I wanted to approach the course with a different flavor than I have in the past. And I have been trying to figure out ways to make it less course-like, and make it genuinely the way teachers learn how to teach. As I study the Routman text more, I find it is perfect because what she has is a conversation.

All three features of the theory and practice property also focus on the preservice teachers' gaining knowledge and understanding about the political and social contexts of the schools in which they work. According to Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), this understanding is prerequisite for initiating educational change: "It is necessary to reflect on and understand both one's own situation and the situations of relevant others in order to plan or cope with change" (p. xiii). This understanding is also prerequisite for the preservice teachers' engaging in an assessment of their own work. Learning to stand outside ourselves and look at an event from both our own perspective and that of someone else is believed to be the basis of reflection and self-assessment (Johnston, 1992, Short & Burke, 1991).

## Student Assessment

Five features make up the property of student assessment: opportunities to reflect, peer revision, responsive feedback, student self-assessment, and negotiated grades. First, the class' structure provides many opportunities for the students to reflect on their work. For example, they are often invited to write "Dear Jerry" letters at the end of the class or complete self-evaluation forms on what they have learned in small groups and how it was learned. Danielle writes on a self-evaluation form what she learns from reading a children's book during a small group task:

Today I learned how I should hold the book so it would be easier for me and for the children to listen, see, and understand. I also learned to make better eye contact and that I need to read slower. I need more depth on introducing the book and ask more open-ended questions.

There are also several freewrite exercises designed to encourage the preservice teachers to reflect on their previous experiences and beliefs. For example, Anne Beth entitles an in-class freewrite about her early literacy instruction "Memories of Spot and Jane":

Reading instruction was sometimes a fun activity but at other times a turmoil. I can remember a unit on vowel sounds and throughout the weeks covering this unit, I sat confused and bored, wondering when it would end.

My school system had textbooks and workbooks that taught literacy skills. Unfortunately, books I wanted to read

were set aside for pleasure instead of learning because teachers believed only the textbooks should be used.

I also remember the embarrassment of being separated from school friends in terms of reading ability. My teachers didn't think I was ready for advanced reading so I was put in a slower reading class, although it wasn't the slowest.

I'm not really sure how reading skills evolved and developed within me. It's as if one day I had them. I can't actually remember learning to read, but I do remember thinking I'm getting better and better at this every year.

I look back on those Dick and Jane and Spot readers and it's a wonder I even like to read today. Those stories were dry, monotonous, and of little personal interest for me.

Johnston (1992) points out that learners have working hypotheses based on current knowledge, experiences, and values. However, often teachers' intentions and beliefs are seldom consciously known or easily verbalized (Berliner, 1986) unless there is a specific impetus, such as a freewrite activity, which encourages them to reflect back on previous experiences. When practitioners consciously interact and assess their present situation with past experiences, they take an active role in shaping their professional growth (Argyris and Schön, 1974).

On several occasions, the preservice teachers engage in peer revision and provide written feedback to one another's major assigned tasks. This feedback is different in nature from the



instructor's but is nevertheless important, as Heron (1988) points out:

. . . self-assessment is necessarily interwoven with peer assessment. I refine my assessment of myself in the light of feedback from my peers. (p. 86)

The preservice teachers receive both oral and written feedback from the instructor on all of their tasks. As Harp (1993) suggests, students "must be given feedback on and be asked to self-evaluate their performance at each stage of the process" (p. 45). As previously pointed out, the feedback helps the preservice teachers extend and refine their thinking. The written feedback the instructor provides on the major assigned tasks is also very supportive. To illustrate, I have selected several excerpts from the preservice teachers' assigned tasks. The preservice teachers' excerpts are in normal text and the instructor's corresponding feedback is in italics.

Danielle's Literacy Description Task: 1) As you walk down the fourth grade hall a feeling of mystery and intrigue bursts out at you. The halls are full of detectives with minds full of questions. *Wow what an image!* 2) Journals are also used for free writing in this class. . . . They seemed to enjoy this exercise more and spent more time on this than the worksheet they were assigned. *Good observation.*

Anne Beth's Vision Paper: 1) I've already found that it's much easier to look at my teacher's methods of teaching literacy and critique them rather than developing my own program. *You're smart.* 2) I've seen so many benefits from reading programs developed to emphasize trade books more than basal readers. The children are interested in what they're reading, actively seeking out what they want to read, but still receiving enough guidance from the teacher to develop specific reading/writing skills (sequencing, recall, writing, ditto sheets vs. exploration, self-guided activities, and hands-on experience vs. textbook learning). *You're right on target.*

Dottie's Vision Paper: 1) I want my students to be placed in the least restrictive environment and I want them to feel they have the power to achieve any goals they make for themselves. I picture my students behaving independently within the classroom, even though they will be working in cooperative groups and pairs for a majority of the time. *A wonderful foundation.* 2) Children need to have first-hand experiences with life by growing a variety of plants, maybe a garden if the opportunity arises and a compost pile. Students can learn a multitude of information relating to many areas of life by being responsible for growing plants and taking care of animals. *Great examples.*

Becky's Student Story: 1) Throughout the day he works slowly, mostly with his head resting on his hand or his desk. Often he is dazed, "staring into space." *Very vivid image.* 2) Later, he began asking me for help, claiming that he did not know what to do. I had him read and explain the directions to me and attempt the work. *Good idea.*

Michelle's Student Story: 1) My observations of Bill's work habits contradicted my original assumptions. *That means you are open-minded in your thinking.* 2) In nine days of writing, he chose to write or draw about his soccer team everyday. *Excellent observation.*

Bower and Flinders (1990) emphasize the need for responsive teaching to maintain a supportive educational environment, where decisions are based on understanding learners. As Johnston (1992) explains: "We have to remember that our dialogue with the students tells them who we think they are, what we think learners should do, and what we think it means to be literate (or how literate people behave)" (p. 20). Becky, one of the preservice teachers, also points out that there is a connection between the instructor's understanding them as learners and the students' self-assessment:

I think that the instructor needs to have a very good feel for the type of person that you are, the work that you have put into it, and the thinking that you have done about it. Because I think

that is what holds us accountable. If we didn't think that somebody was going to question what we put into it, everybody would just put, I deserve an A and wouldn't worry about the justification and making sure that they have met the criteria and that sort of thing.

When the preservice teachers complete each of the major tasks, they also write a self-assessment of their work. Again, the instructor provides written feedback which emphasizes his understanding and support of what the preservice teachers have written. For example, in Michelle's self-assessment of her literacy description, she first explains how she had initially disagreed with her cooperating teacher on several issues; she then tells what she has learned from the experience:

I feel my description not only conveyed the actual atmosphere of our classroom, but an analysis of its components as well. I tended to start with a description that included appearance and location. I then tried to analyze whatever area I had just described. I purposely wrote the paper in chronological order to reveal changes in those conclusions on ways my impression of the environment developed with more information. I feel this decision gave my paper a unique perspective. It gives the reader the opportunity to almost visualize my thinking process.

Once reading your comments, I realized there were several places I could have elaborated further. My answers to

most of your questions include an unfavorable assessment or comment of my cooperating teacher's decision-making in our classroom. My understanding of the assignment was that we were to avoid focusing on our feelings in this description. I feel very strongly about my dislikes of some components of the literacy environment. At the time I wrote the paper, I did not think I could critically analyze areas without letting those strong feelings interfere. I now realize I can communicate those statements effectively. However, I am still satisfied with my original effort. At the time my dissatisfaction was so emotional I probably could not have separated my feelings from my beliefs and analysis. It is not that I am less sensitive to the problems, but as I have spent more time with Mrs. Freeman [cooperating teacher - pseudonym] I am more aware of her motives. Though I still disagree with her on many points, I now realize she truly feels she is teaching in a manner that is beneficial to her students. I see that the decisions she has made are consistent with her beliefs. This understanding allows me to analyze more thoroughly according to my beliefs.

I feel this assignment would have been extremely valuable if I had only learned to understand other teachers' decision-making. I will have to work with many colleagues over my career and feel I will be more tolerant if I try to accept their beliefs may just differ from mine - but they are still trying in the context of their beliefs. This in no way

means I should conform to their methods, but should make cooperation easier for the sake of my students. I also gained a better understanding of what makes up a literacy environment and how many things affect it. This assignment also aided in the development of my vision paper. Since I better understood the components of a literacy environment, I knew which types of things I wanted to include. I then chose how I wanted to accomplish my goals and presented those decisions.

I am very satisfied with my outcome, effort, and gains in learning from this paper.

The instructor responds to her written self-assessment in the following way:

Dear Michelle,

Your self-evaluation, as your description, is remarkably insightful. Your description and awareness of your thinking process provided me with a vivid picture and context for understanding your description more fully. Your insights into understanding your view and Mrs. Freeman's [cooperating teacher] view and what those differences really mean will be truly a foundational block of your professionalism for years to come. You are a powerful thinker, and your ability to share your thinking with other faculty in a constructive way will be a tremendous asset to the school(s) you will teach in.

JN.

According to Rogers (1983), students assume responsibility for their learning when they engage in student self-assessment practices:

The evaluation of one's own learning is one of the major means by which self-initiated learning becomes also responsible learning. It is when the individual has to take the responsibility for deciding what criteria are important to him, what goals must be achieved, and the extent to which he has achieved those goals, that he truly learns to take responsibility for himself and his directions. For this reason, it seems important that some degree of self-evaluation be built into any attempt to promote an experiential type of learning. (p. 158)

It needs to be pointed out that while the assessment process for each of the major assigned tasks in the reading methods class consistently includes peer and instructor feedback, that feedback varies during the revision and the written student self-assessment process. For example, during the first and third task, the preservice teachers follow the sequence of receiving peer feedback, making revisions, receiving feedback from the instructor, making revisions again, and writing a student self-assessment of their work. For the second task, the preservice teachers receive peer and instructor feedback but do not make revisions or write a student self-assessment of their work. For the final task, in addition to receiving feedback from their peers and the instructor, the preservice

teachers also receive feedback from their language arts instructor. The preservice teachers are invited to submit the same project for the reading methods class and the language arts class. The difference between the two classes is that for the language arts class, they submit an idea for a curriculum project that they eventually carry out and assess for the reading methods class.

This assessment process continues throughout the semester, until the preservice teachers receive a grade for the course. The preservice teachers submit to the instructor a written comprehensive assessment of the class and the grade they believe they deserve; if he disagrees with their grade, they have a conference to negotiate the final grade. In essence, grades are backgrounded in the reading methods class because of the extensive feedback the preservice teachers' receive on their work which instead placed emphasis on their professional learning.

The instructor's approach to student self-assessment outlined in this section focuses on active participation and the integration of in-class and out-of-class tasks. The preservice teachers engage in and receive feedback on the assessment of their work in a community characterized by shared learning and inquiry. Next, we will look at how the students mediate this approach. It is important to note that the section on the students' approach to student self-assessment does not provide an in-depth case description of the way an individual preservice teacher approached student self-assessment. Rather, it represents the common characteristics of the



participants' mediation of student self-assessment in the reading methods class.

### Students' Approach to Student Self-Assessment

There are four properties which define the students' approach to student self-assessment: participating in small group work, engaging in ambiguous tasks, receiving and giving feedback and reporting self-assessment. This is illustrated in Figure 6.

#### Participating in Small Group Work

Three features make up the property of participating in small group work: sharing, clarifying and thinking, and testing. When the preservice teachers are given the opportunity to work in small groups, the majority freely express and test their ideas, while a few preservice teachers, such as Danielle, feel more comfortable assuming a less focal role:

I learned from the others in our class and participated in their activities and discussions as well. I worked together with our groups and was flexible in working with them as well as accepted their criticism. I took their criticism to better me as a student teacher. . . . I am not as vocal as some in our class, but I feel I learned as much as them and participated especially in our small groups.

All of the preservice teachers are eager and excited to work in small groups and welcome the opportunity to clarify, modify, and extend their thinking. For example, on the day that the instructor asks the preservice teachers to read the rough drafts of their

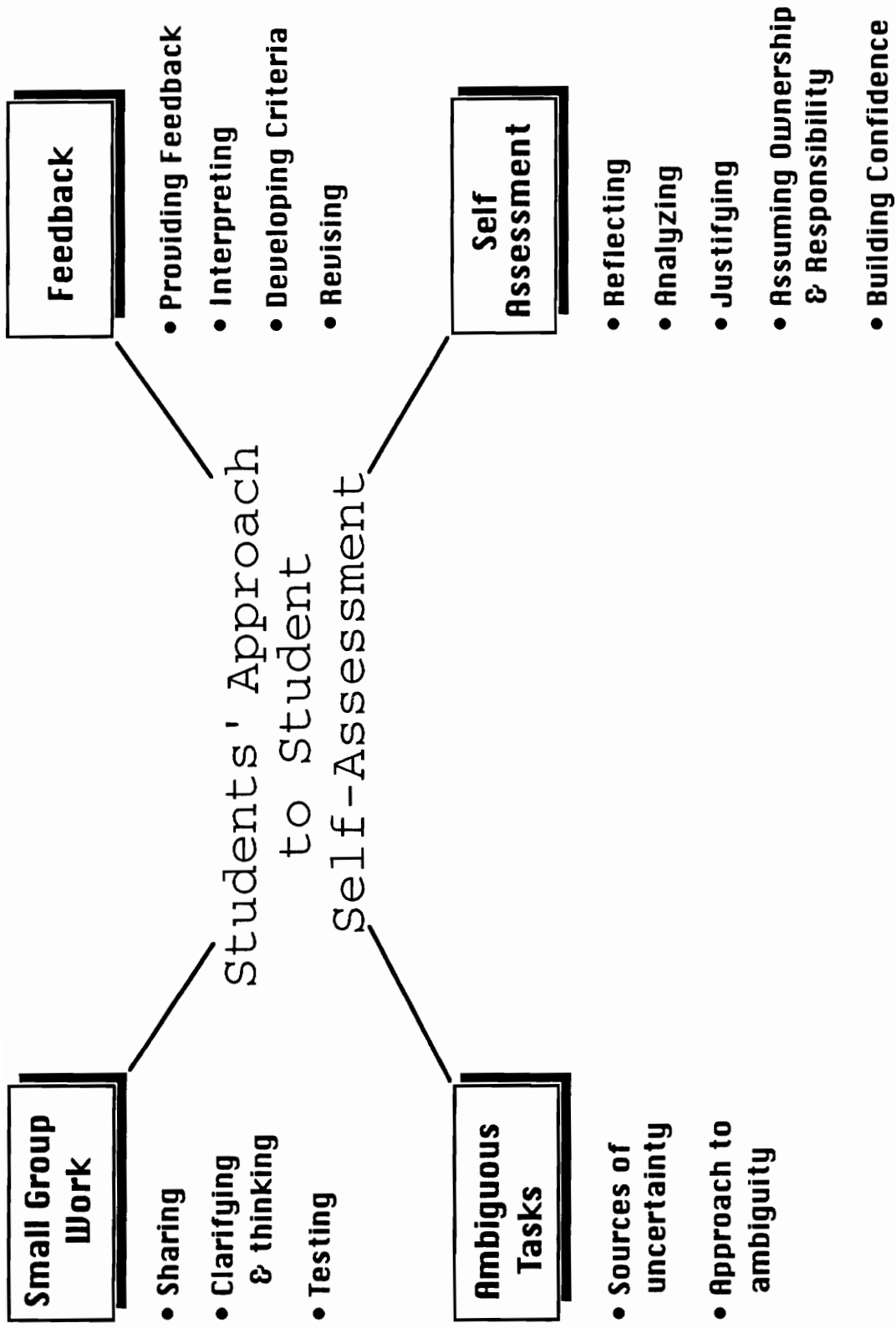


Figure 6. Students' Approach to Student Self-Assessment.

student stories in small groups and provide written feedback to one another, the preservice teachers modify this in-class task to meet their needs. The group I participate in does not read their drafts, nor do they provide written responses. They instead use this time to clarify and extend their thinking about the major assigned task:

*Dottie:* Are ya'll looking for specific things when you are observing your children?

*Lindsay:* I haven't really. My child is so easy to observe because she stands out so much, and she is so outgoing and she is so talkative. . . . I mean I haven't been really looking for things specifically, but I've just been noticing a lot.

*Dottie:* Well see, I just kind of found it is impossible to come up with a draft after one week. I mean [*interrupted* ]

*Lisa:* It is hard.

*Dottie:* It is very hard. I can't believe that he expects us to have a final next week, because I feel like I'm just scratching the surface.

*Lisa:* We're just starting really.

*Dottie:* I don't see how this is going to benefit me, just making observations that are kind of like shallow. And then writing a paper about it. Because I have a writing club, and I am doing a lot of work on my own, and I'm in and out of the classroom. . . . I mean Mary [student story child], I rarely have to go and help her with anything. So, even when I am going to table to table, it's not with her. It's with other children.

*Becky:* But don't you think if you try to look at it from the perspective of being a teacher, that the very same situation may happen in your classroom?

*Lindsay:* And that may be part of the intention of the project.

*Dottie:* Well, I think it is kind of different if you are the teacher. She is also getting all of her [student story child] work, and seeing what she is doing. She has also had more interactions with the parents, and she is also there five days a week. I mean, I don't think I can really compare. . . . I think this project would be a lot more valuable if we had more time to look at that child. I mean, I think to really get a meaningful description it takes time.

*Lisa:* I don't think it is supposed to be that in-depth.

*Dottie:* Maybe not. It is maybe just to get us to start observing.

*Lindsay:* And I also think an intentional part is maybe for us to realize that it is difficult. If you are teaching a class of all of these kids, you maybe asked to fill out something. I know my teacher filled out a referral, some checklists for ADD or whatever. I mean, you might have to do that sort of thing. Maybe you have had the kids for one week, and they want you to observe them.

*Dottie:* That's true.

*Lindsay:* There are limitations.

*Dottie:* I mean, I'm not saying it's bad or anything like that. I am just one of these people that I guess, I kind of jump into too much, and if I only get two weeks, I feel like I'm not getting enough. Maybe like you say, that might be what he wants us to do; what can we get in a matter of two weeks.

*Lindsay:* I think maybe we all would like to do that. We would love to sit down, and OOPS there comes that one child, and really study them in-depth.

*Dottie:* Well, maybe he is making us do this so that we get a taste of what we are trying to look for. So maybe it is a kind of awareness thing, and if you do have to observe all the children, then you will be more trained in what you have to look for and be able to do it faster.

*Lindsay:* I think that's what we have kind of got to learn how to deal with. You know, we have got a limited amount of time, and I want to make as good of a observation as I can. I want it to be accurate, and I think that's what is kind of hard about it, and what you have to learn to do.

*Dottie:* Yeah, because I'm like trying to dig out what I need to look for. Like how I can see differences, and by just looking at different settings, differences in how they act, and who they act with, and what subjects they act with, it's just kind of a window into every child, and not just this one child.

*Lindsay:* I don't know if this is what you are talking about, but one day last week I taught this science lesson. And she

[cooperating teacher] told me the way that she observed me was through watching the kids, and how well they are receptive to what I was saying. And she picked out the kids that are having problems, like hearing and seeing, and getting the instructions down, and he [student story child] was one of them. And she said, he was listening to me, every instruction I gave, he sat and he did it. And I was like all right! Cause you know, she was picking out these target kids in our classroom to see if they were responding to what I was up there teaching.

According to Vygotsky (1978), we make meaning out of the world in which we live through language and by interacting with others. He claims that "every function of the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p. 57). Through our interactions with others, we help each other not only learn academic knowledge, but also construct our own version of the world in which we live. We also provide support for one another, which helps reduce the level of risk. As Short and Burke (1991) point out: "The risks that each individual takes are cushioned by community membership and by the realization that others are also taking risks" (p. 19). Through our interactions with others, we also construct those perceptions of ourselves which help form the basis for our self-assessment. Kristi explains that during small group work, the views of the preservice

teachers differ from one another's, and these individual views change over time:

Working in groups this time was a lot more challenging than normal. We are all starting to form our own opinions, and they are no longer all the same. We see so many different things in our placements, and we are all exposed to such different teaching styles. All of this is starting to come forward in our own views. Whether or not we are following our cooperating teachers or learning what not to do, we are all starting to make the transition from student to teacher! Thus, the name student-teacher. It is exciting to see the change taking place, however slight the change may be.

### Engaging in Ambiguous Tasks

The property of engaging in ambiguous tasks consists of two features. First, the preservice teachers experience uncertainty and tension when engaging in ambiguous tasks. These feelings are generated from two sources; the preservice teachers' lack of knowledge about literacy instruction and their lack of experience with these types of tasks. Short and Burke (1991) claim that tension results from the acknowledgment that knowledge is tentative and evolutionary, but they add that this tension is a positive force that propels students to take new risks and stretch themselves towards greater understandings.

The second feature entails the preservice teachers' approach to ambiguity. Because they realize there are not predetermined

answers to the tasks, they feel a high level of risk and uncertainty. They turn to their peers and to the instructor for feedback, clarification, and guidance. Dottie explains her reaction to the instructor's feedback:

I think he [instructor] brings out good points. Whenever he says anything I would just have to sit and really think about it. I mean, it's not just a right or wrong kind of thing. He provokes things that make me think and maybe they won't be resolved right then and there. He's asking me questions that he may not necessarily expect an answer. That's one thing I've really learned about him. He's not expecting an answer in black and white; he's expecting me to think about it. And not just get his input but to get input from other people. It's not one of those things that you can just come up with a formula and solve.

Throughout the classes, the preservice teachers are observing, reflecting on their work, gaining multiple perspectives, testing ideas, exploring different possibilities, and setting goals. These are integral processes of the self-assessment process, or what Dewey (1933) defines as reflection: "the kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration" (p. 3).

Because all the ambiguous tasks are connected to the preservice teacher's field-placement assignment, the preservice teachers view them as being relevant and meaningful to their



development. As Anne Beth explains, they are motivated and approach the tasks enthusiastically:

You [instructor] show us the benefits of the papers we will be doing, so when they're assigned it's not something I dread. It's something I look forward to using in my classroom (whether it's a teaching tactic, reflection, or activity involving the students.)

### Receiving and Giving Feedback

The next property of the students' approach to student self-assessment is receiving and giving feedback. It consists of four features: providing feedback, interpreting, developing criteria, and revising. First, the preservice teachers take feedback very seriously. They give and receive feedback in group situations, and there is a two-way feedback process between the preservice teachers and the instructor.

The second feature is interpreting the feedback. When the preservice teachers receive feedback, they form an opinion about what is said. This leads to the third feature, which is developing criteria. As the preservice teachers are engaged in giving and receiving feedback, they identify what is important to accomplish. According to Rogers (1969), when students have choices about what is important to learn and how well they think they are learning, they gain ownership and responsibility for their learning. According to Becky, the feedback from the instructor helps them identify the criteria for what is important for them to learn:

Even though specific criteria was not set, he gave us some kind of vague goals and he told us that we would be self-assessing. We got started working on projects and we asked him to clarify this and clarify that. Throughout the semester we became more aware of what we needed to be doing and what he was looking for. Through that process where he would give us a little more information in class or we would ask questions when we did things, if we got reinforcement, we knew we were on the right track.

The last feature is revising. Because the students receive written feedback on all of their assignments, they revise their work often. For example, in Dottie's literacy description paper, she discusses how at the beginning of the school year her cooperating teacher had used a number of literacy games to help the students become more familiar with each other. She describes a card game in which the students had identified their likes and dislikes, and then she writes:

Adding to that feeling of belongingness, each student was given a puzzle piece made out of cardboard. . . . Each student then decorated their particular puzzle piece to their approval and the puzzle was pieced together.

When the instructor reads Dottie's literacy description paper, he questions: "How does belongingness relate to literacy?" Dottie responds to his question in her revision:

The puzzle named "we fit together" was one of the ways that Mrs. Brown [cooperating teacher] introduced this concept to the children. I feel that belongingness relates to literacy in many ways. Each individual person has a place in the literate world. No matter what your circumstances in life may be, there is something for everyone. Taking pride in your work and expressing your own opinion are all part of the literate world. No two people are exactly alike, nor express themselves in the same manner, although we all "fit" in a literate world.

On this revised excerpt, the instructor provides Dottie the following feedback: "Sensitive," "Smart," and "Wonderful Explanation."

