

A Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Based Literature Circle (LC) Model:  
Effects on Higher-Order Reading Comprehension Skills and Student Engagement  
in Diverse Sixth-Eighth Grade Classrooms

by

Charles Gibao Bendu

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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## **Abstract**

Outcomes related to students' reading comprehension and higher-order critical thinking skills, and students' academic and intellectual engagement following the implementation of a Three-Block Model of UDL-based literature circles pedagogical model were investigated. Fifty-nine (59) students attending three suburban public middle schools took part in the study. The study adopted a mixed-design approach to data collection and analysis, with quantitative data collected from all students, and qualitative data collected from a purposively selected sub-sample of 24 students (12 in each of treatment and control classes). Intervention and control groups were assessed pre and post for measures of reading comprehension using classroom-based assessments, which were triangulated by qualitative data from pre and post semi-structured student interviews to explore students' academic and intellectual engagement. Quantitative data were analyzed using repeated measures MANOVA's to determine treatment effects for both groups while qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed thematically using a case study approach. Quantitative results showed a small but significant increase in reading comprehension outcomes for proficient and typical readers in treatment groups compared to their counterparts in control classes, and showed a significantly greater increase in reading comprehension outcomes for students in treatment classes who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) and struggling readers. These findings were corroborated by the qualitative results, which showed that students' academic and intellectual engagement increased in the treatment classes both for proficient readers and struggling readers.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Chapter 1.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Reading Comprehension .....</b>	<b>6</b>
History of Reading Comprehension Instruction.....	6
Effective comprehension instruction: a paradigm shift from old to new.....	9
<b>Student Engagement .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Definitions.....	12
The Importance of Engagement.....	14
<b>The Three Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>What are Literature circles? .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Theoretical and Pedagogical Foundation for Literature circles.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Social constructivist theory.....	22
<b>Characteristics of literature circles in a UDL classroom.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>A Universal Design for Learning (UDL) -Based Literature Circles Model.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Statement of Problem.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Purpose of the Study .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Research Question .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Barriers to Inclusion of Students Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Instructional Paradigms in Literacy Instruction – Teacher-Directed Approach versus a Student-Centered Instructional Approach .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Teacher-Centered Pedagogy .....	38
Student-centered pedagogy.....	39
<b>Research Outcomes of UDL and the Three Block Model.....</b>	<b>41</b>
Student engagement.....	42
Social inclusion and peer interactions.....	43
Student self-concept and respect for others.....	43
Student autonomy.....	44
<b>Pedagogical Outcomes of the Three Block Model of UDL .....</b>	<b>44</b>
Type of task and flexible groupings.....	44

Teachers' perception of student outcomes, and teacher self-efficacy related to inclusive practice.....	45
Teachers' perceived benefits and challenges .....	45
<b>Social and Academic Outcomes of Literature circles .....</b>	<b>46</b>
Social Outcomes of Literature circles.....	46
Academic Outcomes of Literature Circles .....	52
<b>The Benefits of Literature circles for Students Who Are CLD and are Struggling Learners.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Chapter 3.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Sample and Participant Selection.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Data Collection Procedure.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Assessments and Measures .....</b>	<b>71</b>
Quantitative Measures. ....	71
<b>Training Procedures.....</b>	<b>76</b>
The UDL-Based Literature Circle Intervention.....	76
<b>Data Analysis Procedures .....</b>	<b>80</b>
Quantitative Data .....	81
Qualitative Data .....	81
<b>Chapter 4 .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Results and Discussion.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Quantitative Student Data .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Qualitative Student Data.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Strengths and Limitations.....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Implications and Future Research.....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Research Positionality.....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>162</b>
The Three Block Model of UDL .....	162
<b>Appendix B .....</b>	<b>163</b>
Letter to School Superintendents.....	163
<b>Appendix C.....</b>	<b>171</b>
Letter to Principals.....	171
<b>Appendix D .....</b>	<b>179</b>
Script for Teacher Invitation.....	179
<b>Appendix E.....</b>	<b>183</b>
Letter to Teachers.....	183
<b>Appendix F.....</b>	<b>191</b>
Letter to Parents .....	191
<b>APPENDIX G.....</b>	<b>196</b>
Participant Assent Form .....	196
<b>APPENDIX H .....</b>	<b>198</b>

Sample Standard Reading Assessment .....	198
<b>Appendix I.....</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Double Entry Journals.....</b>	<b>204</b>
.....	<b>204</b>
<b>APPENDIX J.....</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Comprehension Choice Board – Individual Performance Task (Blooms Taxonomy) .....</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>APPENDIX K .....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Semi-Structured Interview Questions .....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Appendix L.....</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>GRADE 6 Unit (social studies and science).....</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>Appendix M .....</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>GRADE 7 Unit (social studies and science).....</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>APPENDIX N .....</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>Six Week UDL-Thematic/Instructional Unit Plan/Time Line (90 Minutes per Day – 3 x per Week)</b> .....	<b>236</b>

### List of Tables

Table 1: Teacher-Directed Approach versus Student-Centered Instructional Approach.....	37
Table 2: Data Collection Procedure.....	70
Table 3: Research Instruments; Quantitative and Qualitative Measures of Student Outcomes .....	71
Table 4: Qualitative Student Sub-Sample.....	82
Table 5: Quantitative Student Sub-Sample .....	86
Table 6: Estimated Marginal Means: Treatment/Control – Reading Level – Pre and Post .....	88
Table 7: Estimated Marginal Means- Struggling Readers .....	90
Table 8: Pre-Interview Themes for Proficient Readers in Treatment and Control Classes (Quotes included) .....	95
Table 9: Post -Interview Themes for Proficient Readers in Treatment and Control Groups (Quotes Included) .....	101
Table 10: Pre- Interview Themes for Struggling Readers in Treatment and Control Classes (Quotes Included.).....	107
Table 11: Post-Interview Themes for Struggling Readers in Treatment and Control Classes (Quotes Included).....	112

### List of Figures

Figure 1: Overall Group Means - Proficient and Struggling Readers .....	89
Figure 2: Group Means - Struggling Readers -Treatment and Control .....	91

### **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I would like to gratefully and sincerely thank Dr. Jennifer Katz, my research advisor, for her guidance, understanding, patience, and most importantly, her mentorship and professional support during my journey as a graduate student. I am especially grateful for the unique opportunity she gave me to work as a research assistant, which provided me a well-rounded professional experience consistent with my graduate research career goals.

Second, I would also like to thank my research committee, Dr. Rick Freeze and Dr. Michelle Honeyford for their guidance and invaluable contributions that helped me to complete this research study. Their propositions and constructive suggestions in the development of this research work helped to make this study what it is. I sincerely appreciate their guidance and enthusiastic encouragement that propelled me in this study.

I would also like to express my profound gratitude to the brave classroom teachers who allowed me into their classrooms to conduct the intervention. This study would have been incomplete without their invaluable contribution in planning and implementing UDL-based literature circle units together with me, and supporting the collection of data from their classrooms.

Many thanks also go to my colleagues at Dufferin School especially Mr. Wyke, (Principal), Mrs. Warner (former Vice-Principal) and Ms. Frankie Pallen (ECLC Teacher) who encouraged and supported me mentally and professionally in my research journey.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my family, my dear wife, Mahawa Jaisy Bendu and children who supported me and believed in me while I worked through this process. To my wife, whose support, encouragement, patience and unwavering love were

undeniably the pillars upon which my graduate student journey has been built, I am especially grateful to her for her tolerance and devotion to my career-driven ambition. It was with her total support that I gained so much drive and ability to tackle the challenges in my studies head on. Finally, thank you to my children, Elizabeth, Charles (Jnr) and Baruba. They have inspired me to become what I am today.

### **Dedication**

To my wife, Mahawa Jaisy Bendu, who stood by me through thick and thin throughout my graduate research studies. Thank you for believing in me and standing with me through all the challenges of my academic journey as a graduate student up to the final moments. Your sacrifice and devotion to my education and the aspirations of the entire family will never be forgotten. Your labor of love will not go in vain.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, Canadian schools continue to reflect the increasing diversity of our society in terms of culture, ethnicity, language, ability and other characteristics. While students from diverse cultural backgrounds enrich the experience and discourse of Canadian classrooms, concerns regarding these changing demographics are underscored by the poor academic outcomes of students from language minority backgrounds (Lee, 2002; Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994). For instance, a recent study released by Alberta Education (2006) indicates that an increasing proportion of younger-arriving immigrant children (usually referred to as English as an Additional Language [EAL] learners) are entering educational systems throughout Canada with little or no experience or background schooling in English. According to the study, 40% of all immigrants to Canada are children and youth (0-24 years) and the majority of them have had little or no access to formal schooling. Research indicates that for the past 25 years, children who are culturally and linguistically diverse and exhibit a limited English-language proficiency have been underperforming academically in comparison with their English-speaking counterparts, and are failing to integrate meaningfully into the economy in large measure because of this (Zong, 2004).

As more and more students from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds populate 21st century classrooms, and efforts mount to identify effective methods to teach these students, the need for pedagogical approaches that meet the diverse needs of all students intensifies. Today's classrooms require teachers to educate students varying in culture, language, abilities, and many other characteristics (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). To meet this challenge, teachers must employ not

only theoretically sound approaches but also instructional pedagogies based on empirical research that meet the needs of this diverse student population. Demographic changes are taking place just as schools also face rising levels of accountability for the academic performance of all children in inclusive classrooms. Researchers have noted that despite these changing demographics, there is a dearth of empirical research about students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) as well as a disparity in providing for these students (Falconer & Byrnes, 2003).

This research was designed to investigate the effects of a universally designed literature circles model on the reading comprehension, higher-order critical thinking, and engagement of culturally and academically diverse sixth and seventh grade classes including both proficient readers, and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD/EAL) and are struggling readers. The model integrated the principles of the Three-Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and research-based literature circles to form a unique UDL-based literature circles model. The study specifically adopted a non-equivalent case study approach involving two instructional conditions - a treatment group using the model and a control group not using the model, in order to find out if the model helps all students to comprehend texts, improve student reading engagement, participation, and high-order thinking skills in diverse classrooms. It is hoped that this study would help develop a better understanding of how the academic needs of this diverse group of students can best be met in the regular classroom and the ways in which students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and are struggling learners, can learn not only with native-English speakers but with proficient readers, and be included genuinely in as many classroom activities as possible.

### **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students**

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) is an educational term used by educators in the United States and Canada to identify children from homes and communities where English is not the primary language of communication (Garcia, 1991). For the purposes of this study, therefore, the operational definition of the phrase students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) is any student whose primary language or languages of the home, is/are other than English and would require additional English language support to develop reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in English. Students who are CLD come from a range of cultural backgrounds. They bring with them a variety of educational, social and personal experiences as well as varying levels of English language proficiency. These students first learned to speak, read and/or write a language other than English and have a level of English language proficiency that impedes them from full participation in the learning experiences provided in Canadian schools.

Students who are CLD are estimated to form 20-50% of the general student population in urban K-12 systems across Canada (Roessingh & Kover, 2002). They may differ from the mainstream in ethnicity, primary language spoken at home, and social class (Au & Raphael, 2000). However, not all require the same types of support: some are Canadian-born, and live in homes in which the primary spoken language is not English, but enter school having had varying degrees of exposure to the language and cultural norms of the majority of English-speaking Canadians. Canadian-born ESL students include First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Francophone, Hutterite, Mennonite and Canadian-born children of immigrants. They may need to complement their early childhood experiences and home languages with extensive ESL support, including a variety of cultural-bridging experiences, if they are to be successful in the English-speaking school system. Some students who are CLD may have immigrated to Canada with their families after having

received some formal education in their home countries. In some cases, they have learned English as a foreign language in school. Given appropriate ESL support, including cultural-bridging experiences, these students usually progress well in their new schools, particularly if their parents support their academic efforts and their evolving bilingualism (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1999). At the same time, some students who are CLD arrive in Canada as refugees. These students may have received little or no schooling in their home country. They may also have experienced the traumatic conditions caused by political, social, and economic upheaval. They have often left their country involuntarily, perhaps leaving key members of their family behind. In addition to ESL support, these students may need specialized counseling and literacy training in their home language(s) (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1999).

More often than not, when students who are CLD are not sufficiently efficient to close the achievement gap with their native English speaking peers on these processes, they are at risk of academic failure and of being referred for special education services (Cummins, 1984; Ortiz & Yates, 1983). This reinforces the need for research that informs the accurate identification and assessment of struggling students who are CLD, as well as the design of specific instructional programs to meet their particular needs. In a knowledge-based Eurocentric society, having poor reading comprehension abilities beyond the primary grades can have unfavorable consequences on school achievement, access to societal resources, and occupational success (Ortega, 2012).

Students in upper elementary grades require the ability to analyze and comprehend complex texts to attain academic success and benefit from instruction (Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010). In fact, the challenges of acquiring and developing language and literacy skills in order to participate fully in social and academic contexts with native speakers (NS's) has been related to high rates of school

drop-out, reduced job expectations and poverty among students who are CLD (August & Shanahan, 2006).

To improve the academic achievement of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, educators must be responsive and sensitive to meet their diverse linguistic, and educational needs. Today's teachers are therefore faced with the task of educating an increasingly diverse student population, with varying levels of formal schooling, and representing a diversity of cultural traditions. Creating inclusive environments as well as implementing instructional pedagogies to support curricular outcomes for this student population has become essential for classroom teachers (Gonzalez, Pagan, Wendell & Love, 2011). In fact, as has been shown by Gonzalez et al. (2011) research identifies the fundamental need for instructional strategies that will support students who are CLD who struggle with literacy and content area academic needs as a priority for educators. Gonzales et al. (2011) also noted that although many strategies for supporting native English speakers are applicable to the CLD population, significant differences exist in the way that instruction must be designed for students who are CLD to achieve academic success.

