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# **The Road to Participation: The Construction of a Literacy Practice in a Learning Community of Linguistically Diverse Learners**

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*This article describes a year-long process in which a group of fourth- and fifth-grade students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds learned to participate in reading, writing, and talking about books in a literature-based instructional program. Our analyses revealed a gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to students as they developed the knowledge and skills needed to respond to books and explore personal meanings collaboratively through guided participation. Accompanying these changes in participation structures and practices were exceptional gains in student performance on both related (metacognitive control) and unrelated (reading and unfamiliar sight words) measures of reading ability. A pattern of three distinguishable but overlapping stages emerged from our analyses of student-teacher interaction patterns: (1) teaching by telling, (2) teaching by modeling and scaffolding, and (3) teaching from behind. Five features of the focal teacher's instruction were pivotal in promoting this transformation of responsibility. First, the teacher created a classroom learning community in which students felt respected and their experiences and knowledge were valued. Second, the teacher allowed time to build opportunities to engage students in reading, writing, and talking about age-appropriate and quality literature. Third, the teacher challenged students to think critically and reflectively about what they read by asking open-ended but pointed questions. Fourth, the teacher employed multiple modes of teaching—telling, modeling, scaffolding, facilitating, and participating. Finally, the teacher persisted in maintaining high expectations for all of her students.*

Over the past two decades, the number of American students who speak a language other than English at home or participate in a non-mainstream home culture has risen dramatically, and this number continues to grow (August & Hakuta, 1997). Studies have documented that the differences in language and culture between these students' home and school settings can make their academic success at

schools difficult (Au, 1998; Banks, 1993; Heath, 1983). Research suggests that students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are at a higher risk of lower achievement on wide-scale measures (Au & Raphael, 2000; Donohue, Voelkl, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999), and of becoming school drop-outs (Fillmore & Meyer, 1992). Perhaps in response to these performance and behavioral profiles, or perhaps in line with long-standing traditions, ESL reading instruction has tended to focus on basic skills, such as word recognition, pattern drills, and oral reading. Comparatively little time is typically spent on comprehension, and, especially, on meaning construction and authentic communication. In short, ESL reading instruction has tended to focus on linguistic forms through memorization rather than constructing meaning through complex thinking and critical response (Au & Raphael, 2000; Fitzgerald, 1995; Valdés, 1998).

Valdés (1998) claims that language barriers prevent second-language learners from gaining access to success, and that schools are failing to offer adequate assistance. In response to such concerns, educators and researchers have explored various ways of helping these students experience success in school settings (Au & Mason, 1981; Cummins, 1986; Garcia, 1996; Hiebert, 1991; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Raphael & Brock, 1993; Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton, 1990). The current study joins this broader effort by examining the process by which students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in a fourth/fifth-grade classroom learned to participate in the literacy practices of a program known as "Book Club," developed by Raphael and her associates (McMahon & Raphael, 1997; Raphael, Pardo, Highfield, & McMahon, 1997). In light of what we know about default patterns of ESL instruction, our hope was to evaluate whether more ambitious models of instruction might help students develop a broader repertoire of language skills that would lead to improved performance in book discussions, writing in response to reading, and text comprehension.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### ***Conceptual Framework***

The theoretical framework guiding this study is sociocultural; the perspectives on learning and development articulated by Vygotsky (1978, 1986), Wertsch (1985), Lave and Wenger (1991), and Rogoff, Matusov, and White (1996) were all influential in shaping the practices of the learning community our focal teacher attempted to develop, and in guiding our steps as we designed and conducted this study. A fundamental tenet of sociocultural theory is that all higher (internal) psychological processes originate in purposive social interactions among human beings within an environment in which cultural tools and artifacts are present. Learning and development occur as learners interact with more knowledgeable members of a community within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts in which all of the participants are striving to make sense of the messages they

encounter, either from texts or one another. According to Vygotsky (1978), “Every function in 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 (intrapyschological)” (p. 57). Gavelek and Raphael’s (1996) adaptation of Harre’s (1984) “Vygotsky Space” metaphor was influential in helping us think about how learning moves from its social to its individual instantiation, and back to the social again. In this model (see Figure 1), learning begins in the social/public arena, where learners are exposed to the cultural practices of the community. What they see and hear is appropriated and transformed individually before they demonstrate their understandings in a public space. Through recursive cycles of appropriation, transformation, publication, and conventionalization, learners construct knowledge of their community’s cultural practices as they interact with the more knowledgeable members of the community and, more importantly, participate in the practices of that community as apprentices.

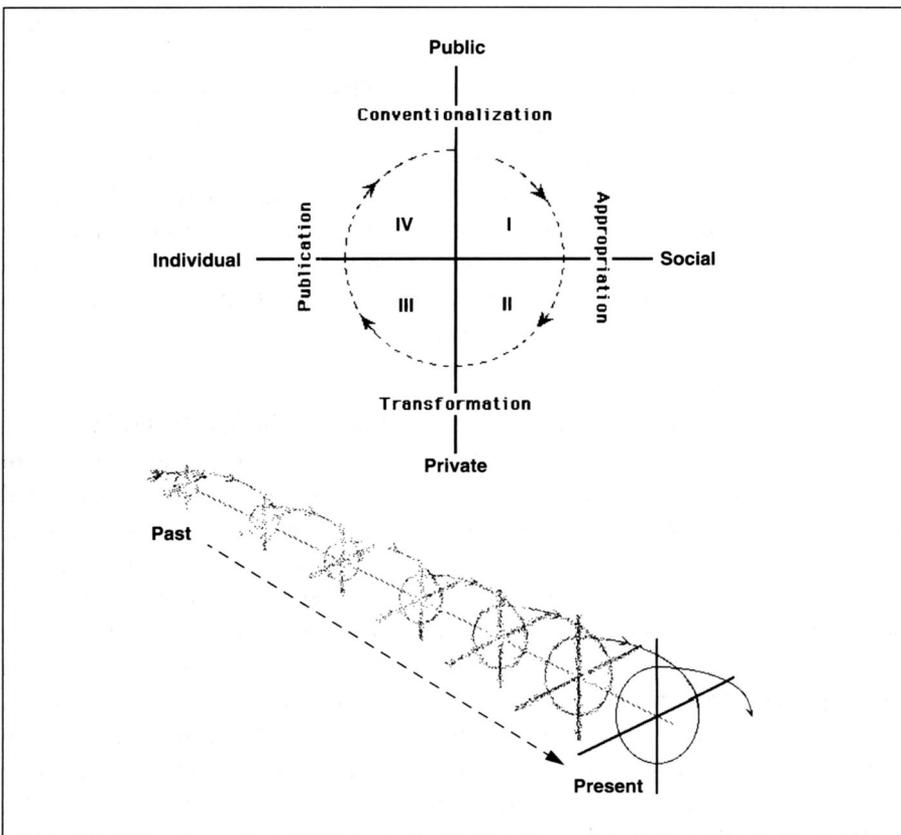


FIGURE 1. *The Vygotsky Space (Adapted from Model by Rom Harre [1984]). Source: Gavelek & Raphael (1996, p.186). Copyright 1996 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission of the author.*

The dialogic and interactive nature of learning and meaning construction posits that participation is both the goal as well as the means of learning (Dewey, 1916; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, et al., 1996). Lave and Wenger (1991) describe learning as a process through which newcomers proceed from “legitimate peripheral participation” to full participation in a community of practice. For Rogoff, et al. (1996), learning and development entail transformation of participation. During this process, learners develop understandings of the practices, negotiate roles and responsibilities in those practices, and engage in guided performance, their participation mediated by the more knowledgeable others, and the tools developed culturally and historically by that community. Where Vygotsky’s notions of “appropriation and internalization” emphasize outcomes within the learner, framing the teaching-learning process as a transformation of participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, et al., 1996) emphasizes learning as it is displayed within a wider social arena. The two explications illustrate the inner and outer arenas of the same dynamic process, as communal practices are adapted, reconstructed, and transformed through learners’ intensifying participation (Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998).

Within this sociocultural perspective, we believe that for students to develop their literacy knowledge and skills, two conditions are indispensable. First, students must have plenty of opportunities to engage actively in the meaningful literacy practices of a given community—even before they have mastered those practices. Second, students must receive support and scaffolds as they gradually move toward full participation and independent control of those practices. As they learn to participate in literature discussions, students need calibrated opportunities to master new ways of talking and thinking about books.

### ***Literature-Based Instruction***

Beginning in the mid-1980s and continuing through the late 1990s, literature-based instruction drew increasing attention in both research and classroom pedagogy. Originally popularized as an antidote to the dominant skill-based instruction of the 1970s, literature-based instruction gained momentum alongside the process-writing and whole-language movements (Pearson, 2000). Au and Raphael (1998) describe the purpose of literature-based instruction as “to engage students in active meaning-making with literature, to give them the ability both to learn from and to enjoy literature throughout their lives” (p. 124). Purves (1993) also highlights the educational impact of literature, suggesting that “Literature, that collection of imaginatively created and artistically crafted texts, is an important cultural expression, and its place in the schools is to bring the young into an understanding of their culture and the cultures that surround them” (p. 360). Galda (1998) views literature as both the “mirrors and windows” that enhance our understandings of ourselves and others.

Literature-based instruction aims to engage students in what Rosenblatt (1978) calls an “aesthetic” reading experience, in which readers engage with the affective character of the text, as opposed to “efferent” reading in which information acquisition dominates. Benton (1983) describes this aesthetic experience as a journey through the secondary world created between the reader and the text. Building upon Benton’s arguments, Galda (1998) claims that when we read aesthetically, “we picture characters and events, anticipate actions, think back over what we have read, identify with characters, and make the virtual experience; we are shaping part of our lives” (p. 2). Reading aesthetically is a creative, transactional process that involves readers in actively constructing meaning under the guidance of the words on the page. In Rosenblatt’s original conceptualization, the notion of transaction is central in that the result of the transaction between reader and text becomes something different from either. In her classic *The Reader, The Text, and The Poem* (1978), literary understanding is envisioned as the result of this transaction.