The preservice teachers perceive feedback as a means for improving their work; they view learning as an ongoing process. Vygotsky (1978) talks about this concept as the "zone of proximal development" when students are able to accomplish a task that they could not accomplish on their own without the feedback, assistance and support they receive. Short and Burke (1991) add that "knowing that we will have the opportunity to make changes in our ideas increases our willingness to take a risk and act as decision-makers" (p. 19). Michelle points out yet another way the revision process influences her thinking:

One of the most important things I learned this semester was to view things from my colleagues' perspectives. At the beginning of the semester I was very judgmental of my

cooperating teacher because her methods differed from those I have adopted from classes and experience. While revising my literacy description, I realized my cooperating teacher was teaching based on a belief system she truly thought was best for her students. She had developed her methods over many years and was teaching from that background. I am grateful that revision gave me insight into her thinking. . . . I feel it was the thought I put into my revision and evaluation that allowed me to see things from her perspective.

### Reporting Self-Assessment

The last property of the students' approach to student self-assessment is reporting self-assessment. This property is made up of five features: reflecting, analyzing, justifying, assuming ownership and responsibility, and building confidence.

When the preservice teachers write a self-evaluation of their work, they first think about and reflect on their work. They are analyzing their work to see if expectations are being met. They are identifying strengths and weaknesses and justifying what they have accomplished and learned. According to Boud and Falchikov (1989), identifying criteria and making judgments are the two key elements of the student self-assessment process. Throughout the process, the preservice teachers are building confidence about and gaining ownership and responsibility for their work.

What is most evident about the students' approach to student self-assessment in the reading methods class is that the preservice

teachers are publicly expressing, testing, and reflecting on their ideas. Boud (1990) claims when students are encouraged to develop the skills of learning how to learn and how to monitor their own work, they are developing the skills of professional practice. Anne Beth demonstrates this type of analysis when she writes in her comprehensive self-assessment:

I've always felt uncomfortable with my ability (or lack thereof) to assess, reflect, and assertively change a situation. The discussions, brainstorming activities, car pool conversations, text book readings, and written papers have helped me to think more critically about good and bad situations in the classroom. I find that I am more aware of when and why things are going right or wrong, rather than just accepting the situation. As a result, I am more likely to evaluate an activity that isn't going well and change it so it will go better. Even though I am still working on my critical analyzing skills, I feel that I have made marked improvements over the course of this semester.

In this first section of the chapter, we have seen how the instructor's approach to student self-assessment is important because it represents the context and conditions necessary for the preservice teachers to manage, carry out, and respond to student self-assessment. Under these conditions, the preservice teachers are able to self-assess their work. The way that the preservice

teachers mediate student self-assessment practices was delineated in the section on the students' approach to student self-assessment.

In the following section, the reader is provided a story entitled "Launching the Adventure." The story illustrates the instructor's and the students' approaches to student self-assessment in the reading methods class. The purpose of the story is to provide the reader with an example of the instructor's and the students' approaches to student self-assessment as the participants are living this experience. It can also serve as an illustration of how the instructor's and the students' approaches to student self-assessment continue throughout the remainder of the reading methods class.

The story contains a detailed description and analysis of the preservice teachers' first major assigned task. It begins with the preservice teachers' being introduced to the task, continues through all of the in-class tasks relating to the task, and ends with the preservice teachers' assessing the task. The specific task entails the preservice teachers writing a description of the literacy environment where they are concurrently completing their field-placement assignment.

The story is organized into sections. The reader is first provided a vignette of what occurred in the reading methods class; it is in italics. Immediately following is an analysis of this vignette; it is presented in normal print. This format is continued throughout the story.

### Launching the Adventure

*"I want you to take yourself back to your elementary school. Some of you might have gone to more than one. Pick one that you like. I don't want you to think about the first day. I want you to get in there and it's about October or November. You learned the classroom, think about here's the school, your knowledge of the classroom. You're in your classroom, there's your teacher, Ms. or Mrs. or Mr. so and so. What are you wearing? What do they usually wear? Who's in the class with you? Do you recognize anybody there? OK, now in the class, I assume you have reading instruction. Things you did to learn how to read. That teacher taught you about reading. And what I want you to do for a minute is think about that. What did you do related to reading? What did he or she do related to reading with you? What did the reading lesson look like in that elementary classroom? OK, now what I want you to do is to begin to write about that. Just freewrite as fast as you can to describe what reading instruction is like in your classroom."*

*It is early morning on August 27th when the twenty-nine preservice teachers gather for their first reading methods class and hear these directions given for the picturing activity. Leading into this task, the instructor first shares stories of how picturing helps him to plan his lessons and adds this is difficult to do if one doesn't have the background information to do that.*

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As the instructor begins the task with his own personal stories related to picturing, an important component of the class has begun. Stories help the preservice teachers and the instructor to become connected as a community of learners. When Danielle imagines a conversation with a fellow student who would be enrolled in the class next year, she shares her reactions to these stories:

I would tell her . . . about how we communicate, and how we are pretty much a big family. And I would tell her about how Dr. Niles gives us examples on different topics. It is different reading a textbook in my room and just sitting there trying to comprehend it. But I like it so much more when he tells us stories about things. It makes it more real.

The freewrite exercise itself is important for the preservice teachers because it provides them an opportunity to reflect on their prior experiences. In today's class, when the preservice teachers reflect on their practice and prior experiences with reading instruction, it may be seen as a first step in the student self-assessment process. The preservice teachers need to be aware of their present beliefs before they can interact with and assess their present situation and take an active role in shaping their professional growth.



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*After 10 minutes, the preservice teachers form into self-selected groups of 4 to 6 and are asked to either read or tell what they wrote. The instructor adds: "As you are doing this [sharing], think about how each person's is the same or different from yours and be sure to be facing somebody because the way you 'do space' is important." The next 20 minutes is spent listening and comparing one another's story.*

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This is the first time the preservice teachers have worked together in small groups in this course, but this approach will continue to be used in every other class throughout the semester except one. Small group work illustrates the instructor's strong belief in collaborative learning and building a community of learners. The preservice teachers feel they are helping one another, as Anne Beth comments when talking about the benefits of small group work:

It's really wonderful to be able to compare my work with someone else's. It's not to see if it's better, but to see if I am at least going along the same lines that they are going. It's not something that's competitive, at least I don't feel that it is competitive at all. I feel that we are there to help each other.

It is also important to note that the preservice teachers are given the choice to read or tell their stories. They are free to choose the approach that makes them feel most comfortable. Providing the

preservice teachers with the opportunity to choose between options is another approach that is used over and over again throughout each class. The preservice teachers are quick to pick up on the relationship of choice and their learning, as Becky concludes: "I know that we have a lot more freedom in this classroom, and what we get out of it really depends a lot on what we put into it." Choice is obviously crucial in the self-assessment process, because ultimately it is the preservice teachers themselves that make decisions about their learning.

Another interesting feature of the directions given to the preservice teachers is to "be sure to be facing somebody because the way you 'do space' is important." Here the message is that different contexts make reflection, self-assessment, and risktaking more or less likely to occur.

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*After the small group sharing, the instructor draws a line on the chalkboard with increments from one to ten, with one representing YUK! and ten representing WOW! and asks for a show of hands of how the preservice teachers feel about their reading instruction. The majority of the preservice teachers' ratings fall within the four or five category. When this exercise is complete, the instructor states that he has good news for those who have yuk feelings toward reading instruction and continues by sharing personal stories about how he didn't like reading and writing as a student and how he later became a reading teacher. "I have a*

*confession to make. I ended up being a reading teacher because when I started teaching 4th grade, reading was the thing that I knew least about." He continues: "I think it is important that you understand where you are with that . . . and if you don't feel good about your own literacy then that is something that we will have to work on."*

---

Once again, the importance of the preservice teachers' identifying their previous feelings about reading instruction is illustrated through the rating scale activity. This activity provides them the opportunity to reflect about their beliefs, but it also sets the stage for tensions to arise when they recognize that their prior experiences with reading instruction were negative.

An example of how the preservice teachers approach these tensions is seen when Becky reflects on her previous experiences:

Reading and writing has never been a big desire of mine. . . . I just don't recall reading very much as a child, and the only writing that I remember was the pressured kind of term paper in high school that I just hated. I dreaded it. It was always associated with a paper and a grade. . . . But I was interested in it [literacy] for my students. . . . I think because I felt so unprepared, it made me that much more interested so that I would be prepared for my students.

Through his stories the instructor is attempting to illustrate how his own knowledge and beliefs about literacy have changed over his career. They also illuminate the goals of student self-

assessment in this class: for the students to grow and develop into the teachers they want to become.

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*Next, the instructor suggests that the class take a 30 minute break, but adds "while you are on this break, I want you to sit by yourself for 10 minutes and make a list of everything that you see, make a list of things that are going on."*

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During the break, the observation task provides an illustration of how the class features a variety of activities. It is actually a sub-task that provides guidance and support to the preservice teachers while completing the major task of writing the literacy description. Providing in-class sub-tasks for each of the major assigned tasks is another approach used throughout the class.

The observation task also forces the students to stop and think about what they normally take for granted, which is the basis for student self-assessment. As Anne Beth later explains: "I learned that first impressions are not always the right impressions." It is important to realize that the preservice teachers are looking, questioning, and trying to understand what is going on around them in terms of getting ready for their first major assigned task. In addition, they are practicing the very processes they will continue to use throughout the semester.

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*After break, the preservice teachers form into groups of four or five to analyze the picturing story written earlier according to the following four categories: people, things, processes, and feelings. The instructor says, "These are domains that I think are related to curriculum experiences, and what you did this morning was to write a narrative of your curriculum experience from your perspective." When the groups finish composing their lists, everyone freely shares from their list as the instructor writes the responses on the chalkboard. When the discussion is complete the instructor states the purpose of the activity: "What I am trying to do with this is give you a framework for you to go out and to begin to build your description of the literacy environment in your classroom and your school."*

---

Providing mutable frameworks for the assigned tasks is an important contribution of the instructor to these preservice teachers' learning and is another approach frequently used in the class. Presenting the category framework today gives the preservice teachers not only a direction for accomplishing the in-class sub-task, but also a structure to follow when they are writing their literacy description. In addition to observing what is occurring in their classrooms, they have a means for making sense out of it.

When the instructor identifies his beliefs about what curriculum entails, the preservice teachers begin to see the criteria

he has established for this assignment. This criteria is critical information for the preservice teachers when they are assessing their work to determine if they have fulfilled the course requirements. It is also similar to the situation the preservice teachers will be placed in as future teachers when they must consider their own criteria as well as the criteria established by the institutions in which they work.

It is important to note that the preservice teachers must observe and analyze what is occurring in their field-placement classrooms to complete the literacy description assignment. Once more we see an approach used for all of the major assigned tasks in the reading methods class. The preservice teachers take this opportunity to explore and test their ideas in their classrooms. As Becky explains:

We learned largely from experience because a lot of the things that we read in there [reading methods class], people had questions about or ideas that they thought would work, or wouldn't work, and we really didn't know until we were able to try them out in our classrooms.

By viewing these tasks as meaningful and relevant to both their student teaching placement and their future work, they are motivated to learn and change as much as possible. Motivation is another critical factor in the self-assessment process, as Michelle explains: "I am doing everything I possibly can. I know that I am putting everything into it, and I can't give any more than this."

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*Next volunteers are asked to read their list from the observation task completed during break. After two preservice teachers share, the instructor states: "The point that I wanted to make is when you are building your description, it is going to be individual. I have kind of created these categories to assist you, but don't let these categories trap you into making meaning about the literacy environment in your classroom. . . . The important thing is that you begin to build a picture in your head of what literacy is all about. Because it is that picture in your head that will help you make decisions about how to go about teaching."*

---

An important aspect of this discussion is that the observation sub-task completed during break illustrates to the preservice teachers that even though everyone was engaging in the same task, each person's list was different. It provides an example for the preservice teachers about what they can expect to happen as they begin observing in their own classrooms, and it further illustrates that there isn't a right or wrong answer. Becky realizes the impact of this approach when she says:

I think with the assignments that he has given us, since he's not expecting a particular way of doing it . . . that he has given us that leeway there and it's made me focus on more of what is comfortable for me. So I can think of it as I can do it this way, or this way, or this way.

These statements suggest that Becky is exploring a variety of options and feels free to develop her own interpretations and choose her own path to follow, which is another component of the self-assessment process. In order for student self-assessment to be valid, students must be empowered to value their own observations and the meaning they make from them. This contributes to the students' ability to build confidence about their work and their willingness to share their ideas, as Michelle points out:

Throughout the whole experience, of student teaching and everything that I have done, I have gained more confidence about myself as a teacher. Especially the reading class, it was so supportive that it made me feel more confident, that no matter what, he [instructor] is not going to say, "hey this is stupid." And then once you have that confidence behind you and you are clarifying your own ideas at the same time, then that confidence boosts up those ideas until you are at a point where you are saying, "Okay, these are my ideas," and you feel your experience backs those up too; it keeps on going a little higher and a little higher until you feel confident enough to express them.

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*The first class concludes with the passing out of next week's assignment sheet, which also includes an invitation to the*



*preservice teachers to write about any concerns, questions, or comments they have.*

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The invitation extended to the preservice teachers at the end of the class to share their concerns, questions, or comments is initially upsetting to me as a researcher. In my research proposal, I had stated that one form of data collection for this study was exit slips written by the preservice teachers at the end of each class, and I had assumed they would be required. When only two of the preservice teachers write to the instructor at the end of the class, I am afraid that I am missing out on important data for the study. Approaching the instructor after class about the matter, he vehemently explains that requiring students to write their responses and reactions does not fit into his teaching approach because his beliefs are grounded in providing students with choices. I remember giving a lot of serious thought to this conversation and later wrote about this in my dialogue journal to him:

I feel like I learned a valuable lesson about the type of research I want to do from our conversation after class concerning exit slips. Initially, I was just concerned about getting my data, without concern for the class being conducted in a normal manner. I must remember that I am a guest in your class and that I am trying to understand what is going on. My research should add to rather than interfere with the class. I

am thankful that you are as knowledgeable about novice researchers as you are about novice teachers!

In thinking back on this transaction, it is significant in terms of my understanding the strong conviction the instructor has for providing students with choices. As an example in today's class, if the preservice teachers have something they want to share, the invitation is there, but if they have no response, they do not have to come up with something just to please the instructor. In terms of understanding student self-assessment, it is also significant that the preservice teachers reflect on their work throughout the various stages of the class, not just after a specific assignment or when the course is completed.

Another important aspect of this transaction is the instructor's conviction of not letting the research study interfere with the usual way the class is conducted. He comments about this conviction during several interviews throughout the course of the study:

I worry that my concern for your study may affect my instructional decision-making in some unnatural way. While I know the study influences how I behave, I want to make sure it does not drive what I do.

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*The second class does not focus on the literacy description task per se except when the instructor makes the suggestion to continue adding to the description and its interpretation; he*

*stresses: "in your carpool or as you talk to your colleagues, share those [observations they are making] back and forth."*

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The importance of gaining multiple perspectives while in the process of completing their field assignment is once again reiterated to the preservice teachers. The instructor's suggestion further illustrates to the preservice teachers that learning to become a literacy teacher extends beyond the context of the reading methods class and encompasses their other out-of-class experiences.

As the semester progresses, it becomes surprisingly evident to the instructor, the preservice teachers, and me just how important the carpools are in terms of promoting conversations and facilitating the preservice teachers' learning. Anne Beth sums the carpools' importance up by saying: "I never realized that a forty-five minute or hour drive could be as influential as it is. That had never even crossed my mind when going into this."

The carpools were truly a natural forum for the preservice teachers to clarify assignments, share classroom stories, extend their thinking, and provide support to one another as they were traveling together on this journey of becoming a teacher. Indeed, these are the very processes involved in self-assessing one's work.

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*The third class begins with randomly assigned groups being formed to brainstorm and group into categories the items about*

*literacy gained from their classroom observations. Members of each group freely and openly share freshly generated stories from their field-placement assignment while accomplishing the task of giving their group a name, preparing a chart to display on the wall, and making a list of additional ways to find out more about literacy in their school and classroom (see Appendix J). Afterwards, each group spends 5 minutes viewing each group chart attached to the wall by comparing, talking, and taking notes.*

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What is important to note about the small group work on this particular day is how the preservice teachers are asked to present their findings. An instructional approach that is used throughout the class is for the preservice teachers to synthesize the ideas generated from small group work in a variety of ways. For example, the sharing provides the preservice teachers with numerous examples for comparing and contrasting their thinking to that of others, which is a critical feature of the self-assessment process.

On this day, when the preservice teachers share their stories and display their lists, they are gaining a new understanding about teaching literacy, generating new directions for completing their task, and establishing group criteria. Kristi recognizes that the group conversations are becoming more meaningful as the preservice teachers gain more experience in their field-placement assignment. She also recognizes the value of giving and receiving feedback in group situations:

I saw change in our group talk today. Everyone had things to say. Everyone could not wait to tell their stories about their first week of school. Our talks are changing from our "personal" weekend plans to our experience in our classroom and school. I heard so many good ideas and so many horror stories that blow mine away. I heard ways to cope, ways to improve, things to do to get around differences. We are all helping each other, and the ironic thing is that I do not think anyone realizes it yet.

---

*Next, as the class engages in a whole group discussion focusing on "What did you learn about and what generalizations could you make?" the issue arises about classroom teachers being unwilling to change. The instructor takes this opportunity to voice his opinion:*

*"The point is that your teacher, your kids, and you are all entitled to your beliefs. The teacher is entitled to this belief, whether you agree with it or not, that is her belief and that is very important. You don't have to accept her belief, but you have to recognize it. . . . Change is a very complex thing. When you try something new, you can actually look worse at what you are doing than you did prior to that. And these teachers are being asked to think of new beliefs and new ideas, and that is hard. And they are doing it with minimum levels of support. . . . So what I am telling you is your teachers, you have got to*

*understand them. They are trying to do the best they can. And you may disagree with it, and it's OK, but until you walk 5 years, 10 years, 15 years in their shoes being given more work than you can do, just be careful before you judge them too harshly. That is my advice to you. I am not telling you to believe the way they do. You keep your beliefs. But also, understand why you have them, and how you can justify them."*

---

As previously pointed out, an instructional approach in the reading methods class is to ground the major assigned tasks in the preservice teachers' field-placement classrooms. The conversation in today's class illustrates to the preservice teachers the need for them to gain knowledge and understanding about the political and social contexts of the schools in which they work. It further suggests that while they have the right to their own beliefs, they must also be able to justify them. When Michelle talks about what she is learning in the reading methods class, she addresses this topic:

My knowledge base is so much greater and I can justify my beliefs. I knew that I wanted to create a good environment and allow the children to learn as much as they could by setting up experiences. I went on an interview this past summer, and I was saying all those things, but I didn't know exactly how I was going to accomplish it and I didn't know all of the reasons behind it. Now I feel like I have both of those things.

The instructor's talk to the class also suggests to the preservice teachers the importance of being responsive to others' situations. Kristi seems to recognize this when she writes in her dialogue journal:

I still feel like I am "learning" the most from our group discussions and share times. But Dr. Niles really made me stop and think today. His "sermon" on beliefs and attitudes, on having too much to do with too little time, and on doing what you believe is your "best" really hit home. It's so easy for us to judge our cooperating teachers, to say that they are not good, or as good as we want them to be, but we have no idea what they really go through.

The importance of the preservice teachers' being open to gaining a new understanding of the contexts of their field-placement assignment is important to their self-assessment because it initiates thinking about exploring and testing new possibilities in these settings.

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*The instructor also suggests that they might like to divide up among their school groups to talk to different staff members at the school such as the librarian, reading teacher, or principal because "What I want you to eventually do, in addition to the writing assignment, is to have a concept in your head about the variety of perspectives."*

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Once again, the importance of gaining multiple perspectives is emphasized to the preservice teachers. They view multiple perspectives as critical to their professional development, as Dottie explains:

Feedback from people is one of the best things in the world. You can always take it or leave it, and most of the time I do take it, whether it is a small portion or the whole thing.

In relation to student self-assessment, this means that while assessing one's own work is ultimately an individual action, the reasoning behind it is generated through collaborative efforts. For example, when the preservice teachers write their literacy descriptions, it is their own perception of that classroom; nevertheless, it actually encompasses the perceptions they gained from many other people.

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*The preservice teachers next ask the instructor various questions relating to the literacy description assignment, such as their freedom to observe in other classrooms, the possibility of getting copies of the group reports generated in class that day, and whether the final draft was to be in a narrative or list form. The instructor responds that he is looking for a narrative, "a good story about literacy in your classroom," and he emphasizes the importance of bringing a draft to share in the next class because:*



*"What you will do is begin to see other people's narratives. . . . Very seldom do you ever see what someone else did, so how do you ever know? And is there a right way? No. You should keep your individuality, but you should see what others have done. We are not looking for a right answer here. The kinds of tasks that I design do not have a right answer; they can be adjustable to you."*

---

The statement about the task not having a right or wrong answer is significant to understand, because all of the major assigned tasks and in-class tasks the preservice teachers engage in during the class are of this nature. The effects of the ambiguous tasks for the preservice teachers are twofold. First, as Becky points out, she views the tasks as an opportunity to shape them to fit her own situation:

That's one of the reasons that he's given us the open-ended assignments. One, it's just because in the teaching field, as much as I would like it sometimes, to be given a definite answer - you do it this way, or this way, or this way; there really isn't a right answer. But in addition to that, I think that he has given us the open-ended assignments to see what we are doing because we will kind of take the assignment and make it our own. And it will have Becky written all over it.

The second effect is connected to the students' lack of experience with both literacy instruction and with these types of

ambiguous tasks. Anne Beth explains how she copes with the risk associated with ambiguous tasks:

I think a lot of us have the fear of doing the project wrong, because it is a broad thing and it is going to be different for every single person in the classroom. And so I think I have the ultimate fear of turning in all this hard work that I have been doing and getting the big red X on it or something. And so, that really concerns me. But Dr. Niles is really good because he is happy to answer our questions and he talks to us about it. And like, if you give him your ideas, he will give you feedback on it. So, it is not too much of a worry, but it is a concern.

As illustrated in today's class, the students are filled with uncertainty and so they turn to the instructor for support, guidance, and clarification about completing the assignment. The outcomes of these ambiguous tasks are also highly related to student self-assessment. When a definite right or wrong answer exists, there is little purpose for student self-assessment.

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*The class concludes with the instructor inviting the preservice teachers to complete a self-evaluation form on their group work; this form is then placed in their class notebook.*

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As illustrated in today's class, there will be numerous opportunities throughout the semester for the preservice teachers to assess their work, and these opportunities will vary in form. For

the preservice teachers, these opportunities to engage in assessing their work contribute to their overall impression of the class. As Michelle states: "Our whole class was directed around the process of us thinking about our work, not just the end result."

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*The fourth class starts one hour later than usual, according to the instructor's directions:*

*"To show you how important I think this draft is, I will donate one hour of class time to work on it. . . . You may come to the classroom and write if you wish or use the time as you choose. I will be available in the classroom from 8-9 for consultation with you if you like."*

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What is important to recognize about beginning the class one hour later is how the class management varies in this class according to the needs of the students. The preservice teachers perceive that the instructor acknowledges and respects the heavy demands placed upon them during this stage of their program. Michelle expresses her belief that the instructor is responsive to their needs and suggests how it influences her thinking: "I want to learn how to be as in tune with my students as he seems to be with us."

Several preservice teachers took advantage of the instructor's availability during the first hour of class for consultation. When students have sources available to turn to when they are "stuck"

their learning does not come to a halt. Instead, they reassess their learning according to the feedback they receive; they gain new direction for continuing forward with their learning.

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*Once class begins, the preservice teachers follow the written directions provided for the description sub-task:*

*(1) In groups of three, read your draft to the other group members. (2) The listeners should pay close attention to the substance of the draft based on their view of what a description might be. (3) On completion of the reading, each group member, including the reader, should list three stars (things you liked about the description) and 1 or 2 wishes (things that the author might consider changing or adding). Then share. The author should collect the written feedback from the other group members and keep it with the draft to help in rewrite. (4) As a group, decide on four or five important things (criteria) that make a good description. Share with at least one other group.*

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The opportunity for the students to engage in peer revision is an example of an instructional approach that shifts from a traditional authoritarian model of assessment to a mixture of self, peer, and collaborative assessment. During the peer revision process, the preservice teachers are freely giving and receiving feedback. The feedback is taken very seriously, as Kristi describes:

I really enjoyed listening to the literacy stories and trying to picture the various environments. It was exciting as well as disappointing to hear the others' papers. Disappointing to hear that literacy was "left on the shelf" in one room and often overlooked or even ignored. I learned more about the environment in my room from reading my story and receiving feedback as well as from listening to my story. I raised questions of my own, and with my group's help, was able to step back and answer them. "3 stars and a wish" . . . helped me to see the strong and weak points of my draft. Today was productive and helpful. And once again our group discussion drifted into our classrooms and our own experiences."