The purpose of this research was to investigate if and how the integration between UDL principles and research-based literature circle pedagogical instruction in reading comprehension affect reading comprehension skills (higher-order critical thinking skills applied to text) and academic and intellectual engagement for proficient readers and students who are CLD and are struggling readers in inclusive sixth and seventh grade classrooms. Three suburban middle schools (Grade 5-8) in two public school divisions located within close proximity to a major urban center participated in this study (two control classes in school A and one treatment class in each of schools B and C).

### **Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is a dynamic, interactive process between the individual, the text, the reading activity (i.e., purpose), and the larger socio-cultural context for reading (Best, Rowe, Ozuru, & McNamara, 2005; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Thus, the multidimensional nature of reading comprehension makes it difficult to define what reading comprehension is. However, for the purposes of this study, I recognize the operational definition of reading comprehension as defined by the RAND Reading Study Group because it captures the interactive processes occurring between the individual, the text, and the reading activity and conceptualizes the overall reading processes activated within the individual. The RAND Reading Study Group (RRSG) defines the term reading comprehension as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (Snow, 2002). The RRSG believes that comprehension consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading. In terms of the reader, one should think of what is being brought to the act of reading – the ability, knowledge, and experience of the reader. When considering text, all printed or electronic reading material is included, and the activity encompasses the purpose, process, and consequences or outcomes of reading. The reader, the text, and the activity, combine to shape what occurs (Snow, 2002).

### **History of Reading Comprehension Instruction**

Prior to the First World War, the whole issue of comprehension instruction was not given any particular attention. Until that time, most reading instruction consisted of oral reading, and the indicators of successful oral reading were accuracy and fluency. In less than ten years, however, several significant changes occurred almost simultaneously: paper and pencil tests of reading

achievement became readily available; silent reading as an instructional activity became the vogue, and early reading comprehension instruction shifted emphasis from decoding to meaning. These changes marked the beginning of a new dawn in the world of reading instruction.

Over the years a variety of instructional reading comprehension programs emerged. Basal reading programs for instance, have been used for decades. According to Hendricks & Rinsky (2007), basal reading programs are “Instructional materials (generally designed for grades K-6 or K-8) consisting of sequential lessons that incorporate the use of student books, teacher guides, assessment materials, and other ancillary materials” (p. 211). It wasn’t until 1890 -1910 when “reading readiness” books were produced that promoted using authentic literature to teach students and promote literacy interest (Martinez & McGee, 2000). These books then became a part of a typical basal reading series (Teale, 1995).

In the mid-to-late 1970’s the approach to teaching reading comprehension continued to change and some teachers followed a whole language approach to reading instruction. In his examination of the whole language approach, Gunning (2008) stated that whole language supporters believe that reading and writing instruction should be learned in the same ways as we learn to speak, which is by doing. Students are taught to use critical thinking strategies to read and write whole texts and to develop reading and writing skills within meaningful or authentic reading and writing situations. This includes explicit help in developing phonemic awareness, phonics knowledge, and decoding skills. This was a significant change from the traditional approach in which teachers first taught students specific reading skills, and then required practice with stories in which that skill was applied.

In the late 1990s, balanced reading instruction emerged as a popular approach to teaching reading (Reutzel & Cooter, 2004). Fountas and Pinnell (1996) believe that balanced literacy not

only includes a well-structured class that incorporates read alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading, but it also requires home, library, and community involvement. Teachers began to implement even amounts of teacher-directed and student-directed reading activities, whole group, small group, and individual activities, as well as intensive and extensive reading and writing (Daniels, 2002).

In the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, reading comprehension instruction continued to experience significant changes. With a great deal of literature supporting whole language instruction and balanced instruction, researchers are now expanding this work and suggesting that current reading comprehension instruction should emphasize comprehensive instruction (Reutzel & Cooter, 2004). According to Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2007),

Comprehensive effective literacy instruction in the modern era emphasizes the personal, intellectual, and social nature of literacy instruction, and supports the notion that students construct new meanings in response to contextual experiences rather than simply learning what others have created (p. 14).

Gambrell et al suggest that there are at least ten different “evidence based best practices” that illustrate comprehensive literacy instruction. They consist of creating a classroom environment that allows and encourages literacy motivation; teaching reading in a way that allows for true meaning-making literacy experiences; including scaffolded instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension; providing a great deal of reading time to students; making high-quality literature from a variety of genres available to students; balancing the amount of teacher-led and student-led discussions; linking and expanding concepts through the use of technology; and using a wide range of assessment techniques to inform instruction. All of these current approaches help to develop fluency and essential decoding skills,

background vocabulary, as well as acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, and strategies necessary for a reader to develop proficient reading skills and construct personal meaning from texts.

**Effective comprehension instruction: a paradigm shift from old to new.** Cognitive research points to the need for a new conceptualization of comprehension curriculum, and research on teaching suggests that we rethink instruction, including pedagogy related to reading comprehension for native English speaking peers and students who are CLD (Dole, Duffy, Rocheler, & Pearson, 1991). Traditionally, curriculum designers and teachers have relied on a drill-and-practice, retell model of instruction; that is, repeatedly exposing students to tasks such as answering comprehension questions and completing skill exercises and work books until they have achieved mastery (Duffy & McIntyre, 1982; Durkin, 1978-1979). The disadvantages of this traditional approach in terms of limiting the ability of readers to make creative and constructive meanings from text, has led to a cognitive model called “the cognitive view of the comprehension process” that explains the constructive nature of reading comprehension (Dole et al., 1991, p. 242). Just as in text comprehension readers construct meaning from prior knowledge about the topic and cues gleaned from the text and situational context, in instructional comprehension students construct meaning of instructional events by using knowledge about instruction and cues gleaned from the teacher and/or other students in the instructional context. Gradually, students construct personal meanings, or schemata. Shulman (1986) describes the process cogently:

The learner does not respond to the instruction per se. The learner responds to the instruction as transformed, as actively apprehended. Thus, in order to understand why learners respond (or fail to respond) as they do, ask not what they were taught but what sense they rendered of what they were taught. The consequences of teaching can only be

understood as a function of what that teaching stimulates the learner to do with the material (p. 17).

Hence, in this cognitive model, students are active learners; they construct meaning from the instructional context and they monitor and regulate instructional information. In this sense, students are metacognitive much as good conceptual comprehenders are (Baker & Brown, 1984; Flavell, 1987).

From a metacognitive perspective therefore, reading instruction can be seen as a transactional process between the student, the text, peers and the teacher. Messages move between each member of the literacy community even as ideas are exchanged for the purpose of generating knowledge. Transaction-oriented literacy activities foster productive teacher– student and student– student relationships and communication. These productive relationships are shaped when students’ interest and involvement in meaningful literacy activities serve as the starting point for instruction (Au & Raphael, 1998). Student interest and involvement increase when teachers include instruction that makes explicit connections between literacy activities and students’ personal lives and interests. Teachers that emphasize literacy skills raise the comprehension and personal response with students of diverse backgrounds who may be unfamiliar with the interactional demands of classroom activities (Au & Raphael, 2000).

Many researchers specializing in second language (L2) student populations today call for abandoning traditional instruction that involves reductionistic skill-building activities mentioned earlier (Au & Raphael, 2000; Carrasquillo et al., 2004; Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Cummins, 2002; Freeman & Freeman, 2003; Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Hickman-Davis & Kouzekanani, 2003; Peregoy & Boyle, 2000; Watts-Trafte & Truscott, 2000). Instead, they support approaches that encourage a metacognitive and constructive model such as discovery, hands-on, experiential,

collaborative, project-based, and task-based learning. To further support this view, research studies by Raphael and Brock (1997) also advocate for instruction that consists of genuine dialogue between the student and teacher, as well as student-to-student collaborative talk. They believe that the teacher's role is to meet the L2 learners' literacy and language learning needs through student-to-student as well as teacher facilitated conversations and activities that develop higher-level comprehension, such as the ability to analyze, synthesize, and make connections rather than literal recall.

Some researchers specializing in culturally and linguistically diverse special education populations have therefore called for a paradigm shift from traditional literal recall comprehension strategies to an interactive or experiential model (Cummins, 1984, 1989). Cummins, for instance, advocated instruction that consists of genuine dialogue or instructional conversations between the student and teacher, as well as student-to-student collaborative talk. The teacher's role is thus one of facilitator, encouraging students to use meaningful language without focusing on the correctness of form.

Effective L2 reading comprehension approaches should therefore facilitate creativity, critical thinking, self-efficacy and most importantly, facilitate collaboration, access and viable membership and engagement in a classroom literacy community. According to Dunleavy & Milton (2008), exploration of student engagement and research pointing to high levels of disengagement in inclusive classrooms have raised concerns about educational systems and pedagogies that do not create social and academic engagement and collaboration for diverse learners. Thus, there is clearly a need for empirical research on types of instructional pedagogies in the schools that encourage students' engagement and cognitive investment in their schooling.

## Student Engagement

### Definitions

There are many definitions of student engagement (Dunleavy & Milton, 2008). Researchers investigating academic engagement have used multiple terms interchangeably to define academic engagement such as: *Engagement, Academic Engagement, Active Engagement, Student Engagement, Academic Engagement Time, On-task behavior, and Task Engagement* (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Finn, Pannozzo, & Voelkl 1995; Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris 2004; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Skinner and Belmont, 1993). Indicators of engagement have also varied, and at times have intermingled with compliance, as when researchers observe students following directions and adhering to the classroom rules and expectations, and taking out their materials when directed by the teacher as measures of engagement (e.g. Lien-Thorne & Kamps 2005; Sutherland, Alder, & Gunter 2003; Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000). In a nutshell, most studies seem to adopt or use a variation of the Academic Engaged Time definition from Walker et al, (1990):

Academic Engagement (AET) means that the student is appropriately engaged in working on assigned academic material that is geared to her or his ability and skill levels. While academically engaged, the student is (a) attending to the material and the task, (b) making appropriate motor responses (e.g. writing, computing) and (c) asking for assistance (where appropriate) in an acceptable manner, and (d) interacting with the teacher or classmates about academic matters or listening to teacher instructions and directions (p.45).

Although this definition was intended to measure observable behaviors such as time on task, there are several drawbacks to this definition. First, it centers on students'

appropriate/inappropriate behaviors. By implication, this definition seems to overlook the vital aspect of engagement that is internal to the student: motivation, interest, and effort. While these variables may be more difficult to observe, they can be measured through interviews or surveys, and by behaviors such as showing effort and persistence in challenging tasks.

Recently, in a national study of student engagement, Willms, Friesen, and Milton, (2009) identified three dimensions of engagement: social, academic and intellectual engagement. These dimensions detail the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes, have a sense of belonging at school, participate in academic and non-academic activities, strive to meet the formal requirements of schooling, and make a serious personal investment in learning (Willms et. al., 2009). Social engagement, including factors such as belonging and self-concept, is unlikely to be changed by a short term, specific activity such as literature circles. For this reason, my study will focus on the impact of literature circles on academic and intellectual engagement only. For the purposes of this study, therefore, student engagement has been operationally defined by the researcher as active participation or involvement in the requirements of the learning task and it includes two factors: a) academic engagement – defined as “the degree to which students are ‘connected’ to what is going on in their classes” (Steinback et al., 1996, p.15) and b) intellectual engagement – defined as cognitive investment in learning or the degree to which students are interested and curious about what they are learning, and consists of internal factors such as motivation and interest, and a serious emotional, psychological and cognitive investment in learning (e.g. passion, determination, resiliency, perseverance), using higher order thinking skills—such as synthesis, analysis and evaluation—to increase understanding, solve complex problems, or construct new knowledge (Willms et. al., 2009).

### **The Importance of Engagement**

There is growing consensus among researchers that optimal learning comes from active engagement with the material being taught (Prince, 2004). Research indicates that students who are highly engaged at school learn more, get higher grades, and more often pursue higher education (Park, Holloway, Arendtsz, Bempechat, & Li, 2012). In fact, student engagement predicts achievement in and completion of school (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). Engagement with classroom work has been established as an important attribute of cognitive development and productive academic achievement, the lack of which (disengagement) has been shown to lead to poor learning outcomes (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001; Fincham, Hokoda, & Sanders, 1989; Finn & Cox, 1992; Laffey, 1982; Ogbu, 2003; Spivack & Cianci, 1987). It is important therefore, that classroom instruction aims to ensure active participation and cognitive engagement and that instructional pedagogies be developed that facilitate students' academic and intellectual engagement in diverse, inclusive classrooms from K-12. Findings from studies that have put students in active learning situations support the benefits of participatory engagement (Smith & Cardaciotto, 2011; Yoder & Hochevar, 2005). Instructional methods that include small group work, differentiated tasks, and peer interactions have been shown to increase student engagement (Katz, 2013). Given that concerns have been raised about the engagement and success of students who are CLD, this study will focus on two dimensions of student engagement – academic and intellectual engagement of students who are proficient readers and students who are CLD and are struggling readers in the context of a UDL-based literature circle literacy intervention in grade six and seven classrooms.

### **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**

One possible model of instructional planning that addresses both the academic and social needs of all students in inclusive classrooms and facilitates access, participation, and progress for all learners is the Three-Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (Katz, J., 2012a). This model or concept of Universal Design originates from the field of architecture with accessibility as its overriding goal (Story, Mueller, & Mace, 1998). More than 30 years ago, Ronald Mace, an architect and wheelchair user, proposed the ground-breaking idea that physical environments should be proactively designed to meet the needs of the broadly diverse individuals who access these spaces (Wilkoff & Abed, 1994). The term universal design (UD) was devised to reflect the approach of proactively incorporating inclusive design features while reducing the need for individual, retrofitted accommodations (Center for Universal Design, 1997).

As the concept of UD evolved, Mace and his colleagues at the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University (NCSU) defined UD as “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Center for Universal Design, 1997, para. 1). A common observation about universally designed products and environments is that they result in a more functional environment or product for everyone; for example, curb cuts (useful for wheelchair users, but also accessed by individuals on skateboards, parents pushing baby strollers, etc.).