Evidence from research has shown that students significantly benefit from engaging in this transactional process of reading. For example, as children in Eeds and Wells’ (1989) research engaged in “grand conversations” in literary study groups, they developed literacy and inquiry skills, learned to become collaborators, and created a learning community that encouraged risk-taking and exploratory talk (see also Mercer & Wegerif, 1999). Galda, Rayburn, and Stanzi (2000) studied students’ growth as readers, critical thinkers, and participants in conversations about books, as they and their teacher engaged in a literature-based reading curriculum. Their study suggests that as they participated in small-group discussions about books, these second graders not only developed important interpersonal skills, but also made giant gains in reading and comprehension over the year, an increase of 3 to 6 levels as determined by an informal reading inventory. Almasi (1995) compared the effect of peer-led and teacher-led discussions of literature on sociocognitive conflicts, finding that peer-led discourse consisted of language that was significantly more elaborate and more complex than the discourse that characterized teacher-led groups. The opportunities to share and talk about books with peers and to collaborate in constructing meanings of the texts can also help foster students’ motivation to read, and allow them to learn from and with others (Gambrell, 1996; Turner & Paris, 1995).

The change to literature-based instruction from skill-based instruction requires not only a change in materials and learning activities, but also a change in beliefs about the very nature of reading, literature, learning processes, assessments, learners, and the distribution of power within classrooms. Literature-based approaches have tended to adopt sociocultural perspectives as a theoretic foundation, emphasizing reading and writing as higher-order mental processes acquired through interaction with more knowledgeable others in the enactment of cultural practices (Brock & Gavelek, 1998; Gee, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978). Students are seen as

knowledgeable beings with their own theories of the world (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Smith, 1975), not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. They are encouraged to bring their prior knowledge to bear in making sense of texts. Literature-based instruction also creates opportunities for students to construct meanings in collaboration with other members of a classroom community. Thus meaning has both a cultural face, based upon the dispositions and experiences students bring to the reading process and the interpretive traditions operating in the classroom, and a social face, realized in the give-and-take of classroom talk about text. Instruction, as we have argued, is not a process of transmitting a set of skills, processes, or bodies of knowledge, but of providing scaffolds as students make sense of texts through reading, writing, and talking.

### ***Book Club***

Raphael and McMahon (1997) outline four activity contexts in the Book Club program: community share (whole-class discussion), reading, writing, and the small-group book clubs that comprise the center of the program. Teacher instruction is “contextualized to meet the particular needs of students’ acquiring and developing literacy abilities (i.e., reading and writing) and oral language abilities (i.e., as speakers and listeners in meaningful discussion)” (p. xii).

Existing research on the Book Club program has suggested such opportunities for interaction and participation provide varied support structures (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996). First, the approach calls for a “community of learners” in which students feel sufficiently safe and valued to accept the invitation to participate and explore ideas (Kohn, 1996; Raphael & Goatley, 1997; Rogoff, et al., 1996). Second, the Book Club program provides students time and opportunity to share their developing thoughts, ask each other questions, and construct meanings of texts and of their own life experiences collaboratively (Boyd, 1997; Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1995; Highfield, 1998; McMahon & Raphael, 1997; Raphael & Brock, 1993). Third, these activities open possibilities for exploring forms of assessment that involve sharing responsibility with the students (Bisesi, Brenner, McVee, Pearson, & Sarroub, 1998; Wong-Kam, 1998). Finally, the Book Club approach permits teachers to play multiple roles and assume multiple stances toward their students. Teachers can move from teacher-centered stances (e.g., direct instruction and modeling) in which they control the flow of activity; to shared stances (e.g., scaffolding and coaching), in which power and responsibility are more equally shared; to more student-centered stances (e.g., facilitating and participation) in which students take primary responsibility for enacting activity structures and initiating conversations (Au & Raphael, 1998). Based on their on-going observational assessment of students’ needs, teachers can provide the instructions (both direct and indirect, sometimes pre-planned while other times impromptu) to help

students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to participation in a literary community.

Looking across the array of scholarly efforts to understand and evaluate literature-based instruction, it appears that these instructional strategies are well framed within a theoretic framework. However, changes in practice do not automatically follow from such conceptual shifts. Marshall, Smagorinsky, and Smith (1995) found in their study of literature classrooms that teachers dominated discussions, their questions and remarks focusing on the text and emphasizing description and interpretation. They found little evidence that “discussions were moving toward a point where teachers could remove themselves, disappear, and ‘watch it happen,’” or that students “were engaging with the literature on a personal level” (p. 56). Similarly, in their five-year multi-level project, Johnston, Allington, Guice, and Brooks (1998) reported that although teachers incorporated authentic literature into their daily literacy lessons, “the time allocations, the teacher-child interactions, the assessment and evaluation practices, and the tasks children were given remained largely stable across the 5 years” (p. 88). Even where teachers realize the importance of student-centered discussion, the transition from teacher- to student-led discussion can present difficulties for students and teachers alike (Maloch, 2002; Scharer & Peters, 1996).

Research to date suggests that teachers can engage students in these more challenging approaches to reading, writing, and talking about literature. Even so, we also know from examinations of typical practice that long-standing classroom norms may dictate more traditional approaches to reading instruction, particularly in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms, where the focus on low-level decoding skills rather than meaning construction tends to be particularly pronounced (Fitzgerald, 1995).

Our year-long study of one fourth/fifth-grade classroom suggests that the journey toward meaning-based instructional strategies is both complex and well worth the effort. By examining the changes in teaching and learning that occurred as one teacher engaged her linguistically and culturally diverse students in Book Club activities, we charted her efforts to provide assistance as students struggled with these new challenges and moved into increasingly active and sophisticated forms of participation. Our study was guided by two research questions:

1. What learning trajectory did a class of culturally and linguistically diverse students travel as they learned to participate in Book Club, a literature-based instructional program? In short, what could they do at the end of the year that they could not do at the beginning?
2. What learning opportunities did the teacher create? How did she create them? What motivated her at each step along the way?

## **Method**

### ***Participants and Setting***

This study was conducted in a fourth/fifth-grade classroom at an urban school in a Midwestern U.S. city. The school was founded in 1994 to meet the needs of the growing number of students coming to this city who needed special instruction in English as a new language. At the time our study was conducted, the school offered DLP (developing language proficiency) classes as well as regular education classes. The classroom teacher, Ellen<sup>1</sup>, had incorporated Book Club activities for four of her four-and-a-half years at the school. She believed that knowledge is constructed through interaction with more knowledgeable others in a community, and that the Book Club program created opportunities for students to develop their literate abilities by reading good literature, writing responses, discussing their responses with each other, and constructing meanings collaboratively. Mini-lessons, community share (whole-class discussions), and fishbowl discussions (in which a small group of students conducted a book discussion with the rest of the class observing) enabled Ellen to provide direct and indirect, pre-planned and impromptu assistance closely based on the needs of her students.

Ellen was teaching a split, regular education class comprised of students who represented the diverse student population of the school. When the year began, there were 25 students in her class—10 fifth graders and 15 fourth graders, 14 boys and 11 girls. Ethnically, 6 were Vietnamese, 4 Hmong, 4 multi-racial, 3 Euro-American, 3 Latino, 3 Haitian, 1 Somali, and 1 Bosnian. Linguistically, more than 60% of the students came from homes in which a language other than English was spoken. These students were at various English proficiency levels and a few had enrolled in a DLP (developing language proficiency) class during the previous school year. During the year of this study, 4 students were “promoted” to Ellen’s classroom from the DLP class so as to make room for newly arrived students with little or no English competence. Ellen’s students lived all over the city and most were bused to school. When the bus arrived at the school at 8:05 a.m., some students had already been on it for an hour. Over 90% of Ellen’s students participated in the school’s free or reduced-price meal program.

During the data collection year, Book Club was a daily activity except on school half-days, taking between 70 to 90 minutes of Ellen’s daily instructional time. After their initial fishbowl discussion phase, a typical Book Club day began with discussion in small groups, followed by a whole-class “community share,” a mini-lesson, reading in groups, and individual writing in response to teacher-provided prompts (open-ended questions designed to engage students in personal, critical, and creative responses to literature). At their second fishbowl, two extra chairs were added at the discussion table to allow other students to join the group. New groups of four or five were formed with each new book unit. The whole class read the same book at the same time; a total of 11 books were covered in 9 book units

during the school year. All the books were generally acknowledged as modern classics for young readers (see Appendix A for a list of the books).

### ***Data Collection***

This interpretive case study is methodologically eclectic, making use of participant observation and grounded theory development (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Merriam, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) as well as quantitative measures to assess students' literacy development (Schmitt, 1990; Slosson, 1963). We followed the case study group over the course of a school year, observing daily events with a focus on interactions during Book Club activities. Data collection was concentrated within three time periods: (1) six weeks between the start of school in late August and early October, (2) two weeks in early February, and (3) two weeks in early May. During the rest of the school year, the class was observed at least one day every other week. Altogether, observational data were collected on 31 whole school days, 19 half days, and 6 visits of only the Book Club instruction and activities. We chose to concentrate on the three time periods for data collection in hope of capturing any changes that might have occurred during the school year. The initial 6 weeks of focused data collection helped us to achieve two goals. First, the beginning of the school year was essential for establishing the tone for the whole year as new practices and rules were introduced. Second, it allowed Ailing, who collected all data for our study, an opportunity to merge into the classroom community.

The data included field notes for all instructional activities; videotapes of small-group discussions, whole-class discussions, and mini-lessons; and interviews with the teacher and the focal students. The Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT) (Slosson, 1963) and the Metacomprehension Strategy Index (MSI) questionnaire (Schmitt, 1990) were administered at both the beginning and the end of the school year as part of the classroom teacher's regular assessment tools. Six students, 4 Vietnamese and 2 Hmong at various developing English proficiency levels, were chosen as focal students. This group was selected in accord with the data collector's research interests as well as practical considerations. Having learned and taught English as a foreign language in China, Ailing was especially interested in how ESL children of Asian background develop their English proficiency. Second, since Ailing could only videotape one group during the small-group discussions, she rotated among book clubs that included 2 or 3 focal students. These six students were also interviewed both at the beginning and end of the school year and their written responses were collected. Ellen was interviewed formally six times during the school year, each interview lasting between one to one-and-a-half hours.