---

*After small group work, the instructor asks if there are any questions and announces that the basic due date for the draft is the next class, but "If you want to hold onto it until your vision paper comes in and hand it all in together, that will be fine with me too."*

---

When the instructor provides the preservice teachers with the opportunity to turn in their work after the specified date, it illustrates that he understands the complex and demanding life of preservice teachers. When I ask him why he provides this flexibility to the preservice teachers, he responds:

There are a couple of things. One of them is, it's not a course for me. It's a year-long experience. The other thing is my belief

that it has to be integrated into their work. Their work in the schools determines when they can do it. Sometimes they can do their projects early, sometimes they have to wait. Sometimes they get into a project and they don't like it, so they flip it over to their next assignment. It [the field-experience] kind of mediates all of that, and I just let them go.

The students express mixed reactions to being afforded the flexibility to turn in their assigned task. Anne Beth is very appreciative of having the extra time:

I really like the way that he is very understanding that we have lots of things going on at once. He's like, well, I would like to have it by this date, and if you talk to him and tell him your circumstances that I can't get it done by this date but I can try to have it into you by next week, and you don't abuse the system, he is very understanding about that. And that makes me feel a lot more comfortable as far as assessment goes. Because I know if I can't get it done the way that I want it by a certain date, that it's probably going to be okay. And that I can have more of an opportunity to give a much more thorough and much more accurate assessment of the paper and myself.

Anne Beth's comments clearly illustrate the relationship between having extra time to complete assignments and student self-assessment. When students have the freedom to decide if their work needs improvement and are afforded the extra time to make changes,

their learning increases. They assume ownership and responsibility for their work.

In contrast, Dottie is concerned that some students may take advantage of this situation:

I think people do abuse it. I can just see how Dr. Niles structures things, like our assignments, our self-evaluations or what ever, that they didn't have to be done by a certain time, right then and there. He was just like, get it in by the end of the semester. And I don't really have any underlying evidence to back it up, like somebody telling me, but I just think the fact that he is like that, that maybe people might just have the tendency to take advantage of that. And that is one thing that I have really thought about because I've never had a teacher that was so understanding. If you were teaching anybody else, they would just rip you apart.

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*The next 20 minutes are spent viewing a video in order "to analyze an elementary classroom environment for literacy features" with added directions to "compare and contrast it to your classroom." The class concludes with the instructor writing on the chalkboard "Feedback for Jerry."*

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Again we see an example of how the class consists of a variety of activities that facilitate the preservice teachers' completing their first assigned task. This sub-task provides them yet another

perspective for reflecting on their work by exploring different possibilities and points of view. What is important to note about the "Feedback for Jerry" invitation is that the preservice teachers are consistently invited to assess and share their thinking.

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*During the next class, the majority of the preservice teachers turn in their literacy description papers and the instructor announces, "I will comment on them and give them back to you and then you will have a chance to change things around if you wish, just like a revision process."*

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On this day, the preservice teachers turn in their first assigned task and realize they will have the opportunity to revise their work. This is another approach that is used throughout the class. According to the preservice teachers, having the opportunity to revise their work is a critical component of the student self-assessment process, as Danielle explains:

I think going back and looking at our papers, rewriting them or whatever, is a part of assessment. Testing ourselves. If we didn't have the chance to revise them, I may not go back and look at them again to be honest with you.

---

*Two weeks later the instructor returns the papers with written directions to the preservice teachers for self-assessing their work:*



*Please write a self-assessment of what you think about your literacy description after you have read your paper again and my feedback. You may like to consider such criteria as the comprehensiveness of your description as well as its vividness and success at communicating an understanding of why things work the way they do. There may be other criteria you would like to include as well (things that you think are noteworthy about your work). You may also like to note things that I missed in my feedback or disagreements that you have with my comments. Finally, you might like to comment on what you learned.*

*After completing the written self-assessment, you may wish to revise your description. This is not a requirement. You may do a revision simply by adding another section or inserting the new information in the most efficient way possible.*

*After completing the self-evaluation and the revision, if you chose to, resubmit the paper and the self-evaluation to me.  
Thanks!*

---

A significant aspect of the written directions provided to the preservice teachers is connected to student self-assessment. When students are asked to assess their work, they are examining it critically to determine if they need to make changes, checking for meaning, and deciding to accept or reject the feedback of others. On this day the preservice teachers receive not only specific feedback

on their papers but also the instructor's four major criteria for the written literacy description. Even though previously the criteria was specified on the tasks sheets and through class discussions, they were not as explicit as in these directions.

It is also significant to point out that providing written feedback to the preservice teachers is one of the instructor's major concerns about the student self-assessment process. He questions if there is a ratio between the number of negative and positive comments that he can give without it having a negative influence on the preservice teachers' learning. He also adds, "I'm not sure what my criteria is and how I decide what it is that is important that I write down."

Another concern the instructor has about the feedback is the amount of time involved in this process. He provides extensive responses to each of the preservice teachers' major assigned tasks, their revisions, and their written evaluations of the tasks. He questions if there are more efficient means of transmitting this feedback. For example, he discusses that for future classes when preservice teachers revise their tasks perhaps they could simply list any changes on a numbered sheet of paper that has corresponding numbers on the original draft, rather than rewriting the entire draft.

The preservice teachers receiving their papers back today is also significant because it is the first time they have received feedback from the instructor. They are uncertain about what they will find, as Michelle explains:

I had no idea what to expect. And to tell you the truth, when I got my paper, I flipped to the last page to see the grade, and there wasn't one. This was the first thing that I had received back, so I guess it hadn't hit me yet that I wasn't going to be getting a grade. . . . I was kind of bracing myself, because I wasn't sure, I knew he wouldn't be critical, I knew that he would be supportive no matter what, but I was still unsure because I didn't know what it would be. So it was a relief when I read it and it sounded good to me.

Like the instructor, the preservice teachers are also concerned about feedback. First, they question the reliability of the instructor's feedback. Specifically, they are concerned that the instructor is withholding negative comments on their papers. Michelle states that the feedback is very positive, as evidenced by the comments written on her description: "Good analysis," "Good point," and "Very insightful." Michelle suspects, however, that there are more weaknesses in her work than he is disclosing:

I'm sure if there was a problem, that he would come to me. It's just because I know that with my students, I always try to have many positive points and suggest they work on maybe one thing, which is what I see him doing with my work.

The second concern about feedback entails the preservice teachers' desire to receive more specific direction about how to go about revising their work. For example, Dottie states:

I felt a little up in the air when he asked us to revise our paper. I kind of wanted him to tell me if he thinks that I should spend more time on it or if I didn't explain myself clearly.

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*All but two of the preservice teachers eventually revise their papers, and all of them write a self-assessment of their literacy description and resubmit it to the instructor.*

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It is significant to note that while it is optional for the preservice teachers to revise their papers, all but two choose to do so. Michelle, sees revision as an opportunity to facilitate her own learning:

From the revision process I learned to be more, not critical of my own work, but able to analyze my own work. Immediately after I read it, I said I want to do this, and do this and do that, which shows just in the two weeks from when I turned it in and I had it back, I already had found things that I wanted to do differently. . . . I liked having the opportunity to get to do it, because it wasn't like we were doing it for a grade, or even because of any feedback from him, but it was something that I was doing for me. It impressed me that I was motivated, even though I was under a lot of other pressure, I wanted to revise it.

The feedback the preservice teachers receive on their papers is taken very seriously. They perceive it as supportive and

constructive in extending and modifying their work for the class and their practice in general. In most cases, revision encourages the preservice teachers to go back and be more explicit about literacy in their classrooms, as Anne Beth states:

For me, the feedback from Dr. Niles is mainly what my revisions were from. Because he just asks such good questions and he had such good insight into what I was writing. Those comments and questions really made me stop and rethink the situation and sometimes look at it from a point of view I hadn't seen before.

Anne Beth continues by stressing the importance of criteria in the student self-assessment process:

You really need the criteria up front to know where you are now as opposed to where you want to be. And then once you are ready to assess yourself, you still need to look back at that criteria to see, "did I meet it, you know, where am I in comparison with it now." So it would be pretty aimless to not have any certain sort of goal in mind when you're starting out on something that you know that you're going to want to closely monitor and keep an evaluation on.

While the preservice teachers are reporting their self-assessment, they are not only looking to see if expectations are being met by focusing on strengths and weaknesses, but they are also assuming greater ownership and responsibility for their work. Becky testifies to the power of student self-assessment:

I like the fact that we have some say in it, that it's not strictly his decision. It's sort of a comparison because I think that it gives each of us the opportunity to obviously assess ourselves, but with him as a part of it. . . . So I think it puts more responsibility, more credibility on our observations, and I think it causes us to reflect more on what we are doing.

---

### Final Class Reflections

The instructor's and students' approaches to student self-assessment which are described above are also observed throughout the remaining classes of the reading methods class. The classes consist of a mixture between activities addressing a variety of literacy issues and sub-tasks focusing on the three remaining major assigned tasks.

### Major Assigned Tasks

When it is time for the preservice teachers to go on their curriculum adventure (the fourth and last major assigned task for the class) of developing and implementing a curriculum enhancement project in their classrooms, they are well prepared. Generally, coming up with a problem for an inquiry project is the most difficult part of the assigned task, but at this point, these preservice teachers are clear about what they want to do and why they want to do it. The first assignment, writing a literacy description, had enabled them to know very well what was going on in their classrooms in terms of literacy and why these practices were

occurring. The second assignment, writing a vision paper, had provided them with the opportunity to identify what was important to them and to engage in the process of comparing what they were seeing to what they thought should be happening. The third assignment, writing a student story, had been more difficult for the preservice teachers than any of the others. Their previous experiences of writing case studies in their Family and Child Development training had led them to question whether the insights they were gaining about the child they were describing in such a short period were really justified. But what the third assignment does accomplish for the preservice teachers is to provide them with a growing understanding of the influence of the curriculum on students' learning. This information is clearly taken into account when they begin to plan and implement their curriculum adventures, the final class assignment.

For this last task, the preservice teachers are able to clearly and thoughtfully establish and justify the purpose of their literacy projects by analyzing the classrooms in their field-placement assignments and the needs of its students. For example, Michelle explains her project selection:

I was alarmed and frustrated by the situation I observed. The students had no input or autonomy in their classroom. . . . The reading program never allowed self-directed reading or writing. . . . I yearned for a way to help my students. The

assignment of planning and implementing a literacy project for my classroom gave me that opportunity.

When planning the projects, the preservice teachers take into consideration the political environment of their classrooms;

Michelle continues:

I was also concerned about how much input I would be allowed in the classroom. I tried to take initiative whenever I could, but I never received any feedback and was unsure. I was afraid that I might be doing more than she [cooperating teacher] wanted. I was desperate to begin interacting with the children. Finally, I decided to discuss my role in the classroom with her. She told me she wanted me to indicate a desire to try more, so I did not feel pressured. I took this opportunity to mention my literacy project. She told me she wanted me to feel free to develop a project of my choice. At the same time, she reminded me I probably could not have much more than five to ten minutes a day because of the time restraints on reading time.

Given the parameters of the classroom and the purpose of their projects, the preservice teachers begin to develop their curriculum;

Michelle adds:

I next directed my attention to planning a project that would accomplish as many of my goals as possible in the short time available. . . . One of the concepts I was most interested in was journals. . . . These qualities seemed consistent with my desires for my students, so I investigated further. . . . I felt my



fourth graders deserved the opportunity to express themselves and achieve greater comfort and security in their writing.

As Michelle points out, central to the preservice teachers' decision-making process of what project to do is their concern for their students:

I feel one of the teacher's most important responsibilities is to make informed decisions about planning activities based on the changing needs of her students. This requires being aware of their situations. It also required investigating many ideas and then picking and choosing those aspects that would accomplish set goals. . . . I decided I would implement a journal emphasizing personal ownership to the students. I wanted to provide one time in their day they had control of and felt their ideas were respected.

After selecting the project, the preservice teachers next make decisions about how to gain permission from their cooperating teachers to implement the projects in their classrooms. Michelle explains:

Even though I realized Mrs. Freeman [cooperating teacher] would have preferred assigned topics, I felt my students needed autonomy, so I decided to follow my own beliefs and allow them to choose for themselves. I presented my idea to her [cooperating teacher] immediately, because I wanted my students to begin writing as soon as possible. . . . We concluded

that they [students] would have ten minutes a day whenever possible to write.

Once the classroom schedule is established, the preservice teachers make decisions about implementing the projects. Michelle discusses how she had planned to introduce and manage the project by using small group discussions, illustrating different purposes for writing, modeling self-selected topics, responding to the students' work, and using student folders:

My attention then shifted to how I would introduce the journals to the students. I wanted to be enthusiastic and assure them the journals were theirs.

The preservice teachers then implement the projects and provide a detailed description of what they did and how their students responded. Michelle emphasizes how important the feedback from her students was in determining if she was meeting the project's goals:

That afternoon I received a note from Melissa thanking me for my comments on her paper. It made me feel I was having a positive impact on my students and was moving them to a point that they wanted to respond to me.

As time goes by, the preservice teachers find it necessary to adapt their projects, as Michelle explains:

My position on the journal continued to change according to the needs of my students. . . . The day journals were introduced, I stated nothing would be removed from the folders until the end

of the nine weeks. I saw so many benefits in these letters [written by students] I felt I had to deviate from the rule. . . . I believed activities in school should be made relevant to every day life. Sending these letters would form a connection between their lives in and out of school.

While the preservice teachers are implementing their projects they seek advice and guidance from others, as Michelle explains:

I felt apprehensive about my plan, so I set up a conference with my language arts instructor. The conference also included five of my classmates. I was very interested in all of their input.

From this conference, Michelle develops a new plan for her project that involved integrating student conferences and publishing a class book: "I was thrilled by this new idea. Making their own book could allow them to feel proud of their work while sharing it with others."

When it comes time for the preservice teachers to submit their projects to the instructor in the reading methods class, in addition to the purpose, need, and description of their projects, they also include a written self-assessment of their work. They are free to identify areas that needed to be changed in the future, as Michelle points out:

The entire curriculum adventure made me more confident I wanted to establish a reading-writing classroom of my own. There are several changes I would make based on this

experience when implementing in the future. First, I would increase the amount of time given to writing to as much as was practical and still productive. . . . I would also allow my class to work in partners or even groups throughout the project. . . . I would introduce conferencing at the beginning of the project as well. . . . I would attempt to retain the enthusiasm and dedication I found this semester through these adaptations.

The preservice teachers also discuss the impact the project had on the participants. For example, Michelle delineates what her cooperating teacher had learned, what her students have learned, and what she had learned from this experience:

My students learned a great deal through their journals. They realized writing was valuable and enjoyable. . . . I believed Mrs. Freeman [cooperating teacher] learned as well. She told me on several occasions she was learning from me. . . . I find it difficult to summarize the many lessons my students and their journals taught me. I learned that watching the students carefully, time, and research used together can be powerful sources of ideas that reflect the changing needs of students.

All of the preservice teachers conclude that the curriculum projects were a valuable learning experience. They had developed, implemented, and reflected on a literacy classroom project much like classroom teachers normally do.

At the end of the semester, the preservice teachers not only turn in their curriculum project, but also the grade they feel they deserve for the reading methods course.

### Final Grade

As previously mentioned, for each of the major assigned tasks, except the vision paper, the preservice teachers are extended the invitation to revise their papers and are required to provide a written self-assessment of their work. At the end of the semester, they are also required to write a comprehensive self-assessment of the course and assign the grade they feel they deserve. The grade they actually receive in the course is a negotiated process between the students and the instructor. It is significant to note that the students feel more comfortable with the written self-analysis of their major assigned tasks and overall course evaluation than with assigning themselves a grade. Anne Beth explains how she struggled:

I had a lot of problem with that. I kept putting it off and I finally typed that little paragraph in at the very last. And I talked to Kelly [another preservice teacher who is her roommate] about it a lot before hand because at first I just really didn't want to do it. I was even thinking about talking to Dr. Niles about it. I was like, "Kelly, I just don't feel right in telling someone, this is what I deserve" and she was talking to me and she said, "Okay, pretend that I am Dr. Niles, what grade do you think you should have." I was like, "Well, I think I should have an A" and she said, "Well why?" and I listed off all the

reasons and she said, "Well just write that down." And so, you know I came to see it's not this big bad thing. I think I'm glad I did it now that it's over with because it made me see parts that I could have done better on or parts that I did really good on, because you had to justify all the points of why you thought you deserved that grade.

As previously pointed out, grades are not a major focus in the reading methods class. Instead the focus is on facilitating the preservice teachers' learning. For the preservice teachers, grading is similar to completing all of the other requirements for the course. It is an adventure consisting of choices and negotiation. This makes it both exciting and risky.

In this chapter, the reader is presented a detailed description and analysis of the instructor's approach and the students' approach to student self-assessment in the reading methods class. Next, it is important to understand the factors influencing student self-assessment. What are these factors? (See Figure 7). This is the focus of Chapter Four.

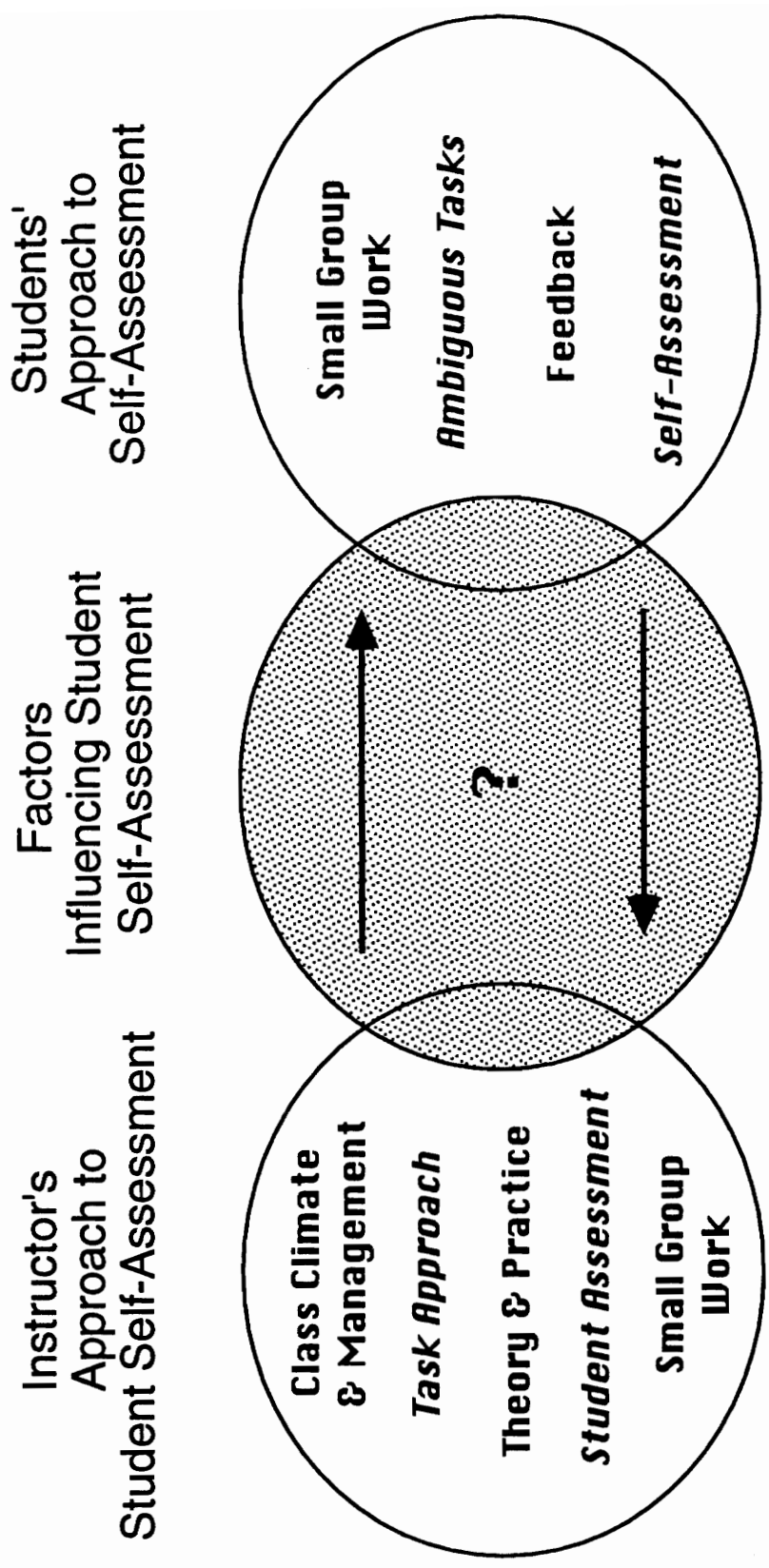


Figure 7. Instructor's Approach and Students' Approach to Student Self-Assessment.

## CHAPTER 4

### Interpretations

In this chapter, I first describe the factors influencing student self-assessment. Next, I present a model of a democratic approach to student self-assessment practiced in the reading methods class.

#### Factors Influencing Student Self-Assessment

As pointed out previously, going on an adventure is an exciting but risky undertaking. In this study, numerous factors emerge that influence the preservice teachers ability to carry out this adventure. In essence, the interaction between these factors is at the very heart of gaining understanding about student-self assessment in this class. For the purpose of this document, these factors will be presented in a linear process, although, in reality, the process is highly interactive and recursive.

It is also important to note several significant aspects about the preservice teachers' previous learning experiences. From interviewing the preservice teachers, it is clear to me that most of their previous experiences were in traditional classrooms where lecture was the primary instructional approach. There was very little opportunity for them to interact with their peers or with their teacher. I also concluded from the survey (see Appendix B) administered at the beginning of the class that the preservice teachers had very little prior experience with student self-assessment and that they held various opinions about its



effectiveness. Very seldom were the preservice teachers asked in their previous classes to reflect on their work, and they were rarely asked to participate in assigning themselves a grade; this was the teacher's responsibility. Nevertheless, the majority of preservice teachers, if indeed not all, felt that the instructor's approach to student self-assessment followed in the reading methods class facilitated their learning. It is also evident that the instructor agrees with this assumption: "There is no doubt in my mind that every single one of them showed extensive professional thinking in their work."

In Chapter Three, five properties of the instructor's approach and four properties of the students' approach to student self-assessment was presented. When analyzing the data for this study, six salient factors emerged (see Figure 8) that influenced student self-assessment in the reading methods class: instructor's role, class climate, participatory activities, student-teacher trust, responsibility and ownership, and reflection on work. Each of these factors is discussed below.

### Instructor's Role

In classrooms that use a traditional assessment approach, it is the teacher's role to assign student grades without significant input from the students. This is not the instructor's role in the reading methods class. He is a model, coach and facilitator of the student's learning. The instructor's modified role greatly influences student self-assessment in the class.

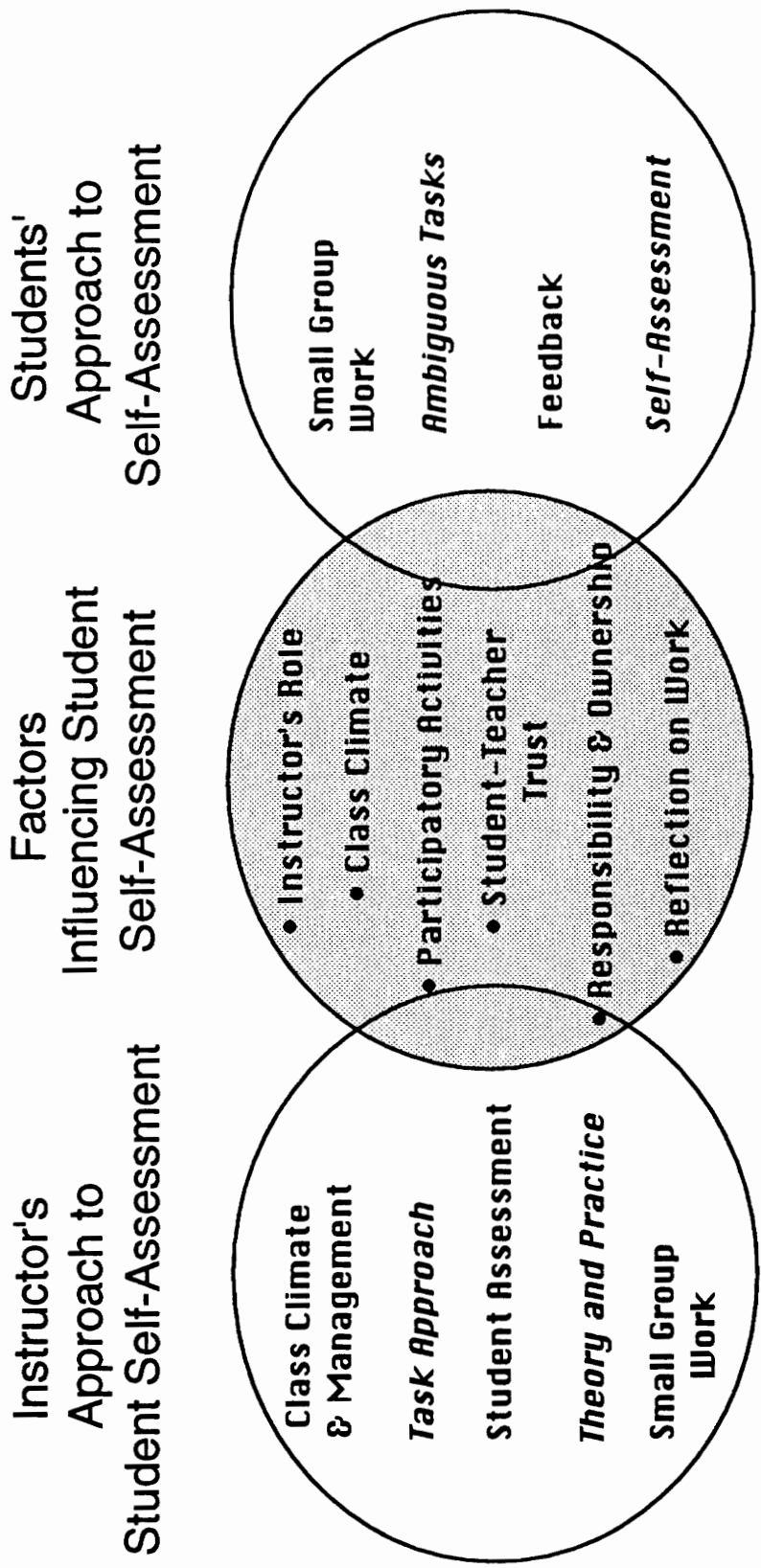


Figure 8. Factors Influencing Student Self-Assessment.