However, as noted by Welch (1995),

The concept of UD goes beyond the mere provision of special structures for various segments of the population. Instead it emphasizes an innovative approach that is more inclusive, one that asks at the outset of the design process how a product, graphic

communication, building, or public space can be made both artistically pleasing and functional for the greatest number of users (p. iii).

Further research in neuroscience and new research initiatives by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), a not-for profit organization founded in 1984 that promotes the uses of technology to expand opportunities for all people, especially those with disabilities (CAST, 2004a), continued to increase awareness of UD and its application in the educational milieu. The work of CAST developed the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), an approach to planning and developing curricula in ways that enhance access, participation, and progress in the general education curriculum for all learners (CAST, 2006). CAST has enunciated three essential principles of UDL: More specifically, a UDL curriculum is characterized by the provision of: (1) multiple or flexible representations of information and concepts (the “what” of learning), (2) multiple or flexible options in expression and performance (the “how” of learning), and (3) multiple or flexible ways to engage learners in the curriculum (the “why” of learning) (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

More recent development of the theory and practice of UDL recognizes instructional pedagogies that facilitate accessibility for diverse learners (Burgstahler, 2008). UDL is a means of identifying and removing barriers in the curriculum while building scaffolds, supports, and alternatives that meet the learning needs of a wide range of students (Meo, 2008). Therefore, one probable framework for addressing the diversity of all students and creating a flexible curriculum, which in standards-based settings includes instructional goals, methods, assessments, materials and technology that supports access, participation, and progress for diverse learners is universal design for learning (Meyer & Rose, 2000; Rose & Meyer, 2002). As a result Universal Design for Learning may be the model that can help make inclusive education work for students who

proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling readers. Its goal is to ensure that students learn in a variety of ways through multiple means of representation, expression and engagement.

From a UDL perspective therefore, the type of instruction in reading comprehension should be guided by universal design for learning principles that ensure access and participation for all learners such as: (1) multiple means of representation such as multi-level texts that provide choice and appropriate challenges for a mixed ability group of students, and materials that are flexible and varied and take advantage of digital media, such as digitized text, multimedia software, video recorders, tape recorders, and the Internet, (2) Multiple means of expression or performance that are flexible and diverse enough to support and challenge all learners and assessment techniques that are sufficiently flexible to provide ongoing, accurate information to inform instruction and determine student understanding and knowledge (Rose & Meyer, 2002), and (3) Multiple means of engagement with authentic learning activities that are flexible, culturally relevant and meet the learning styles and multiple intelligences of all students. This way, students will likely respond to text differently depending on the strengths they possess as a reader, the text they are reading, and the activity in which they are participating. Ultimately, the goal is for the instructional design to meet the learning needs of every student, enhance student access and participation in their learning, and eliminate the problems associated with the traditional teacher-centered model of instruction.

### **The Three Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**

UDL has been revealed to support access, participation and progress for all learners (Meo, 2012; Rose & Meyer, 2002). However, very few studies have provided a comprehensive framework that links the evidence-based practices in inclusive education together, including

practices supportive of social and emotional engagement, in a practical, research based, K-12, insightful manner. In a recent book about UDL, *“Teaching to Diversity: The Three Block Model of UDL”*, Katz, (2012a) describes a UDL framework that integrates decades of research on inclusive educational practice and key strategies such as differentiated instruction, understanding by design, assessment for learning, inquiry, literature circles, performance assessment, student self-assessment, democratic classrooms, class meetings, and communities of care. In proposing a Three-Block Model for UDL, Katz (2012a) attempts to synthesize the research on effective strategies for inclusion in order to address key questions such as, how can we make inclusion work successfully in a learning community?, what are the foundational best practices of a truly inclusive learning community?, and how does one create such a community? Katz delineates three main components (blocks) of UDL that provide teachers with a system for creating inclusive environments and enhancing student engagement. The three blocks include: (1) building compassionate learning communities, that is, ensuring positive social and emotional learning influences on the climate of school and classroom; (2) inclusive instructional practice; and (3) systems and structures that support inclusive learning communities (see Appendix A).

According to Katz (2012a), the first block deals with Social and Emotional Learning, and how to build compassionate learning communities; employing the Respecting Diversity (RD) program and democratic classroom management with class meetings. In the second block of this model, called Inclusive Instructional Practice, Katz proposes a procedural planning and instructional framework for the model. At the initial stage, physical and instructional environments are planned so that students have access to differentiated learning opportunities in order to address their varied learning modes. Teachers are provided with training on year and unit planning that integrates evidence based practices such as Understanding by Design (Brown, 2004; Wiggins &

McTighe, 2005), Differentiated Instruction (Beecher & Sweeny, 2008; Tomlinson, 2010), Curriculum Integration (Drake & Burns, 2004), Inquiry (Brusca-Vega, Brown, & Yasutake, 2011), and Assessment for Learning (Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004). The essential understandings within the curricula are identified, and inquiry activities that promote higher order thinking are planned. Embedded in this process, according to Katz, is the designing of rubrics by teachers using Bloom's Taxonomy that reflects multiple developmental levels of understanding, and can be used to assess multi-modal expressions of knowledge and understandings. In the third block, called systems and structures, Katz (2012a) recommends significant changes in some of the policies and practices in our current school systems related to budgeting, staffing, training, and interactions with communities. In conclusion, the "Three-Block Model of UDL" has shown a significant impact in terms of social inclusion and engagement for both students and teachers when this program is implemented (Katz, 2013; Katz & Porath, 2011).

The current study was an application of the principles of UDL in the second inclusive instructional practice block of the "Three-Block Model" using a universally designed pedagogy of literature circles in inclusive classrooms within an elementary reading comprehension program. It seeks to investigate if and how the integration between UDL principles, the inclusive practices included in the "Three-Block Model" and research-based literature circles' pedagogical instruction in reading comprehension affect reading comprehension skills (high-order critical thinking skills) and engagement of proficient readers and students who are CLD and are struggling readers in inclusive sixth and seventh grade classrooms. A unique UDL-based pedagogical instructional approach to implementing literature circles was designed to conduct this investigation in two inclusive UDL experimental classrooms.

### **What are Literature circles?**

Literature circles have been referred to by researchers in many ways, such as instructional conversations (Goldenberg, 1993), dialogic inquiry (Wells, 1999), or dialoging to learn (Barnes, 1992). Some specific examples of text-based discussion models include literature circles (Daniels, 1994), book club (Raphael, Pardo, Highfield, & McMahon, 1997), or grand conversations (Eeds & Wells, 1989). Regardless of the terminology or the model used, educators are encouraged to move away from the dominant “recitation” format for discussions found in today’s classrooms (Almasi, 1996). Recitations are manifested as an initiation-response-evaluation (I-R-E) discourse structure—a three-part sequence where the teacher initiates a question, students respond to the question, and the teacher evaluates the response (Cazden, 1988). The main objective is to replace the pattern of asking students to recite answers to questions focused often on mere facts or skills with a new pattern of collaborative meaning-making comprehension activity that promotes analysis, reflection, and critical thinking.

Literature circles are a form of literary engagement used in many classrooms today. The purpose of this approach is to encourage students to read with a focus and then report on and discuss what they read, determining for themselves what is significant in their reading and why. They have many forms, but essentially they are small, discussion groups consisting of students who are reading the same text, but at their own level and pace. Literature circles have been known to contribute to the development of skillful and thoughtful readers at all grade levels (Daniels, 2002). Literature Circles can function as a method of helping students generate their own ideas about what they read and provide conversational structures that help students and teachers break away from typical recitation discourse patterns. Through this approach students gradually take responsibility for reading, comprehending, interpreting, developing discussion of text, and

engaging in increasingly more complex levels of reading and thinking (Brabham & Villaume, 2000). Initial interpretations of text may be individual, where meaning represents something different to each reader, but when situated within a collaborative setting, such as a literature circle, the discussion nudges the interpretations of text along an unstable and shared path of meaning-making (Gee, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rosenblatt, 1983). Researchers acknowledge that meanings created in social interactions can provide a foundation of learning and critical analysis (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978), thus, developing interpretations with a peer group has the potential to be even more powerful than independent processes (Eeds & Wells, 1989).

### **Theoretical and Pedagogical Foundation for Literature circles**

Although teachers typically use literature circles as a way to have students respond to literature, much more is happening that can and should be connected to theory (Marshall, 2006). Therefore, a set of principles that promotes learning interactions proposed by theory needs to be articulated in order to understand how participation in literature circles affects reading comprehension. Literature circles are theoretically grounded in cognitive psychology (Flavell, 1992; Palincsar & Brown, 1984) as well as sociocultural theory (Perez, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). In order to understand what is being read, a reader must have a broad range of abilities. These capabilities include cognitive abilities like attention, memory, visualization, and inferring, as well as motivation and knowledge. A complete explanation of the nature of literature circles and a deeper articulation of their social structure is evident in how literature circles seem to instantiate Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivist theory. This theoretical analysis of literature circles is positioned in social constructivism and it explores Piaget's and Vygotsky's perspectives on interaction in relation to literature circles as a collaborative task, reader response criticism or critical theory research as well as the socio-cultural theories that underpin this approach.

**Social constructivist theory.** The literature circle pedagogical model is partly based on Piaget's constructivist theory, and on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). Piaget believed that learners construct knowledge through experiences (Piaget, 1970). Building on Piaget's initial theories, constructivists also believe that a child is an active learner and thinker, or a sense maker who is constructing his or her own knowledge by interacting with objects and ideas and is actively engaged in the reading process (Jonassen, 1999). Based on this constructivist theory, literature circles require students to draw upon their past experiences in order to construct knowledge. Implementing literature circles allows each student to bring his or her own reading experience to the discussion table, self-pace his or her own reading and decide how much to read and how much to participate in the discussions. In literature circles, students practice reading comprehension strategies while reading books that are at their reading level and are of interest to them.

According to social constructivist theory, learning occurs through social interaction. Learning in social interactive contexts can be observed in several ways. Vygotsky (1978) identifies four major aspects or principles of learning: (1) the zone of proximal development (ZPD), (2) semiotic mediation, (3) concept development, and (4) internalization. The ZPD is the zone in which a child can achieve success in learning when aided by a knowledgeable other or in a situation of a high level of challenge. According to this tenet, a knowledgeable other is required in order to learn; therefore, instructional practices need to account for this because it is important to engage students in meaningful and challenging learning experiences. Typically, when initiating literature circles, the teacher assumes the role of the knowledgeable other and models interaction for the students through mini-lessons and other demonstrations. Later, these modeled interactions influence the discussion produced by the students, and they assume the role of knowledgeable

other for each other (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Therefore, as students participate in these modeled interactions and “book-talk” with others, a constructive meaning-making process evolves through predicting, clarifying, making connections, analyzing and evaluating the objects and materials in their discussion.

Vygotsky’s second principle, semiotic mediation relates to using signs and symbols in a social context to create meaning. Essentially, semiotic mediation is the process in which humans internalize the world around them through discourse. In most literature circle designs students engage in some sort of preparation prior to discussion in the form of writing questions, making connections, or other comprehension strategies. During the discussion, their notes and response journals serve as signs and symbols that represent their understandings of the text and help to scaffold their discussion. Ideally, the participants’ initial understandings act as a springboard into semiotic mediation of meaning for themselves and others (Shotter, 1993). These signs and symbols initiate cognitive restructuring and meaning making. A student’s understanding of text can change as he/she engages in dialogue. Language can be a powerful sign that aids students in developing their understanding of a concept; therefore, students should be given ample opportunity to use language as a learning tool.

McMahon (1996) provides a perfect example of students engaging in semiotic mediation in a literature discussion when he describes two boys as they discuss and represent their understandings of the topic “war”. At the initial stages of their literature circle discussions, their symbols represent a more comic discernment of war, drawing pictures of war consisting of little stick figures being barraged with heavy artillery. After engaging in four weeks of literature circles and very profound discussions, the students demonstrated a more sophisticated understanding of the consequences of war, in this case language serving as the signs and symbols. The students

began with their own vague conceptions of war, but through the collaborative dialogue and exploration of the topic, their understandings changed from the literal to a more complex understanding as they engaged in different semiotic resources (language, images) exhibited across various modalities (visual, tactile, oral) as well as their interaction and integration in constructing the topic.

This semiotic mediation leads to the third principle of the social constructivist perspective - concept development. In the example of the two boys mentioned above, the students did not initially have an accurate concept of war. This was seen in their comical drawings and informal laughter during the discussion. After the concept of war was developed through reading and subsequent dialogue, their discussions became thoughtful, and the conversations turned from fun to a serious dialogue. Through the process of reading, discussing, brainstorming, and representing their understanding in multiple formats such as journaling, drawing, and presenting, their concepts of war became more profound. Therefore, the first three principles of social constructivist theory help serve to explain the complex path from a novice understanding of texts to a more complex and sophisticated one that is nudged by a collaborative approach.

The last principle takes the newly found concepts and internalizes them. According to Vygotsky, there are two ways to internalize concepts (Vygotsky, 1978). He describes two planes of mental function: inter-psychological and intra-psychological. Essentially, an individual in a group connects the social interaction to their prior experiences. Students do not internalize the socially constructed reality verbatim, but create a coherent understanding that can exist within their individual realities. While the internalization may not resemble the individual understandings of other group members, the social interaction and collaboration plays a major role in the

construction of personal knowledge. In other words, the group conversation helps participants internalize information related to the text (McMahon, 1996).