Ailing tried to minimize her presence as a participant observer. On the first day of school, Ellen, the teacher, introduced Ailing to the students, telling them why she was there, what help they could request of her, and what questions they should not ask her. Ellen's students were seated in groups around six round tables

arranged in a horseshoe. When Ellen was teaching, Ailing sat at the back of the room, observing, taking notes, and sometimes videotaping activities. When students were working individually or in small groups, Ailing typically walked around and provided help when asked, although she sometimes just watched the students at work. She would occasionally join in reading, but she rarely participated in any group or whole-class discussions. During recess time, she played games with the students, both inside the classroom and on the playground. She also joined the students in other school-wide activities. For example, she attended the school's Unity Day celebration and a fund-raising event to collect money for the fourth- and fifth-graders' camping trip. As a result, a bond developed, and both the students and their teacher recognized her as part of their classroom community. The fact that Ailing was an international student and spoke English as a second language may also have helped her blend into this ethnically and linguistically diverse setting.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data analysis was ongoing between the data collection phases and afterward. It involved most of the approaches typical of ethnographic analysis—perusing the data for emerging themes and categories, followed by revision of those themes and categories with each new round of data analysis. As is true of all researchers, we did not start with a truly blank slate that would allow our categories to “emerge” without the bias of preconceptions. The sociocultural lens we took into this study meant that we viewed learning as a process of the transformation of guided participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, et al., 1996; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989), and we took that perspective into our analysis; even so, we attempted to be open to surprises and even violations of our expectations. The bulk of our data analysis occurred after the conclusion of the study, although we conducted inter-stage analyses to guide revisions of our protocols. We reviewed our field notes, interview transcripts, and videotapes multiple times. These data sources were crucial to our goals of determining whether learning was taking place and, if so, identifying the patterns of learning and the practices facilitating it. Of special interest to us, of course, were the roles played by the teacher and the students as the Book Club curriculum unfolded. We identified categories of students' participation, and we examined the discourse moves the teacher made and the functions they served. We created categories of teacher behavior, including building a learning community, valuing students' opinions, disciplining students, creating opportunities for student-centered talk, guiding student participation with direct and indirect instruction, and a variety of scaffolding moves (Applebee & Langer, 1983; Meyer, 1993; Roehler & Cantlon, 1997). Our analysis of students' behavior focused on the questions they raised, the topics they discussed, and the ways they interacted with each other. The roles played by the teacher and the students and their participation patterns in discussions were key foci for our analyses.

This study was not experimental in any sense; it was not even quantitative. However, we did use both the Slossen Oral Reading Test (SORT) and the Metacognitive Strategies Inventory (MSI) because Ellen had planned to use them to evaluate her students' growth in learning. We collected these data because we were interested in any significant change over time; that is, while we did not set out to prove that Book Club worked, we did want to know how engagement in Book Club influenced student performance on conventional (the SORT) and unconventional (the MSI) measures of reading.

### The Development of a Shared Literary Practice

Our data analysis suggested a "gradual release of responsibility" (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983) from the teacher to the students in conducting Book Club over the school year (see Figure 2). In reporting our findings, we divide the year into three stages that represent distinct (if sometimes overlapping) categories. Our account of Stage One, "*Teaching by Telling*," starting with Ellen's Book Club introduction on the second school day and ending with the first fishbowl discussion on September 22, chronicles both the teacher's and the students' initial efforts to construct meanings and practices regarding what it meant to do Book Club. Teacher-led talk dominated the discourse in this stage. Stage Two, "*Teaching by Modeling and Scaffolding*," lasted from late September to early February. This stage was marked by a substantial increase in student-centered talk, and by opportunities for the teacher and the class's more knowledgeable peers to model and scaffold literacy skills. As students observed, appropriated, and practiced, they continued to develop the knowledge and skills needed for participation in this particular literary discourse. Stage Three, "*Teaching from Behind*," was characterized by a further shift of power and control, as students' growing mastery of the discourse norms of Book Club freed their teacher to engage in a more facilitative approach to instruction. The beginning of this stage was marked in February by the teacher's explicit effort to push students to a higher level of engagement with texts.

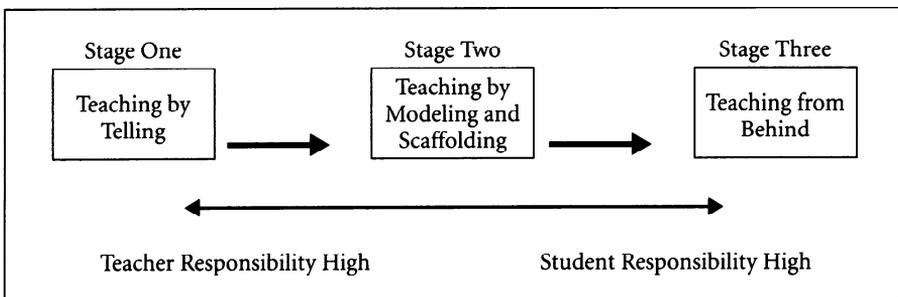


FIGURE 2. A Gradual Release of Responsibility from the Teacher to the Students in Conducting Book Club over the Year

In general, the distinction between the first and the second stages was characterized by a dramatic shift in the *amount* of student talk (during Stage Two the students held the floor for a much higher percentage of time), while the distinction between the second and third stages was in the *quality* of what would become decidedly student-centered conversations. We must acknowledge at the outset that these three stages were not as distinct as our sequential labels might seem to imply. The students were engaging in Book Club discussions and practicing the knowledge and skills needed for participation long before they took over in February; likewise Ellen continued to model and scaffold ways of reading, writing, talking, and thinking long after that takeover—even into the last month of the school year. Even so, the stages provide a useful heuristic for explaining the process of implementing the Book Club program throughout the year. The journey toward the development of a shared practice began with resistance on the part of the students, and guidance and persistence on the part of the teacher. It ended with students' increased knowledge and expertise in participating in discourse about books.

### ***Teaching by Telling: The First Stage of the Journey***

Stage One was relatively brief, including an introduction to the Book Club program and the first book unit, and culminating in the first fishbowl discussion. In this section, we discuss how Ellen introduced the Book Club practices, and consider the challenges she and her students confronted at the beginning of the year.

### **Introduction of Book Club**

During this initial introductory stage, Ellen focused on three goals. First, she aimed to create a classroom learning community in which students respected each other and constructed meanings together. Second, she introduced the Book Club program and explained what key skills would be needed for participation. Third, she made explicit to students her expectations for their Book Club performance.

For Ellen, creating a classroom learning community was essential to making Book Club successful for her diverse students. At the beginning of the school year, Ellen explained the notion of a learning community by using a boat metaphor, noting that “if one of you kicks a hole in the boat that you all occupy, the whole class will sink.” She also organized games to play in small groups and as a class—some designed to help students get to know each other better, others requiring collaboration in accomplishing a task. Ellen valued the prior experiences and background knowledge her diverse students brought to her classroom, and tried to foster a feeling of mutual respect. Ellen told her students that each one of them had unique life experiences, and they could sometimes teach one another better than she could alone. Ellen also explained to her students why she used the word *response* instead of *answer* to encourage them to share different ideas, “Usually with *answer*, people think of right or wrong; while with *response*, we can have different responses but we could all be right.”

By validating her students' unique prior experiences and affirming their differences in responses to books, Ellen attempted to create a learning environment in which students would feel comfortable sharing ideas and discussing issues of personal interest and meaning. Working within this relational and instructional context, she also introduced them to some of the terminology that would later become part of their daily experience in Book Club.

As she fostered a sense of a classroom learning community, Ellen also wanted her students to develop specific discussion and writing strategies. She introduced the following list of *how* and *what* to share in book discussions:

#### ***How to Share***

- Keep conversation going
- Respond to questions
- Elaborate responses
- Challenge interpretations
- Clarify ideas
- Include all members of the group
- Take turns
- Stay on task

#### ***What to Share***

- Elaborate written response
- Formulate questions
- Share personal response or experience
- Construct meanings of and evaluate the text
- Move beyond literal interpretations
- Ask fat, juicy questions

In addition to the general introduction of how and what to share in book discussions, Ellen focused on teaching the students two key skills: (a) asking fat, juicy questions, and (b) writing for a know-nothing audience. Ellen explained that fat, juicy questions were “open-ended” and “make you think about the story.” She noted that these questions would often begin with “how do you think?” or “why do you think?” She also provided examples to help students learn to distinguish these questions from their “skinny/lean” opposite. Finally, Ellen told the students explicitly that she expected only fat, juicy questions in Book Club discussions.

Ellen introduced a special writing technique that she called “writing for a know-nothing audience.” She told students that she expected them to write responses for an audience who had not read the text and who knew nothing about the book; therefore, the writer should provide necessary background information. As part of the initial lessons, she shared writing samples from previous students to illustrate texts appropriate to a know-nothing audience.

Ellen's goal was to help her students become self-directed and to engage in student-led discussions. She made explicit her expectations for their performance in Book Club and involved them in self-evaluation right from the beginning. She asked students to evaluate their own participation in each group discussion and introduced a rubric with these criteria: “to be prepared, to share ideas, to listen and respond, to ask fat, juicy questions, to have positive attitudes and no off-task

behaviors.” She also shared her scoring rubrics for their written responses, explaining that after each book unit, students would (1) assess their own written responses and learning, and (2) respond to the teacher’s grading and feedback by setting personal goals for the next book unit.

Thus, within the first few school days, Ellen introduced the Book Club program and made known her expectations. The journey towards developing a shared literary practice for this discourse community had begun.

### **Challenges to Participation in Book Club**

Participating in Book Club was a big challenge for Ellen’s culturally and linguistically diverse students. First, these activities were cognitively challenging, posing new and unfamiliar demands on their reading comprehension and abilities to synthesize ideas, formulate arguments, and discuss their responses with others. On top of these cognitive challenges, Ellen’s second-language learners also faced social and linguistic challenges. The collaborative nature of knowledge construction in Book Club called for a different set of interactive skills than those they had developed in their prior school experience. Students needed to learn when to talk, with whom they might talk, and how to agree or disagree with others. They also needed to develop new concepts (e.g., point of view, character development), and acquire new terms for expressing their reasoning, providing support, and challenging others’ ideas.