As was pointed out earlier, the instructor has 18 years experience teaching literacy education courses. He has also been experimenting with student self-assessment practices in his classes for the past four years. Coupled together, these experiences generate a level of confidence for the instructor about his teaching that he has never attained before. He discusses this in his first dialogue journal entry: "I have mentioned it to you, but I am a bit nervous about my current feelings because it is the first time I have had this much confidence in where I may be heading with the students".

In the students' eyes, these experiences make the instructor seem credible. They view him as a reliable source of information and support. Also, they feel these characteristics of credibility and reliability naturally fit his personality. We see an example of this when Katherine is talking about how she feels about the class:

I'm very comfortable. I think his [instructor] personality went along with that. I think he is very open and just very, very easy to work with. I find him to be extremely intelligent. I mean, he's one of the more intelligent people that I've met. And he doesn't do that in a show off way; it comes out through just talking in general. You can just tell there is a level there that he's on that we're not quite on yet.

### Class Climate

The climate in the reading methods class influences the preservice teachers because it stimulates a focus on learning rather

than grades, links beliefs to goals, and integrates theory with practice. In classrooms that use a traditional assessment approach, the instructor generally assumes that predetermined knowledge exists that learners are expected to learn. The teacher judges if the students have learned this knowledge and then grades accordingly. In the reading methods classroom, however, knowledge was generated through a combination of the preservice teachers' prior experiences, in-class experiences, and out-of-class experiences. The instructor does not perceive these to be fragmented experiences for the preservice teachers but rather a total integrated experience:

I have tried very hard to integrate the field-experience and my course . . . I have been trying to create a learning environment that makes sure that the things that they do are the things that they really want to do and are useful to them, and yet they can still learn about teaching literacy from it.

Michelle responds that, to her, the class is indeed an integrated experience because:

The whole class was working towards a common goal of making informed individuals that will be good teachers. So I looked at each assignment as helping me as a teacher to learn about how I want to teach reading in the classroom and my beliefs about it. I looked at each thing building up to that.

When the preservice teachers are asked to talk specifically about the reading methods class, they often remark that it is difficult. As Becky explains, the class is integrated with their field-

placement assignment and the language arts methods class in which they were enrolled: "It was hard to do an evaluation for this [reading methods class] separately from our student teaching because they were so intertwined. That is very much how I feel - like one was the extension of the other."

In the reading methods class, the preservice teachers also perceive that the focus of the class is not on judging their performance but rather on facilitating their professional development. Anne Beth explains how this focus is connected to risktaking behavior:

I would say that one of the most comforting things is the risk-free environment that we are in. This really makes me feel like it's okay if I try something and it doesn't come out quite right. You don't feel like you are going to be judged - you feel like you are going to get help.

Actually, the preservice teachers seldom mention the topic of grades. The instructor finds it puzzling: "This is the least discussion and talk about grades that I have ever, ever heard in any of my classes." Nevertheless, the preservice teachers reiterate time and time again that they find their learning so valuable that grades are not that important. Michelle talks about this importance:

I feel that not putting pressure on our grades puts the emphasis on my learning. And not on the end result, but on the whole process, which is why I felt more comfortable to do all

of the things that I have been talking about with all of those assignments.

Yet Danielle suggests grades entail a political component in addition to a learning component that should not be forgotten:

No matter what I had gotten in there, an A or a D or whatever, I think I learned a lot. I mean I learned a lot from Dr. Niles and from everybody else in that classroom, so the grade kind of didn't really matter. I mean it did matter because I needed that grade for graduate school. I don't think it would have mattered to me if he gave me an A or a C because I felt like I learned a lot.

### Participatory Activities

In classrooms that use a traditional assessment approach, the power and control to make decisions about assessment rests in the hands of the teachers. It is the teacher's sole responsibility to assign grades. Similarly, in traditional classrooms, activities and assignments are generally accomplished in an unilateral fashion. In this model, the students interpret the teacher's expectations and complete the requirements without receiving feedback from outside sources. Otherwise, the students could be, and indeed usually are, accused of cheating. Often time, what is created is a highly competitive environment.

In the reading methods class, an entirely different context is created that focuses on the sharing of power and control. This is a major influence on student self-assessment. Through a collaborative

negotiation process with their peers and the instructor, the preservice teachers participate in making decisions about their activities, assignments, and assessment. As Becky explains, it is very different from the preservice teachers' prior experiences:

Most teachers go in, and even if they were going to self-assess, they would have it in their minds the right way to do something. And he did not approach us that way at all. . . . He basically said it was okay for us to question things, and to question what he was saying in class and try it out for ourselves if we didn't believe him. Whereas another teacher would just be mortified - I can't believe that you would question me - I am a professor - I have a Ph.D. - I have been teaching for 23 years. I mean, it's just a very different freeing environment than others that we have been in.

When Anne Beth talks about how she is encouraged to negotiate, clarify, and extend her ideas with others, she also touches on how this is a new experience for her:

I almost feel like I cheat when I write these papers, because Kelly [roommate] and I talk about them. We have a good edge there when I'm sitting at the computer typing mine in - "Kelly, do you think this sounds okay?", and she'll bring a new point to the whole paper or something. It almost feels like you are cheating because you feel like okay, I should do this by myself with no help. I guess it's just the way that the schools have taught me over the years. Okay this is your individualized work

- you do it yourself. This is your creation and then it's not cheating. When you think about it, you're bettering yourself, and you're probably bettering the person that you're talking to because they're thinking about it too.

In the reading methods class, grades are also a negotiated process between the instructor and the preservice teachers. Dottie describes how this leads to a less competitive environment:

I feel a tremendous amount of pressure to achieve above and beyond what he wants. But at the same time, the pressure is different because I can't stress how much, for me, it is better not to put a grade on my work. Because he's asking me to reflect myself rather than to determine what he thinks I should do. And it's not like, oh well, this is the A group, and this is the B group, so I feel like it is less competitive.

Dottie adds that by participating in the decision about her final grade, she has more influence and control over the assessment of her work:

In other classes you take a test and you get what you get. But in this class you feel like you have some more control over it. Dr. Niles seemed very fair about it, and if you disagree with him, he would take that into consideration. So I felt like I had a lot of input about my grade and assessing myself.

Michelle describes the instructor as a "partner" in her learning and labels the class a "community of learners with the whole class being a collaborative effort."



## Student-Teacher Trust

In classrooms that use a traditional assessment approach, assessment decisions are generally derived from quantitative measures. There is little room for error on the teacher's part because there are clear-cut right or wrong answers. Students know what to learn, and if they aspire to do well, they will memorize the material and regurgitate it back on a test.

As it has been previously pointed out, in the reading methods class, assessment decisions are based on negotiated qualitative measures. A factor that is paramount in this process is student-teacher trust. Before students are willing to openly and honestly share their thinking, they must feel they will not be penalized. In essence, they must feel safe to take risks with their learning. For the preservice teachers in this class, it is a process that evolves over time. Trust is generated from a feeling of close rapport with the instructor, receiving and giving responsive feedback, and feeling free to explore new possibilities.

One way that close rapport develops between the teacher and students is through the use of stories. Anne Beth explains how the instructor's stories enable her to feel that she is not the only one making mistakes: "He has given us personal experiences, like his teaching and his student teaching experiences, which are a comfort to hear and then we know that we are not the only ones that are going to flub up on a lesson plan." Later when she discusses implementing a writing project in her classroom to meet her

curriculum adventure requirement, she identifies how she felt safe enough to be willing to take risks with her learning:

I was really scared that it wasn't going to fly in my classroom. And then, Kelly [roommate] and Dr. Niles have both been telling me that it's not if you succeed or not, it's not whether you did good or you failed. It's not so much whether it is right or wrong, but how much you feel like you have achieved and the reasons you achieved it and what you learned from it. . . . It's very much a non-threatening place, because you take the risks, but you don't feel like you are going to get an F if a child doesn't write.

Next, when Anne Beth is discussing assessment in the reading methods class, she further explains how this process differs from traditional classes:

Another thing that ties into that [self-assessment] is we are in a pretty much risk-free environment. I mean you do take those risks, but you don't feel like you are going to be penalized for them. So you assess yourself honestly and you don't assess yourself according to what the professor wants to hear. And it is very different than a lot of other courses that we've had in the past three years. You write something or do something just because you know that is what the teacher wants you to get out of the class, even though you may not really agree with the reasons.

When Becky talks about assessment in the reading methods class, she emphasizes how feedback is a two-way process and how the instructor values the feedback she gives him:

There are so many things that a professor might not necessarily take into consideration, that a student probably feels should be part of the grade that is not. So I do like the fact that I have some say, and I think that he trusts what we say, and we know that he's not stupid, so we don't try to pull any fast ones, or at least I don't think anybody did.

Becky also states that her experience in class is different from her experiences in other classes, especially in terms of student-teacher trust:

He showed a level of trust in us and in our judgment and values to a degree that I don't think any of us have ever really experienced before. That gave us the self-confidence or assisted us in building our own self-confidence to get to that point.

### Responsibility and Ownership

In classrooms that use a traditional assessment approach, there are very few opportunities for students to assume responsibility in the learning and assessment process. The responsibility for making curriculum and assessment decisions belongs to the teacher. When students have few opportunities for making choices, they gain very little ownership in their learning and in the evaluation of their work.

Like the student-trust factor discussed above, responsibility and ownership in the reading methods class is a factor that evolved and grew over time. It is also a collaborative process grounded in a willingness to negotiate and is highly connected to the student self-assessment process. There are numerous opportunities in this class for the preservice teachers to make choices and decisions about their learning.

When Becky talks about assessing her work and whether she relies on her own criteria or the instructor's criteria, she illustrates how this process changes over time:

I think it has been kind of a 50/50 thing, because he never gave us a set of this, this, this and this. He gave us more guidance and worked with us where we wanted to go. . . . I think his criteria were more important to me in the beginning, because I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know what was going to happen. I had never student taught before. He was really the one in control, in charge then. But he guided us to the point where ours was more important than his.

Next, when Becky is questioned about whether grades should be given earlier in the semester, she replies:

I think we would have been much more uncomfortable. I don't think we would know him like we know him now and would not have interacted with him in the same way that we have up until this point, because it was very much a gradual process. And a large part of it wasn't until the end that we did our

adventure projects that we really kind of took off with what we were doing on our own.

According to Michelle, responsibility and ownership is connected to the way the class is approached because the instructor is very astute about their level of development:

The class was run in a completely different way. He set up experiences that were valuable to us. I stopped saying, okay I have to do this thing this way because he'll think I did a good job on this and I'll turn it in. It was obvious those exercises were set up for us to get out what we put in it, to become good teachers and to pass it on to our students. It's obvious through those exercises and the way he doesn't give us definite answers, he wants us to think about it on our own. I think he also waits to see what stage of development we're at as well, to see when we're ready for it. In class, if he was asking questions and we didn't answer, he would say, "that was a tough question." He said something like that and just moved right on with it.

### Reflection on Work

Throughout the reading methods class, the preservice teachers have the chance to reflect on their work from their own perspective as well as from the perspective of others. The definition of work in this context includes both process and content. The preservice teachers are reflecting on what and how they were doing, not just what they produce. In classrooms that use a traditional assessment

approach, students generally perceive that there is very little need to reflect on their own work. Here, the assumption is that once work is completed, turned in, and graded, it is over. Supposedly, the material is learned and it is time to go on to another topic.

According to the preservice teachers, this assumption does not hold true in the reading methods class. When Dottie discusses the importance of revision to the self-assessment process she states:

I think one of the processes of assessment is going back and looking at it. You know, just like in daycare, if they've got a certain program and they get comments back on it, they look at those comments and see what they can do at the end to change that for the next time. It's just like an ongoing type of thing. I think that we can never ever have enough of looking at things from different points of view and seeing that you take that into perspective. I mean, I just never think that you can get enough of that.

When Anne Beth talks about how assessment in the class influences her learning, she comments:

It makes me really willing to learn. Because I feel like there is always room for improvement. I am learning that in this class. I mean, I knew it before, but you really see it in action in this class. Because I mean, like in the three years prior to this, sure you could write a good paper, and you felt like you knew all you could know on that subject. But with this, there is always an assessment. You can revise a paper and have

someone read it, and it still wouldn't be complete. There is always something that can be changed. And I really think he sets up our environment in our classroom to be one of perpetual assessment and perpetual growth. It's not you've gotten to this level, you can be a good teacher. It's more like, you reflect well, keep it up, and you will always be a good teacher.

Michelle feels the focus of the class is on their learning:

The whole nature of the class was supporting our learning. It was the whole process of the whole semester. It wasn't the product of our grade. And so assessment, that backed it up. In a way, self-assessment was almost like another assignment to help me learn.

Nevertheless, Danielle helps us remember that we cannot assume students will automatically be consciously reflective about their work: "I have never done that [self-assessment] until this semester, so I never really would have even thought about doing something like that until it was brought up by Dr. Niles."

In this section I presented seven factors that influenced the preservice teachers' ability to carry out their adventure. Next, I will look more closely at what this adventure is actually all about.

#### A Democratic Approach to Student Self-Assessment

Prior to the study, I defined student self-assessment as "an aspect of reflection that entails identifying, observing, and analyzing one's actions; establishing criteria for one's actions; and

determining the most appropriate methods to judge the effects of these actions for the purpose of making future decisions about one's learning" (p. 28). As the study progressed, this definition began to seem lacking in many ways. The results of this reading methods class more closely resembles what may be defined as a democratic approach to student self-assessment. When I wrote the first definition, I considered student self-assessment to be primarily an individual process. However, it soon became apparent that while in this learning setting the process included extensive opportunities for collaborative interactions. The social nature of self-assessment was a vital feature missing from the first definition. ✨

The definition of student self-assessment that emerged from this study is: "a process of examining, discussing and critiquing one's values, beliefs, attitudes, and actions in a community of shared learning and inquiry that promotes empowerment, the sharing of power and equal participation in terms of what is in the best interest of its members." In essence, it is a democratic approach to self-assessment. It is a highly interactive and recursive process defined by three domains: (1) purpose, (2) process, and (3) context. This concept is illustrated in Figure 9 and followed by a discussion of the role played by each domain in a total democratic process.

### Purpose

The purpose of engaging in student self-assessment in the reading methods class is to facilitate students' learning; this purpose encompasses four properties: assuming responsibility and



## A Democratic Approach to Student Self-Assessment

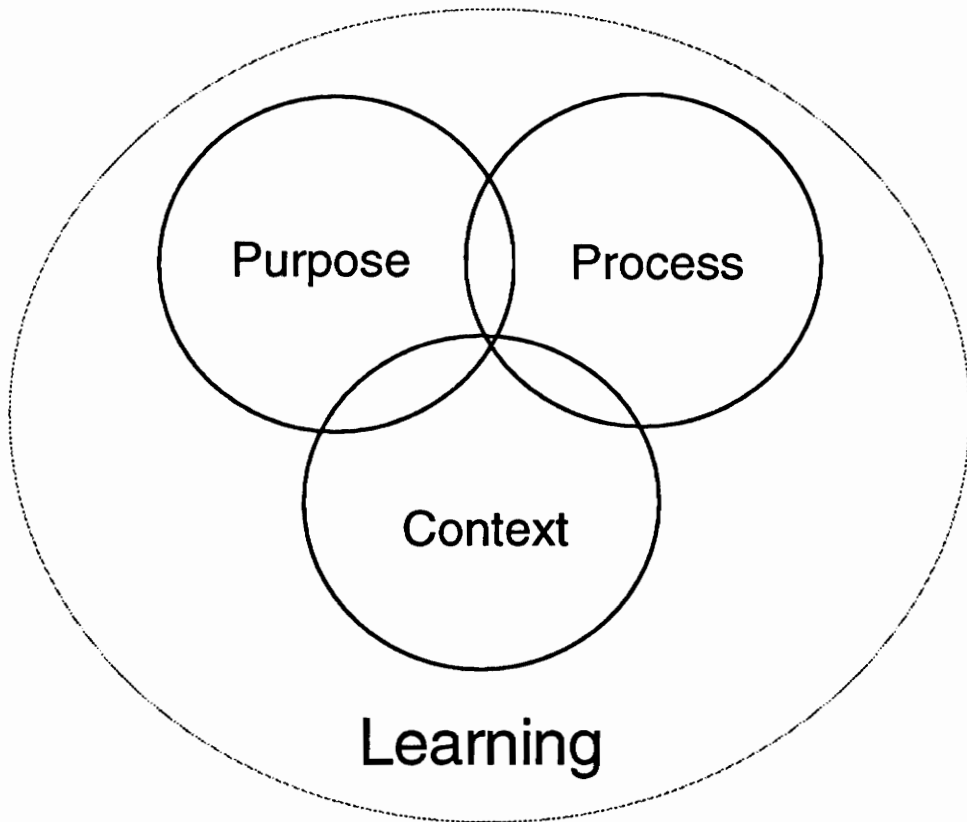


Figure 9. A Democratic Approach to Student Self-Assessment.

ownership for learning, developing professional competence, fostering active learning, and using self-assessment as a learning tool in a democratic process. These properties are illustrated in Figure 10.

Assuming Responsibility and Ownership for Learning. One of the primary goals in education is for learners to assume responsibility for their learning. Cambourne (1988) posits that, for this to happen "learners need to make their own decisions about when, how, and what 'bits' to learn in any learning task" (p. 33). He also reveals the consequences if this does not occur: "Learners who lose the ability to make decisions are 'depowered'" (p. 33). Rogers (1983) extends this claim one step further by arguing that learners must also engage in self-evaluation before they can truly learn to take responsibility for their learning.

As pointed out earlier, throughout the entire reading methods class, the preservice teachers make decisions about what to learn and evaluate how well they think they were learning. This evaluation enables them to assume ownership in their learning.

Developing Professional Competence. Reflection is a key concept for understanding the development of professional competence. Dewey (1933) emphasizes the connection between thinking about one's beliefs and future actions:

Reflection is a specialized form of thinking which emancipates us from merely impulsive and merely routine activity. Put in

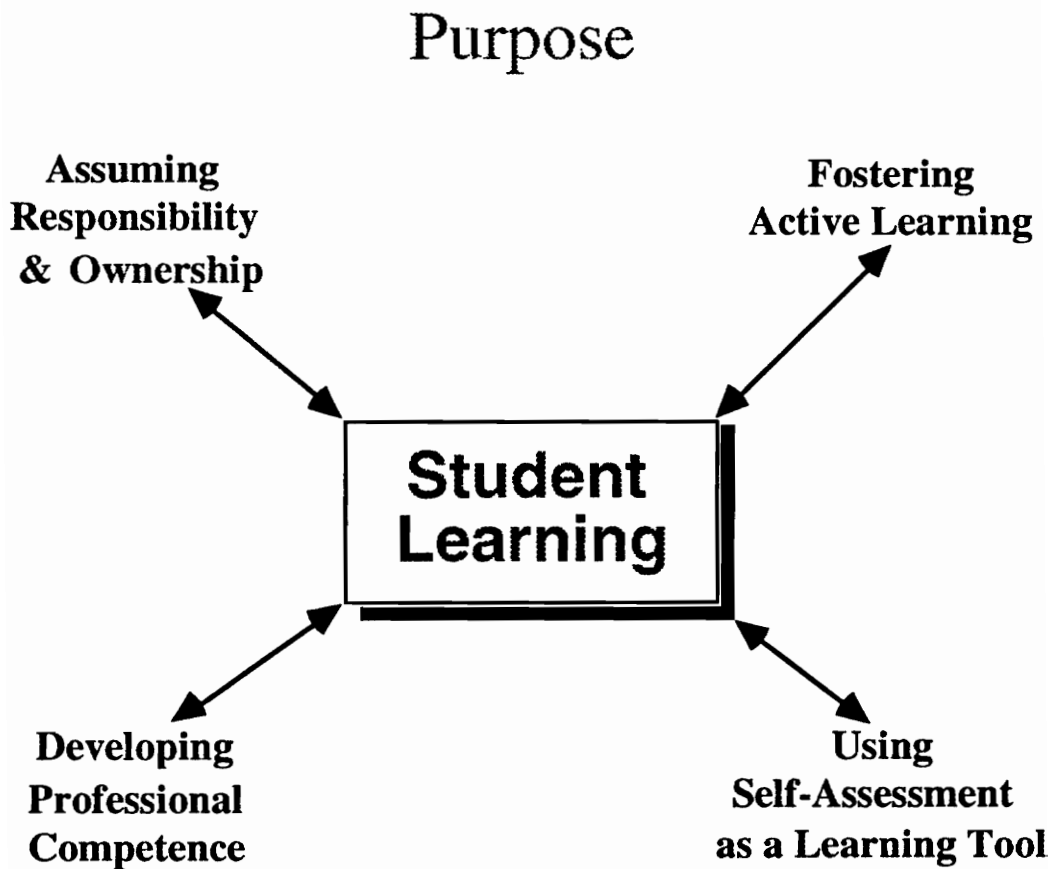


Figure 10. Purpose of a Democratic Approach to Student Self-Assessment.

positive terms, thinking enables us to direct our actions with foresight and to plan according to ends in view or purposes of which we are aware. . . . It enables us to know what we are about when we act. (p.17)

When students are encouraged to critically assess their present situation by reflecting on past experiences, the quality of their work improves (Kincheloe, 1991). Taking an active role in shaping their professional growth enables them to become empowered and informed decision-makers.

In the reading methods class, as previously noted, the preservice teachers are provided numerous opportunities to reflect on their work. What is important to emphasize here is that the major assigned tasks the preservice teachers complete for the class are action, problem-solving tasks that are carried out in their field-placement setting, so they perceive these tasks to be meaningful and relevant to their development. Raven (1992) argues that competence, values, and interests are inseparable. Students become competent about their profession by doing things they care about. As Raven (1992) states: "What a person *values* is, therefore, central" (p. 89).

Fostering Active Learning. When students engage in tasks they value and the instructor emphasizes the process as well as the product, they are willing to say "I can engage and try to emulate without fear of physical or psychological hurt if my attempt is not fully 'correct'" (Cambourne, 1988, p. 33). In other words, learning can occur from "failures" (in the traditional sense) as well as from

successes. However, this is not the normal view students hold about assessment. As the data reveals, this focus is a new idea for the preservice teachers in the reading methods class. Their past experiences had focused primarily on tests that measured specific facts which they were expected to learn. So when the preservice teachers are provided the opportunity to engage in tasks that promote their construction of knowledge, it is a freeing and empowering experience. They are no longer expected to be passive consumers of existing knowledge but rather active producers of knowledge.

Using Self-Assessment as a Learning Tool in a Democratic Process. "A democracy is more than a form of government, it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey, 1916, p. 87). In essence, it is a way of life. It is created and maintained by its members and for its members. It entails the sharing of power and control through a negotiation process. It is sustained through dialogue. It involves all members assuming responsibility for the betterment of the group.