**Characteristics of literature circles in a UDL classroom.** In 1994, Daniels introduced the concept of literature circles. In this initial format, students assembled groups, selected a text, created a schedule for meeting, and determined roles. These roles, such as discussion director, word wizard, connector, summarizer, or illustrator were given to students in preparation for the literature discussion. In fact, many interpretations of literature circles, or book clubs, assign roles to participants (Pearson, 2010; Sandmann & Gruhler, 2007; Tompkins & Tompkins, 2001). In support of this perspective, research indicates that students prefer some sort of preparatory work prior to discussion (Evans, 2002). However, preparatory methods vary in implementation. The structures range from rigid roles (Miller, 2002; Tompkins & Tompkins, 2001) to complete open discussion (Li et al., 2007). The differing structures might be attributed to varying teacher philosophies, goals for literature circles, or a teacher's past experience with literature circles. During discussion, each student assumes a role that corresponds to specific cognitive tasks, thereby providing a support framework for the discussion. The classroom teacher offers guidance and support to students as they apply strategies while interacting with each other and with the text. A long-term goal of this approach is the self-regulated use of these strategies to foster comprehension (Hill, Noe, & King, 2003).

Newer forms of literature circles have eliminated the use of roles, and change the preparatory process for discussion (Day & Ainley, 2008; Eriksson & Aronsson, 2004; Hulan, 2010) moving towards more authentic conversations (Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1995). Some researchers (Pearson, 2010) argue that limiting students to roles in literature circles potentially inhibits the discussion. Pearson's (2010) class of 28 students served as the subjects in a study that

used roles for discussion. The teacher implemented literature circles with scripted lessons and utilized roles. Pearson was hoping to see more exploratory talk- to have children elaborate reasoning, use personal anecdotes, and back up their claims with text evidence (Mercer & Wegerif, 1999). However, discourse analysis revealed that students only demonstrated these desired behaviors when conversation switched from school discourse to an informal discourse. In other words, when students abided by the structured roles, the discussions were less likely to go beyond the minimum expectation. However, when students neglected the roles, students were able to discuss freely. Pearson found that the less-structured instances produced more exploratory talk and higher order thinking (Pearson, 2010).

Faye Brownlie's book, *Grand Conversations, Thoughtful Responses - A Unique Approach to Literature circles* (2005), a study she developed for over 15 years, followed on this desire to facilitate higher-order thinking and developed a unique pedagogical approach to reading comprehension instruction through literature circles. She believed that research and experience had shown that assigned roles can lead to rather artificial conversations and can be an organizational challenge (Brownlie, 2005). The opportunity to talk with their classmates about what they are reading-in small groups, where all voices are respected and heard and where all students are included, is what inspires students towards more effective reading. In this way, students are engaged in making sense of the text, creating images, asking questions, making connections, drawing inferences, predicting, analyzing, synthesizing, and responding emotionally.

Brownlie's approach to literature circles includes several key components of a literature circles model. First, a multi-leveled collection of books from various genres is made available for the class to choose from. Students then meet in heterogeneous discussion groups to talk about the book they are currently reading, often, with an adult to facilitate but not lead the discussion

(students in each group read the same book at any given time and lead the discussions). Students are asked to come to the discussion with a passage from the book that they would like to read aloud or comment on as a conversation starter, and other students in the group respond to the conversation starter (referred to as the “say something strategy”). When a student is finished a book, they return the completed book or novel to the collection and choose another book, thus joining a new discussion group. This allows diverse learners to self-pace, as one student may read several books in a week, while others will read only one. Two or three times a week, students respond in journals to the books they are reading; the choice of journal format changes with the increasing skills of the students. Every two weeks, all students complete a comprehension activity based on the novel or book they have just completed reading and a final culminating inquiry project is completed as a group. Brownlie suggests large blocks of time (seventy-five to ninety minutes) are most effective for literature circles, including reading time, group discussions, and response activities.

An important component of the success of this model is the text, which must be engaging, relevant and contain an element of controversy. The teacher thoughtfully presents texts from multiple genres and text formats that meet the need of every student, and inspire critical thinking and a variety of perspectives. Book choices revolve around an integrated thematic unit, which may connect to English Language Arts, social studies or science. Students are encouraged to choose books that are appropriate for their independent reading level, but are not directed to particular texts, and may choose books that are easier or difficult for them if desired.

Therefore, this new direction of literature circles has emerged with the aim to deviate from traditional discursive paradigms in classrooms between teachers and students (e.g., initiate, respond, evaluate) and move towards a new model of literature circles that embraces the principles

of UDL, the concept that maximizes accessibility for all students by meeting the needs of diverse learners.

### **A Universal Design for Learning (UDL) -Based Literature Circles Model**

A UDL-based literature circles model integrates elements from the following successful reading instructional approaches: Faye Brownlie’s literature circles (Brownlie, 2005), modified guided reading (Avalos et al., 2008), instructional conversations (Goldenberg, 1991), book club (Raphael & McMahon, 1994), transactional strategy instruction (TSI; Pressley et al., 1992), differentiated instruction and understanding by design (UBD) models. Its design utilizes flexible groupings, allowing the classroom teacher to differentiate literacy instruction for all students using a backward design model, while students meet in literary discussion groups to dialogue about what they have read in order to collectively construct meanings from the text. This model utilizes the Three-Block Model of Universal Design for Learning framework as an approach to planning curricula—including instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments—that are sufficiently flexible from the foundation to accommodate learner differences (Katz, 2012a; Meyer & Rose, 1998). For instance, this model incorporates multi-level texts and text formats (audio and digitized copies) that provide choice and appropriate challenges for a heterogeneous group of students; multiple methods of text representation, expression and engagement that are flexible and diverse enough to support and challenge a diverse group of students; authentic learning activities that are flexible, engaging, participatory, and meet the learning styles of all students in an inclusive classroom; and authentic assessment opportunities that are adequately flexible to support ongoing, accurate information, to inform instruction and determine student understanding and knowledge. The essential components of the model that connects it with the Three-Block Model of Universal Design for Learning principles include:

1. Multiple or flexible representations of information. A collection of books is made available for the class. In choosing these books, the teacher aims to have different titles and five or six copies of each title for each group. Within the book collection, there needs to be a title choice that is both readable (at an appropriate reading level) and desirable (something that students will want to read) for each student in the class. Each set of books in the collection is based on a thematic unit that includes curricular concepts from science and social studies currently being studied in the classroom. This ensures that all students will have some background knowledge and vocabulary with which to attack the text, as they will have engaged in learning surrounding this topic throughout the school day. Realizing that novels or the text may be a barrier to students who are designated English as an Additional Language (EAL) students and other struggling readers, teachers ensure that digital copies of texts, scanned sections of texts that could be read digitally by a computer, strategy stickies in a book to help students pause and think about what they are reading, and high-tech strategies such as using Microsoft Word's insert text or audio comment features to support understanding are all made available as options.

2. Multiple or flexible options in expression or performance. In this model, students meet in discussion groups three times a week, to talk about the book they are currently reading. The discussion group is made up of all students who are reading the same book at any given time. The classroom teacher generally joins any of the discussion groups. Because students can read at their own rate, when they meet to discuss the book, they are all at different parts of the book. Students are encouraged to "tease" other readers (i.e., to encourage them to read on) but not to "spill the beans" about the book. This scaffolds struggling readers, as they hear about what is coming up, thus providing motivation to "get to that part" and facilitating comprehension. Students come to the discussion to share "what happened" and "what I think" about the book they are reading as a

conversation starter. Other students in the group respond to the conversation starter. The literature circles last for forty minutes (20 minutes of silent reading and 20 minutes of discussion or sharing). When students complete a novel, they return it to the collection and chose another book and join the discussion group for that book. In this way, students are able to self-pace, and are not held back waiting for others to finish the chapter or text before they can have a meeting and move on.

3. Multiple or flexible ways of engagement. Two or three times a week, students respond in double entry journals to the books they are reading. Students record their ideas in two columns: “what happened?” and “what I think?” about the text they have read. Every week, all students complete one to two comprehension activities in multiple formats based on the novel or thematic unit they have completed reading, thus creating opportunities for students to engage themselves, and demonstrate their understanding, in multiple ways. At the end of the unit students select a favorite text based on the thematic unit, and each group (having completed their texts) complete an inquiry project and present it to the class to express their understanding of the thematic unit using a multiple intelligences framework. At the end of the unit students select another set of books of their choice and continue to meet in their discussion groups and take part in the classroom activities.

### **Statement of Problem**

To ensure that all students have genuine opportunities to learn in standards-based settings, educators need to develop a new kind of approach to learner differences. Whereas learner differences have been traditionally defined as inherent strengths and weaknesses of students themselves (without regard for weaknesses in the curriculum itself, which has been regarded as

static and infallible), the interaction between the learner and the educational curriculum must be considered (Meyer & Rose, 2005). In other words, in looking for ways to create inclusivity amongst all learners, including proficient readers as well as English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners in high-quality, standards-based educational settings, educators and researchers should look for ways in which the curriculum presents barriers and supports to academic achievement for diverse learners and how the curriculum can be redesigned to include all learners from the inception.

Frequently, in conventional classrooms all students are required to read the same books, making it difficult for struggling readers to succeed (Yatvin, 2004). In most cases, the classroom teacher will stay focused on whole class instruction and discussion in an attempt to reach all students, and provide effective instruction at one time for all students – a practice antithetical to recognition of the diverse ways of learning in inclusive classrooms, particularly for students who are English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners.

In addition, instructional practices in use in classrooms today must be developed from theory and supported by research. It is not enough for an instructional strategy to be popular or well-liked by teachers. One of the criteria of scientifically-based research is that instruction must have evidence of a research foundation (Allington, 2001). These instructional practices demonstrate the need for connecting theory to potentially successful approaches, such as UDL and literature circles, and for studying them empirically.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Teachers have praised the merits of literature circles with testimonials and action-researchers have explored it, but as of yet, its connections to UDL principles have not been

explored empirically. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the application of UDL principles, and explicit teaching of reading enriched through the use of multi-text literature circle inquiries and thematic study as employed by teacher facilitated instruction and student-led literature circles, helps all students to comprehend texts, improve student reading engagement, participation, and high-order thinking skills in an inclusive sixth grade classroom.

What set this study apart from other studies was its connection of UDL and literature circles and its application to reading comprehension, student engagement and higher-order critical thinking skills of sixth grade students, through the implementation of an integrated UDL-based pedagogical model of literature circles.

This research examined a problem that many general education teachers face today: how to successfully improve academic and intellectual outcomes in reading comprehension, for all students in a mainstream English-only environment? Although previous studies (Katz, 2013) have investigated the academic and social outcomes of UDL and its impact on inclusion, there has been no empirical research to document the connections between literature circles and UDL principles and its application to reading comprehension. While UDL and the Three-Block model have been shown to support access, participation and progress for all learners (Meo, 2012; Rose & Meyer, 2002), and significantly increase students' engaged behavior, and promote social engagement through increased peer interactions, student autonomy, and inclusivity (Katz, 2013), few studies have provided a comprehensive UDL based framework that connects UDL principles with pedagogical instructional methods in reading comprehension through the use of a pedagogical literature circles model. Documented empirical research is absolutely vital if a Universal Design for Learning (UDL)-based literature circles model will be able to ensure that all students will have

genuine opportunities to benefit from reading comprehension instruction in their mainstream classroom and learn in standards-based settings in current and future classrooms.

### **Research Question**

The question driving this research study was “What is the impact of a UDL-based literature circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension on students who are identified as proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills, based on classroom measures or assessments ?

To frame the purpose of this research, two specific research questions addressed in this study are:

1. Is there a significant difference in reading comprehension scores and higher-order critical thinking for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills, following the implementation of a UDL-based literature circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension?
2. Is there a significant difference in academic and intellectual engagement for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills, following the implementation of a UDL-based literature circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension?

## Chapter 2

### **Literature Review**

Literature circles are currently a popular instructional pedagogy for reading instruction. Several research studies have investigated their effectiveness in improving academic and social outcomes for students in reading comprehension (Lloyd, 2004; Long & Gove, 2003, 2004). However, existing research on their application in a UDL classroom is very minimal and seldom empirical. This chapter includes a review of selected literature and research outcomes related to literature circles and their application to UDL principles vis-à-vis their efficacy in supporting the academic, social and intellectual engagement of proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling readers in language and literacy instruction. The chapter is divided into sections that review research outcomes related to: (a) the barriers students who are CLD encounter in inclusive classrooms (b) instructional paradigms in literacy instruction –Direct instruction versus a UDL-based literature circles literacy instruction (c) UDL and the Three Block Model – what are the research outcomes? (d) social outcomes of literature circles (e) academic and intellectual outcomes of literature circles and (f) outcomes of literature circles for students who are CLD.

#### **Barriers to Inclusion of Students Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse**

As a result of growing international concerns to “provide education for children, youth and adults with special education needs within the regular education system” (UNESCO, 1994, p. viii), educational reforms attempting to merge regular education and special education together to form an inclusive education system began to take place in Canada and the United States (Edmunds,

Macmillan, Specht, Nowicki & Edmunds, 2009). As a given policy in Manitoba and Canada, inclusive education represents a belief that all students belong and are valued members of their classroom and school communities (Council of Ministers of Education in Canada [CMEC], 2008; Specht & Young, 2010), regardless of their diverse physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and/or linguistic needs (UNESCO, 1994). In response to this growing concern, the Appropriate Education Act of 2005 (Bill 13) was promulgated in Manitoba, Canada, which requires that all students are entitled to receive appropriate educational programming that fosters student participation in both the academic and social life of the school. The act also attempts to address this need by requiring school divisions to develop a plan, establish targets and meet them in the provision of a free appropriate education, provide general supervision and transition services, and address the diverse needs of all students. It has also dictated that non-discriminatory assessment be conducted with students who are CLD in consideration for Special Education services. In 2006, Manitoba amended its Public Schools Act regulations and guiding Standards for Student Services to define appropriate educational programming for all students.