These challenges became a source of frustration for the students and the teacher in Stage One. Students displayed implicit and explicit resistance to participating in the Book Club activities. Many came to class without finishing their reading/writing assignments, openly sharing their confusion (“What does it mean, ‘how you feel about him?’”).

Towards the end of the second week, Ellen started to check students’ written responses before morning recess, which was followed by Book Club activities. If they were not properly completed, she required students to “catch up with the work” during the recess. Ailing’s field notes recorded that many students missed their recess because they either “forgot to do their assignments” or “wrote too little.” Getting students prepared for the Book Club discussions would continue to be a major challenge for Ellen in Stage Two.

Besides checking students’ homework assignments and talking to them about the importance of being prepared, Ellen undertook a series of steps to help students overcome their initial difficulties and resistance. In mini-lessons, she modeled how to respond directly to prompts and how to pull out evidence from the readings to support an argument. To help students develop skills to interact with each other in group discussions, Ellen showed her class a group discussion segment from a commercially available Book Club tape, and she also invited students who had participated in Book Club the previous year to demonstrate how to engage in a group discussion. The class then offered observations, noting several key

elements of effective group discussion, such as listening and responding to each other, having a positive attitude, asking fat, juicy questions, and sharing personal ideas and experiences. From their observations, they also learned that book club discussions provided opportunities to clarify confusions, and that it was okay to disagree with others. Having the opportunity to observe and talk about their observation of how more “knowledgeable peers” participate in group discussions allowed Ellen’s students to begin to “appropriate” the Book Club practice (Gavelek & Raphael 1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

As students sat down for their own initial fishbowl on September 22, it was obvious that they did not yet know how to sustain such discussion. This first fishbowl group, selected based on their seating arrangement, consisted of four students, two boys (Osman and Tu) and two girls (Rosie and Maria). The class was reading the book *Shiloh* and the group was expected to discuss their character map for Marty, the protagonist of the story. Tu was the first to share, and his response included all the elements of character mapping that Ellen had explained the previous day; as he finished, however, everyone sat quietly. Ellen tried to generate discussion by asking questions (“Have you got some response to him? Do you agree with everything? On what specific thing do you agree with him? Or do you disagree with anything he has said?”). After each query, Ellen deliberately left a long pause, but all the students in the group continued to sit quietly. When all four students had read their written responses, Ellen asked the audience to comment on the group’s performance, explaining that a discussion was different from sharing and that group members needed to ask each other questions. In short, the first fishbowl did little more than demonstrate the class’s lack of experience in conducting a student-led book discussion.

Another challenge for the students, expressing different opinions in discussions, was illustrated in a fishbowl discussion at the beginning of October. Though this event actually occurred early in what we eventually labeled Stage Two, it illustrates the kind of beginning-of-year challenges these students encountered (it also suggests that our stages are analytic conveniences rather than distinctively bounded categories). The discussion group consisted of two boys and two girls who were reading *The Watsons Go to Birmingham: 1963*, and responding to a prompt that asked whether they thought the Watsons were “weird” or not, and why. The two girls who shared first agreed that the Watsons were not weird but only different, citing examples by way of support. Although the two boys, Thahn and JR, remarked in their written responses that the Watsons were “funny” and “weird,” Thahn never presented this view openly, while JR experienced marked difficulty in sharing his written response, as he struggled to conform to what his peers had said before him. After three unsuccessful starts and pauses, JR skipped the word *weird* in his first sentence, stuttered, asked Ellen if he *had* to read what he wrote, apologized for a passage that did not make sense, and lowered his voice. Even

when Ellen asked him explicitly whether he thought the Watsons were weird or not, JR answered “no”—in accord with his peers’ stated beliefs, but in conflict with his own written response. Although Ellen constantly emphasized to the students that all ideas were valid as long as they had support, what JR tried to do, or what he tried *not* to do, suggests that publicly disagreeing with peers can constitute a real challenge for diverse students.

### **Dominance of Teacher Talk and Teacher-Led Talk**

Stage One was marked by a dominance of teacher talk, with Ellen explaining, leading, and often asking questions that elicited short answers. During the eleven days when the class was reading the first book, *Stone Fox*, they spent an average of seventy-eight minutes each day on Book Club. Student reading and writing took about half of this time, and the other half was devoted primarily to an “interactive lecture format” (Raphael, 2000), as Ellen explained what Book Club was, how students should participate in book discussions, and how to respond to her writing prompts. Out of the eleven days, students had group discussion on only two days (9 minutes on the first day and 10 minutes the second time) and community share on two days (3 minutes the first time and 10 minutes the second time). As a result, student talk averaged only three minutes per day (see Table 1).

### **Teaching by Modeling and Scaffolding: The Second Stage of the Journey**

With Stage Two, students increasingly engaged in hands-on practice of the skills and strategies Ellen had described to them in Stage One. This change in activity structure created opportunities for students to fine-tune and extend their understandings, while Ellen closely observed their fledging efforts and provided guidance that fostered their continuing growth. As a result, Stage Two witnessed a gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the students (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) in conducting book discussions. In this section we discuss factors that facilitated this transition, including time allowed for student-centered talk, teacher moves, and instructional mediating tools.

In contrast to the teacher-centered norms of Stage One, the enactment of fishbowl discussions, small-group book clubs, and community share in Stage Two

**TABLE 1: Average Time Per Day Spent on Book Club Activities in Stage One**

Activity	Average Time Per Day (min.)*
Student Centered Talk	3 (4%)
Teacher Talk and Teacher-Led Talk	37 (47%)
Student Reading and Writing	38 (49%)
Total Time on Book Club	78 (100%)

\*Based on field notes on the first book unit.

**TABLE 2: Comparison of the Average Time per Day Spent on Book Club Activities in Stages One and Two**

Activity	Average Time Per Day (min.)	
	STAGE ONE	STAGE TWO*
Student Centered Talk	3 (4%)	32 (35%)
Teacher Talk and Teacher-Led Talk	37 (47%)	21 (23%)
Student Reading and Writing	38 (49%)	38 (42%)
Total Time on Book Club	78 (100%)	91 (100%)

\*Based on field notes on January 28, February 1, 2, 4, 5, and 9, 1999.

positioned students in the center of conversation about books. As shown in Table 2, evidence of the shift from teacher-led to student-centered talk was dramatic. Student-centered talk had come to occupy an average of 32 minutes per day, compared to an average of 3 minutes per day in Stage One. Teacher talk decreased from 37 minutes per day in Stage One to an average of 21 minutes per day.

### Teacher Moves: Multiple Instructional Strategies

Opportunity to talk about books among themselves was necessary but not sufficient for student-led discussions to occur, as students continued to need guidance, modeling, and support as they were apprenticed into this literary practice. As she observed students' fledging efforts in Stage Two, Ellen responded with multiple teaching moves designed to facilitate greater student participation, including (a) building on students' prior knowledge, (b) using peer knowledge, (c) coaching/modeling, and (d) scaffolding/challenging students' thinking and participation.

While Ellen's Stage One explanations prepared students to take the first steps, their movement toward fuller participation would involve more substantive transformations, as they progressively modified their existing knowledge structures and built upon what they already knew (Smith, 1975). Ellen persistently operated within her students' existing understandings as she helped them make the leap from the known to the new. For example, to illustrate the concept of "a point of view," Ellen referenced a disagreement with another class that her students had recently experienced on the soccer field, explaining that the two classes offered different accounts of the conflict because they held different "points of view." This real-life example helped her students understand the concept with little difficulty. On another occasion, when teaching the concept of "going beyond literal interpretations," Ellen began by asking students what the book *Charlotte's Web* was about, knowing that they had all read it the previous year. One student said the book was about a pig and a spider, while another added that it was also about friendship. Ellen juxtaposed the two views, helping students understand what it means to reach beyond literal interpretations.

Believing that her diverse learners brought valuable experiences and knowledge to their book discussions, Ellen employed four basic strategies as she endeavored to make these collective resources available for all.

First, throughout these Stage Two discussions, Ellen drew the class's attention to the literacy strategies the more knowledgeable students demonstrated in responding to texts and interacting with each other. For example, after a volunteer fishbowl discussion on the book *The View from Saturday*, Ellen pointed out how some students used the strategies of paraphrasing and clarifying, saying, "A few times I heard people say, 'I think what she means is . . .,' or 'I think what he means is . . .' It sounds like you're clarifying that and there's an opportunity for the other person to say, 'Yeah, yeah' or 'No, that's not what I mean'. So that is really good."

Second, when introducing tasks requiring new skills, Ellen would initially ask the more knowledgeable peers to model these new strategies. When teaching students to provide specific evidence and support, for example, she asked "Do you think Ms. Olinski thought it was Julian who wrote the word 'cripple' on the board? Why or why not?" Tu's and Alicia's answers to this question helped illustrate what it means to provide evidence to support one's ideas.

Third, when new students joined the class, Ellen invited students already proficient in Book Club practices to share their understanding and expertise. Students not only told the new members how they participated in Book Club, but also explained why they were discussing the books in small groups and as a whole class. At one time, a student even recommended that new members be prepared, because otherwise it would "ruin the discussions." On these occasions, not only was peer expertise acknowledged and valued, but new members also felt welcomed into the classroom community and these Book Club practices.

Fourth, Ellen also used students' written responses as models for the whole class, pointing out strengths as well as opportunities for improvement. The opportunity to examine these peer-generated texts helped students understand what it meant to respond directly to prompts and to provide specific support in a more meaningful way.