In the reading methods class, student self-assessment is a democratic process. It is a tool that facilitates the preservice teachers' learning. It is not just an event that occurred after a task was completed, but rather a lived and on-going experience. In the class, the creation, distribution, and confirmation of knowledge is a group effort. The preservice teachers are free to consider alternative means when interpreting and implementing the tasks.

They are encouraged to respect and value similar and diverse views and are provided opportunities to reflect on and analyze their work. Through open conversations, negotiation, and equal contributions, the instructor and the preservice teacher collaboratively learn together. When the preservice teachers write their written self-evaluations, their reflections are generated from conversations they have with all of the group members. Just to provide the reader with an example to help clarify what this means, identify one of the many cultures that you personally are a part of, (perhaps educators) and think about the other members that are part of your group. Next, pretend that you are standing at the edge of a lake and you are thinking about your recent performance in this group. When you look into the water, what you see is not just your own face reflecting back at you but the faces of all the other members of your culture. You are considering what their expectations are when you make your judgments about your performance. Yet, ultimately, the decision is yours, and this is what will guide your future actions.

In the above discussion, the reader was presented with the purpose domain of the model of a democratic approach to student self-assessment. The purpose of student self-assessment in the reading methods class is to facilitate the preservice teachers' learning to become teachers. This is a shared goal of all of the members of the class. To gain a greater understanding of what the preservice teachers are doing on this adventure, we need to next

look at the second domain of a democratic approach to student self-assessment, which is process.

### Process

The student self-assessment process the preservice teachers engage in encompasses six properties: engaging in ambiguous tasks, establishing criteria, investigating ideas, confirming ideas, choosing to make revisions, and assessing work. Figure 11 represents these properties.

Engaging in ambiguous tasks. When students engage in critical inquiry, they are afforded the opportunity to interpret and act upon ambiguous tasks in multiple ways. A certain amount of uncertainty exists because of such latitude and makes learning risky.

The four major assigned tasks and the numerous in-class tasks in the reading methods class are ambiguous. The preservice teachers are provided with the parameters for each task, but they are free to choose the best course of action for actually carrying it out.

Establishing of criteria. When students engage in highly ambiguous tasks that do not have clear right or wrong answers, they actively seek clarification. The preservice teachers place a great deal of respect and value on what each other had to say and do. Likewise, they feel that it is their responsibility to voice their ideas, which in turn helps contribute to the production of knowledge. When there is freedom to observe, express, and share ideas, criteria are established about what is important to be accomplished. The standards to be used for judging one's work is an evolving process

## Process

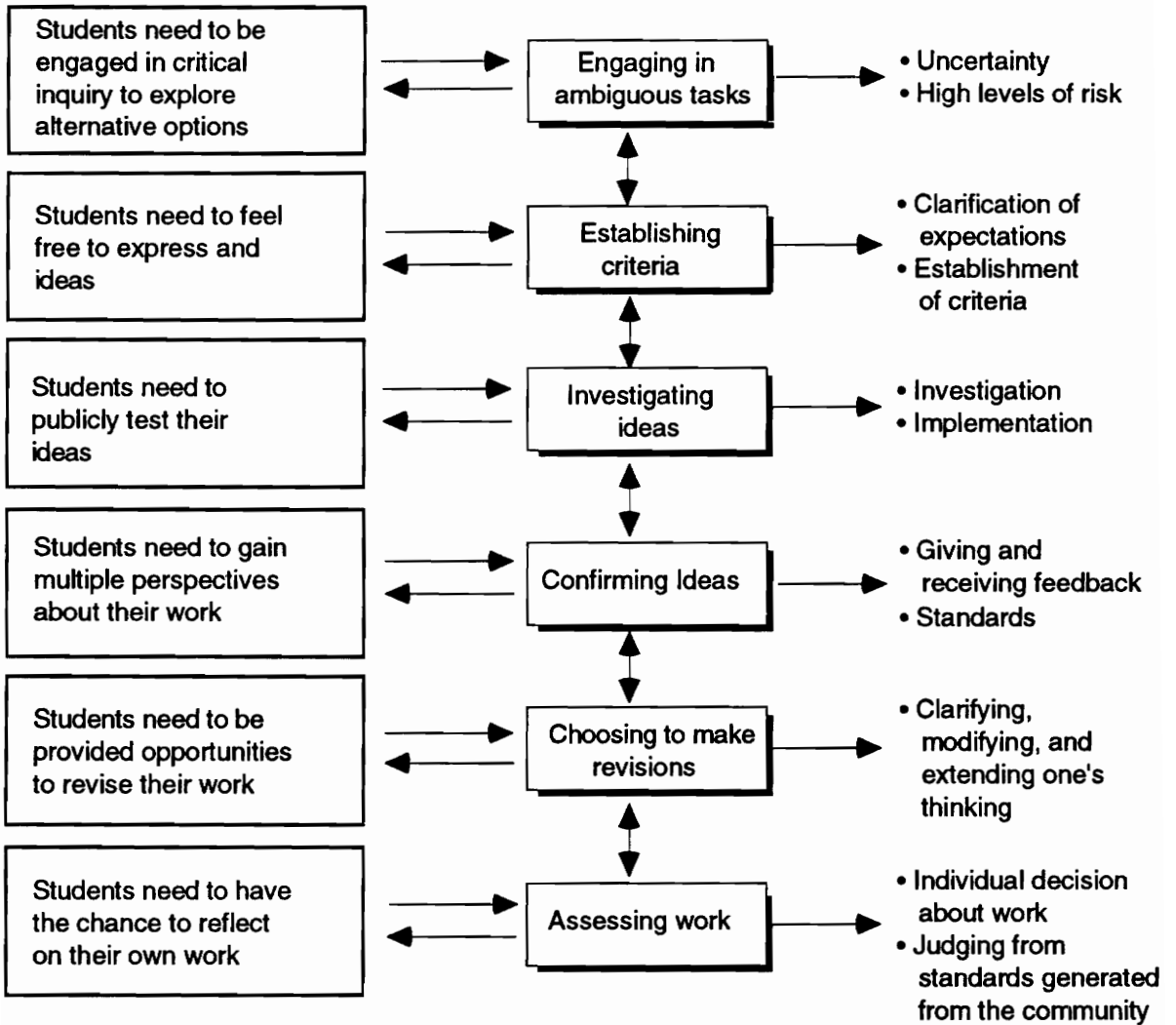


Figure 11. Process of a Democratic Approach to Student Self-Assessment.



generated from the interactions among the members in the community, including the students and the teacher. From these interactions, students gain new insights and formulate new hypotheses. It is important to note, however, that in the reading methods class the criteria were not explicitly tied to a grade for any of the four major tasks.

Investigating ideas. When students have new hypotheses, they publicly investigate and implement these ideas. The data revealed that the preservice teachers test and share their ideas in the reading methods class, in their carpools, and in their field-placement classrooms. Sharing new understandings with others enables them to feel that they are the producers of knowledge.

Confirming ideas. When students are engaged in a critical inquiry process, that process may quickly come to a halt unless the students receive feedback about their work. Gaining multiple perspectives often facilitates students to think along a different avenue, add new meaning, or establish standards for their work. Students gain confidence when other members of the community confirm their ideas, which in turn, leads to their being more willing to take risks with their learning.

In the reading methods class, the preservice teachers give and receive feedback to both one another and the instructor. It is a continuous two-way process that was perceived to be a constructive process in improving their work.

Choosing to make revisions. When students are given feedback on their work and are provided the option to revise, then opportunities exist for students to clarify, extend, and modify their thinking. Unless students are provided an invitation to revise their work, they generally do not take the teachers' responses seriously. At best, the comments are read and thought about but rarely acted upon.

In the reading methods class, the preservice teachers receive feedback on all of their work and are invited to revise three of the four major assignments. The instructor does not suggest to the preservice teachers that they revise their vision paper because, as he comments, "it is their vision." Even though it is an option and not a requirement for the preservice teachers to revise three of their major assigned tasks, it is an opportunity of which they generally take advantage. As the preservice teachers in this study explain, revision forces them to reflect, gain new understandings, and see that there is always room for further thinking.

Assessing work. When students provide a written critique of their work, they are examining, evaluating, and justifying their performance. This critique is ultimately their personal decision about their work, even though they judge their work from standards generated from the community. In the reading methods class, the preservice teachers are assessing not only their final product but also the very process that leads up to their producing the product. In other words, it is a critique of both process and product. It is a

process created, developed, and shared with other members of the community.

The reader has now seen how the preservice teachers were learning how to become teachers by engaging in ambiguous tasks, establishing criteria, investigating their ideas, confirming their ideas, making revisions, and assessing their work. A salient finding from this study is that context is a critical factor in enabling these processes to happen. The context can either facilitate or inhibit students' willingness to assess their work, as described above. Context is the next domain of a democratic approach to student self-assessment.

### Context

The context in the reading methods class encompasses four properties: creating a community of shared learning and inquiry, promoting empowerment, sharing in power and control, and fostering equal participation. These properties are illustrated in Figure 12.

Creating a community of shared learning and inquiry. The setting in which learners freely express and test their ideas has a powerful impact on learning. According to Floden (1993), "Engagement in an ongoing, extended conversation is an important element in building community" (p.22). Indeed, students will not share their reflective thoughts unless they feel they are part of a safe, collaborative environment.

Short and Burke (1991) suggest that having a shared commitment encourages risktaking by giving the group a sense of

## Context

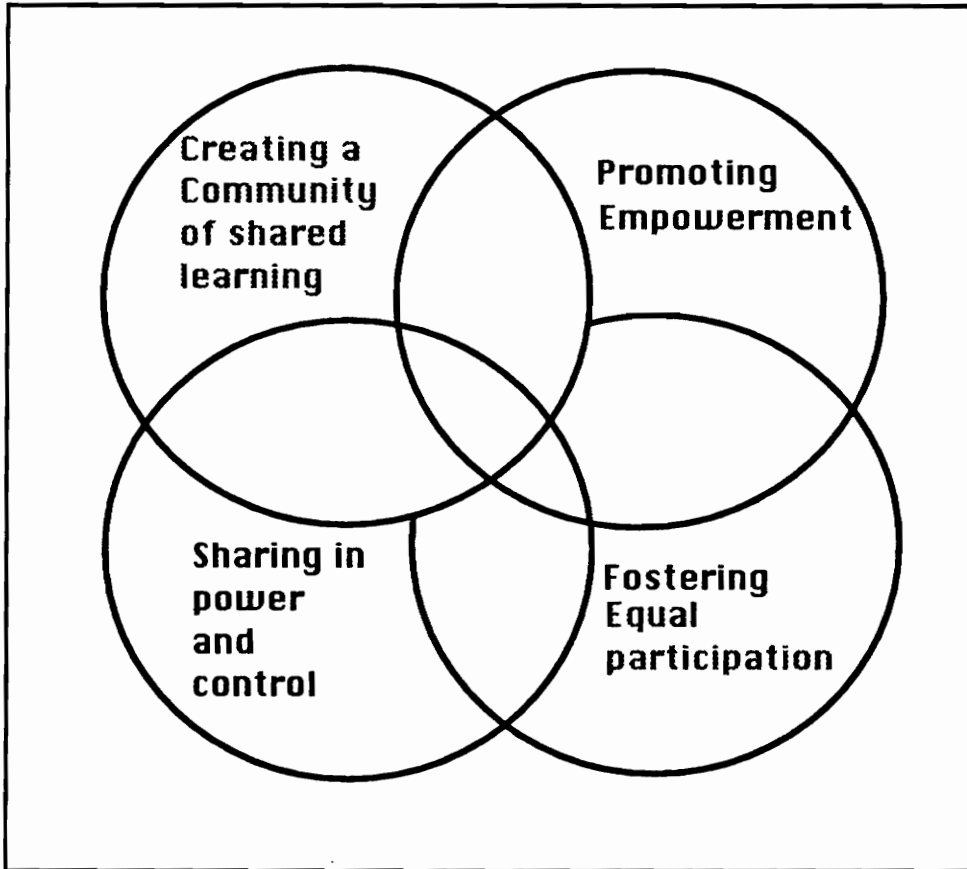


Figure 12. Context of a Democratic Approach to Student Self-Assessment.

focus. In the reading methods class, all of the preservice teachers are dedicated, and they expend a great deal of time and energy on learning how to become "good" teachers. Being committed to a shared goal does not mean that everyone is expected to perform in the same way. Rather, each of the preservice teachers has her own vision of the teacher she wants to become, even though her vision varies according to her past experiences and her interpretations of the goals of the class.

Promoting empowerment. When environments are created in which the students are expected to be active producers and distributors of knowledge, rather than mere passive consumers, they become empowered (Garrison, 1988). Throughout the reading methods class, the preservice teachers engage in tasks that promote problem solving. It is never suggested that there are specific facts for them to master, and because of this, the preservice teachers assume ownership in their learning.

Sharing in power and control. The property of power and control represents three dimensions from the teachers having all of the authority to make decisions about the students, to the teachers exercising their power in favor of the students having control. In the middle is the where the teachers and students share in the decision-making process. It is important to note that these dimensions in the reading methods class are not mutually exclusive or fixed; rather the process shifts over time. Two keys to this movement are time and instructional approach. It shifts according to the development of

the students' knowledge and their willingness to accept responsibility. The instructional dimensions of power and control within a democratic context are illustrated in Figure 13.

As previously pointed out in the data, in the reading methods class the instructor attempts to share his power to make decisions about student learning with the preservice teachers. This is a process that is influenced by time. In the beginning of the class, the instructor has more control over making decisions because he is a literacy expert and the students do not have the background or experience necessary to know what or how they should be learning. As the class progresses, and the preservice teachers gain more knowledge, they increasingly assume more control over their learning. The power sharing at this point is, as one of the preservice teacher explains, a "meeting in the middle." The instructor and the preservice teachers negotiate together. At the end of the semester, when it is time for the preservice teachers to complete their final major assigned task, they are able to "take off on their own," as another preservice teacher describes, and implement their projects independently. They are now able to decide what is best for themselves. According to the instructor, the preservice teachers are ready to assume this power. He describes it as a new experience and role for him: "I stepped out of this course more than any course I have ever been in before in terms of my having my hands directly on it." He continues by pointing out that if the course had stopped at the end of the 10 weeks, the preservice teachers could not have

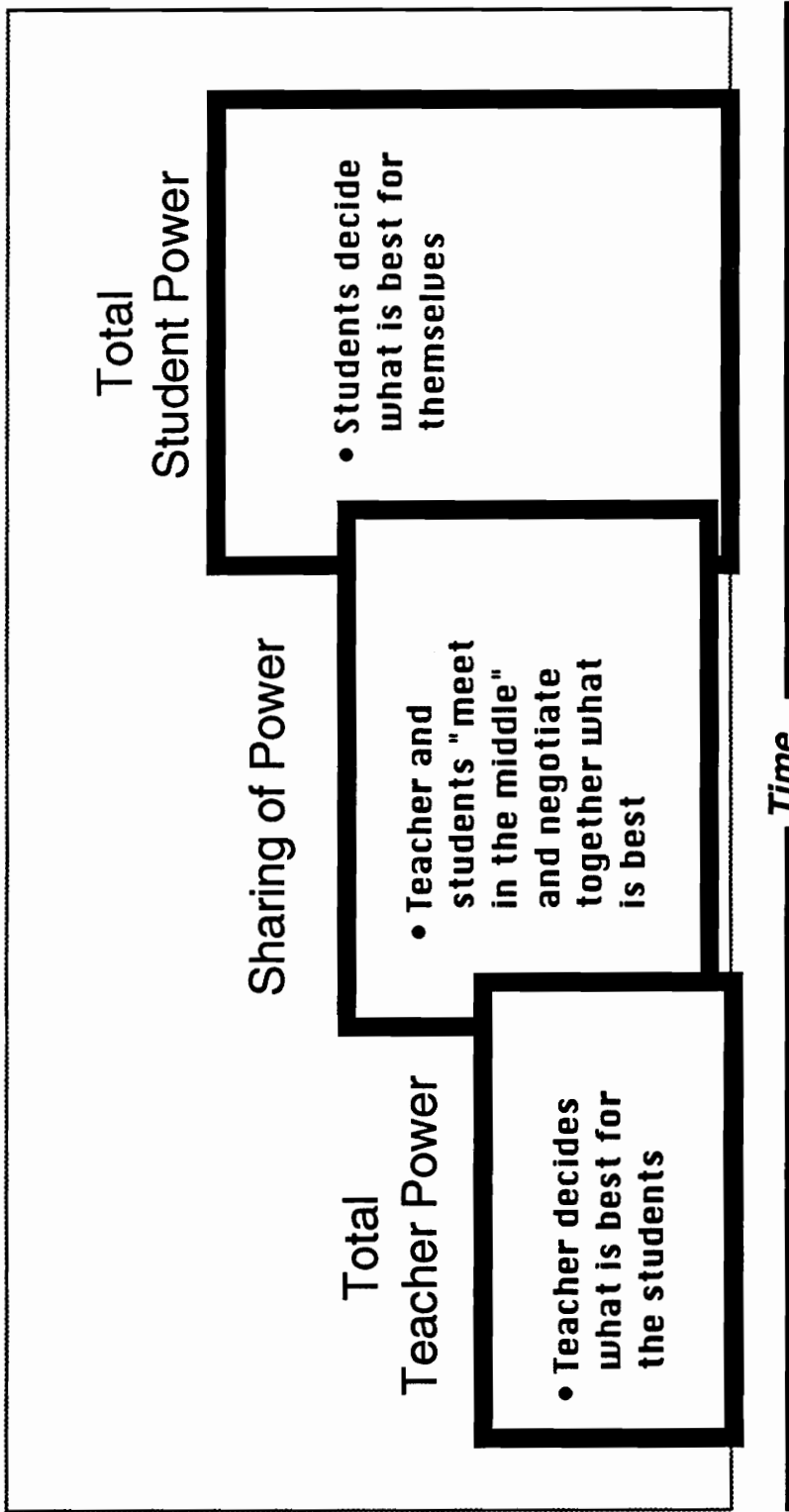


Figure 13. Instructional Dimensions of Power and Control Within a Democratic Context.

conducted their literacy enhancement projects because they needed more time. The final major assigned task is completed independently over the next four weeks, when the preservice teachers are engaged full-time in their field-placement assignment.

Fostering equal participation. It is well-known that the demographics of our nation are quickly changing. According to Ogbu (1992), the major approaches advocated in the current school reform movement do not adequately address cultural diversity and learning. Building on the notion of Dewey's (1954) "Great Community," Greene (1993) argues that to help create community we need to make the "multiple voices silenced over the years" (p.13) part of the ongoing conversation; this in turn will help create community. What this suggests is that learning communities must acknowledge, support, and respect individual differences and similarities.

Gaining multiple perspectives is highly valued in the reading methods class. It is a necessary component for continuing to move forward in critical inquiry. The preservice teachers assume the responsibility of helping one another, and the instructor assumes the responsibility of providing the support necessary for the students to continue on the adventure.

In this section, the adventure was presented as a model for a democratic approach to student self-assessment. The reader has seen it as an interactive and recursive process consisting of three domains: purpose, process and context. The preservice teachers examined and critiqued their actions in a community of shared



learning and inquiry for the purpose of becoming the teachers they aspire to be. Each domain contributes and interacts with the others to create a democratic approach to student self-assessment.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Epilogue

#### Summary

This study was the result of my interest in alternative assessment practices in teacher education. It grew out of my searching for ways to facilitate preservice teachers' learning. Specifically, it was a search to eliminate the barriers often found in traditional assessment that inhibit constructive relationships between student learning and assessment processes. The reader has now seen how the interaction between the instructor's approach to student self-assessment and the students' approach to self-assessment in a reading methods class is actualized in a lived experience. I clearly acknowledge that all of the interactions that occurred in the class are not represented in the findings provided. It was impossible from the enormous amount of data collected to present everything. Additionally, the findings emerged from a study which focused on the interactions of a whole class of preservice teachers, and therefore does not provide all of the specifics of any one individual's experience. Since all of the class members were white females in their early twenties, obviously the study suffers from a lack of diversity. What the findings do represent, however, are the salient themes that were important to the student self-assessment process in this reading methods class. The findings are

described in detail in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, but a brief summary will be provided here.

The preservice teachers in the reading methods class examined, discussed, and critiqued their values, beliefs, attitudes, and actions. They were engaged in a student self-assessment process.

The instructor's approach to student self-assessment in this class is important, as it represents the conditions and context necessary for the preservice teachers to engage in student self-assessment practices. The context consists of five specific properties: class climate and management, small group work, task approach, theory and practice, and student assessment. This instructor's approach focused on an active participation in and the integration of in-class and out-of-class tasks embedded in the preservice teachers' field-placement. The preservice teachers engaged in and received feedback on the assessment of their work in a community characterized by shared learning and inquiry.

The way the preservice teachers managed, carried out, and responded to student self-assessment in the reading methods class is delineated in the students' approach to student self-assessment. There were four properties which defined these strategies: participating in small group work, engaging in ambiguous tasks, receiving and giving feedback, and reporting self-assessment. The class encouraged the preservice teachers to publicly express, test, and reflect on their ideas.

The interactions between the instructor's and the students' approaches to student self-assessment are what caused student self-assessment to unfold in the manner in which it did. Six factors influencing student-self assessment were identified as necessary conditions for student self-assessment: instructor's role, class climate, participatory activities, student-teacher trust, responsibility and ownership, and reflection on work. These properties combined together led to student self-assessment in the class. When the preservice teachers equally shared in the power and control over curriculum and assessment decisions and fully participated in terms of what was in the best interest of the community, then the result is a democratic approach to student self-assessment.

A model of a democratic approach to student self-assessment is a highly interactive and recursive process defined by three domains: purpose, process, and context. The purpose domain of a democratic approach to self-assessment is defined by four properties: assuming responsibility and ownership for learning, developing professional competence, fostering active learning, and using self-assessment as a learning tool in a democratic process.

The process of a democratic approach to student self-assessment that the preservice teachers practice in the reading methods class encompasses six properties: engaging in ambiguous tasks, establishing criteria, investigating ideas, confirming ideas, choosing to make revisions, and assessing work.

A salient finding from the study was that context is critical to student self-assessment. This domain encompasses four properties: creating a community of shared learning and inquiry, promoting empowerment, sharing in power and control, and fostering equal participation.

### Conclusions

Throughout the course of the study, a recurring theme for the preservice teachers was that the textbook used for the class was influencing their learning. Just as the title Invitations (Routman, 1991) implies, in the reading methods class the preservice teachers were asked to participate in making decisions about their learning. This theme is being adapted as a framework to present the conclusions of the study, because it was so significant to the preservice teachers as they were going on this adventure.

The results of the study were presented in Chapters Three and Four. A description and analysis of the first assignment the students completed (Chapter Three) illustrated both the instructor's and the students' approaches to student self-assessment in the reading methods class. In Chapter Four, six factors were discussed which illustrated the conditions necessary for student self-assessment to occur. Finally, a model of a democratic approach to student self-assessment was presented which demonstrated how student self-assessment in the reading methods class is ultimately an individual process that is generated from collaborative interactions.

Now it is time to ask the question "so what?" What is important about these findings? Once again, I clearly acknowledge that I do not have all of the answers to this "so what" question. I can only offer my current understandings and hope that they will provide new insights for those of us who are committed to the belief that preservice teachers should be encouraged to become more systematic and critical in the analysis of their own work.

The conclusions of this study suggest that the learning environments which are established in our reading methods classes influence the preservice teachers' learning. The barriers outlined in Chapter One that traditionally exist between assessment and learning may be eliminated by the creation of environments that focus on students' learning. These environments are linked to the instructor's approach to student self-assessment used in the class. The instructor's approach to student self-assessment itself is no simple matter; rather, it is a highly complex and fluid process. As such, there is no prescribed path to follow, because the instructor's approach to student self-assessment will vary from classroom to classroom and even within the same classroom over time. Knowing what the preservice teachers are experiencing and how they are responding to these experiences appears to be one key to making responsive decisions about the instructional approach.

The instructor's approach to student self-assessment is complicated even further because of its highly interactive nature. It consists of many features that are interacting simultaneously.

Indeed, the balance between these features helps create and maintain this fragile environment. Even if one of the features is overlooked or altered, it may affect the learning environment.

As previously discussed, the adventure of learning how to teach is an exciting and risky proposition for preservice teachers. As a teacher educator, I believe it is my responsibility to be the preservice teachers' guide on this adventure and use an instructional approach such as student self-assessment that can facilitate their learning. When developing the instructional approach to student self-assessment, several factors must be considered. From this study and from the literature, many of these factors are identified.