However, as the population of students who are CLD continues to grow nationally in K-12 classrooms, many students who are CLD are at risk of failure and dropping out of school entirely (Toohey & Derwing, 2006). For instance, black/African Canadians, First Nations/Aboriginals and Portuguese Canadians have been shown to have higher dropout rates than the general student population (Dei, 2003). Also, according to Gunderson's recent comprehensive study of 24,890 immigrant secondary students enrolled in Vancouver public schools between 1991 and 2001, it was shown that the number of ESL students in provincially-examinable courses decreased significantly from Grades 8-12 (Gunderson, 2004). In his study, Gunderson concluded that:

Students who drop out of school are likely to be from socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances. And, as indicated by the study reported here of Vancouver immigrant students, the more subtle measure of enrolment in “academic stream courses,” courses students must take to be admissible to a university or college, confirmed that immigrant students were “disappearing” from such courses as well, reducing their chances for higher education and all the benefits that come from such (Gunderson, 2004, p.18).

These concerns have become enormous tasks to overcome for many students who are CLD and struggling readers in mainstream classrooms. The barriers to success for students who are CLD have also acquired a new intensity particularly in light of: 1) the increased competitiveness caused by globalization and pluralism of Western industrialized societies; 2) the increased diversity in school populations (Furman and Shields, 2003; Goldring & Greenfield, 2002); 3) the inadequate preparation of teachers to meet the needs of students who are CLD (Carroll, 2003); and 4) the achievement and economic gaps between proficient learners and students who are CLD and are struggling learners (Coleman, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Valenzuela, 1999). Therefore, it is evident that what students who are CLD really need is an effective instructional or pedagogical approach that supports them in building their language competency and literacy skills in a mainstream classroom, while at the same time overcoming the barriers presented by a static and eurocentric curriculum.

### **Instructional Paradigms in Literacy Instruction – Teacher-Directed Approach versus a Student-Centered Instructional Approach**

*In the last 20 years, educators have made significant advances in their thinking about how students learn and construct knowledge, how they are best grouped for instruction, how*

*instruction is best guided and directed or delivered, how the literacy curriculum can be designed to reflect the diverse needs of students, and the extent of student autonomy needed for maximum learning. In the field of literacy instruction, for instance, two distinct paradigms or instructional approaches exist; (a) the teacher-directed instructional approach in which the teaching of reading and study skills is separate from the content classroom, based on the assumption of transfer to content areas and (b) the student-centered instructional approach to literacy instruction in which the teaching of reading is embedded within the context of content learning using text-processing strategies (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002). (See Table 1)*

*Table 1: Teacher-Directed Approach versus Student-Centered Instructional Approach*

	Teacher-Centered Pedagogy	Student-Centered Pedagogy
Instructional Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on a static curriculum only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-curricular planning</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole class/individual instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group instruction</li> <li>• Heterogeneous groups</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homogeneous groups/same ability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student directed learning/instruction</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher directed planning/instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students choose their books/self-pace their learning</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher directed book choice and learning pace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner is actively using</li> </ul>

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Research Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner is passive and has mastered a large number of sub-skills to construct meaning</li> <li>• Effective for structured reading tasks e.g. decoding and explicit reading procedures</li> <li>• Rote skill/recall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strategies to apply new concepts and construct meaning</li> <li>• Increase in cognitive, meta-cognitive and self-regulation skills</li> <li>• Increase in higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• Increase in social and academic skills</li> </ul>
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### **Teacher-Centered Pedagogy**

Direct instructional approach (sometimes referred to as explicit or systematic instruction) is a teacher-centered strategy for providing students with instructional support before, during, and after reading. Research conducted over the past thirty years has provided considerable evidence to support the efficacy of direct instruction programs in primary schools. Recent meta-analyses of intervention research have found that techniques associated with direct instruction are some of the most effective teaching practices for improving academic achievement, particularly for students with learning difficulties (Borman, Hewes, Overman & Brown, 2003; Forness, Kavake, Blum & Lloyd, 1997). The study by Borman et al. (2003) examined the effects of 29 widely implemented models in primary and secondary schools across the United States. The results of the study indicated that direct instruction was one of only three models found to have strong positive effects

on student achievement, and benefits were consistent across various school contexts and study designs. The models in the study by Borman et. al. (2003) were evaluated on the basis of a combination of the quantity, quality, and statistical significance of the evidence.

Overall, the findings of direct instructional reading research indicate, however, that direct instruction may be more effective for highly structured reading tasks, such as decoding, explicit reading procedures, and foreign language vocabulary, than less structured tasks, such as reading comprehension, and analyzing literature (Rosenshine, 1986; Swanson, 1999). Swanson's (1999) well-regarded meta-analysis on 54 reading intervention studies with samples of children and adolescents with learning difficulties was conducted in the domains of word recognition and reading comprehension. The results of this synthesis showed that a prototypical intervention study has an Effect Size of .72 (Partial eta) for reading comprehension and .59 (Partial eta) for word recognition. Furthermore, the synthesis demonstrated that effect sizes (ES) for measures of comprehension were higher when studies included derivatives of both strategy and direct instruction (ES = 1.15), whereas effect sizes were higher for word recognition when studies included direct instruction (ES = .70) (Swanson, 1999). Thus, the findings from this study are supportive of the conception that direct instruction is particularly effective for more structured tasks, such as word recognition.

**Student-centered pedagogy.** One current approach to literacy instruction is student-centered instruction or strategy-based instruction. It is based on cognitive psychology and schema theories, meta-cognitive and self-regulation strategies which are systematically oriented toward the attainment of students' own learning goals (Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989). This approach is based on the cognitive view of the comprehension process that explains the constructive nature of reading comprehension. Strategy based instruction to teaching has encouraged educators to review

prevailing constructs about reading comprehension and how they affect instruction and learning. It is widely recognized that strategy instruction is based on a different view of the student than direct instruction. For instance, whereas direct instruction:

assumes a passive reader who has mastered a large number of sub-skills and automatically and routinely applies them to all texts... [strategy instruction] assumes an active reader who constructs meaning through the interrogation of existing and new knowledge and the flexible use of strategies to foster, monitor, regulate and master comprehension (Dole et al., 1991, p. 242).

Furthermore, contrary to teacher-directed instruction, which is seen to focus primarily upon the acquisition of foundational skills (a “bottom-up” approach which takes in letters and words from the outside world and manages them with little recourse to higher-level knowledge), student-centered instruction aims to develop students’ higher-order cognitive abilities (a “top-down” approach which is characterized by the intake of information based on the reader’s prior knowledge and expectations) (Goodman, 1994).

Student-centered pedagogical instruction eliminates the incredible burdens on teachers and students alike to adapt to an inflexible, barrier-filled curriculum. Empirical studies documenting the impact of the UDL approach have focused primarily on literacy applications (Dalton, Pisha, Eagleton, Coyne, & Deysher, 2002; Proctor, Dalton, & Grisham, 2007). Such studies have demonstrated positive outcomes for struggling readers using a UDL approach. In addition, the principles and practices of UDL are rooted in a number of research-proven educational approaches with which teachers may already be familiar. For instance, it draws on and extends aspects of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 1999), which teachers use to individualize criteria for student success, teaching methods, and means of student expression while monitoring student

progress. UDL emphasizes teachers as coaches or guides (O'Donnell, 1998), learning as process (Graves, Cooke, & Laberge, 1983), and cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1986; Wood, Algozzine, & Avett, 1993). In these approaches, teachers support learning rather than impart knowledge, and students construct knowledge rather than passively receive it. UDL represents a shift in how educators look at learner differences. It emphasizes the need for a curriculum that can adapt to student needs rather than requiring learners to adapt to an inflexible curriculum (Meyer & Rose, 2005).

### **Research Outcomes of UDL and the Three Block Model**

In the next section of this review, the research outcomes of the qualitative and quantitative study of the Three-Block Model of UDL (Katz, 2013; Katz, 2012b, 2012c) that have evaluated the academic and social outcomes of inclusion will be examined. In one study (Katz, 2013), six hundred and seventy-one students and fifty-eight teachers (including classroom teachers, resource teachers, and school administrators) from grades one to twelve attending ten schools located in two rural and three urban school divisions in Manitoba took part in the research. Treatment and control groups were assessed pre and during intervention for academic and social engagement. The intervention was shown to significantly increase students' engaged behavior, particularly active engagement, and promoted social engagement through increased peer interactions, student autonomy, and inclusion of all students. These results corroborate findings from previous research investigating Block One of the model –socio-emotional learning (SEL) - (Katz & Porath, 2011; Katz, Porath, Bendu, & Epp, 2012) which included: improved student self-concept, respect for diverse others, social skills, students' sense of belonging, and view of class climate, and reduced aggressive behaviour.

### **Student Outcomes Resulting From Implementation of the Three-Block Model of UDL**

**Student engagement.** The research outcomes of the qualitative and quantitative study of the Three-Block Model of UDL (Katz, 2013; Katz, 2012b, 2012c) that have evaluated the academic and social outcomes of inclusion of all students also show that active and engaged behaviour was considerably different between the treatment and control groups. The elementary schools' evaluation results indicated significant differences in pre and post intervention scores between treatment (UDL) and control groups, with treatment group students' engagement increasing overall, and control group students' scores decreasing, as shown by the a time sampling measurement tool for active, passive or non-engagement. In K-4 classrooms for instance, treatment scores for active engagement almost doubled from 23/60 minutes to 42/60 minutes, while controls went down from 32/60 minutes to 25/60 minutes. The same trend repeated in grades 5-8 classrooms: treatment scores went up from 21/60 minutes to 43/60 minutes, while controls came down from 31/60 minutes –to 22/60 minutes. In high schools (grade 9-12), treatment scores went up from 11/60 minutes to 41/60 minutes, while controls went down from 43/60 minutes to 7/60 minutes. In other words, post intervention scores show that students in UDL classes, on average, spent 42/60 minutes actively engaged, while students in control classes spent 18/60 minutes actively engaged, despite control classes starting off at a higher level. By contrast, students in UDL classes spent 6.5/60 minutes not engaged, while students in control classes spent 18/60 minutes not engaged in learning. In a nutshell, the results indicate a trend of increases in active engagement, and decreases in passive and non-engagement for treatment group students, while control group students' decrease in active engagement and increase in passive and non-engagement as the school year progresses. This trend encompasses all grades from K-12. Katz (Katz, 2013; Katz, 2012b; 2012c) investigated whether results were different for students who are

CLD, and no significant interactions were found. Thus the results indicating improved engagement outcomes are relevant for students who are CLD.

**Academic achievement / critical thinking.** Traditional, text-based learning and assessment methods limit students' ability to make sense of concepts at a complex level, develop critical thinking, and demonstrate a deep sense of understanding (Hill, 2010; Kassem, 2000). Thus even students who are "successful", that is, get good grades, are often not challenged to go beyond a rote level of learning. In Katz's most recent study (in submission), students in Three-Block Model of UDL classrooms demonstrated significantly higher levels of critical thinking ( $F(5,639) = 13.587, p < .01, \eta = .511$ ). Students with disabilities ( $F(1,12) = 6.077, p < .01, \eta = .336$ ), students who were CLD ( $F(1,66) = 49.338, p < .01, \eta = .428$ ), and students who were Aboriginal ( $F(1,25) = 55.296, p < .01, \eta = .689$ ) all showed significantly improved achievement in classrooms implementing the Three-Block Model of UDL as compared to control classes.

**Social inclusion and peer interactions.** The results of the Katz (2013; 2012c) study also indicated that students in treatment (UDL) classrooms implementing the Three Block Model of UDL were observed to more frequently interact with peers and reported higher levels of student autonomy, while students in control classrooms spent more time not interacting. There were more reciprocal interactions in treatment classes than in control classes, and students in treatment classes reported significantly higher levels of social and academic inclusiveness and independence (Katz, 2013).

**Student self-concept and respect for others.** In the first block of the Three-Block Model of UDL, the Respecting Diversity (RD) program is used to create a positive and compassionate classroom community, through activities intended to develop student self-concept, valuing diversity and democratic classroom management. The RD program has shown to improve student

self-concept, emotional resiliency, valuing of diverse others, inclusiveness, class climate, and social skills, while reducing levels of aggression (Katz & Porath, 2011). As the study was conducted in schools where over 35% of students were CLD, these findings too appear relevant.

**Student autonomy.** Increasing students' opportunities for autonomy in the classroom may be a key factor in reversing the trend of disengagement. Research has shown that classrooms in which students have high levels of autonomy promote engagement and achievement (Hafen, 2012). When students believe their teacher is allowing them some autonomy – whether by helping lead the class or having some freedom of choice in what they study or how they express their learning – their engagement actually increases over the course of the year (Park et al., 2012). The results of the Three-Block Model of UDL study also showed that students in treatment classes reported significantly higher levels of student autonomy than did students in control classes, perhaps contributing to group differences in engaged behaviour (Katz, 2013).

### **Pedagogical Outcomes of the Three Block Model of UDL**

Because the outcomes of the Three Block Model of UDL related to pedagogical instruction and teacher outcomes showed a positive effect on teachers' willingness to change instructional practices, reflect on what had or had not been working for them, and reduced teacher stress/increased job satisfaction, it was important to examine these outcomes and how they would relate to the findings of this study. The outcomes were grouped into three categories (Katz 2013, p. 176-179):

**Type of task and flexible groupings.** Katz's study showed trends toward increased differentiated tasks, and small group structures, and decreased transition times in which there was no task for UDL classes (2013). However, types of task did not differ statistically, with the exception of a significantly greater amount of time with no task/in transition in control classes.

The results of the study also showed that control classes spent significantly more time in whole class and independent structures, while treatment classes spent significantly more time working in small groups, thus perhaps influencing active engagement.

**Teachers' perception of student outcomes, and teacher self-efficacy related to inclusive practice.** The results of the study also showed that teachers' perceived an improvement in student self-concept, improved school climate, and social engagement (Katz, 2014). Teachers indicated a greater ability to include students with both mild and severe disabilities in the academic tasks of the class (i.e. more often responded affirmatively to the prompt "Students with exceptionalities engage in the same tasks as their peers – differentiation takes place for all students", and "students spend 80% or more of their time in the regular classroom").