Ellen continued to provide explicit instruction in Stage Two; in contrast to Stage One's pre-planned lessons, however, such instruction became more spontaneous, most often arising in response to students' needs. One vivid example of Ellen's coaching behavior occurred when Thi's group took their first turn at a fishbowl discussion. Seeing the group sitting there silently, Ellen squatted beside Thi and literally whispered a question into her ear for her to repeat to the group. After a little initial confusion, Thi did pose the question and started a conversation, later adding a follow-up "why" question of her own. Thi, a Vietnamese immigrant, was in her second year in the United States and first year in a regular education classroom. She was a shy, quiet girl who seldom spoke in class. By giving her the question and encouraging her to ask it, Ellen helped reduce her anxiety in speaking up and drew her into the group discussion.

In helping students develop written responses to prompts (especially where a question may have been unfamiliar or difficult), Ellen provided mini-lessons in which she suggested a sentence structure or sometimes an exact topic sentence for students to copy. Such scaffolding helped these second-language learners develop new writing strategies, and bolstered their confidence as they began sharing these responses in discussion.

In addition to explicit instruction, throughout Stage Two Ellen responded to students' attempts at participation with scaffolding designed to foster their continuing growth, and with challenges to their existing understandings. One such example occurred in the students' second fishbowl discussion. As soon as Alicia, the first speaker, had finished sharing her response, Michael started to read his. Ellen walked to the fishbowl group table and interrupted Michael, saying to Alicia, "Wait, I have a question for you." In a follow-up conversation, Ellen challenged Alicia by asking for evidence of support ("I'd like to know what type of things he did that shows he is determined"), and then scaffolded her response ("What kind of words did he say that tells you he is determined?"). Ellen also challenged JR's suggestion that "he doesn't use bad language," by asking, "Does that tell you that he is determined?" Through this combination of challenging and scaffolding, students were pushed to support their interpretations with textual evidence.

Nowhere was this scaffolding more pronounced than in helping students understand the functions and appropriate use of "fat, juicy questions." Our video camera captured the obvious pride some students displayed in posing such questions, although they often seemed to lack genuine interest in the answers they received. Ellen sometimes challenged students whose questions seemed uninformed by substantive rationales or authentic curiosity. During a fishbowl discussion on *The View from Saturday* in early December, for instance, a student asked one of the group members why he had repeated a particular sentence. When Ellen asked the questioner why he had offered this observation, he didn't seem to know. Afterwards, during the debriefing, Ellen raised the issue again: "Michael, I'm not picking you in particular, but for example, you went up to Tu and said, 'Why did you say it twice?' What is your point when you're asking that?" Through this public conversation with Michael, Ellen emphasized to the whole class that "When you ask a question, you need to have a point to make."

This example also suggests that language development for these second-language learners involved both form and function. That is, while Ellen's students readily understood this new interrogative form, learning how to use the form appropriately to achieve a particular purpose within a specific social-cultural context posed greater challenges. Book club discussions created an authentic learning environment for Ellen to scaffold this connection between forms and functions (or between performance and competence, as Cazden [1981] phrased it) for her students.

In Stage Two, we saw Ellen consistently employing an array of practices and strategies to help her students develop their literacy knowledge and skills as they practiced the activities she had introduced in Stage One. She *told* them information when they needed it. She *modeled* strategies. She *challenged* their use of strategies to promote fine-tuning. We turn next to two instructional tools that also mediated the students' learning.

### Mediating Tools

Two mediating tools, the fishbowl discussion format and the writing prompts, played a facilitative part in this Stage Two transitional process. Ellen introduced fishbowl discussion as a daily event when the class began reading their second book, *Shiloh*, and continued this practice throughout their next book, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham: 1963*. Groups took turns in conducting the fishbowl discussion. Beginning with the second fishbowl, Ellen added two extra chairs at the discussion-group table, inviting the audience to join in asking questions or making comments. Thus, fishbowl discussions became a public space where ways of responding, thinking, and talking about texts were demonstrated and observed. This space created opportunities for Ellen to model and scaffold students' knowledge and skills, for the more knowledgeable peers to try out and practice what they had learned, and for all students to observe the discussions in action and to appropriate these new practices as well.

The daily writing prompts mediated students' learning of literary skills, directing their attention to issues of craft, genre, and interpretive convention. The prompts consisted of open-ended questions grouped under topics such as *Me and the Book*, *Point of View*, *Character Map*, and *Character Development* (Raphael, et al., 1997). Before students began reading in groups, Ellen provided mini-lessons to introduce the topics and prompts for the day. Each time a new topic was introduced, Ellen explained the key concepts (such as third person point of view, round/flat characters, key elements in a character map, and others). She also used mini-lessons to teach students how to make character maps, and to use Venn diagrams to compare and contrast two characters. Over the year, students responded to a total of 122 prompts for the 11 books they read. Through responding to their teacher's and peers' questions, students were guided to analyze and interpret texts, synthesize information, make personal and intertextual connections, articulate their own ideas, and provide support for their arguments. They also developed writing and thinking techniques, such as organizing and presenting ideas and arguing one's point.

The writing prompts provided students opportunities to move into their individual repertoires the skills and strategies modeled and fostered in fishbowl discussions—in which public sharing of thinking was expected, as well as reflection and critique on the nature and quality of that thinking. As student participation

gradually intensified in Stage Two, both the fishbowl activity format and the writing prompts helped mediate students' literacy learning and development.

### ***Teaching from Behind: The Third Stage of the Journey***

While Stage Two differed from Stage One in that students were given more time and opportunity to engage in student-centered conversations about books, what distinguished Stage Three from Stage Two was the quality of these conversations as well as the continuing shift of discussion control from the teacher to the students. Our name for this stage, "Teaching from Behind," is an adaptation from Nash's (1995) term "Leading from Behind"; the adaptation is intentional and meant to convey that while the students were setting the stage and direction, Ellen continued to influence that direction with her mini-lessons as needed.

With students' habits of sharing ideas with one another now well established, Ellen focused her Stage Three efforts on developing more sophisticated ways of thinking and talking about books. An initial example of this marked the start of Stage Three, when for three consecutive days in February Ellen challenged the class to avoid tolerating farfetched ideas, predictions, and explanations. As they read the fantasy book *Tuck Everlasting*, students voiced imaginative ideas rooted in neither reason nor evidence, perceptions that Ellen termed "outlandish." For two days, Ellen either stopped the whole-class discussion or brushed the topic aside, saying "I think we're getting a little bit ridiculous and that really spoils the whole discussion," or "I don't think that's worth spending our community share on." On the third day, Ellen not only stopped students from sharing such ideas, but also tried to make them understand why she found these notions outlandish, asking them to examine the book and marshal evidence ("What happened in the story that made you think of that?"). In the following short excerpt, Ellen asked specific questions designed to guide students toward more realistic thinking:

**ELLEN:** Okay, what would be more likely to happen at 78 years old, the tree fell on you and you die, or you die of old age?

**STUDENTS:** Old age.

**ELLEN:** When was she supposed to drink the spring [water]?

**STUDENTS:** 17.

**ELLEN:** Okay, how many years apart from 78 to 17?

Ellen engaged her students in such "no-outlandish-idea" discussion as she saw the need. As they continued to practice and develop their literacy skills and knowledge, students were pushed to think in ways consistent with the norms and values of literary discourse, such as using logical reasoning and presenting well-supported arguments. They learned to interact in increasingly purposeful ways as they listened to one another's opinions, asked questions, and kept discussions

focused. Students also appeared to begin to develop sensitivity to differences in their classmates' backgrounds and perspectives.

In Stage Three students encountered enlarged opportunities to practice and develop their cognitive, social, and linguistic literacy skills. The cross-stage data presented in Table 3 show that students continued to enjoy the time and opportunity granted to them in Stage Two to engage in guided participation in reading, writing, and talking about books. While the most significant shift between Stages Two and Three was in the quality of student talk, the quantity of such talk increased as well (by an average of 2 minutes per day), as did students' independent reading and writing (by 8 minutes per day); teacher talk, meanwhile, decreased by 7 minutes.

### Opportunities for the Development of Cognitive Skills

Through their increasingly active participation in Book Club, Ellen's linguistically diverse students had opportunities to practice and develop three complementary stances toward reading: (a) an aesthetic stance; (b) a critical stance; and (c) a reflective stance.

**DEVELOPING AN AESTHETIC STANCE TOWARD READING.** Book Club activities created opportunities for students to make connections between what they had read in a book and what they had experienced in their worlds—an essential part of aesthetic reading described by Rosenblatt (1978). Sometimes connections were made because the prompt questions required students to do so; other times, students made the connections because they felt a need to use personal examples in making sense of the text. In a community-share discussion of *Walk Two Moons*, for instance, Thahn claimed that he believed Mrs. Cadaver, a main character in the book, had murdered her husband. When challenged, he solicited support from the text, asking "Why did the author say she came back late [if she didn't murder her husband]?" Andy used his uncle and aunt as an example to explain to Thahn that doctors and nurses usually worked late hours. He concluded that since Mrs. Cadaver was a nurse, it was not abnormal for her to come home late, and thus he suggested that Mrs. Cadaver might not be a murderer.

**TABLE 3: Comparison of the average Book Club Time per Day in Stages One, Two, and Three**

Activity	Average Time Per Day (min.)		
	STAGE ONE	STAGE TWO	STAGE THREE*
Student Centered Talk	3 (4%)	32 (35%)	34 (36%)
Teacher Talk and Teacher-Led Talk	37 (47%)	21 (23%)	14 (15%)
Student Reading and Writing	38 (49%)	38 (42%)	46 (49%)
Total Time on Book Club	78 (100%)	91 (100%)	94 (100%)

\*Based on field notes on May 3, 5, 7, and 10, 1999

Often Ellen's prompts asked students to make such connections to their own lives. In one small-group discussion, students were asked to compare Mr. Birkway, a teacher in *Walk Two Moons*, with their own teachers. The four students brought a range of educational experiences to the discussion: Thi had attended school in Vietnam through third grade, Andy had gone to kindergarten and third grade in Ecuador, while Tu of Vietnamese background and Vong from a Hmong family had immigrated as pre-schoolers. In their 20-minute discussion, they compared Mr. Birkway with the teachers they had experienced, explored what it meant to be a good or a mean teacher, and considered differences between schools in and outside the United States. Both Thi and Andy recalled teachers in Vietnam and Ecuador who would physically punish students who failed to turn in homework. Vong remarked that "teachers like them [Mr. Birkway and these real-life teachers] are mean." The students also learned how long each had been in the U.S., how many teachers they had experienced over the years, and which were their favorites. As Andy tried to correct Vong's mixed use of the pronouns *he* and *she*, they also became aware that few of their teachers to date had been male.