**Preservice teachers should be invited to participate in an integrated experience.** The reading methods class was only one small part of what the preservice teachers were engaged in during this time. They were also taking two other methods classes and completing a field-placement assignment. They were struggling with how all of these pieces fit together into the bigger picture of becoming a teacher.

Throughout the study, the preservice teachers emphasized that the reading methods class, the language arts methods class, the reading assignments in both of these classes, and their field-placement assignment complemented one another. Since all of the major tasks for the reading methods class were also connected to their field-placement assignment, the preservice teachers perceived them to be meaningful and relevant to their professional

development. In-class time being devoted to working on these tasks also helped create a context that more closely resembled the "real world" in which teachers reside. Obviously, as the data revealed, the integration of these experiences facilitated the preservice teachers' learning. It also influenced how they assessed their work. When the preservice teachers critiqued their assignments for the reading methods class, they drew from the total experience in which they were participating.

**Preservice teachers should be invited to engage in critical inquiry.** All of the four major assigned tasks and in-class activities in the reading methods class entailed highly ambiguous tasks. While this ambiguity created uncertainty for the preservice teachers, it also made a mutable framework for the goals of the class, which in turn provided the preservice teachers the freedom to explore and test possibilities. The preservice teachers were not expected to digest predetermined knowledge but rather create their own knowledge. This led to the preservice teachers' assuming ownership in their learning. If preservice teachers are expected to engage in tasks that have rigidly fixed right or wrong answers, then there is little or no need for student self-assessment.

**Preservice teachers should be invited to help generate the criteria for their work.** As pointed out above, when students engage in highly ambiguous tasks, they experience a great deal of uncertainty about what is expected of them. In the reading methods class, the preservice students were able to reduce this uncertainty



by participating in a community of shared learning. Through freely sharing and expressing ideas with others, the criteria for the tasks were generated jointly by the instructor and the preservice teachers. When preservice teachers have the power to share in making decisions about what is important for them to learn, they become empowered decision-makers.

How the reading methods class was approached also influenced how the preservice teachers established criteria. There were a variety of activities such as small group discussions, whole group discussions, stories, frameworks presented by the instructor, and video tapes which all provided the preservice teachers with multiple perspectives on what others thought were important about the topic.

**Preservice teachers should be invited to receive and give feedback.** Responsive feedback is one of the critical aspects of the student self-assessment process. Through the feedback, the preservice teachers gave to others, they were able to clarify and justify their own thinking. Through the feedback the preservice teachers received, they were able to extend and modify their thinking. In addition, through the feedback the preservice teachers received, they were able to gain confidence in their work and be willing to take risks with their learning. This feedback reiterated to the preservice teachers that their thinking would be valued and respected. While the feedback that the preservice teachers gave to one another was certainly important, the feedback they received from the instructor was even more so. The preservice teachers

regarded the instructor's comments as being those of an expert, which led them to question their work in new ways. Perhaps even more importantly, they perceived the instructor's feedback as being supportive of their efforts with the intention of helping them improve their work. This led the preservice teachers to trust the instructor, which seems to be a prerequisite for students to assess their work successfully. We cannot expect students to share their honest opinions and be willing to take risks with their learning unless they know that their thinking will be respected and valued.

**Preservice teachers should be invited to revise their work.** In the reading methods class, feedback was taken very seriously because the preservice teachers were provided the opportunity to revise their work. The feedback was very helpful because the preservice teachers were committed to improving their work, that is, extending their thinking. They saw the connection between making their work better and developing as a teacher. They appreciated the idea that their efforts were not final, and that if they chose to do so, they could continue to improve and grow.

The revision process is also an integral part of the student self-assessment process. If students are not afforded the opportunities to look back and reflect on the work that they have accomplished, then this probably will not occur. Obviously, reflection entails both time and effort.

**Preservice teachers should be invited to continually analyze their work.** In the reading methods class, the preservice

teachers were required to produce a formal self-assessment of each of their major assignments. In addition, the class provided numerous less direct opportunities for the preservice teachers to assess their work. The preservice teachers justified their own beliefs when they worked in small groups and when they conversed together in carpools. During in-class time, they wrote exit slips to the instructor, completed self-evaluation forms about what they had learned during group work, and explained during whole group sharing time what they had learned from engaging in sub-tasks. The focus was always on what they learned from the experience as well as from the "success" of it. It included both process and product. This reflection process enabled the preservice teachers to understand that error and a willingness to take risks with learning are part of the learning process. It also enabled them to reveal their vulnerabilities by honestly sharing their weaknesses as well as their strengths because they thought they would not be penalized. Indeed, the continuous engagement in analyzing their work enabled the preservice teachers to see that learning is an ongoing process, and they were able to establish realistic and personal goals for continuing forward in their professional development.

**Preservice teachers should be invited to participate in a democratic learning environment.** All of the conclusions provided above were created in the reading methods class because it was grounded in the principles of democracy. The preservice teachers were empowered to participate in the process of knowledge

production and distribution in a collaborative context. They were provided with choices, engaged in negotiations of meaning, and made decisions about their work. Similar and diverse opinions were acknowledged and respected. The preservice teachers assumed responsibility for their work, and the instructor provided the support necessary to sustain that work. It was a community created by and for its members. This conclusion has many implications for me as a teacher educator. It suggests I need to look carefully at the learning environments in which I expect preservice teachers to develop. The implications provided in the next section focus primarily on assessment in a democratic classroom.

#### Implications

I began this paper by stating that the purpose for studying the reading methods class was to explore alternative assessment practices that would facilitate the learning of preservice teachers. I was searching for an assessment approach that could enhance preservice teachers becoming empowered, informed decision-makers and independent learners. I close by stating that the research from the alternative assessment in the reading methods class implies that my assessment efforts need to focus on the creation of a democratic approach to student self-assessment in my classrooms. I did not realize until after all of the data were collected for the study the importance and connection of democracy to the student self-assessment process. However, it is now clear to me that an important key to breaking down the barriers which prevent

assessment from facilitating students' learning hinges on a democratic approach.

As a teacher educator, I should reconsider my stand on assessment and specifically self-assessment. No longer can I assume that assessment is facilitating preservice teachers' learning when it is something that is only provided after they have completed an assignment. No longer can I assume that assessment is facilitating preservice teachers' learning when it is something that is done solely by the instructors. I believe assessment should be something that the preservice teachers participate in within a community of shared learners. It should be part of an ongoing, systematic process.

Preservice teachers should be able to experience and reflect upon a program that integrates their specific classes into the broader context of becoming a teacher. Preservice teachers should be able to engage in tasks that develop their capabilities to frame and solve problems. They should be able to freely share, express, and test their ideas with others; they should be able to receive responsive feedback that makes them feel good about their work; they should be able to have opportunities to revise their work; and they should be asked to analyze their work. All of these results are possible when classrooms are created for and by the members - when classrooms embrace a democratic approach to assessment. I believe this research implies all of these goals.

The notion of a democratic approach to student self-assessment also has implications for the current nationwide focus on multicultural education. In collaborative contexts, students with diverse backgrounds could freely share their ideas and experiences. Diversity could be acknowledged and nurtured. Diversity could be seen as an asset to the generation of new knowledge. Students could receive feedback and have opportunities to improve their work. They could feel good about the progress they are making instead of receiving low grades for work that is not meeting pre-established standards. Most importantly, students could have opportunities to reflect on their work and establish future goals to work toward.

Perhaps we should also reconsider what is meant by diversity. Generally, the term refers to students from minority groups who are perceived to hold a different perspective from the white, middle class view. In other words, it typically refers to differences in social location established by factors such as race, class, gender, or sexual orientation. However, what was evident in this study that consisted of only white, females in their early twenties is that each of them had diverse opinions. In this context, diversity refers to differences in perspectives.

Another area that may need to be reconsidered is the current language used when talking about assessment issues. For example, the word "assessment" carries an authoritarian connotation. However, I found from the results of this study that assessment facilitates students' learning when there is a sharing of power and

control regarding what will be learned and how this learning will be assessed. Another finding was that while self-assessment does ultimately contain an individual component, it is actually a process that grows out of collaborative interactions. It is not an authoritarian model. The implication here is that if we cannot move closer to a common language to frame our new understandings about assessment, then it may be difficult to move from a traditional assessment paradigm to an alternative assessment approach. Alternative assessment approaches may be doomed to fail, as have frequently happened with other movements in education. It is hard to initiate change when we are talking about concepts that have different meanings to different people.

Though the reading methods class offers one model of how a democratic approach to student self-assessment process can facilitate student learning, it certainly does not represent everything that is possible with student self-assessment. It does illustrate a process by which preservice teachers examine, discuss, and critique their values, beliefs, attitudes, and actions in a community of shared learning and inquiry that promotes empowerment, the sharing of power, and equal participation. They are then able to assume responsibility and ownership for their learning and develop professional competence. These are noteworthy results. Indeed, they are the qualities that preservice teachers should possess as future teachers in order to meet the diverse and complex challenges that they will face. They are also the qualities

they will need to guide their own students in student self-assessment practices. The questions that I raise are all related to how a democratic approach to student self-assessment might be established and maintained.

### Questions About a Democratic Approach to Student Self-Assessment

1. What are the teachers' responsibilities?
2. What are the students' responsibilities?
3. How do grades influence the process?
4. How do standards influence the process?
5. How is student effort influenced by the process?
6. How does student accuracy of their work influence the process?
7. How can the teacher negotiate with students about curriculum? About assessment?
8. How can the teacher most effectively and efficiently provide feedback to students? How does the timing of feedback influence this process?
9. How can the students most effectively and efficiently revise their work?
10. How can peer assessment be used in this process?
11. How much time should be provided in-class for students to assess their work? How much out-of-class time?
12. How will the decision be made about the weight of students' grades?
13. How does the instructor's gender influence the process?



14. How does an instructor with a different theoretical perspective than the mainstream approach influence the process?
15. How can the process be seen as an integral part of what we do in methods classes?

### Suggestions for Future Research

1. A democratic approach to student self-assessment in the reading methods class provides one alternative approach that facilitates preservice teachers' learning. Studies should also be conducted that document the processes of preservice teachers' learning using other alternative approaches and how these approaches influence professional growth compared with this study of the reading methods class.

2. Other reading methods classes or similar methods classes that use a democratic approach to student self-assessment need to be described and comparisons made among these experiences.

3. Instructors who use a democratic approach to self-assessment in their classes should describe these experiences through classroom-based research so that we can better understand the concerns and issues raised by teacher educators who use this approach.

4. This study focused on how the entire class approached student self-assessment. New insights might be gained if case studies of different types of learners were conducted.

5. A follow-up study of the preservice students who were involved in the reading methods class would provide invaluable evidence about if and how the class influenced their future teaching.

### Epilogue

To conclude our story, I would like to share how the instructor, the focal preservice teachers, and I responded to this adventure. At the end of the semester, the members of the reading methods class met at the home of the instructor for a holiday party. I presented each of the preservice teachers enrolled in the class with a copy of the following letter. It captures many of my reactions to participating in the study.

December 17, 1992

Dear Preservice Teachers,

This was an exciting and challenging semester for me! Just as you were initially concerned about which school you would be placed in and what your cooperating teacher would be like, I too, was concerned about what you would be like in the reading methods class that I was studying for my dissertation. I was unsure about my role and how you would respond to me. Yet you eagerly accepted and invited me to become a part of this learning community. You freely gave your time and exhibited a concern for my learning that far exceeded my expectations. For that I want to say thank you. I would also like to share with you a few things that I have learned:

1. Conducting research isn't painful - it is actually fun!  
For some reason, before the study I had some real misconceptions about research. Now I see it as something that I hope to always be engaged in doing.
2. I wasn't in this all alone. Not only did I have you to talk to about my work, I also realized that you were involved in doing your own research projects this semester!
3. When I began my research, I thought I was just going to be learning about issues related to assessment in this class, but I learned so much else. Specifically, I gained new insights into what preservice teachers think. I never realized how complex learning to teach really is, and how all of the diverse experiences you are engaged in influence your learning. In other words, I am beginning to see what makes sense to you and why. As a result, I feel that I will be a better teacher in the future.
4. I learned a lot about literacy instruction. The small group tasks generated new ideas for me.
5. Our small group interactions also enabled me to gain new understandings about creating and maintaining group work - how to create tasks, different grouping and sharing techniques, benefits, teacher's role, etc.
6. I am convinced that I did indeed select the right topic for my dissertation - my passion involves preservice

teachers and literacy instruction. And most important, I was lucky to get a group like you to work with!

Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Becky

Another reaction I have to the study entails the interactive research position I assumed. In many respects, this was the most risky and exciting part of the adventure for me. It was risky because I lacked experience with this approach. Like the preservice teachers engaging in ambiguous tasks, I experienced a great deal of uncertainty. I found the support I needed to sustain me during this process from the instructor and the preservice teachers. Their feedback indicated that they were indeed reflecting and gaining a deeper understanding of their practice because they were participants in the study. This made it exciting. It also provides reinforcement to me about the type of research I want to conduct in the future and provides me with a clearer vision of the path I need to follow.

The final reaction that I would like to share is how overwhelmed I feel about the willingness of the instructor and the preservice teachers to participate in the study. They each were living under heavy professional demands, but they so generously gave of their time for interviews and conversations. These actions coupled with their responses suggest to me that an interactive research approach can create a context in which the researcher and

the participants are co-learners, freely voicing and testing their ideas together. An interactive research approach is a collaborative process that can reduce the greater institutional power that a researcher normally assumes over the participants in a more conventional research approach. It can also lead to greater benefits to the participants in a study as evidenced from the instructor and the focal preservice teachers' reactions that follow in this Epilogue.

When I asked the instructor to respond to being a participant in the study, he wrote the following letter:

Dear Becky,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to you regarding my reactions to being a participant in your study. First, it was most unusual being a participant and advisor. When you first conceived the study, I did not see my role as a participant to be central to your questions. Thus, I was not worried about the influence of my participation. However, as the nature of the study changed to look at the broader context of the instructional approach, I found myself beginning to worry about the definition of my role and my responsibility as an advisor. Many times I was not sure whether I was answering your questions as a participant or an advisor.

During the course of the data collection these worries related to role conflict subsided as I settled into the participant role. From this perspective, I began to feel comfortable because you focused on my teaching. Our

interactions caused me to reflect deeply and extensively about my practice. I liked it. I can say with a certain amount of confidence that the course, including your study as a part of that experience, was clearly one of the defining moments of my teaching career. The reasons are many. It was truly a special group of students; many of the ideas that I had been developing over the past four or five years (and maybe longer) came together.

Teaching was my highest priority during this time period and the support that I received from you as part of the study was an essential ingredient. Our weekly discussions and written exchanges were a constant source of ideas for me. I believe that much of what occurred would have happened even if the study was not conducted, but I also believe that the experience was far more richer and meaningful to me because it did. Your work and my participation has provided a window into my practice that has affected me profoundly as a teacher. I believe that I understand the concept of reflective practice in new and richer ways that will help me be the kind of teacher that I aspire to be.

After the completion of the data collection phase, the role conflict worries began to show-up again as I was commenting on your interpretations. As I read your text and reacted, I continually wondered about my reasons for making certain responses and particularly suggestions. I did not want

the interpretations to be mine. They had to be yours. However, I did feel like I had certain rights as a participant but I did not want to go beyond these rights because I was an advisor. This dilemma was followed by another. In my effort to avoid undue influence on the interpretations, I questioned whether I was providing you with adequate feedback. Thus, this part of the process was the most unsettling for me.

My last reaction relates to my teaching. As I read your description of the instructional approach, I felt confident since I had explicitly designed that and was reasonably aware of what had happened. However, as I read your descriptions of the students' mediation of the class, I experienced a distinct feeling of uneasiness. I am not exactly sure why. Perhaps it is because you knew more about how the course was influencing them than I did. After much reflection, I came to the conclusion that teaching is a highly uncertain craft and it is almost impossible for a teacher to know their students in the way you got to know mine. True, their work indicated that they were moving in directions I had hoped they would move, but one can only make large inferences from such products. Moreover, one always worries that you might only see those things in your students' work that confirm what you believe.

It occurs to me that this reaction is getting much too long. I have much more to say but I realize that it is your study so I will close. The fact that I have much more to say is

another piece of evidence of the educative value of your research. The reality for me, as a participant, is that I do not want it to end.

Jerry

As previously mentioned, each of the preservice teachers were invited to provide written and oral responses to my preliminary interpretations of the study. Katherine's written response is provided as an example of the agreement the preservice teachers expressed about my interpretations:

Dear Becky,

Congratulations! Your thesis looks wonderful. I just finished reading it and I hardly know where to begin! Your interpretations and analysis were right on the mark from my perspective, especially in the last chapter. I made very few comments, but I hope they help!

To begin at the end, your ending sounds good. I especially liked your inclusion of your letter.

Pages 115-116 (Dr. Niles' quote), was especially powerful. I had forgotten about this until I read it, and considering my situation now, it is more powerful than ever. If you don't mind, I'd like to keep this page and post it - just so I don't forget again!!

My favorite part of the whole thing is on page 164: "Yet, ultimately, the decision is yours, and this is what will guide your future actions." So true, so true. The entire analogy was



good, but this point sums it up. I guess we are all just learning how to make better decisions.

My wish is that you get this whole thing together in time to graduate with us. I think it would be an excellent milestone in our adventure.

Good Luck,

Katherine

Each of the focal preservice teachers were also invited to answer the question: "What is your reaction to being a participant in this study?" While each of them mentioned several different reactions, there were two common themes that emerged. The first theme was that the preservice teachers were glad that they had participated in the study. The second theme was that the study itself had facilitated their learning. Anne Beth's reaction is provided as an illustration.

Becky,

I've never before been asked to participate in such an in-depth study but I have thoroughly enjoyed it. The fact that I've had someone asking me very thought provoking questions about how I assess myself, my performances, and my learning has tremendously helped me come to better know myself as a person, teacher, and learner.

Although I've "given" information that will be used in your dissertation, I have learned a great deal. Due to the "toughness" of the questions asked during each interview I've

had to put unconscious thoughts and beliefs into words. This has made me more aware of my own thought processes which has been a very exciting challenge for me.

The interviews, in combination with Dr. Niles' class, has helped me to become a much stronger teacher. I can see the areas I've improved in over the semester. I can also recognize areas that I need to improve on. And with the assessment skills I've strengthened over the semester, I feel I'm better equipped to accurately assess, evaluate, and change situations.

The questions asked in this study have helped me to confirm many things I learned in class. The power of conversation should never be underestimated in any learning situation!

Perhaps the most exciting outcome of this study for me is the fact that the things I've learned will carry on with me for a long time to come. This is only the beginning of my experiences as a teacher and a learner!

Sincerely,

Anne Beth

Like Anne Beth, all of us who participated in the reading methods class knew that we grew and changed from this experience. We also knew that our journey was not over. It can never be over as long as we continue participating in the exciting and risky adventure of becoming teachers and researchers.

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## Appendix A LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I first discuss several quantitative studies in student self-assessment. This part is followed by a discussion of qualitative studies in student self-assessment and self-assessment studies in teacher education.

### Quantitative Studies in Student Self-Assessment

In 1989, Boud and Falchikov undertook what appears to be the first major review of the literature on student self-assessment in higher education. Forty-eight quantitative studies were analyzed in this review to examine the differences between student and teacher marks when assessing the same student's performance. Later that year, Falchikov and Boud (1989) subjected 57 quantitative self-assessment studies that compared self and teacher marks to a meta-analysis. To better understand the findings of these quantitative studies, three issues will be discussed: methodology, conceptual framework, and evidence about self-marking (Boud & Falchikov, 1989).

### Methodology Issues

The work of Boud and Falchikov (1989) identifies numerous methodological issues involving these quantitative studies - these issues were adapted for this review. First, how criteria is established by students and by teachers to rate the students varied. Criteria can be established by the students, by the teacher, or collaboratively by the teacher and students. Stanton (1984) argued



that students should know the criteria which are being applied to the assessment of their work, and outlined an approach that actively involves the students in generating such criteria. However, in many studies, insufficient detail was given to determine if and how criteria were established.

Second, student ratings were often derived differently from teacher ratings (Boud & Falchikov, 1989). Frequently, students were asked to estimate their grade in an impressionistic way which was compared with the teacher's grade derived from a number of disparate pieces of work. For example, Mueller (1970) requested that the students in an introductory psychology class write the grade they thought they deserved on the back of their final examination and, in two or three sentences, the reason they felt they deserved that grade. The students' grades were then compared with the professor's grade which was based on objective tests.

Third, the way the researchers reported their findings varied. Some of the studies included the numbers of individuals or the percentages of the self-assessing group whose grades corresponded to a greater or lesser degree with those of the teacher group. Many studies reported mean scores, while others gave correlation coefficients. Thus, as Boud and Falchikov (1989) concluded, in the majority of the studies it is difficult to obtain a complete picture of both "how many" and "how much."

Fourth, very few studies replicated or even mentioned another study. Boud and Falchikov (1989) claimed, "most studies would not

warrant replication in their existing form; nevertheless, there were few examples of studies taking up issues raised by earlier ones" (p. 535). They acknowledged that their criticisms may be too harsh, since there is little consistency in the locus of published self-assessment research. For example, the 48 studies analyzed for their review appeared in 36 different journals.

Fifth, several studies included the rating of student effort but did not distinguish this effort from performance (Boud & Falchikov, 1989). Since effort exerted by students is subjective and often difficult for teachers to be fully aware of, it is unrealistic to expect agreement between teachers and students. For example, in one study, students predicted the grade they would get by the third week of class based on what they normally did in a similar course (Davis & Rand, 1980). In another study, a two-fold standard of self-measurement was proposed: grade self (1) by what you put into the course, in terms of effort and interest, and (2) by what you got out of the course relative to what was to be gotten (Filene, 1969). Filene (1969) acknowledged that he allowed students to mistake enthusiasm for achievement.

Sixth, there were a few studies that had students predict their grades before the course ever began. For example, Keefer (1971) asked students at the beginning of the grading period to rate what they expected to receive in each course they were enrolled in. This was later compared with the grades they actually earned.

Seventh, very few studies defined what they meant by self-assessment (Boud & Falchikov, 1989). In some instances it appeared to refer to the grade students felt they deserved, while in other instances it referred to what students felt the teachers would give them or to the rating of a specific performance that was translated into a grade. In addition, it was very seldom mentioned whether the student's self-assessments were incorporated into their overall grade for the course.

### Conceptual Framework Issues

The reasons stated for conducting the self-assessment studies varied. For example, Davis and Rand (1980) were interested in the issue of competitiveness in an undergraduate Educational Psychology course. Self-assessment was employed as a method of eliminating competitiveness by allowing students to assign themselves their grade by the third week of class. Hoffman and Gellen (1981) described the purpose of their study as an examination of the self-evaluations of student aides versus the evaluations by participating classroom teachers of these aides to determine salient information for working with aides in future programs. Filene (1969) argued that the present grading system is a nuisance which corrupts or at least distracts from the experience of learning. While there were others who were interested in self-assessment being used as a tool for learning (Denscombe & Robins, 1980; Henbest & Fehrsen, 1985), the most common rationale was more out of curiosity or the "look and see" motivation (Boud & Falchikov, 1989). For example, Wheeler and

Knoop (1982) simply stated they were curious about the agreement among student teachers, field supervisors, and university supervisors and wanted to explore this relationship of performance assessments.

The majority of studies were atheoretical, without mention of a conceptual or theoretical framework. There were exceptions, however, such as the study by Stanton (1978), who cited the work of Carl Rogers and the study by Irvine (1983), who included Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance. Nevertheless, to gain new understandings into the reconceptualization of learning, it is necessary for all of the studies to make explicit the theories that undergird and guide their work.

The independent variable in these studies were the teachers' ratings (Boud & Falchikov, 1989). In other words, the teachers' ratings defined the accuracy of self-ratings. Boud and Falchikov (1989) cautioned that while this may be a valid working assumption when dealing with the lowest level of performance, as students become more knowledgeable and grow outside the teacher's immediate area of competence, the assumption becomes less valid. Furthermore, students often have greater insights into their own achievements than the teachers, and thus, it is important to remember that these studies deal only with information known to teachers. In addition, the unreliability of teacher marks is an issue (Boud & Falchikov, 1989). It is well-documented that there are

discrepancies between markers and even within the same marker over time (Heywood, 1989).

### Evidence About Self-Marking

The majority of quantitative studies reviewed inquired about students overrating or underrating themselves as compared to their teachers' rating. Boud and Falchikov (1989) concluded that there was no consistent tendency to over- or underestimate performance. The evidence suggested that if the studies are excluded where students graded themselves on effort rather than achievement, students generate marks which are reasonably consistent with the marks given by the staff. Even though in most studies greater numbers of student marks agree rather than disagree with teacher marks, there is a tendency towards some degree of over- or underrating in most studies.