**Teachers' perceived benefits and challenges.** The results of the study revealed that teachers believed that the Three-Block Model of UDL supported teachers' philosophy or beliefs about teaching (Katz, 2014). They felt like the model helped them to meet the needs of the students and that they could do what they wanted to or believed in. The teachers acknowledged an improved self-efficacy regarding inclusion, and improved collegial relationships. They indicated that the model made inclusion "doable" and "enjoyable," decreased challenging behavior, improved student engagement, risk taking, and student learning and deeper conceptual understanding in literacy and numeracy skills, thus enhancing teacher job satisfaction and sense of success. However, they also noted that the model had challenges such as scheduling of time to co-plan, scheduling in secondary schools limiting ability to "go deep" and the challenges of finding resources for diverse learners (e.g. multi-level texts).

In sum, evidence-based research has made clear that the teacher-directed type of instruction and one-size-fits-all curriculum has proven to be an entirely inadequate solution for problems that

plague our schools in diverse classrooms. The textbook, or singular novel, a mainstay of traditional curriculum, is static in form and, by its design, inaccessible to many students both students who are CLD and are struggling learners and proficient readers alike. It is also quite a hostile medium for students who have organizational difficulties, attentional challenges, or cognitive impairments. New instructional approaches that meet the learning needs of all students are thus required so that students who are CLD and are struggling readers and students who are proficient readers or gifted and talented can all benefit from a curriculum that is no longer fixed or static.

### **Social and Academic Outcomes of Literature circles**

In this section of this chapter, the term “social and academic benefits” is used to refer to outcomes of literature circles for both proficient readers and students who are CLD and are struggling learners. Research that has evaluated the social and academic outcomes of literature circles for proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling readers, were examined, including studies that have measured both social interaction skills and reading comprehension outcomes related to student engagement and critical thinking skills.

### **Social Outcomes of Literature circles**

Research investigating the efficacy of literature circles has shown positive social outcomes for students who engage in them. Benefits such as improved social interaction skills, collaboration and cooperative learning amongst students, increased student ownership of their learning and positive student engagement, have been mentioned by most researchers noting the success of this particular method of instruction (Lloyd, 2004; Long & Gove, 2003; Raphael & McMahon, 1994; Stein & Beed, 2004).

**Increased social skills.** According to Almasi, Arya, and O’Flahavan (2001), 95% of educators agreed that peer discussion is a valuable technique for students because it creates a new way to learn about literature, 77% indicated an interest in using peer discussions, but only 33% of these educators reported using peer discussions with their students. Through the process of discussion included in literature circles, students learn to interact with each other in a positive way, and they help each other by building on one another’s thoughts and opinions (DeVault, 2009). Prior to this, Lloyd (2004) attested to the above claim and explained the observable positive results such as, “student eye contact, leaning forward, animated reactions, and responses that sounded like a ‘real’ conversation” when the literature circles “looked” completely different from the past experiences using roles (p. 122). Additionally, when students are given the power to socially interact in literature discussions, they are increasing their critical thinking, as exposure to different perspectives helps students enhance their ability to reason at increasingly higher levels (Stringer et al., 2003). Research also shows that, along with the enhancement of listening and communication skills, feelings of community camaraderie increase in the classroom (Blum, Lipsett, & Yocom, 2002). Study results show a strong connection between literature circles and the fact that a “shared literacy event is not always tied to a piece of literature, thus broadening conceptions and knowledge base of text” (Casey, 2008, p. 285), which ultimately allows the discussion forum to become a place where ideas and knowledge are shared and openly discussed.

On the other hand, researchers have also conducted qualitative studies geared towards documenting the potential problems of implementing literature circles. These studies have yielded contrasting conclusions to the increase in social outcomes already mentioned. For instance, although there have been many positive findings with using literature circles in classrooms, Clarke (2007) observes that teachers can run into difficulty while executing literature circles. To

investigate literature circles, Clarke conducted a study in an urban sixth grade classroom. She found, “sociocultural forces such as economic disparities, strong student animosity, and racial and gender tension had powerful influence on how these students discussed texts, despite the teacher’s best attempts to create a safe and trusting environment.” (2007, p. 22) One of the main reasons why there was such difficulty was that the classroom lacked harmony to conduct successful literature circles. “Many of their language practices dominated discussion groups such as giving orders, using insults and disagreeing.” (p. 23) This presumes a negative classroom climate, thus had work been done initially to establish respectful interactions (as happens in the RD program of the Three-Block Model of UDL), these issues presumably could and would be mediated.

**Increased opportunities for collaboration and cooperative learning.** Literature circles also promote classroom climates that are cooperative and collaborative because students are given the responsibility for working with each other to make decisions in accordance with their needs and interests (Burns, 1998). Cooperative learning can take place in a “common literacy experience” using literature circles with all students “regardless of reading level or ability.” (Boardman Moen, 2005, p. 52) According to some researchers, the use of instructional groupings such as heterogeneous ability grouping in the classroom can have benefits for all students involved, despite ability level. In fact, having the opportunity to help lower-ability students in cooperative heterogeneous groups increases students’ own understanding of certain literacy skills (Lyle, 1999). This type of metacognitive awareness is a desired goal for educators as they strive to help their students achieve higher order thinking skills. Stevens and Slavin (1995) called this type of interaction a “cognitive apprenticeship” in which students work with peers that are at various levels of mastery for particular skills (p. 242). It is the students themselves who provide the support and guidance to one another for all to attain mastery of a desired skill. The peer

apprenticeship becomes an important and powerful support for students who struggle to read certain texts. In fact, to support the claim that students of different ability levels can work together successfully without damaging the self-image of students of lower ability or creating a learning hierarchy among students of higher academic ability, Stein & Beed (2004) noted that this improved willingness to accept each other as individuals who possess worthy opinions leads to the deeper valuing of the ideas of others.

The power of collaborative grouping as a social benefit of literature circles is also well documented. Research shows that collaboration is one of the biggest social benefits of literature circles. In fact, collaborative learning has been defined as a key ingredient of “best educational practice” (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993). Definitions of collaborative learning, however, vary across researchers and theorists. Vygotsky (1978), for example, viewed collaborative learning as part of a process leading to the social construction of knowledge. Other scholars (Khon, 1992; Sapon-Shevin & Schniedewand, 1992) considered cooperative learning to be a form of critical pedagogy that moves classrooms and societies closer toward that ideal of social justice. Caplow and Kardash (1995) characterized collaborative learning as a process in which “knowledge is not transformed from expert to learner, but created and located in the learning environment” (p. 209). Others such as Burron, James, and Ambrosio (1993) and Ossont (1993) intended cooperative learning as a strategy to help students improve intellectual and social skills.

In the context of the above definitions, collaborative learning is open-ended and student-centered. It fosters democracy, community, and shared responsibility in the classroom and encourages multiple perspectives in student-led discussions. The research and theory on cooperative learning is cited as one of nine effective strategies in *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* (Marzano, Pickering &

Pollack, 2001). The authors recommend the use of cooperative group strategies like literature circles. These grand conversations, as they are called by Brownlie, (2005) are the culminating product when all the social skills merge and students are actively engaged in literature discussion.

**Increased opportunities for independence, choice, student ownership, and responsibility.** In reviewing the literature discussing the social benefits of literature circles, it is easy to recognize the common theme denoting that literature circles allow students to have a voice inside the classroom through choosing the books they will read, and thus a better opportunity to engage with text in a school setting. Daniels (2002) indicates that literature circles are an excellent way to help students take ownership for their learning. He maintains that literature circles allow students book choice, as well as the ability to self-pace. Students who choose books for themselves, and who read independently become better readers, score higher on achievement tests in all subject areas, and have greater content knowledge than those who do not (Krashen 1993; Cunningham & Stanovich 1991; Stanovich & Cunningham 1993). The literature circles strategy takes these two powerful ideas, collaborative learning and independent reading, and integrates them into a powerful, interesting and open-ended classroom activity. Literature circles also provide a support system for students creating an environment in which they have a sense of ownership of their own learning and reading.

Another social benefit of using literature circles is the reader is empowered because the reader is allowed to participate in the decision-making process (Blum et al., 2002). Research helps us understand the important role played by self-confidence and a feeling of being in control. For example, research suggests that students perform at higher levels if they have confidence in themselves (Pressley, 1987) and that personal efficacy is a matter of self-control. Daniels (2006) explained that the provision of choice in literature circles allows students to experience success

and avoid frustration by choosing their own books and friends in the group. Furthermore, as a result of providing choice and students feeling successful, Casey (2008) noted that literature circles have the potential to help motivate students who are disengaged readers. In a teacher research study, Jewell and Pratt (1999) documented that allowing students to choose the text that they had the highest interest in, the assignments, and the type of response they would complete, helped to increase motivation and enthusiasm for reading. However, they note that it is the ability to learn who they are as a reader and what they are capable of doing that is the most important. The benefits of literature circles attest to the fact that they are student-led groups that foster student ownership, independence and collaboration.

Blum et al. (2002) stated similar benefits. Literature circles provide a structure of conversation within the classroom that helps both teachers and students change the normal pattern of the classroom. Literature circles allow students to control the talk as opposed to previous notions of responding only to the teacher's probes. Almasi's (1995) study discovered that teachers asked 93% of the questions in the classroom and talked 62% of the time. By changing the structure of the classroom, teachers are allowing students to take responsibility for developing and discussing their own thoughts and connections to the text. In the transition of control from teacher to student, the teacher is aiming for the students to "(a) enjoy, analyze, and interpret the book; (b) use the questions recorded as a catalyst for discussion; and (c) gain control and independence through genuine conversations around a text." (Lloyd, 2004, p. 118) There should be a purpose behind everything that is taught, and literature circles work to teach students to be self-sufficient readers.

However, although literature circles provide students with choice and ownership of their learning, one limitation, albeit minimal, that is found in research studies is that of the variety of

books or text choice needed for the groups (Daniels, 2002). Often times, teachers participating in literature circles have very limited class budgets to purchase a wide variety of books from different genres to address the diversity of needs of their students. By the same token, a variety of books or texts are not always available in large quantities from a local library either (Daniels, 2002). It therefore becomes critical that school divisions support such literacy practices with adequate resources.

### **Academic Outcomes of Literature Circles**

**Increase in reading comprehension.** Perhaps the most measurable aspects and effects of literature circles in the classroom setting include increases in reading comprehension outcomes. Klinger, Vaughn, & Schumm (1998) found that students who worked with peers and generated their own discussions of literature exhibited significant gains in comprehension. The collaborative setting inherent in literature circles provides students with an opportunity “to move from literal, text-based conversations of texts to purposefully reflecting and looking at texts from more than one perspective.” (Long & Gove, 2004, p. 359) Burns (1998) stated:

The interactive dialogue that takes place in literature circles is the key component of its success. To be able to verbalize the content, to listen to other modes of thinking, and to hear other perspectives, all contribute to deeper comprehension (p. 127).

By monitoring their own reading and discussing their ideas with others, students strengthen their ability to raise their own questions and construct meaning for what they read by using prior knowledge and information from the text (Brabham & Villaume, 2000; Jewell & Pratt, 1999; Stien & Beed, 2004).

A review of the literature available found many more advantages than disadvantages regarding the use of literature circles. The benefits of literature circles range across social and

academic dimensions but the main focus of literature circles is developing reading comprehension (Berne & Clark, 2008). According to Leal (1993), literature circles provide a catalyst for meaningful learning. Leal also found that students in literature circles willingly discussed their text 26 percent longer than regular classroom discussions. According to an action research study conducted by Parker, Quigley & Riley (1999), students in literature circles showed a “marked improvement in reading comprehension, willingness to discuss, enthusiasm for reading and personal student autonomy and accountability.” (p. 69-70) In fact, students in the literature circles were three times more likely to score at grade level on the Woodcock & Johnson (1990) reading level grade test than students who did not participate in literature circles.

Other research suggests similar promising outcomes, for instance, a 1998 study of fourth graders by Klinger, Vaughn, and Schumm found that students in peer-led groups made greater gains than control groups in reading comprehension and equal gains in content knowledge after reading and discussing social studies material. The results were confirmed through a standardized reading test, a social studies unit test and audio-tapes of group work. Researchers found that 65 percent of students’ small group talk was academic and content-related, 25 percent was procedural, 8 percent feedback, and only 2 percent off-task.

Nolasco (2009) also investigated the outcomes related to comprehension when literature circles were used with the reading of expository texts. The participants of the study were 26 fifth grade students in a suburban public school located in the North Eastern United States. The study lasted six weeks during which students engaged in literature circles discussions. The results of this study indicated that literature circles were an effective cooperative learning strategy when reading expository, scientific text to improve reading comprehension test scores. Students working in small learning groups encouraged each other to ask questions, explain and justify their opinions,

articulate reasoning, and make deeper connections among facts, concepts, and ideas in expository texts.

On the other hand, a mixed design study by Mizerka (1999) with 50 sixth grade students in two heterogeneously mixed classrooms, contradicts the claim that students in peer-led literature circles made greater gains in reading comprehension than teacher led group discussion. The purpose of this study was to determine how student-directed and teacher-directed literature circles affect reading comprehension. The focus of the study was an examination of the effects of using group discussions as a tool for promoting students' high-level comprehension of text (i.e., critical literacy and reflective thinking about text). Quantitative comparisons of an achievement test for reading comprehension scores for both groups showed that there was no difference between the teacher-directed and student-directed literature circle groups. However, the transcripts analyzed from literature discussion groups showed that the student-directed discussion group participated in discussions at a far greater frequency than the students in the teacher-directed discussion groups. This result showed a disadvantage to the teacher directed group, if not for comprehension, at least in terms of engagement.