Clearly members of the group found this topic personally meaningful, and all had much to say and to ask. Several features suggest that they turned a discursive corner in this discussion. First, students seemed to be genuinely interested in each other's stories (they were concerned, for instance, about whether Thi and Andy "got whipped"). Second, students felt comfortable sharing with each other and asking questions of a personal nature (for example, Thi remarked at one point, "I thought you were born here, Tu," and Vong asked if his current teacher was among Andy's favorites). Third, criticism was given and taken in a friendly way. When Andy corrected Vong's use of pronouns the second time, Vong ignored him, while Tu and Thi giggled (later, when Andy asked, "so the teacher was a *he* or *she*?" both Tu and Vong replied playfully, "She!"). Fourth, students offered witty remarks and joked about one another. In the midst of an otherwise serious discussion concerning corporal punishment in other countries, the students were struck by the comical prospect of a current classmate, Jessey, being whipped for her casual attitude toward homework:

**TU:** Did you say that the Vietnamese teachers, they whip you?

**THI:** Yeah. The principal, it's like, in here, if the teacher whip the students they can't teach no more but in Vietnam, it's different.

**TU:** It's a good thing that I didn't went [sic] to school in Vietnam.

**ANDY:** Can you imagine they had Jessey and they had Book Club, Jessey, she would be just like, oh, man! [They all giggled.]

**THI:** See, if you go in front of the class and if you do some math and you do wrong, he told you to do it again and if you got it wrong again and he would whip you. He told you to lie on the table.

VONG: [unbelievably, his eyes wide open] If you do it wrong, they whip you?  
THI: [nodding] Mm.

The atmosphere was relaxed in this discussion, and students demonstrated the participation skills they had developed over the year—listening to each other, following up on each other's ideas, providing relevant personal experiences and information to elaborate on each other's ideas, and questioning. Through the discussion, these students collaboratively constructed meanings for teaching practices, learning, and the roles of teachers and students. The discussion also provided an occasion to express appreciation of their schooling in America, as Tu commented that "it's a good thing that I didn't went [sic] to school in Vietnam," and Vong was obviously very surprised to learn that in Vietnam "if you do it [a math problem] wrong, they whip you." Such opportunities to engage in personally meaningful discussion and to explore connections between the texts and their lives allowed these students to experience the aesthetic aspects of Rosenblatt's transactional process of reading (Rosenblatt, 1978).

**DEVELOPING A CRITICAL STANCE.** Book discussions opened opportunities for students to discuss different points of view and navigate multiple perspectives, an essential aspect of critical thinking. An early example of this occurred in February, indicating that students were becoming attentive to historical contexts in making sense of texts. The class was engaging in a community-share discussion of *Tuck Everlasting*, discussing what Mae Tuck could do to escape from prison. Some students suggested that if she pretended to be dead, she might be taken to the hospital, while Thi questioned whether hospitals such as we have today existed in the early 1800s. This attention to historical perspective was picked up in a later discussion, when, in response to Freddy's suggestion that the Tucks could bail Mae Tuck out of jail, Rico wondered aloud about the justice system of the day:

I mean to get her out, was it like that you can pay a fine so you can bail her out? Was it like that way back in the 1800s? To bail her out? Are you sure?

Ellen's students also demonstrated their critical stances by questioning texts. In another group discussion of *Tuck Everlasting*, Thi asked her group "do you think that Tuck took her [Winnie] to fishing and to the water, uh, is it for some reason? Or they were just nice?" Later on in May, when reading *Walk Two Moons*, students began to raise similar questions. For example, Andy asked, "Vong, it's not about your paper, but why do you think Sal's mom went away?" and Thi added, "Why do you think that she left her children and go on a vacation?" Such fictional events were difficult to understand for students from particularly close-knit families, and such questions helped them process these puzzling scenarios. These second-language learners also became aware of the nuances of literary characters,

sometimes pondering their motivations. In one small-group discussion, for instance, Thi asked the others “What do you think of Grandma when she says /’fi:bi:/ (mimicking)? . . . Do you think she try to be humorous sometimes?” Tu later raised the question in a community-share discussion, ultimately concluding that no one in the class could supply a definitive answer.

**DEVELOPING A REFLECTIVE STANCE.** Book discussions also created opportunities for students to discuss substantial, real-life issues such as honesty, bias, the meaning of life, friendship, and responsibility. Such discussions helped students explore and develop their own worldviews and value systems and, sometimes, to voice opinions that differed from those of their peers. During one small-group discussion of *Walk Two Moons*, for instance, Andy said that he thought Grandma and Grandpa were crazy because they stole a tire from a Senator’s car in Washington. Tu challenged this assumption, countering that they were only borrowing. As the students disagreed, each provided support for his opinion:

**TU:** How are they crazy?

**ANDY:** Of course they are crazy, because only crazy persons are going to go to rob tires from a [Senator].

**TU:** They didn’t rob it.

**ANDY:** Yes they did. They stole it.

**TU:** They borrowed it to them.

**ANDY:** SO, they stole them.

**VONG:** That’s the kind of borrowing.

**ANDY:** So I go and steal someone’s video games and I’m just borrowing them?!

**TU:** To them they are borrowing and to other people they are stealing.

Another example of such exploration occurred in response to the prompt “What do you think the message ‘Don’t judge a person until you walk two moons in his moccasins’ means?” Both Tu and Andy shared examples of how their mothers judged people (especially teenagers) by their appearances:

**TU:** Some sayings I think are impossible or untrue. Like my mom says that when you comb your hair like in the middle, like on the two sides [gesturing], she said if you comb your hair like that, you would be bad. She said that people who do that are bad.

**ANDY:** Oh yeah, my mother says, you know how, that teenage boys dye their hair? She says that, my mom says, whenever she sees one of the people like that, (gesturing hair brushed towards back), they dye their hair, she thinks they are bad kids. Like some have tattoos in their arm, she thinks they are bad. [Class laughs.]

**IA:** I think your mom's right. Because no ordinary people comb their hair in the middle and dye their hair.

[Some students tried to quiet the noise down, for Ia always spoke in a soft voice.]

**ELLEN:** Ia, what did you say? Did you ask a question? Yes? Can you repeat it a little bit louder?

**IA:** I think your mom is right. Because most of the people, like in middle school, some people like comb their hair in the middle of their head, and they dye their hair like in different kinds color, they need to do like other people.

**TU:** It depends. My mom is judging someone from his appearance.

**ANDY:** It just gives you a bad impression. Like someone dyes his hair way yellow it gives you a bad impression.

**IA:** Most people dye their hair yellow the most.

**TU:** I have a friend who is bigger than me, he is in high school or something, he dyes his hair way yellow and combed it in the middle and he's still good.

**ANDY:** It gives you a bad impression.

**RICO:** Andy, you know your mom says about people who have tattoo. Not necessarily. My mom has a tattoo and she is not a bad woman.

**ANDY:** You know my friend. He dyes his hair a little bit, just a little bit, because it matches his hair and it looks good, but my mom, it looks really good, but my mom says it's still bad to dye your hair. I go like, "it's nice."

Examining the participation patterns of this class discussion, we found Ellen played a facilitative role, entering the conversation only to ask participants to speak more loudly or to repeat a given remark. The students basically led the discussion, initiating topics, offering counter-points, and providing ample support for their statements. In this discussion, three views were presented: that we should not judge people by appearance alone, that some appearances give a bad impression, and that an unusual appearance is undesirable. Students holding different views employed specific examples to support their points of view. Though no particular conclusion was reached at the end of the discussion, the process of discussing these thorny issues was important in helping students develop their own thinking, and in practicing the new participation structures they were acquiring.

### **Opportunities for the Development of Social Skills**

Participating in talking about books, students gradually developed their social/interactive skills as well. They learned to monitor their group discussions, challenge each other's thinking, and share sometimes tentative ideas.

**MONITORING GROUP DISCUSSIONS.** As shown by examples discussed earlier in this stage, students had developed important participation strategies, such as listening, bidding for the floor, inviting others to talk, and asking for clarification. Although some students began to use conventional conversational markers in Stage Two,

these markers appeared more frequently in Stage Three. These included phrases such as “Do you have any questions for him?” “You should listen to him,” “Could you do it slowly so we can answer your questions?” “Can I ask you a question?” and “I know what you mean, but I want you to be specific.” The increased use of these questions and requests kept the group discussions focused and all participants involved, and also helped students gain more control over academic discourse conventions.

**CHALLENGING EACH OTHER.** In discussions, students gradually learned to ask and think in terms of the fat, juicy questions Ellen had encouraged all year. During book clubs, students constantly asked each other questions that began “Why do you think...?” “What made you think...?” or “Can you give an example of...?” Such questions gave students tools for framing their thinking. When Hussain, who joined the class in the spring, predicted that Sal in *Walk Two Moons* would be “crashing” in the end, Andy asked, “Why do you think that? Could you support that?” Hearing Hussain say “No,” Tu reprimanded, “Why do you say that if you can’t support that?” Such talk reflected new habits of mind, as students displayed increasing awareness of the need to support their ideas with textual evidence.

Through discussions, students also learned to explore how to go about challenging other people’s views and expressing different opinions in a collegial way. In a group discussion during the *Tuck Everlasting* unit, the conversation turned to *how* Winnie could tell her family about the magic water. Thi seemed to believe firmly that Winnie would not release the secret, reminding the group, “But that’s the *secret*.” However, others didn’t pay any attention to her remark, continuing to discuss how Winnie might tell her family about the water in a believable way. Finally, Thi asked her group members directly, “But do you think that Winnie will break the secret or what?” Hearing “No,” Thi asked again, “Then how can the family know about the water?” This exchange occurred during the transition between Stage Two and Stage Three, when challenging one another’s ideas was still hard for these students. However, as shown in earlier examples, their challenges became more confrontational and direct towards the end of the year. On one occasion, for example, when Andy had remarked that Sal’s grandma and grandpa were crazy, Tu asked pointedly, “*How* are they crazy?” Even the soft-spoken Ia offered divergent opinions from time to time, as when she weighed in on the side of Tu’s and Andy’s mothers in the discussion of unusual physical appearances.