In the literature review by Boud and Falchikov (1989), several trends in student self-assessment were identified: (1) high achieving students tend to be realistic and perhaps underestimate their performance, while low achieving students tend to overestimate their achievements probably to a greater extent than the students who underestimate themselves, (2) students in later years of courses and graduates have a tendency to either become more "accurate" in their ratings, or they begin to increasingly underestimate their performance, (3) there are insufficient studies about improvement over time to draw any firm conclusions, and there is particularly a lack of studies on the influence of practice on

self-marking, (4) it is difficult to determine whether students overrate or underrate themselves when self-marks are used for assessment purposes since studies do not consistently specify whether the marks of students are formally recognized, and (5) studies of gender differences remain inconclusive. Of the 48 studies reviewed, only six examined gender differences and only three found any differences between the ratings of men and women (p. 537-543).

As a result of the meta-analysis conducted by Falchikov and Boud (1989), three salient factors were identified relating to the correspondence between self- and teacher marks. First, better designed studies show a closer correspondence between student and teacher assessments than poorly designed ones. Generally, studies after the 1980's were found to be better designed than their predecessors. Second, students in advanced courses appear to be more accurate assessors than those in introductory courses. As stated by Falchikov and Boud (1989): "We must conclude that expertise within a particular field is more influential than is seniority or duration of enrollment" (p. 425). Third, studies within the area of science generally appear to produce more accurate self-assessment than those from other areas of study. There was insufficient data to draw conclusions about the reasons.

#### Qualitative Studies in Student Self-Assessment

The studies that fall within the "qualitative group" focused primarily on the relationship between student self-assessment and learning and addressed the processes involved in using self-

assessment in different situations. As in the quantitative studies reported, these studies were conducted for various reasons in a wide array of contexts such as foreign language learning, health personnel education, university teaching, and student writing. Regrettably, the majority of studies reviewed simply entailed personal accounts of self-assessment use in classrooms without providing information about the research methodology. Five studies will be reviewed to illustrate these diverse discussions.

Barrows and Tamblyn (1976) reported that medical faculty do not have adequate time to obtain an accurate assessment of students' clinical skills. In an attempt to resolve this problem, they developed a "self-assessment unit" that allowed the students to carry out their own evaluation without the need of a faculty observer. The authors provided a step-by-step description of this "self-assessment unit," which involved a student being videotaped while interviewing and examining simulated patients.

In a project entailing private journal writing and assessment undertaken by third-year education students, Butler (1982) expressed concern about how writing could be evaluated if a teacher did not read it, mark it, and grade it. As the end of the journal-writing period he asked the students to bring their journals to class and write their own evaluations by answering questions that addressed the following criteria: (1) quantity, (2) variety, (3) depth, (4) interest, and (5) value. According to Butler (1982), this approach was beneficial because it forced the students to go back through

their experience to come to some conclusions about what they had achieved, it provided a sense of closure to the project, and the written assessments became a piece of hard evidence which could be marked or graded according to a holistic scale which measured the students' insight and learning from the experience.

Cowan (1988), a professor of civil engineering at the time, experimented with self-assessment in his courses during a three year period. He provided a thorough description, based on detailed personal records from the first 15 months of the project, of what it was like to explore a self-assessed course in which each student had complete control over the weekly choice of objectives, their criteria, and their assessment. Cowan (1988) emphasized that teaching a course in this manner entailed a complete change in his role as a university teacher:

The old authoritarian strategies, which had served me well when I controlled assessment (and hence the hidden curriculum), were rendered totally inappropriate. I now took authority only for the decision to pass authority to the learners, and then I had to devote time and effort to learning my role in this entirely new situation. For I still had a responsibility to facilitate learning and development. (p. 193-194)

In conclusion, Cowan (1988) provided 15 statements of advice. The last statement reads:



Always accept the final judgment, whatever it is - and never with your tongue in your cheek. It is your trust in their ability to assess themselves which prompts them to be responsible, in their own ways - although not necessarily in yours. And it will be your openness to consider judgments other than your own which will help you to mature as a genuinely facilitative teacher. (p. 209)

In an earlier study, Boyd and Cowan (1985) discussed a year-long experiment of engineering students who self-assessed their work in lieu of examinations. The results of the self-assessed group were compared to a conventionally assessed group, and even though difficulties were encountered, "the final judgment is that only such methods can achieve deep processing in Higher Education" (Boyd & Cowan, p. 225).

In another study, Edwards (1989), a lecturer in the department of computer science, asserted that students learn better if they are invited to collaborate with each other and the teacher before they assessed their work against their own criteria. The students, on an individual basis, discussed with the teacher for at least 10 minutes what they had done to deserve their grade. It was reported that more than three quarters of the marks were accurate. However, when students rated themselves higher than the teacher thought, it was found if they were asked: "Do you really deserve the mark you have given yourself? that every student willingly reduced the mark. Overall, the method was reported to be very time-consuming for the

teacher, but the benefits for the students' learning far outweighed this drawback.

Collectively these studies provide insight into various benefits and concerns about student self-assessment practices. They illuminate the potential role of self-assessment in a variety of contexts and provide evidence that many scholars are indeed interested in investigating the relationship between self-assessment and student learning. Unfortunately, most of these "findings" should be regarded cautiously, since mention of data collection and analysis is not included.

#### Self-Assessment Studies in Teacher Education

The majority of studies reviewed on teacher education and self-assessment (Briggs, et al, 1986; Hartman, 1978; Hoffman & Gellen, 1981; Irvine, 1983; Johnston & Hodge, 1981; O'Neil, 1985; Pease, 1975; Wheeler & Knoop, 1982) involved a comparison between student teachers' ratings and their supervisor's ratings. These studies were consistent with conclusions reported earlier that students' "accuracy" varied from one situation to another. These studies also revealed a diversity in the purpose of the studies and the type of data collected. Two studies will be reviewed to illustrate this diversity.

A study by O'Neil (1985) extended a prior study by Wheeler and Knoop (1982) which had concluded that student teachers' self-evaluations were significantly higher than either their academic or field supervisory ratings. O'Neil (1985) questioned if these findings

would be altered if one looked at the differences between elementary and secondary students. The results showed that the elementary versus secondary split did not alter the original findings, but there were gender differences. There was a significant amount of agreement between female student teachers and both sets of supervisors but practically no agreement between male student teachers and their supervisors. It was inferred from the study that when individuals are rated by members of the same sex, they are more prone to devaluation, and therefore a balancing in the sex-matching patterns of rater to ratee might help facilitate more impartial supervision.

However, in an earlier study by Hoffman and Gellen (1981) opposite results from O'Neil's (1985) study were reported. Thus, it appears that studies of gender differences are inconclusive at the present time.

A study reported by Freiberg, Waxman, and Houston (1987) had a somewhat different focus for comparing student and teacher ratings. They claimed that isolation is common to many veteran classroom teachers and argued that collegial relations, reflections about the teaching profession, and personal and professional development should be nurtured during student-teaching. Secondary student teachers who were randomly assigned to an experimental group used a self-assessment instrument, developed by one of the authors, to analyze an audio tape of their class. They were also provided feedback through three small group seminars. It was

concluded that providing such a model of feedback and interchange may empower student-teachers to become more reflective about their teaching and break the isolation and dependency cycle for teachers. The description of this project provided one example of how self-analysis of classroom lessons may be integrated into the student teaching experience. Unfortunately, the voices of the student teachers regarding the benefits of this project were not included.

Collectively, these studies illustrate that the primary focus in teacher education and self-assessment research has traditionally been the amount of agreement in ratings between student teachers and supervisors. Most of the instruments used tended to be checklists consisting of behaviors and criteria established by evaluators - in other words, criteria that is external to the students. Recently, there have been many educators advocating the need for teachers to engage in assessing their work based on internally derived criteria, or what is most frequently cited as "systematic self-reflection" (for a sample, see Goodman, 1988; Korthagen, 1985; Ross & Hannay, 1986; Rust, 1988; Wildman & Niles, 1987; Wildman, Niles, Magliaro & McLaughlin, 1990; Zeichner, 1981, 1983).

One descriptive study based on internally derived criteria was the ethnographic study by McLaughlin (1991). He examined the self-evaluative perspectives and processes of student teachers. Data was collected from four student teachers by structured interviews, student journals, and a final written self-evaluation and then

analyzed around the student teachers' primary concerns toward self, the classroom, or relationships with others. Summaries or profiles were provided that highlighted each student teacher's initial concerns and goals before they taught, followed by their definitions and criteria of "success," their methods of self-evaluation, and the dilemmas they encountered. McLaughlin found that the student teachers' entering concerns did not change as a result of this experience, although it was pointed out there was a great diversity in the perspectives initially held by these students. Furthermore, it was found that the student teachers used three sorts of methods to evaluate themselves: (1) analyzing their behavior in the classroom and then comparing that behavior with teaching objectives, (2) basing evaluations on measured instruments or outside observers' judgments, and (3) judging themselves according to feedback from students (McLaughlin, 1991, p. 150).

According to McLaughlin (1991), "teacher educators are obliged to establish the conditions that enable student teachers to develop 'interactive processes of self-evaluation'"(p. 152). "Interactive," as seen by McLaughlin (1991), is a socially created process where self-evaluation processes are "fired in the crucible of classroom interactions and interactions with colleagues" (p. 152). What this means is there is interaction between one's responses to internal and external standards. While it is beneficial for preservice teachers to develop internal standards, there are and always will be external standards that teachers must meet. Thus, it is necessary

for teachers to critique these external standards to develop their own judgmental criteria and knowledge about practice.

In order to enhance student teachers' self-evaluation actions, McLaughlin (1991) urged teacher educators to have prospective teachers (1) examine their prior perspectives on self-evaluation as part of a larger process of self-reflection about their prior knowledge of teaching, (2) strengthen their observational and analytical skills, (3) develop routines of actions, (4) recognize the gaps between prior intents and actions and accept uncertainty as endemic to teaching, and (5) question one's values and educational goals.

McLaughlin's (1991) study provided a rich overview of the self-evaluative perspectives and processes of four student teachers and provided suggestions for how teacher educators might enhance student teachers' self-evaluations. However, a broader picture of how an instructor approaches student self-assessment and how the preservice teachers respond to this approach is needed.

Appendix B  
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

PART I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Age: 17-21 \_\_\_\_\_ 22-25 \_\_\_\_\_ 26-29 \_\_\_\_\_ Over 29 \_\_\_\_\_  
Cum. GPA: Under 2.0 \_\_\_\_\_ 2.1-2.5 \_\_\_\_\_ 2.6-3.0 \_\_\_\_\_ 3.1-3.5 \_\_\_\_\_

PART II: PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. What is your personal definition of self-assessment?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Prior to this class, have you ever been asked by a teacher to assess your work?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered yes to question 2, please complete the remaining questions. If you answered no, please skip to Part III and complete the remaining questions.

3. When did you first assess yourself in a course?
  - A. Elementary School
  - B. Middle School
  - C. High School
  - D. College
  
4. In how many classes have you assessed yourself?
  - A. One
  - B. Two
  - C. Three
  - D. Four or more
  
5. How many times has your assessment been part of your final grade?
  - A. One
  - B. Two
  - C. Three
  - D. Four or more
  
6. In what ways have you assessed yourself?
  - A. Teacher conference
  - B. Written evaluation
  - C. Checklist
  - D. Peer evaluation
  - E. Other (please write in) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Overall, were you satisfied with these experiences?

\_\_\_\_\_Very Satisfied \_\_\_\_\_ Satisfied \_\_\_\_\_Dissatisfied

8. Why?

### PART III: BELIEFS ABOUT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Please check the response which most clearly represents your feelings.

(SD) Strongly Disagree (D) Disagree (A) Agree (SA) Strongly Agree

1. My total course grade should be based on just my own self-assessment.

\_\_\_\_\_SD \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_SA

2. Only the professor should assign my grade.

\_\_\_\_\_SD \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_SA

3. The professor and I should decide together what my final grade should be.

\_\_\_\_\_SD \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_SA

4. Self-assessment should be included as one part of the final grade.

\_\_\_\_\_SD \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_SA

5. I should only asses myself in ways that do not influence my grade.

\_\_\_\_\_SD \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_SA

6. Self-assessment is appropriate for any course.

\_\_\_\_\_SD \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_SA

7. Students should engage in assessing their work in every course.

\_\_\_\_\_SD \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_SA

8. I would like to participate in assessing my work in all of my courses.

\_\_\_\_\_SD \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_SA



9. Professors can accurately assess my work.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

10. Students are capable of accurately assessing their own work.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

11. Peers are capable of accurately assessing my work.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

12. I can accurately assess myself.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

13. I should be able to decide if self-assessment is used in the course.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

14. The professor should establish the criteria for me to assess my work.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

15. I feel confident in establishing the criteria myself.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

16. Effective teachers must be able to assess their own work.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

17. Self-assessment enables me to gain more control over my own learning.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

18. Self-assessment facilitates learning.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

19. To become comfortable with self-assessment, I must have practice with this process.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

20. I feel comfortable assessing myself with some professors, but not with others.

\_\_\_\_\_SD    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ A    \_\_\_\_\_SA

#### PART IV: DEFINITION OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Having completed this survey questionnaire, what is your personal definition of self-assessment?
2. Please include any additional comments that you feel are important about the self-assessment process from a learners' perspective.

Appendix C  
QUESTIONS ASKED PRESERVICE TEACHERS DURING FIRST INTERVIEW

1. What kinds of experiences have you had working with children?
2. What education courses have you taken prior to this class?
3. Could you tell me what you would say if you were to run into a FCD major who will be taking this class next year and she asked you to tell her about the class?
4. I'm interested if you ever think about your own learning in this course. Do you? If so, could you tell me in what ways you think about? How do you think about it? What do you focus on? What ways do you go about doing this? What ideas do you consider? Judgments? Plans? Actions?
5. I'm also interested in what all you think there is to learn in this class. Can you tell me what there is to learn.
6. You have mentioned several different things. I wonder if you could specifically tell me what's most important to you? (goals, want to learn or accomplish)
7. What do you think is important to Dr. Niles?
8. I'm also interested in how you prepare yourself for learning in this class. Could you describe for me how you approach learning for this course? How will you proceed?
9. Do you focus on monitoring and directing your own learning? If so, how? Why?
10. Earlier you mentioned several goals or things you wanted to learn from the class. I'm interested in how you will you determine if you have learned these things. Could you tell me how you will go about doing this.

11. What criteria do you think you will use to evaluate your learning? Why do you choose those criteria?
12. I'm also interested in what you feel like you are learning. Could you tell me something that you have learned recently about teaching literacy?
13. Can you think of any other issues you are dealing with now? Are these issues the same or different from the ones you were working with earlier in the semester?
14. Are you worried about anything in the class?
15. If I were riding in your car pool on the way to Roanoke, what are some of the questions or comments that I might hear about this class?
16. I also want to give you the opportunity to ask me questions about the teaching and learning occurring in this class. Can you think of any questions you might like to ask me?

## Appendix D

### QUESTIONS ASKED PRESERVICE TEACHERS DURING SECOND INTERVIEW

1. If I were riding in your car pool on the way to Roanoke, what are some of the questions or comments that I might hear about this class?
2. I'm interested in what you feel like you are learning. Could you tell me something that you have learned recently about teaching literacy. What are the features that supported you learning these things?
3. Are there things that Dr. Niles has done this semester done that has made you stop and think about your learning? Which of these things has helped you the most?
4. At this point you have turned in three assignments. Let's first talk about your description paper. What did you learn from doing this assignment? Were you surprised about anything? What do you think was important to Niles that you learn from doing this assignment? How did you feel about the description paper you turned in? How did you feel about your description paper as compared to how Niles felt about it?
5. How did you feel about the feedback you received from Niles on this paper? How did you go about looking at his feedback?
6. Did you revise this paper? If so, how did you decide to make the revisions?
7. What criteria did you use? Was any criteria more important than others? If so, why? How did you weigh your criteria against Niles'? When do you weigh your criteria as being more important than someone else's?
8. What did you learn from this revision process? What did you like about it? What didn't you like? What was hard? What was easy? What do you think was important to Niles that you learn from this process?

9. Niles asked you to write a self-assessment response to this paper. How did you feel about this? What did you learn from it? What was easy about doing it? Hard? Why did Niles ask you to do this? Do you think you were able to "accurately" assess your work? What enabled you to do this?
10. Vision paper. What did you learn from completing this paper? How did you feel about it?
11. Niles didn't ask you to self-evaluate this paper. Did you anyway? If so, how did you go about doing this? In what ways was it different or the same from the way you thought about your description paper?
12. Student Story. What did you learn from completing this paper? How did you feel about it? Why do you think Niles asked you to write a self evaluation on your student story? Have you done this? Feel about it? What did you learn? What was easy about it? What was hard about it?
13. Overall, how have you felt about the way Niles has dealt with assessment in this course? Anything else about how you feel about the way assessment has been handled this semester?
14. What have you liked about the role assessment has played in this class? What have you not liked?
15. Is there anything else that you might add about how your thoughts have changed over the semester in the way that you have gone about thinking about your learning?
16. Do you have any concerns or questions about the reading methods class? Or continuing on with it next semester?
17. How did you feel about Niles inviting you to voice your opinion about the direction for the class to go next semester? At this point, do you think you can determine what else you need to know and ways to go about learning that? What has enabled you to be able to determine this? What did you determine that you

would like to learn next in terms of literacy instruction? How do you think you will go about learning this? How will you know if you have learned that?

18. Do you have any comments to make about how about us grad students being in the class this semester?
19. What questions do you have for me?

Appendix E  
QUESTIONS ASKED PRESERVICE TEACHERS DURING FINAL INTERVIEW

1. Pretend you run into your FCD friend again that will be taking the course next year, and she/he asks you what did you learn in the reading methods class. What would you say?
2. I wanted us to next talk about the goals of the course. What did you think about the goals? (Look at the goals outlined on the course syllabus) Would you say that you accomplished all of these? How did you feel about them? Did you set other goals for yourself? What are some things that you wanted to learn but didn't? Are there things that you learned that aren't represented here?
3. What are the features that supported you learning these things? Which of these things helped you the most? How did you know that you learned these things?
4. Return to your FCD friend - she/he says she heard that you assess yourself differently in the class and asks you to describe this to her/him. What would you say? How have you felt about it? Liked/not liked? What is the difference between how you assessed yourself this semester and your prior experience with self-assessment?
5. Do you think this has influenced your learning this semester? If so, how? Your teaching?
6. What have you like about the role assessment has played in this class? What have you not liked?
7. Why do you think Dr. Niles asked you to assess your work in this manner?
8. Can you think of any changes or additional things that Dr. Niles could make in the assessment process for the class that could facilitate learning (even) more?



9. Now, I'd like for us to talk about the assessment of your curriculum adventure. Would you describe how you went about self-assessing that? How did you establish criteria? How did you judge your performance on those criteria? What feelings do you have about the self-assessment of the project? What confidence do you have in that assessment? How did your assessment compare with Niles?
10. What is the difference between writing the self-assessment of your individual papers and writing your final self-assessment of the course? How did you feel about giving yourself a grade for the course? What is the difference between giving yourself a grade on each task throughout the semester and waiting to do just one time at the end? How did your final assessment compare with Niles. (If the same) Why were you able to assess yourself in the same way as Niles?
11. What do you think is a critical factor for successful self-assessment? Could you describe the relationship between self-assessment and having practice with it?
12. Could you describe how criteria fits into the self-assessment process? What is the difference between using Niles' criteria and using your own criteria? Have you noticed a difference this semester in whose criteria was most important to you? If so, how?
13. Could you describe how making judgments about your work fits into the self-assessment process? What do you think really enables us to assess our work? What enables us to accurately assess?
14. Do you think the revision process is related to self-assessment? If so, how? Are there other processes that you think are directly related to self assessment?
15. How would you define student self-assessment? When do you think we do it? Why do we do it? How does self-assessment promote learning? How does self-assessment promote self-assessment? What discoveries have you made about self-

assessment this semester? Is there anything else you might add about how your thoughts have changed over the semester regarding your thinking about self-assessment? What else would you like to learn about it?

16. Could you describe how you feel about possibly using student self-assessment practices in your classroom next year? Why do you feel this way?
17. We have been talking about your self-assessment and learning this semester, how does this fit with who you were as a student before this class (prior history as a student) and who you will be in the future?
18. Can you describe how you feel about teaching literacy in your own classroom next year?
19. Do you have any other comments about your learning, the class or assessment?
20. Questions for me about self-assessment or anything?

Appendix F  
COURSE SYLLABUS

**EDCI 4104 - Reading Language in a Developmental Program**  
**Jerome Niles**  
**Fall, 1992**  
**Phone - 231-5269**

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this course is to assist you in building a conceptual framework for creating a constructive literacy learning environment in your classroom.

**Goals:**

1. Building a comprehensive description of a literacy learning environment for an elementary school classroom.
2. Exploring and reflecting on a variety of literacy learning activities.
3. Developing and carrying out a curriculum project that will enhance literacy learning for your classroom.
4. Other class-generated goals.

**Text:**

*Invitations* by Regie Routman

**Topics of interests:**

1. Developing a framework for teaching literacy.
2. Developing a balanced program for Reading and Writing.
3. Developing a response to literature.
4. Using strategies for ensuring successful literacy learning experiences.
5. Spelling instruction.
6. Integrating literacy instruction in general.
7. Grouping for success in literacy instruction.
8. Other class-generated issues.

## **Course Requirements:**

### **1. Class Participation**

Your active participation in this class is essential for building a productive learning community. It is expected that you will give freely of your ideas, constructively react to the ideas of others and offer constructive suggestions for the good of the group.

### **2. Class Notebook**

This notebook will be a clearinghouse for your writing and thinking related to the experiences in this course. It will contain at least writings from classes, field assignments, reactions to readings, and other features that we deem important. These notebooks should also include spontaneous entries. You might also want to add significant documents from your work with children.

### **3. Literacy Description**

You will develop a comprehensive description of literacy learning in your classroom. This description will include your view of the present as well as your vision for the future.

### **4. Case Study**

This will be a written description of a learner in your class.

### **5. Literacy Curriculum Project**

You will choose an area to focus on in your classroom that you feel would benefit from your input and develop a project that will make a difference for your students.

### **6. Self-evaluation**

You will provide a self-analysis of your performance on each of the above tasks and a comprehensive analysis of your work in the course.

## **Procedures**

Your final grade will be determined by a combination of your self-evaluations and my evaluation of your work. I will provide an explanation of your final grade.

### **Scheduling of Work**

As a broad guideline you can expect weekly field assignments and reading. The description project will take place in September, the case study in early October, the Instructional project in late October (planning), and the implementation in November. A final sharing session will be held in December.

Appendix G  
PRESERVICE TEACHER CONSENT FORM

This is an invitation to you to participate in my doctoral dissertation study that will focus on teaching and learning in Dr. Niles' reading methods class. As with most teachers, I believe that studying another's teaching and learning is a vital part of becoming a good teacher. I believe also that your participation in this study will be helpful to you in your professional development.

If you decide to participate in this research I will ask you to do each of the following: (1) complete a survey questionnaire, (2) allow me to view your course documents, and (3) permit me to audio tape your classroom discussions. I may also ask you to spare me up to 3 hours of your time for interviewing--spread out over the semester. Of course, you have the right to decline to participate in these outside of class interviews. In any articles or reports I write, I will mask your identify in such a way that quoted comments cannot be attributed to you specifically.

If you have questions or concerns, please call the researcher, Becky [Sharpe] Anderson (953-2039) or the researcher's major advisor, Dr. Jerry Niles (231-5269). As with all studies, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice by contacting Dr. Rosary Lalik (231-5558).

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information above and have decided to participate.

---

Signature/Date

Appendix H  
TASK HANDOUTS FROM THE READING METHODS CLASS

**CLASS 1: FIELD ASSIGNMENT 1**

Begin to build a description of the literacy environment in your classroom and school. Make a list of all the features of a literate environment that you observe next week and think about what all of this means. Write a brief narrative that explains your list and how you constructed it.

READING ASSIGNMENT

R&R: 9-21 and 31-51

**MATERIALS ASSIGNMENT**

Bring a children's book to class.

---

**Feedback for Jerry**

Comment on anything that's on your mind related to your learning in this class.

## **CLASS 2: READING OUTLOUD TASK**

### **Part One**

In groups of five, each of you should read your book to the other members as if you were reading it to your class. Take about five minutes to read the book. If it is too long to read in that time frame, you may choose a favorite part or a chapter or read the beginning, summarize the middle, and read the ending. Other members of the group should participate as good listeners.