However, research has also shown that the claim that literature circles help to improve reading comprehension scores would depend on variables such as assessment used, reading levels of the students, length of time of class period, the text and the type of reading activity used. In a quantitative study, Marshall (2006) compared the effects of participation in literature circles to the effects of participation in a directed reading activity (DRA), to determine the interactive effects of type of instruction (literature circles or DRA) with students' overall reading levels. The study showed that several variables impacted whether participation in literature circles affected the reading comprehension of students in this study. There was no effect of treatment alone, but there

were significant interactions between treatment and group, treatment and class period, and treatment and overall reading levels. The effect of literature circles did depend on the type of assessments used, length of class period, and the multiple reading levels of the students. The study however noted that literature circles were a new model of literacy instruction for these students, which could also have influenced comfort level, and ultimately performance results. In contrast, DRA was a model of literacy instruction already in place at the target school, and therefore perhaps the students' level of comfort with this approach influenced results. The study however, helps to prove that, comprehension involves not only the reader, but also the text, and the activity.

Several limitations of literature circles have been cited in research studies. Most of these limitations are related to standardized "paper-pencil" assessment methods used in literature circles. Daniels (2002) writes in regards to standardized testing that "it [standardized testing] increases pressure to grade everything...the testing 'fad' puts extra pressure on any innovation to 'prove' its value" (p. 11). Daniels adds that while research of literature circles demonstrates an increase in standardized test scores, a majority of time within the classroom is spent preparing for and teaching how to pass the state and federally mandated standardized tests. This finding may explain why some research did not find significant differences in outcomes, that is, if outcomes are measured by standardized tests that explore only rote levels of reading comprehension, literature circles may not be found to have positive impacts. However, this research was conducted in American schools. While Canadian contexts are also vulnerable to some standardized testing, high stakes testing is much less emphasized and the degree of "teaching to the test" is thus significantly reduced.

**Increase in higher-order metacognitive comprehension skills - thoughtful and critical thinking.** Literature circles allow students to develop critical thinking skills because they are in

charge of their own learning, and it is this ownership that allows students to think for themselves and make meaningful contributions to the discussion rather than the teacher controlling the discussion. In her study, Stabile (2009) shows that literature circles constitute a method to help struggling readers become engaged, reflective and critical thinkers. Additional findings that echo Vygotsky suggests that learning results from discussion and scaffolding by knowledgeable peers more than from the teacher because they are more often within the zone of proximal development than is the teacher (McMahon & Goatley, 1995). Thus, students who do not have the opportunity to take part in interactive language practices may be denied an important factor in shaping their higher order mental processes.

In a mixed methods study, Brignolo (2010) found similar outcomes related to thoughtful and critical thinking as a result of implementation of literature circles. The study investigated the impact of literature circles on student comprehension, critical analysis skills and higher-level thinking in a grade twelve language arts class as defined by Bloom's Taxonomy of the cognitive domain, given two instructional conditions – teacher-centered direct instruction and literature circles. The results of the study showed that, although the quantitative scores of the Blooms Taxonomy rubric based on the journal entries of the participants did not provide a conclusive result in favour of literature circles, the analysis of observation data indicated that the literature circle discussions and participation levels were much more involved and consisted of a higher level of thinking than the teacher-centered classroom environment. The study concluded that literature circles provide a student-centered, collaborative learning environment with an emphasis on conversation and building higher-level comprehension and critical analysis skills. When students are involved and engaged in the collaborative meaning-making discussions, students are

more likely to increase in their reading comprehension ability, critical thinking skills and their overall achievement.

**Increased student engagement, participation and motivation.** In several studies that have investigated benefits for students in literature circles, positive academic outcomes were identified related to student engagement and participation. As stated by Casey (2008), students become more engaged when they are able to make choices and share responsibility for their reading. Casey also stated that,

Research described engaged readers as those who (a) are motivated by the material, (b) use multiple strategies to ensure comprehension, (c) are able to construct new knowledge as a result of the interaction with the text, and (d) draw on social interactions to mediate these literal processes (2008, p. 286).

Long and Gove (2003) also completed a study involving engagement strategies and literature circles. They found that by combining literature circles and engagement strategies such as asking open-ended questions, making inferences, and critically evaluating texts, they were able to increase the probability of students participating and that engagement strategies helped form a type of scaffolding for students. Literature circles promoted critical response, as “first children read (or are read to, or both), they discuss, they learn to question, they experience the text firsthand; then they act on textual possibilities with others” (2003, p. 358). By so doing, the conversation in the literature circles changed from a literal response based on their text to a critical response. Their research concluded that participation in these activities allowed students to think and respond more critically, become more reflective, and push themselves to read, talk, question, feel, and think outside of the box, thus displaying higher-order thinking skills and the affective variables of intellectual engagement.

A similar research study conducted by Lloyd (2004), focused on the idea that students should lead their own conversations because they will engage more in the meaning behind the text. Her approach to literature circles is that there are many groups that are working at one time, while there is teacher rotation around the room to take notes. Lloyd's research concludes that literature circles are a way to engage students in reading as well as gain independence for their own reading. She argues that in using round-robin reading, students do not gain the understanding that results from engaged conversation and in using small groups, students are more able to participate in conversation. She also found that in letting students choose their own reading material, and engaging them in the learning process on the first day, they became more engaged in their reading and were more apt to comprehend the text. Lloyd's (2004) research also showed that using interesting questions the students formulated, in turn, increased student engagement and motivation.

In a quantitative study, Bedee (2010) investigated the impact of literature circles on reading motivation and comprehension for students in a second grade classroom. This investigation was designed to determine the impact of literature circles compared to read-alouds on reading comprehension and student reading motivation for second grade students. The results showed that there did not appear to be a difference between the literature circles and read-alouds in regard to reading comprehension. However, the research study concluded that the students appeared to be motivated to read and discuss the books more when they knew that they were going to discuss them with their peers and that implementing the literature circles technique was a wonderful way to demonstrate that the students had learned comprehension skills, and were now able to take those learned skills and effectively read, analyze, and discuss a book to help ensure their own understanding of the story.

**The Benefits of Literature circles for Students Who Are CLD and are Struggling Learners**

Research has also validated the claim that literature circles increase reading comprehension outcomes for students who are CLD or second language learners (L2). Parker, Quigley, and Riley (1999) report that the students who are struggling learners benefited the most from literature circles. To support this claim, Peralt-Nash and Dutch (2000), also found that literature circles provide a low-risk learning environment for children who are learning English as a new or additional language. When the teacher selects multiple text formats (same texts in English and in their own language) to reflect the needs and abilities of the learners in the same circle, students from both English speaking and non-English backgrounds benefit. This perspective implies that school success in reading comprehension for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds should be viewed as a socially negotiated process involving interactions with multiple text formats and authentic learning activities that are culturally relevant.

According to Prillaman (2008):

“Literature circles are a promising practice for students who are CLD and are struggling learners as they enable students to have increased opportunities for English oral language production (Kendall, 2006; Meltzer & Hamann, 2006), increase their motivation to read in English through choice (Guthrie & Davis, 2003), participate in collaborative efforts with their peers (Burns, 1998; Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000; Armburster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001), and learn and practice proficient reader strategies” (Brock & Raphael, 2005, p. 13).

The literature circles model allows students who are CLD and are struggling learners to practice good reading strategies in a non-threatening and welcoming classroom environment, permitting them to take risks in their learning without concerning themselves with how they may

be perceived by others (Brock & Raphael, 2005). This claim therefore contradicts earlier claims in a study by Clarke, (2007) in an urban sixth grade classroom that “sociocultural forces such as economic disparities, strong student animosity, and racial and gender tension had powerful influence on how these students discussed texts, despite the teacher’s best attempts to create a safe and trusting environment” (p. 22), which may have been more indicative of a particular classroom’s climate than of literature circles as a whole.

Carrison - in her article that discusses benefits of using literature circles with students who are CLD and are struggling learners to strengthen literacy skills and student confidence—claims that using literature circles is a fun and exciting way to afford students’ choice while at the same time exposing them to powerful strategies to build confidence and enhance their language and literacy. She states that literature circles result in “decreased anxiety about reading and participation, increased motivation on everyone’s part, and improved reading accuracy and comprehension” (Carrison & Ernst-Slavit, (2005). Christina Sanchez (1999) is yet another researcher whose purpose is to address the question: “What language interactions occur within literature circles and how might this affect the oral language development of English Learners?” Her study addressed the question with six English learners in the fourth grade who were responding to literature in a literature circle. She observed her students engaging in meaningful discussions about literature and expressing many levels of thinking. After completing her research report she was convinced that literature circles are one key to the successful development of English oral language for Second Language Learners (Sanchez, 1999).

More evidence can be found which supports this link between reading and speaking when it comes to comprehension. Brock’s (2001) L2 study of how students’ textual comprehension is affected when they were allowed to speak and interact with each other demonstrates that: “...when

teachers allowed children to orally co-construct their ideas and interpretations of stories rather than waiting passively to be called on one at a time by the teacher, native Hawaiian children's comprehension of the stories improved." (Brock, 2001, pp. 469-470) Eeds and Wells (1989) in their LI study found that group collaboration can assist native English students who might not fully comprehend a text. This finding is also supported in an ESL study by Myonghee Kim (2004) who observed that, "when they [students] had difficulty in literal comprehensions of certain expressions or sentences, they asked for assistance from other group members." (p. 151) Iser (1978) has also stressed the concept of "gasps" or "blanks" left in the text by the author that must be filled by the reader. If one group member is missing information, clarification can be received from the other group members. All of this supports the link between reading and speaking, and demonstrates how speaking can assist students who are CLD and those who are native English speakers with comprehension.

McElvain (2010) also investigated how to successfully improve reading comprehension for English language learners (ELLs) in an English-only environment. The researcher examined both the academic and psychosocial effects of the Transactional Literature circles (TLC) programme on a treatment group of 75 fourth to sixth grade, at-risk, ELLs to a comparable control group who did not participate in the literature circles. The results of this study report that literature circles positively affected the reading comprehension of the programme participants. The students in the TLC programme outperformed the students in the control group on standardised reading tests, and in seven months increased one grade level in reading. Teacher interviews and student surveys reported an increase in student reading engagement and motivation that positively affected reading self-efficacy, confidence and a willingness to participate in class discussions. The findings in the

study suggest that the combined use of collaborative conversations and strategic instruction not only resulted in improved reading comprehension and writing skill development for these students, but also resulted in increased engagement, motivation to read (Margolis & McCabe, 2003) and a willingness to participate in whole class discussions (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola & Vaughn, 2004). Many of the teachers and the students in McElvain's (2010) study also noted an increased reading self-efficacy because of weekly small group discussions within their literature circles. This result concurs with Carrell's (1998) extensive research review, which found that the inclusion of meta-cognition in reading strategy instruction significantly improved the second language reader's understanding of the text and their motivation to read.

Kozak (2008) in her study that evaluated the effectiveness of the literature circle instructional strategy as a pedagogical approach in the teaching of English as a second language also found that reading interventions that used literature circles improved reading comprehension of students who are CLD. The research was conducted in partnership with the University of New Brunswick English Language Programme to assess changes in nineteen high school students' reading and speaking skills during a three week course using the literature circles' teaching strategy. Results indicated that reading and speaking skills were positively affected and that the literature circles' instructional strategy is an effective ESL pedagogical approach. Reading comprehension was improved through the intervention as well. From talking about the text with their peers, re-telling the text to other group members to clear up confusion, and analysis of the text, students had ample opportunities to engage with the text and ensure complete understanding. Observations and students' journals supported this notion, as students spoke about the text using higher order critical thinking skills along with basic plot comprehension questions. The comparison of the intake and exit reading assessment also showed how this improved, as more

students were able to identify the main point of the article than on the intake reading assessment. Students' opinions of their comprehension also improved, with students replying more readily that they are "always" able to re-tell a text on their exit self-assessments. The intake and exit self-assessments further showed how students' opinions about their abilities in speaking and reading were positively affected through their involvement in the immersion program, and the literature circle class. For these reasons, the study concludes that literature circles is a method that can be used by ESL educators when looking for an activity that integrates reading and speaking skills and that will lead to improvements in these two areas.

Another recent qualitative study by Stabile (2009) further confirms the notion that literature circles helps struggling readers become engaged and reflective readers. The research was designed to assess whether or not literature circles help struggling readers become engaged and reflective. The research was conducted in a rural high school Language Arts classroom. Three students were chosen for the study solely based on their struggle to understand the whole-class novel, *"To Kill a Mockingbird"*. They were chosen because they were the three students who were able to comprehend the novel the least, which was shown through their scores on the comprehension quiz. The findings suggested that literature circles were in fact an effective reading strategy to enable struggling readers become engaged and reflective readers. Each participant was successfully engaged in reading a subsequent novel within his or her literature circle group.

Three conclusions were drawn from this study as to how and why literature circles are effective. The first conclusion suggests that the literature circles were effective due to the fact that students had a choice of which novel they wanted to read and what they wanted to discuss. It was this ownership of their own learning and reading that made the students eager to participate in discussion of the text. The second conclusion suggests that literature circles were effective due to

the small intimate setting literature circles provide for students. The third conclusion is that the notes students were required to prepare for each literature circle meeting improved their reading skills. All three students in the study explained how the notes helped them comprehend the text better because of the fact that they knew they had to have questions, important passages and connections chosen in order to discuss the novel. By contrast, it became apparent during the whole-class novel that all three of the students were reading to get to the end of the chapter because they knew they did not necessarily have to participate in discussion. Because they were required to participate in discussion in the literature circles, the notes helped them to read more closely and think more critically in order to produce quality notes. Thinking critically was then demonstrated in their connections to the text, important passages and the questions they asked.