### **Opportunities for the Development of Language Skills**

Participating in the reading, writing and discussion of literary texts with an authentic audience provided these linguistically diverse students with opportunities to practice and develop their language skills in meaningful contexts. Students developed their capacities to communicate with each other, to elicit other people’s ideas, to provide uptake, and to challenge each other. Some markers of academic

literary discourse, notably absent in their Stage Two conversations, began to appear regularly as the year progressed. For example, students started to quote from the books to support their views (“Ethan told us in the book that . . .,” “Why does the author say . . . in the book?”), and learned to preface their own comments by linking them to the views of a classmate (“Like Alicia said”).

While students were exploring the meanings of literature in collaboration, they also helped each other develop new linguistic forms and vocabulary. As mentioned earlier, Andy asked Vong whether his teacher was “a *he* or *she*” to show him that he needed to distinguish the two pronouns. In the following conversation, Andy, Thahn, and Michael explained the meaning of the word “divorce” upon Thi’s request, listening to each other, building on each other’s ideas, and collaboratively constructing meaning:

**THI:** What does *divorce* mean?

**ANDY:** When you marry someone and you want to marry.

**THAHN:** And then you don’t want to marry them and you sign paper.

**ANDY:** Then you get divorced and you can only be friends.

**THAHN:** You divorce.

**MICHAEL:** You dump them. [laughter and smiles from all group members]

### ***What Is Learned beyond Talk in Book Club Discussions***

Over the school year we witnessed changes in the students’ participation patterns in Book Club discussions, as they gradually mastered these new ways of reading, interacting, and talking, and ultimately formed a literary community. Parallel to the changes in students’ participation, evidence from the quantitative measures taken at the beginning and end of the school year shows that students (a) dramatically increased their vocabulary, and (b) became more metacognitively aware of their own strategies. While neither of these outcomes in any way constitutes a direct and curricularly sensitive measure of the effects of the Book Club program, they do represent an opportunity to examine whether these activities provided any unintended or corollary benefits.

### **Slosson Oral Reading Test**

At the beginning and the end of the school year, students were tested on the Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT), a progressive assessment of word recognition designed to be used with students from pre-school through high school. We used this test not because we thought that it might be particularly sensitive to the Book Club intervention, but for the very reason that it had virtually nothing to do with Book Club. We wanted to know whether something as simple as word recognition increases beyond normal expectations when it is embedded in broader literacy practices such as Book Club. Clearly in silent and oral reading, these students were

recognizing a great many words, even though no specific curricular attention was given to word recognition in the program.

For this analysis we used pre- and post-tests for 19 of Ellen's 25 students. Their average pre-test raw score was 86.4 and their average post-test raw score was 123.5. The average gain in raw score was 37.2 words, which is equivalent to 1.8 years of growth. Except for one student, all gained more than one year of growth in reading vocabulary (see Appendix B). According to the Slosson norms, this sort of gain is quite exceptional. Of course, without a control group, we cannot attribute these gains to the Book Club intervention, but even so it is interesting to note that these activities may have assisted in promoting exceptional growth on a measure only incidentally related to the intervention. It may be possible that more ambitious approaches to reading and talking about text promote lower-level skills in the process.

### **Metacomprehension Strategy Index (MSI)**

The Metacomprehension Strategy Index (MSI) (Schmitt, 1990) measures readers' awareness of strategic reading processes. The questionnaire has 25 items, each consisting of 4 choices, one of which indicates appropriate metacomprehension strategy awareness. According to Schmitt (1990), MSI assesses students' awareness of a variety of meta-comprehension behaviors that fit within six broad categories: (a) predicting and verifying, (b) previewing, (c) purpose setting, (d) self-questioning, (e) drawing from background knowledge, and (f) summarizing and applying fix-strategies. Clearly, the MSI is more transparently related to the curricular intentions of Book Club than is the Slosson.

A t-test was conducted at the confidence interval of .05 to compare the differences between students' pre-scores and the post-scores. The results show that the differences are statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ) (see Appendix C), suggesting that students became more aware of and reported using more reading comprehension strategies in their reading at the end of the year. Further analysis of the paired mean differences of the six categories shows that students improved especially in the area of self-questioning, drawing from background knowledge, summarizing and applying fix-strategies, and predicting and verifying (see Appendix C). Again, without a control group or grade-level norms, it is difficult to assess the growth observed. Even so, this pattern of results is certainly consistent with the Book Club program's goal of promoting student reflection.

### **Conclusions**

Our study provides an account of the landscape Ellen and her diverse students traversed in constructing a shared literary practice as a community of learners. Our findings suggest that culturally and linguistically diverse students are capable of conducting student-led book conversations and experiencing aesthetic reading

when they are given opportunities to read, write, and talk about age-appropriate quality literature and explore meanings (Rosenblatt, 1978; Galda, 1998) along with guidance and scaffolding from a teacher and more knowledgeable members of the community (Vygotsky, 1978; Brock & Gavelek, 1998; Eeds & Wells, 1989). Evidence shows that over the school year, student conversations became more expert-like and focused, as students learned to ask each other questions and to share their thoughts on topics of mutual interest. Their conversations shifted from focusing on factual information to fundamental questions of human existence as they learned to engage in critical and reflective talk about texts. Students also learned to appreciate literary texts and began to enjoy conversing with each other. And along the way, their command of vocabulary increased dramatically (as evidenced by changes in their Slosson scores), and they became more aware of the strategies they were using to construct meaning in response to texts.

Evidence indicated a gradual release of teacher responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) over the school year as students developed the knowledge and skills to participate in Book Club activities through guided participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, et al., 1996). Instruction became a process of scaffolding and mediating students' participatory performances at different developmental stages (Bruner, 1986; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989). Our analysis revealed five features of one teacher's classroom practice that helped create and support student learning. First, the teacher believed that all her students brought rich experiences and knowledge to discussions, and she tried to cultivate a sense of community and mutual respect for their prior knowledge. Second, students were given time and opportunity to share with each other their responses to quality literature, and they were encouraged to construct meanings collaboratively. Third, students were pushed to think critically and reflectively about what they had read by responding to high-level questions, a practice consistently associated with greater than normal growth in achievement, especially with low-achieving students (Knapp, 1995; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2002). Fourth, the teacher employed multiple modes of teaching, including telling, modeling, coaching, scaffolding, facilitating student discussions, and participating as a member (Au & Raphael, 1998). Finally, the teacher persisted in challenging the students and maintained high expectations.

Even though learning to read in a second language involves more complexities than learning to read in a native language, it does require many of the same conditions (Cambourne, 1995); therefore, reading methods that are sound for teaching reading in a native language can also be helpful for teaching reading in a second language (Fitzgerald, 2000; Fitzgerald & Noblit, 2000). What was remarkable in Ellen's classroom was not that she treated her second-language readers differently, but that she provided them the very affordances that are often reserved for the most talented of first-language readers and, correspondingly, withheld from

the lives of second language readers and other groups who live on the margins of our schools.

### ***Implications for Practice***

This work offers several possible courses of action for teachers to consider as they endeavor to engage English language learners in rich discussions of text.

**COMMUNITY MATTERS.** First, teachers can create classroom learning communities in which not only the teacher but also the students value the prior knowledge and experiences each brings to the classroom. Such learning communities allow students to explore texts in a personally meaningful and psychologically safe context as they embrace the challenges of critical and reflective reading. As Au (2002) points out, “Although all students can benefit from belonging to a classroom community of readers, this experience may be especially important to students of diverse backgrounds” (p. 398).

**CONSTRUCTING MEANING MATTERS.** Second, it is important to create the time and opportunity for diverse learners to construct textual meanings both individually and collaboratively through reading, writing, and discussing quality literature appropriate to their age and interests. Very often, instruction given to second-language learners tends to emphasize language structures and sentence copying rather than comprehension and communicative competence (Valdés, 1998). Opportunities for students to interact with texts and each other in purposeful and authentic contexts, such as the ones created in Ellen’s classroom, allow students to practice and develop not only their comprehension and critical thinking skills, but also their command of English as a second language. Such conversational opportunities, in which students can actively produce language and develop more complex linguistic tools for communicating with each other, are especially important for ESL students who may speak a different language at home (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Garcia, 1993; Gersten, 1996).

**CHALLENGING QUESTIONS MATTER.** Third, as with Ellen, teachers who use higher-level questions as prompts can engage students in thinking critically and reflectively about what they read. Responding to her prompts, students in Ellen’s class were, in her words, “sharing, discussing, agreeing and disagreeing, and bringing their own stories and their own background knowledge into what they read” (instead of copying, pattern drilling, oral reading, and doing worksheets, instructional practices that too often prevail in ESL classrooms). The use of higher-level questions requiring inferences across text(s) or to personal experiences is consistently associated with greater than normal growth in achievement, especially with low-achieving students (Knapp, 1995; Taylor, et al., 2002); it is ironic, then, that such approaches are usually missing in the education of the very learners for whom it makes the most difference, especially ESL learners (Au & Raphael, 2000; Fitzgerald, 1995; Valdés, 1998).

**HIGH EXPECTATIONS MATTER.** Fourth, students respond to teachers who hold high expectations for all, including those who come to school not already steeped in the culture of schooling. As Langer (2001) learned in her study of successful middle- and senior-high school language arts instruction, effective teachers share “a belief in students’ abilities to be able and enthusiastic learners; they believed all students can learn and that they, as teachers, could make a difference” (p. 876). Ellen believed that her students were capable of engaging in rich book talk because her previous students had demonstrated it. “I don’t lower my standards at all for them,” she explained early in the year. At the same time, she responded to her students’ difficulties by consistently providing developmentally appropriate assistance.