### **Part Two**

Analyze the read aloud processes each of you used and build a description of how you did it. Include in your description a list of the processes you used; explain why you used them and what effect they had on the listeners.

### **Part Three**

What are some other processes or strategies you might have used and why?

What are some important things to keep in mind when you are reading to your students? Why?

### **Part Four**

For a large group sharing session, prepare a list of processes/strategies that members of your group used on an overhead provided by me.

Also create a list to share from your discussion in part three of this task. Place it on an overhead.

Choose a reporter for these two sharings.



## **CLASS 2: FIELD ASSIGNMENT 2: INDEPENDENT READING**

Read at least one children's book for next week's class and bring that book to class.

Keep a daily record of your reading for the next two weeks. See page 45 of *Invitations* for a sample of a reading log. You may use this format or develop another if you wish.

Practice reading books out loud to children if possible, to friends, to enemies, to yourself on tape (and listen to) it and finally, read to your car pool group. The point here is to get as much experience as possible reading out loud so you can develop your style and also familiarize yourself with the literature for children at the grade level you are teaching.

## **CONTINUATION OF FIELD ASSIGNMENT ONE**

Continue to build your description of the literacy curriculum in your class and school. Try to elaborate on your observations based on our discussions in class and your growing understanding of literacy and literacy instruction that is emerging from your reading and your conversations with other professionals.

---

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**Feedback 9/3**

**Dear Jerry,**

## **CLASS 3: LITERACY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Task 1: Building a description for a literacy curriculum in your classroom**

In groups of 5&6 list the observations about literacy that you have been making in your school and classroom. You will do this by the category system I gave to you, which includes persons, things, processes, feelings-attitudes-beliefs (this is one category), and other.

After you have finished your brainstorming for each category, group the items and processes into subcategories that make sense to you.

Make a list of ways you could find out more about literacy in your school and classroom.

Arrange to visit one other group to share your findings.

Large group share out and synthesis with Niles.

### **FIELD ASSIGNMENT for 9/17**

Continue to build your description based on what you learned in class and your ongoing thinking. Next write a rough draft of your description. Try to make it as vivid as possible so that a person who has never been in your classroom can understand what was going on. Please spend at least two hours writing this draft. It is important that you get something down on paper for our class on the 17th because we will be working with the drafts as part of our class on that day. To show you how important I think this draft is, I will donate one hour of class time to work on it. That means that class on 17th will begin officially at 9:00 a.m. You may come to the classroom and write if you wish or use the time as you chose. I will be available in the classroom from 8-9 for consultation with you if you like.

## **Task two: Shared reading (doing a literacy curriculum)**

In your groups, take turns interviewing each other about the book you read for this week. You may use the scheme on p. 46 of *Invitations* if you like. Please role play the parts of the teacher and students as realistically as possible as if you were in a classroom setting.

As a group discuss what you think about the book interviewing process.

Next, select one of the books from the group and plan a shared reading activity that would take about 15 to 20 minutes to do with kids.

## **READING ASSIGNMENT for 9/17**

Read a children's book and bring to class.  
Read pp. 79-87 (chapter 5) in *Invitations*.

## **CLASS 4: DRAFTING A DESCRIPTION**

### **Task 1**

Purpose:

To construct a concept of what a literacy description might be.

Procedures

1. In groups of three, read your draft to the other group members.
2. The listeners should pay close attention to the substance of the draft based on their view of what a description might be.
3. Upon completion of the reading, each group member, including the reader, should list three stars (things you liked about the description) and 1 or 2 wishes (things that the author might consider changing or adding). Then share. The author should collect the written feedback from the other group members and keep it with the draft to help in rewrite.
4. As a group decide on four or five important things (criteria) that make a good description. Share with at least one other group.

Time Frame: We need to finish this task by 10:10

## **Task 2: Observing a literate environment**

### **Purpose:**

To analyze an elementary classroom environment for literacy features

### **Procedures:**

Watch the video and compare and contrast it to your classroom. Use for your description and your vision.

### **Assignments**

1. Read/Review Chapter 5 in *Invitations*.
2. Read children's book and bring to class.
3. Revise your Description to hand in on 9/24.
4. Begin thinking about a child or two you might focus on for a case study.
5. Begin thinking about an area of focus for your literacy enhancement project.

## **Learning to Help Students Respond to Literature CLASS 5: Building a Book Guide Task**

In groups of four, take turns interviewing the group members about the book they read for today's class. P46, *Invitations*.

Select one of these books and develop a book guide using the framework from R&R on page 85. You may also want to look at examples on pp. 92b & 93b in the blue pages.

Analyze the process you used to build the guide. Consider what you were thinking as you developed each section.

Summarize what you have learned from this process.

Share your guide with one other group if there is time.

Hand in the guide to Niles as well as a list of the things you learned from the process at the end of class.

## **Extension Enterprises Task**

Select one of the activities on pp. 90-102 and complete it for the book you selected (or one of the other books).

Analyze the process you conducted.

Share with one other group.

## **CLASS 5: On Building a Vision for Literacy Instruction in your Classroom**

### **Brainstorming**

In groups of four, list the major beliefs you have about literacy learning and instruction. You may want to consider such things as how you think children develop literacy in your classroom and what the role are of the major stakeholders such as the students, the teacher, the parents and materials. You may also want to consider what conditions are necessary to promote literacy development. Do this for 10 minutes.

Next, brainstorm a list of features you would like to have in the literacy program in your classroom. You have ten minutes for this task.

Finally, list some ways or forms you might use to share your vision. 5 minutes.

Select a format by which you feel comfortable sharing your visions and write it up.

### **Writing the Vision**

Please include in your vision:

1. A setting that describes the situation you are picturing.
2. A set of beliefs that supports your vision.
3. A description of your literacy environment which includes the major features and justification for these features.

A typical vision statement would be between 2 and 5 pages.

## **CLASS 6: Responding to Literature**

### **Purpose**

To understand and develop teaching strategies for assisting children in developing their responses to literature.

### **Procedures**

1. **Setting.** Your students have just finished reading *Alexander and the Wind Up Mouse*. You would like to give you second graders a chance to respond to the literature in an interesting and useful way to enhance their appreciation for literature and to stimulate critical or higher-level thinking.
2. Select one (or more if you have time) of the suggested responding enterprises (activities) and develop it as a lesson for your children.  
Your plan should include the purpose of your enterprise, an outline of the procedures that you will use with the children to carry out the enterprise, and an example of one of the products of the enterprise.
3. After completing your plan, reflect on your planning process. Think about such things as: what problems did you encounter in your planning; do you think second graders can do your task; what problems do you anticipate them having; are their things you are still unsure of; what did you learn?
4. Share your ideas with at least one other group.

### **Using a literature response log**

#### **Purpose:**

To reflect on the process of keeping a literature response log.

#### **Procedures**

1. Individually write a literature log response to *Alexander ....* The response should address the following question: What has the author done to build suspense in this chapter? (see p. 115 in R&R if you need to see an example)
2. After completing your response (as a student would) hand your log entry to each of the other group members. They should write

a teacher's response to your entry. Thus, on your sheet of paper you should have your responses to each of the questions and a teacher's response from each group member. (see pp. 120 & 121 in R&R for an example.)

3. Compare the similarities and differences of your responses. Discuss why you think they came out the way they did. Discuss the process of making responses in a literature log from a student's and a teacher's perspective. What are its strengths and weaknesses?

## **CLASS 6: Case Study**

### **Purpose**

To develop kidwatching skills and to develop an understanding of the relationship to the behavior of a child and what happens to him or her during a school day.

### **Task 1: Freewrite**

Write for 5 minutes on: I selected \_\_\_\_\_ as a student to describe and I hope to discover ...

### **Task 2: Observation**

Observe your student as closely as possible for a three-day period, take as many notes as possible, and expand your notes from school each day.

### **Task 3: Writing a description**

1. Write a description of your child which reflects the knowledge you gained about your child and the understandings you have developed about his or her functioning in the classroom and school setting. The description should be no longer than 3-5 pages.

2. I will provide 1 hour of class time on the 8th to write a draft. So bring your notes to class. Class will begin on that day at 9 am; I will be available for consultation from 7:30 to 9.

### **CLASS 7: Self-Assessment of Literacy Description**

Please write a self-assessment of what you think about your literacy description after you have read your paper again and my feedback. You may like to consider such criteria as the comprehensiveness of your description as well as its vividness and success at communicating an understanding of why things work the way they do. There may be other criteria you would like to include as well (things that you think are noteworthy about your work). You may also like to note things that I missed in my feedback on disagreements that you have with my comments. Finally, you might like to comment on what you learned.

After completing the written self-assessment, you may wish to revise your description. This is not a requirement. You may do a revision simply by adding another section or inserting the new information in the most efficient way possible.

After completing the self-evaluation and the revision, if you chose to, resubmit the paper and the self evaluation to me.

Thanks!

### **CLASS 9: Planning a Phonics Lesson**

Mrs. Longevity, your supervising teacher, has complained to you that your second grade students are having difficulty identifying words with "ou" in them. She had used her tried and trusted phonics work sheets but they didn't seem to do the trick. She has heard that you have some new ideas about how to use more context to help the children behave more strategically with their phonics knowledge. Thus, she has asked you to plan and teach a lesson on "ou" using the story they are reading that day, *Alexander the Wind-up Mouse*.



Your task is to plan this lesson with a partner thoroughly as if you were going to teach it. Use no more than 1/2 hour to plan and think about the lesson. Write your plan out.

Next, share the lesson with another pair by telling them what you were going to do and why. They will do the same for you.

Finally, in your combined partner groups, list problems you encountered and solutions or understandings you arrived at related to teaching for strategies.

### **CLASS 9: Building a Literacy Curriculum Adventure**

- 1. What is the nature or purpose of your adventure? (one sentence if possible)**
- 2. Why did you choose to go on this adventure?**
- 3. What do you expect to learn from it?**
- 4. How do you intend to document your trip and what you have learned from it?**
- 5. What form might you use to share the adventure with your classmates and other interested folks such as?**
- 6. What questions, problems, or concerns do you have about your adventure?**

**Note:** You may receive travel assistance from your agent, J. Niles, at anytime to insure that your adventure is a good experience for you.

## **CLASS 10: Self-Assessment of the Case Study/Student Story**

Please write a self-evaluation on your student story. As you do your evaluation, think about how well you think you told the story. Consider such things as did you select the most important information to tell about; did you convey this information clearly; was the reasoning in your story sound; and were you able to make instructional connections as you told the story? Also include remarks about what you thought was significant about your work or things you might change. Remember, you do not have to agree with my feedback. Further, don't hesitate to bring my attention to important aspects of your paper that I may have missed.

After completing your self-evaluation, you may wish to revise your story. Please do so in the most efficient way possible. I do not want you retyping large segments of text. You may hand in your revision any time that it is convenient for you.

## **Curriculum Adventure Task**

Your curriculum adventure task should be individualized to fit your needs. However, as you get it ready to share with me and your peers keep in mind several things. Generally, a successful sharing includes a good statement of your purpose, a discussion of why you chose to go on the adventure, what the trip was like, thoughts or reflections that you and others may have had about the adventure before, during, or after the trip, and what you learned on the trip.

Your product may take any form you deem appropriate. It will be due at our sharing session on Dec. 8th. As you construct this product don't forget what you have learned about how to describe curriculum. Also don't forget to use your skills while you are on the journey and

to include this information in your final product. As part of your final project, please include a self-evaluation that tells about how you think you did in conducting and sharing your adventure.

### **Final Sharing and Evaluation**

The course will culminate on Dec. 8th. Each member will get a chance to talk about her curriculum adventure. At this time you should bring your course notebook to hand in. It should contain all the work that you have done related to the course including all papers, drafts, self-evaluations etc. as well as a self-evaluation for your class participation and an evaluation of your performance in the class as a whole. This overall evaluation should include consideration of your performance on all major tasks and your class participation. You may include anything else that you think is important such as your major learnings. Finally, the evaluation should include the grade you think you earned and a justification for your decision.

I will determine your grade based on my perceptions of your work and yours. If there is disagreement on my final decision we can conference about it when you get back.

Appendix I  
SELF-EVALUATION FORM

\*  
**SELF EVALUATION**

----- **GROUP DISCUSSION**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**What important things did I learn today?**

**How did I help others learn today?**

**What might I have done differently?**

**Ideas I have for future learning on this topic.**

\*This form is adapted from *Invitations* (Appendix D p. 95b). You may use it any way you wish.

Appendix J  
CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS GENERATED BY PRESERVICE TEACHERS

**GROUP NAME: Too Many Color  
Coordinated Categories.**

People

teacher  
students  
reading specialist  
librarian  
special education teacher  
principal  
partners in reading  
reading groups  
parents

Beliefs

"Let each child progress at own pace"  
"Whole language is good – but we can't neglect basic skills"  
"It's too much work to try something new." (W.L.)  
"Children should be able to read for fun"  
"Teacher dreads teaching reading"

Things

books (library) (bookshelf)  
author's chair  
overhead projector  
listening center  
spelling book tests  
reading book tests  
board on wall (laminated) to write story  
journals/writing folder  
encyclopedias  
reading logs  
5-subject notebooks  
library  
writing utensils (pens, pencils, markers, crayons available on reading table  
animal cards  
dictionaries  
paper  
reading hut  
tape recorders

Processes

diagnosis of ability  
creative writing  
reading to class  
spelling tests  
choose - check out - reading library books  
reading out loud  
reading in small groups  
sharing/checking papers  
pen-pal writing  
group discussions  
listening  
reading competitions  
displaying writing  
writing on board

Other:

Ask teacher more questions  
Continue to observe  
Check available resources (SOL's, W.L. Portfolio)  
Interact with other classrooms  
Talk to resource teacher  
Talk to students  
Talk to librarian  
Extracurricular activities (PTA)

**GROUP NAME: Book Worms**

People

Primary  
cooperating teachers  
students  
ourselves  
Secondary  
principal  
parents  
librarian  
resource teachers

## Feelings

- + excitement, caring, eager, comfortable, bright, warm, happy, enjoyable, goal of communication
- anxiety, uninviting, confused, boredom, doubt

## Things/Materials

### Books

workbooks  
textbooks - basal  
encyclopedia  
dictionary  
serial books  
comic books  
free-reading books  
journals  
big books

### Bookshelf

dolls/stuffed animals  
bean bag chairs  
loft  
desks/chairs

### Bulletin Boards

chalk boards  
dry-erase boards  
computer  
easels  
paper - all types  
worksheets  
pencils, pens, crayons, chalk  
flannel board

### Spelling charts

reading race game  
alphabet game

### Flashcards

alphabet  
name tags

## Processes

reading groups  
story time  
listening  
reading-silent, aloud, independent and shared  
singing  
writing

discussing  
inventive spelling  
coding  
integrating  
retelling  
drawing, illustrating  
sequencing  
competition  
thinking  
creating  
dictating  
questioning  
predicting  
choral reading

## To find Out More

talk with teacher/principal  
visit library  
visit other classrooms  
SOLs  
Invite resource person  
Lead a reading group  
Explore books in class  
Have students do interviews  
Mentors  
Read students writings - Ask them questions  
Observations  
Ask parents

## **GROUP NAME: The Sleepyheads**

### People

teachers  
student teachers  
students  
principal  
librarian  
counselor  
reading specialist/language arts coordinator  
P.E. teacher  
art teacher  
janitor  
music teacher  
secretary  
parents

paraprofessionals  
peers  
special ed teachers and aides  
cafeteria workers  
bus driver  
substitute teacher

### Feelings

frustration  
excitement  
fearfulness  
anticipation  
happiness  
anxiety  
insecurity  
sadness  
pride  
overwhelmed  
restless  
homesick  
boredom  
safety

### Things/Materials

books  
abc charts  
desks  
chalkboards  
notebooks  
pens  
pencils  
globe  
workbooks  
worksheets  
crayons  
computers  
scissors  
glue  
name tags  
bulletin boards  
calendar  
water fountain  
maps  
dictionaries  
encyclopedias  
folders  
"We deliver"  
bathroom passes

dishpans  
flashcards  
helper lists  
file cabinet  
overhead  
coat rack  
tv/vcr  
record player  
tape recorder  
pencil sharpener  
filmstrip projector  
bathroom  
doors  
windows  
chalk  
markers  
staples  
carpet  
carpet squares  
storage cabinet with materials

### Processes

discussion  
instruction  
brainstorming  
questioning  
drawing  
thinking  
singing  
reading  
writing  
repetition  
cutting  
coloring  
painting  
correcting  
guessing  
predicting  
playing

### Ways to find out more about literacy

Talk to teachers, staff, student teachers,  
principal, children  
Observe  
Ask questions  
Read  
Research  
Teach/experience

**GROUP NAME: Kids Delight in Radical Reading**

People

teacher  
students  
principal  
parents  
librarian  
student teacher  
reading teacher  
L.D. teacher  
language teacher  
guidance counselor

Feelings-Attitudes-Beliefs

**Teacher**

structured  
creative  
excited  
flexible  
motivated  
enthusiastic  
labeling

**Students**

relaxing  
choice  
enjoyment/fun  
autonomy  
frustration  
boredom  
"hate"  
overwhelmed  
excitement/accomplishment  
defeated

**What we think (us)**

flexible  
interested  
creative  
"free"  
variety  
cooperative learning  
self-reliance  
autonomy - self-esteem  
concerned about labeling

Things/Materials

books  
book shelf  
satellite books w/tapes  
tables  
chairs  
big books  
overhead projector  
bulletin boards  
alphabet chart  
charts  
desks  
carpet  
magazines  
chapter books  
library  
computer  
worksheets  
name tags  
"reading tree house"  
writing folder  
homework folders/notebooks  
journals  
crayons/pencils  
message board  
mail boxes  
labels  
globe  
current events board

Other

listening  
attentiveness  
D.E.A.R.  
S.S.R.  
teacher reading  
writing  
reading aloud  
creative writing  
reading labels  
cooperative writing - classbook  
drawing  
workbook work  
inventive spelling  
sharing books  
reading buddies  
modeling - all categories



## Other

plants  
lighting  
comfort  
temperature

## Finding Out More

Be there Thurs. & Fri. to see continuum  
Explore teacher's resources  
Explore library  
Ask teacher about her beliefs  
Observe children  
Observe other grades to see progression  
(same grade)

## **GROUP NAME: The Go-fers**

### People

teachers  
student teachers  
students  
reading specialists  
librarian  
parents  
principal  
secretary  
curriculum coordinator

### Feelings/Attitudes/Beliefs

excitement  
enthusiasm  
curious  
sense of belonging  
independent  
apathy  
teacher concerns  
fear  
confusion  
frustration  
overwhelming  
disappointment  
analyzing  
laughing/joy  
pride  
concentration

interested

### Things/Materials

alphabet chart  
pencils/crayons/chalk  
journals  
bulletin boards  
flip charts  
readers  
library books  
computer  
cassette player/headphones  
worksheets  
writing paper/notebook paper  
spelling list  
overhead projector  
calendar  
vowel charts  
rules/consequences  
reading corner  
labels on objects  
textbooks/workbooks  
chalk board  
student mailboxes  
activity clocks  
bookshelves  
reference materials  
nametags  
teaching manuals  
daily schedule  
chapter books

### Processes

small groups  
oral reading  
questioning  
free-time reading  
notetaking  
copying  
writing/drawing  
copying  
writing/drawing  
co-opertive learning  
talking  
sounding out words  
practicing writing letters  
read-the-room  
names on the board

teacher reading books  
narrate pictures  
trips to library  
"inclusion"/buddy system  
wholistic approach to learning  
reprimand  
inventive spelling  
listening  
recall skills  
prediction skills  
praise  
modeling

### Ways to Learn

journal  
reflect  
question  
analyze  
observe  
listen

## VITA

### REBECCA S. ANDERSON

770 Triangle Street, #418  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
(703) 953-2039

## EDUCATION

- May, 1993 (anticipated) Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Specialization in reading and language arts. Dissertation topic: *Exploring alternative assessment: A democratic approach to student self-assessment in a reading methods class.*
- 1977-1979 Ed.S., Reading Education, Appalachian State University.
- 1974-1976 M.A., Elementary Education, Appalachian State University. Specialization in language arts.
- 1975-1976 B.Ed., (5th year degree), Elementary Education, Brandon University, Canada.
- 1970-1974 B.S., Psychology, High Point College.

## RELATED EXPERIENCE

### *Higher Education:*

**Graduate Assistant** (supervised and coordinated all Reading Clinic activities including intake, parent and school contacts, and course instruction). Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1991-1992; 1992-1993.

**Graduate Assistant** (supervised elementary and middle school education students in field-based student teaching program). Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1990-1991.

**Adjunct Instructor** (taught Language Arts Methods, Reading Methods and Curriculum courses; participated in the Clinical Model Research Grant). Appalachian State University, 1979-1982; 1988-1990.

**Graduate Assistant** (assisted in the Reading Clinic and taught Developmental Reading courses). Appalachian State University, 1978-1979.

*Public Schools:*

**Title 1 Reading Teacher**, Caldwell County Schools, NC (1977-1978);  
Surry County Schools, NC (1974-1975).

**Classroom Teacher**, (taught 4th grade), Surry County Schools, NC (1976-1977).

*Other Professional Experience:*

Weekly collaborative conversations with 3rd grades teachers in Montgomery Co., VA concerning alternative assessment practices (October 1992-present)

Assisted L. A. Harris in revising four chapters of the following text during 1990-1991: Taylor, B., Harris, L.A., & Pearson, P.D. (1988) *Reading Difficulties: Instruction and Assessment*.

**Educational Specialist** (conducted diagnostic evaluations of students experiencing learning difficulties), Developmental Evaluation Center, NC, 1979-1982.

## **AWARDS AND MEMBERSHIPS IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

American Educational Research Association: Graduate Student Representative for Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (1991-1992).

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

Brandon University Gold Medal Award (highest GPA in B.Ed. program)

Gamma Beta Phi

International Reading Association: Graduate Student Representative for VA (1991-1992).

National Council of Teachers of English

National Reading Conference

Phi Delta Kappa

## **PUBLICATIONS**

Anderson, R.S. & Coffman, G.A. (1993). Creating your own response to literacy portfolios. *Kansas Journal of Reading*, (9), 10-16.

Anderson, R.S. (1993). Influential parents: A simple recipe. (Accepted for publication in *Virginia English Bulletin*).

Anderson [Sharpe], R.S., & Reid, S. S. (1992). Exit slips: Why use them? *Virginia English Bulletin*, 42(1), 111-113.

Anderson, [Sharpe], R.S. (1991). Getting an early start: Preservice teachers as teacher researchers. *The Abstract*, 12(2), 13-33.

## PROFESSIONAL PROPOSALS

Anderson [Sharpe], R.S., & Reid, S.S. *Cedars Publishing Company*. A study designed to connect university undergraduate tutors and tutees with public school Chapter 1 students in a joint publishing project. Proposal unfunded by the Appalachian Educational Laboratory, Inc., November 1991.

Swem, T., Riedl, R., & Anderson [Sharpe], R.S. *The writing process in the North Carolina public schools: A study to determine the extent teachers are using microcomputers to teach the writing process*. Proposal funded by the College of Education Research Committee, Appalachian State University, September 1990, for \$500.

## PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Reid, S.S., & Anderson [Sharpe], R.S. (1993, February). *Using collegial journals for reflective research in teacher education*. Presented at the Annual Eastern Educational Research Association, Clearwater, FL.

Anderson [Sharpe], R.S. (1992, November). *Literacy portfolios*. Presented at the New River Valley Whole Language Support Group and The Whole Language Umbrella, Blacksburg, VA.

Coffman, G.A., & Anderson [Sharpe], R.S. (1992, May). *Understandings of literacy portfolios*. Presented at the Annual International Reading Association, Orlando, FL.

Anderson [Sharpe], R.S. (1991, May). *Teaching assistants as researchers in college classes*. Presented at the Annual International Reading Association, Las Vegas, NV.

Anderson [Sharpe], R.S., & Farris, M. (1991, March). *Parental involvement: An action project*. Presented at the Annual North Carolina Council of International Reading Association, Charlotte, NC.

Nelson, B., Anderson [Sharpe], R.S., & Fortney, S. (1990, October). *Word processing and students with learning disabilities*. Presented to Special Educators of Montgomery County Schools, Christiansburg, VA.

Cherry, T., & Anderson [Sharpe], R.S. (1990, September). *The importance of using visuals in content reading, writing and learning*. Presented at the Uberto Price Reading and Language Arts Symposium, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC.

Farris, M., & Anderson [Sharpe], R.S. (1990, March). *Teachers help parents help children: A thematic approach goes home!* Presented at the Annual North Carolina Council of International Reading Association, Winston-Salem, NC.