**STAYING THE COURSE MATTERS.** Fifth, when teachers introduce a new literacy practice to students, especially students unfamiliar with the discourses of schooling, teachers need to remember that such practices might not always work right away. Teachers must be prepared for challenges and persistent in implementing new strategies. In the current case, Ellen recognized that at the beginning of the school year, “they [students] just didn’t know how to discuss. They didn’t know how to ask questions . . . how to respond, plus they didn’t listen to each other.” However, in spite of the challenges and students’ initial resistance, Ellen continued to provide difficult writing prompts, refusing to resort to worksheets and filling-in-the-blanks. She continued to hold high expectations for her students and to provide guidance and support within their zones of proximal development, refusing to give up on them or her chosen instructional approaches (see also Maloch, 2002).

**RELEASING RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS.** Finally, if learning is a process of guided participation, the goal of instruction is to gradually release the responsibility from the teacher to the students (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). However, as Pearson and Gallagher (1983) point out, “just because you want to end up being obsolete does not mean you have to start out by being obsolete” (p. 338). In order for the students to engage in literary discourse among themselves, teachers need to explain, model, scaffold, and facilitate these new cultural practices. Ellen’s nurturance of rich talk about text took on many forms, as our analysis suggests—sometimes pulling, sometimes pushing, sometimes coaxing, and sometimes just letting go.

This study suggests that Book Club has the potential to create opportunities for students, including students with diverse backgrounds, to develop the knowledge and skill to participate in the practices of a literary community. It suggests that we should provide ESL learners with access to rich, quality, age-appropriate literature, let them read, let them respond, and let them construct meanings collaboratively in discussions. As they develop their reflective, analytical, and critical capacities, they also develop their ability to use new language as a communicative tool in authentic and meaningful contexts.

**A CAUTIONARY NOTE.** However, one finding has raised a flag for us about Book Club and other highly constructivist approaches to teaching. Towards the end of the year, students' writing changed to include more ideas and became longer and better organized; however, we noticed that the writing of some students, especially the ESL students who were the focus of our work, still contained many errors in spelling, verb tense and form, and sentence structure. This trend is perhaps unsurprising, as instruction in English grammar was not a goal in Ellen's Book Club program. The Reading Log Evaluation sheet Ellen gave to her students told them that their papers would be judged on "completeness and accuracy of information, as well as length and amount of detail provided," and that the logs "were not graded on spelling, mechanics, etc."; however, during the year no mini-lessons focused on this aspect of language. Looking back, we believe there is a need to ensure that students develop critical and analytical thinking skills as well as language forms associated with "the culture of power" (Delpit, 1988), because like all students, ESL learners will be judged on the basis of how well they can speak, read, and write in standard English. It is interesting to note that the founders of Book Club, Raphael and colleagues, have designed a new program, Book Club Plus, to offer just this balance on the skill side of the curriculum (see Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2001). In her teaching since this study, Ellen has also made time for teaching writing and considered using students' Book Club responses as "Daily Oral Language" texts for instruction on grammar and writing mechanics (Kong & Fitch, 2002).

### *Suggestions for Further Studies*

Like most research, our study raises more questions than it answers. First, how would students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds respond to multicultural literature that is grounded in their own cultures and prior experiences, i.e., literature that tells about the growing-up experiences of immigrant children from different cultures? Second, if students could also choose to respond however they wished to a book (instead of only to the teacher-developed writing prompts), and in whatever way they wanted, would their responses exhibit greater richness and depth, or would they wither to idiosyncratic meandering? Third, if students could select their own books to read, what books would they choose? Would they respond differently to personal choices than to the books assigned by the teacher? What effect would that have on their participation patterns in the discussions? Can literature discussions flourish where students share diverse reading experiences, or is a common text a necessary feature of such literature discussions? Fourth, Book Club was a daily activity in Ellen's class; what would students' learning look like if Book Club were implemented for 2 or 3 days a week in the context of a broader program focusing on other aspects of language,

such as spelling, vocabulary, and grammar? Or what if Book Club were encapsulated into intensive two- to three-week units, distributed throughout the school year?

### ***Concluding Statement***

We close with two impressions that stayed with us throughout our data analysis and writing of this manuscript. The first concerns accountability, a word that we hear a great deal about in the current policy environment.

There was real accountability in this classroom, the very sort of authentic accountability that is hard to capture in tests that seem to drop out of the sky once a year. Students were accountable to each other—to engage one another in genuine civil discourse and even disagreement. Students were accountable to the authors of the texts they read—to use these texts as sources of evidence to warrant the claims they wanted to make in the meanings they were constructing. Ellen was accountable to the goals she had set for herself and her students—to get beneath and beyond the literal surface of each text to the challenging depths of each and every book, where students encounter issues (friendship, conflict, trust, betrayal, and growth) that take them to the core of the human experience. It was accountability to that vision of the role that literature could play in the lives of her students that sustained her through the many rough spots along the journey.

Our closing observation, then, concerns what a committed teacher can accomplish. Examined from a different lens, this study could be re-positioned as a study about one teacher's unwavering beliefs. Those beliefs included several key propositions—that students are knowledgeable beings, that learning occurs through participation, that instruction must be based on students' needs, and that if a teacher is as persistent in challenging students as she is supportive in helping them meet those challenges, their learning may well exceed our loftiest expectations.

### **AUTHOR NOTE**

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### **ENDNOTE**

1. We have the permission to use our focal teacher's real first name. All student names are pseudonyms.

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## APPENDIX A: BOOKS READ DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Author	Title	Award	Year
Gardiner, J. R.	<i>Stone Fox</i>	The Harper Trophy	1980
Naylor, P. R.	<i>Shiloh</i>	Newbery Medal (1992)	1991
Curtis, C. P.	<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963</i>	Newbery Honor (1996)	1995
Lowry, L.	<i>Number the Stars</i>	Newbery Medal (1990)	1989
Konigsburg, E. L.	<i>The View from Saturday</i>	Newbery Medal (1997)	1996
Babbitt, N.	<i>Tuck Everlasting</i>	ALA Notable Book	1975
Taylor, M.	<i>Mississippi Bridge</i>		1990
	<i>Song of the Tree</i>		1975
	<i>The Friendship*</i>	The Coretta Scott King Award (1988)	1987
	<i>The Gold Cadillac*</i>	The Christopher Award (1988)	1987
Fenner, C.	<i>Yolonda's Genius</i>	Newbery Honor (1996)	1995
Creech, S.	<i>Walk Two Moons</i>	Newbery Medal (1995)	1994

\*The class used a version that has both stories in one book.

## APPENDIX B: STUDENTS' GAINS FROM PRE- TO POST-SORT TEST SCORES (N = 19)

NAME	Pre-SORT Test			Post-SORT Test		Gains	
	GRADE LEVEL	RAW SCORE*	READING GRADE LEVEL	RAW SCORE*	READING GRADE LEVEL	RAW SCORE*	READING GRADE LEVEL
Thi	5	80	4	143	7.1	63	3.1
Rico	4	90	4.5	152	7.6	62	3.1
Osman	5	82	4.1	142	7.1	60	3
Kelsey	4	77	3.8	129	6.4	52	2.6
Adeline	4	50	2.5	98	4.9	48	2.4
Rosie	4	90	4.5	133	6.6	43	2.1
Vinnie	4	84	4.2	123	6.1	39	1.9
Thahn	4	61	3	99	4.9	38	1.9
Vong	5	64	3.2	100	5	36	1.8
Xa	5	69	3.4	105	5.2	36	1.8
Jessey	4	125	6.2	157	7.8	32	1.6
Shele	5	45	2.2	72	3.6	27	1.4
My Linh	5	50	2.5	79	3.8	29	1.3
Maria	4	138	6.9	165	8.2	27	1.3
Alicia	4	136	6.8	162	8.1	26	1.3
Tu	4	149	7.4	174	8.7	25	1.3
Michael	4	139	6.9	162	8.1	23	1.2
JR	5	63	3.1	85	4.2	22	1.1
Ia	4	49	2.4	67	3.3	18	0.9
Total		1641	81.6	2347	116.7	706	35.1
Average		86.4	4.3	123.5	6.1	37.2	1.8

\*Raw score = the count of actual words students could recognize.

**APPENDIX C: ANALYSIS OF PAIRED MEAN DIFFERENCES  
FOR PRE- AND POST-SCORES IN MSI (N = 20)**

Strategy Assessed	Mean Differences	Standard Error
Predicting and Verifying (7 questions)	1.45**	.4838
Previewing (2 questions)	.40*	.1835
Purpose Setting (3 questions)	.60*	.2847
Self-Questioning (3 questions)	1.05**	.2348
Drawing from Background Knowledge (6)	1.15**	.3574
Summarizing and Applying Fix-Strategies (4)	.85**	.2741
Total (25 questions)	5.50**	1.1251

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01

### Call for Proposals

The Assembly for Research of the National Council of Teachers of English announces a conference on **Transforming Literacies: Youth Culture, New Media, and Social Change**, to be held February 20–22, 2004, at the University of California, Berkeley. We invite proposals that address the following topics, issues, and questions:

- Forging connections between new literacies, new media, youth culture, and social activism
- The role of youth culture in re-visioning and transforming conceptions of literacy, education, teaching, and learning
- The relationships between new literacies and current educational contexts

Proposals should include a cover page plus no more than 2 single-spaced pages addressing the following: (1) focus of the presentation/background of the problem; (2) connections to research and/or theoretical literature(s); (3) research question(s) and research methods/methodology; (4) findings/issues/questions for discussion, as well as how the research contributes to the conference conversation. The cover page should include biographical information for all presenters, title of presentation, abstract of paper (200 word limit), and audio-visual requests. (Overheads, TV/VCRs supplied without charge and upon request; computers and LCD projectors are not provided and must be brought by presenters.)

**Proposals must be received by September 15, 2003.** Review criteria will include the quality of the proposal and the degree to which it addresses the conference theme. Submit proposals via email to conference co-chair Katherine Schultz: [kathys@gse.upenn.edu](mailto:kathys@gse.upenn.edu). Address questions to conference co-chairs Katherine Schultz, University of Pennsylvania, or Glynda Hull, University of California, Berkeley ([glynda@socrates.berkeley.edu](mailto:glynda@socrates.berkeley.edu)).