### **Summary**

The goal of this review was to provide a summary of research outcomes related to literature circles and their application to UDL principles vis-à-vis their efficacy in supporting the social and academic inclusion of proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling in language and literacy instruction. Based on the review, a large body of research has identified the benefits of literature circles in terms of academic and social inclusion for all students including proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling readers. Although problems regarding group size, text availability, and the time commitment to literature circles within the curriculum exist, research has identified significant social advantages such as student ownership, group accountability, and an increase in social and communication skills that counterbalance these challenges. As well, perhaps the most measurable aspects and effects of literature circles and UDL in the classroom setting include increases in academic achievement in reading comprehension, motivation, student engagement and critical or reflective thinking skills. As implementation of the

Three-Block Model of UDL has similarly resulted in improved social inclusion and engagement, the use of literature circles, set in a UDL context should improve social and academic inclusion of all students, including proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling in language literacy and instruction. Research studies point to the fact that a UDL-based literature circles intervention may be one remedy to the problems classroom teachers are facing in improving language and literacy instruction for both proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling readers, and indeed meeting the needs of all students in diverse classrooms. However, with no empirical research to document the connections between literature circles as a pedagogical instructional model and UDL principles and their application to reading comprehension, it is incumbent on educators to investigate the educational implications of connecting literature circles and the UDL principles and their impact on language and literacy instruction. The present study is intended to investigate whether the application of UDL principles, within the context of literature circles helps proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling readers, to comprehend texts, and improve reading engagement, participation, and high-order thinking skills in inclusive classrooms.

The proposed study therefore differs from earlier studies that have supported the claims that literature circles have potential organizational, structural and assessment problems, in their design and implementation (Clarke, 2007). Previous research has focussed on the impact of literature circles as an instructional pedagogy on reading comprehension, without applying the principles of UDL. In this study, a UDL-based literature circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension will be examined using a mixed design to collect and analyze the data. This is the first time that the connections between the principles of the Three-Block Model of UDL and

literature circles as an instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension will be examined with both quantitative and qualitative data gathered.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Research Methodology**

To address the gap in theory and research connecting UDL and literature circles this study examined the outcomes related to reading comprehension, higher-order critical thinking skills and student engagement as a result of implementing a student-centered UDL-based literature circles pedagogical model of reading instruction. Outcomes for both proficient readers and students who are CLD and are struggling learners in three schools and four classrooms (one sixth grade class, one fifth grade and two seventh grade classes) were measured, and compared to a control group that did not receive the treatment, but rather implemented a teacher-centered pedagogical model of reading comprehension instruction. The study used classroom-based assessments and curriculum based measures to determine reading comprehension outcomes, as well as the perspectives of students regarding their academic and intellectual engagement thus incorporating a qualitative dimension. Recognizing the need to document academic growth within the development of the child, this study therefore used a mixed methods approach to ascertain the widest range of possible effects of the UDL-based literature circles intervention on the treatment group.

In this chapter, the research methods used in the conduct of the study including data collection and analysis procedures are described. The data collection and analysis process, including the measures and assessments, as well as the UDL-based pedagogical model are being described. They include: (a) sample and participant selection, (b) data collection procedure (c) assessments and measures (d) the UDL-Based literature circle model of intervention and (e) data analysis procedures.

**Setting**

The study was conducted in three suburban public middle schools located near a major Canadian urban centre. Teacher participation in the research in all three schools was voluntary and the recruitment process involved an informed consent process. School superintendents and principals in the three school divisions who took part in the UDL initiative with Dr. Jennifer Katz, University of Manitoba were approached (see Appendix B & C) and the three schools were selected for the study based on the following criteria: a) all three schools have a diverse student population that reflects the interests of the researcher – academic and cultural diversity; b) both treatment classroom teachers were provided with two to three days of professional development in a universally designed yearly/unit/lesson planning continuum, a framework proposed by Dr. Jennifer Katz’s “Three-Block Model” of Universal Design for Learning (2012a).

In those schools where administrators expressed interest, teachers were then approached at a staff meeting (see Appendix D & E). Four classroom teachers in three schools (2 treatment classes in 2 separate schools - grade six and seven and 2 control classes in one school – grade five and seven) agreed to participate in the study. An email address was provided where they confidentially volunteered to participate in the study. Teachers in treatment classes volunteered to implement literature circles (they were already implementing UDL), and all teachers volunteered to allow data to be collected in their classrooms – however no data was collected from teachers. Parental consent was then sought (See Appendix F) – teachers were asked to send home letters and they collected them in an envelope. Teachers were also asked to collect participant assent forms (See Appendix G) from students who agreed to participate, as these students were asked to attend interviews during school time. However, teachers were not privy to students’ responses to the interviews, as these were conducted in a private setting.

### **Sample and Participant Selection**

The sample for this study consisted of 59 students (18 students in two control classrooms in school A and 41 students in two treatment classrooms in schools B and C) who attended three different public schools (Grades 5, 6 and 7). They were drawn from a larger sample of four classrooms in three separate schools. However, in the context of this study, both quantitative and qualitative data on the students (11-13 year olds) were collected in two sub-groups, a control group and an experimental group (See Table 2). For the purpose of this mixed-design study, a sub-sample consisted of 24/59 students (12 each from control and treatment classes) who were identified by the participant teachers using a purposeful criterion selection method and placed into categories (proficient readers and students who are CLD and are struggling readers) based on the schools' pre-existing classroom-based assessment and screening process. Participants were identified for this sub-sample based on the following criteria in order to create a heterogeneous and academically and culturally diverse sub-sample:

1. Group A: Students who were proficient readers, performing at least at grade level or above, and enrolled in intervention classes (6 students).
2. Group B: Students enrolled in intervention classes who were culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), were able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may struggle with academic terminology, but could talk to their peers and teachers), but were struggling to acquire literacy skills and were therefore attending ESL instruction (6 students).
3. Group C: Students who were proficient readers, performing at least at grade level or above, and enrolled in control classes (6 students).
4. Group D: Students enrolled in control classes who were culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), were able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may

struggle with academic terminology, but could talk to their peers and teachers), but were struggling to acquire literacy skills and were therefore attending ESL instruction (6 students).

### Data Collection Procedure

*Table 2: Data Collection Procedure*

Group	Method	Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data
Treatment	How?	1. SRA (Rubrics –Pre & Post) 2. Double Entry Journals (During) 3. Comprehension tasks (During)	Interviews (Pre & Post)
	When?	1. SRA (Rubrics)-Weeks 1& 6 2. Double Entry Journals (During) 3. Comprehension Tasks (During)	Interviews (Pre & Post) – Week 1 & 6
	By Whom?	Treatment Teachers	Researcher
Control	How?	SRA - Rubrics	Interviews
	When?	Weeks 1 & 6 (Pre & Post)	Interviews (Pre & Post)
	By Whom?	Control Teachers	Researcher

Both quantitative and qualitative measures of the intervention focused on the reading comprehension outcomes and higher-order critical thinking skills of the students and the total effects on students' academic and intellectual engagement as a result of the intervention (see Table 3). When multiple types of evidence can be cited in support of a particular conclusion, a greater

possibility exists for building consensus, ensuring the translation of research to practice and supporting the sustainability of research-based practices (Lloyd-Jones, 2003). In view of this, credibility of the findings was verified through data triangulation. Trustworthiness was established by first triangulating the data using multiple data sources, including semi-structured student interviews. As well, a graduate student blind to the intents and purposes of the study was also asked to review transcribed data in order to corroborate the findings of the study.

All measures were administered twice – pre and post intervention, to both treatment and control groups.

*Table 3: Research Instruments; Quantitative and Qualitative Measures of Student Outcomes*

	Reading Comprehension & Higher-Order Thinking Skills	Academic Engagement	Intellectual Engagement
Quantitative Measures	1. Standard Reading Assessments (SRA) (Pre & Post)	2. Double Entry Journals: Weeks 2-5 (1 x per week)	3. Comprehension Performance Tasks: Weeks 2-5 (1 x per week)
Qualitative Measures		1. Semi-structured Interviews (Pre & Post)	

### Assessments and Measures

**Quantitative Measures.** The collection of quantitative data involved conducting pre and post intervention reading assessments of students in both treatment and control classes. The goal was to evaluate students' reading comprehension and higher-order thinking skills before and after the intervention. Included in this measure were the following:

***Standard reading assessment (SRA) rubrics.*** The reading assessments (Katz, 2013) are based on a process developed by Faye Brownlie, and the performance standard rubrics developed by the BC Ministry of Education (2013). They were used in this study because they allowed teachers to assess students' reading fluency and comprehension in authentic ways. The SRA's (see Appendix H) have three sections: 1) A prediction activity that assessed to what extent students activated prior knowledge before reading, and how much prior knowledge a student had regarding this particular topic/passage, 2) A silent reading passage and open-ended response sheet. This authentic assessment allowed students to read the passage at their pace, and as many times as they wished and respond in a variety of ways – using images, webs, charts, etc. as well as traditional paragraphs or fact based responses, and 3) A reading conference. Students read aloud a short passage, and a running record was taken to assess reading fluency and decoding strategies. Students were then asked some higher order comprehension questions – the teacher scribed the answer so students had an opportunity to share their understanding orally, clarify their meanings, etc. This assessment was administered to all students in the sample in both control and treatment classes (59 students) twice (once before the intervention and once after the intervention) and it lasted for approximately 20-25 minutes per student during each administration. Teachers conducted the assessment as part of their regular instructional practice with their entire class. Copies of student's rubrics indicating their performance were collected for those students who had volunteered for the study.

***Double entry journals.*** Once a week students in the treatment classes completed double entry journals to measure reading comprehension and higher-order critical thinking skills in response to books they had read and discussed in their groups. The purpose of the response journal was to give students time to reflect independently on their reading and practise a previously

modelled reading comprehension or vocabulary development strategy. The double entry journal (see Appendix I) had two sections: a) what happened, and b) what I think. Section A sought to measure an understanding of the content of the texts read while section B measured the application of the core comprehension strategies and higher-order critical thinking skills such as students' ability to draw inferences from, and make connections to the text. These journals were not independently quantified or analyzed. However, students' reflective or cognitive ability on these journals contributed to teachers' final assessments on the reading assessment rubrics.

***Culminating performance comprehension tasks.*** Once a week students in the treatment classes completed one culminating comprehension performance product of their choice based on the text they were currently reading. This individual performance task or comprehension choice board (see Appendix J) was based on Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains. The goal of this measure was to generate data that reflected growth in the cognitive domain. These tasks were also not independently quantified or analyzed but they contributed to teachers' final assessments on the standard reading assessment rubrics.

**Qualitative Measures.** Quantitative methods of data collection of engaged behavior such as direct classroom observations are common instruments of single-subject designs (McMillan, 2004). However, most observational measures provide limited information on the quality of effort, participation or thinking (Paterson et al, 1984). While most studies have utilized either momentary time sampling methods, duration recording procedures or whole interval, time sampling method, each of these methods of measuring engagement has limitations. First, momentary time-sampling and whole interval time sampling have been shown to either overestimate or underestimate the occurrence and duration of on-task behaviors as well as the length of wait and recorded components (Kennedy, 2005). Engagement can range from simply doing the work, following

directions, and being on-task, to being involved, interested, and motivated, valuing the work and believing that it is beneficial (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Time sampling of engagement measure only the quantity of the behavior while providing limited information about the quality of engagement. In other words, the length of a student's engagement time or time of being on-task becomes more important than the level and intensity of the engagement when using these measures. Finally, some aspects of measuring observable behaviors may not be accurate indicators of the occurrence of the behavior. For example, Peterson et al. (1984) interviewed students immediately after observing them for on-task behaviors and found that some of the students who had been reported as being on-task were not actually thinking about the material, whereas many students who had been reported as being off-task were actually cognitively engaged in thinking about the material.

Qualitative, in-depth interviews on the other hand, help to uncover the quality of participants' thinking. Student self-report or self-assessment measures are qualitative measures that report the personal learning experiences of the student, such as feelings, thoughts, and attitudes about learning (Reynolds & Kamphaus 1992). Students can report on whether they are effectively paying attention or participating during classroom instruction or just looking at the teacher. Skinner et al. (2009) used self-reports with students in the third through sixth grades to measure behavioral engagement and disengagement (e.g. When I'm in class, I just act like I'm working. When I'm in class, I think about other things.). Similarly, Miserandino (1996) used self-reports with third and fourth graders to measure involvement, a behavioral component of engagement (e.g. I work hard for this class. I try hard to understand when my teacher explains things).

For this reason, this study measured academic and intellectual engagement qualitatively using semi-structured interviews (See Appendix K). Thus, the data generated from this study provided students' perspectives of two of the three dimensions of student engagement that according to Willms et al. (2009) includes social, academic and intellectual engagement. Specifically, this study considered two dimensions of engagement: a) academic engagement and b) intellectual engagement.

Semi-structured, in-depth student interviews were conducted to explore academic engagement and active participation in the program and included ten (10) questions related to students' personal experiences about learning, their active participation in the program of instruction, instructional challenge of the program; academic skills and intellectual engagement. Twelve students from each group in the sub-sample participated in pre and post interviews to explore their academic and intellectual engagement in their learning. Through emails or by phone, I set up separate data collection times with treatment and control teachers at their convenience. Baseline interviews were conducted during the first week during core subject hours at each school. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes per student. Students were interviewed one at a time in an assigned location either a quiet classroom or school library.

At the end of the sixth week, when the UDL-literature circle units were completed, I once again visited the treatment and control classes to collect final data through post-interviews. Each interview lasted again for about 20 minutes per student. To ensure reliability, the baseline data and post-data were collected during core subject hours when students were engaged in their learning and were able to describe their feelings about school, their learning and the type of instruction in their class.

### **Training Procedures**

Prior to the implementation of the UDL based literature circles' pedagogy, the researcher provided two after school professional development sessions for about 90 minutes each specifically in UDL-based literature circle's thematic unit planning and assessment, at a convenient time and place that suited the needs of the treatment classroom teachers. During these sessions, the two teachers (experimental classroom teachers) were trained on how to administer and analyze students' reading comprehension using the Standard Reading Assessment (SRA) Rubrics. They were also trained on how to plan a UDL-based literature circles unit. Following this training, both teachers and I collaborated to plan a UDL-based literature circles thematic unit (choosing texts, designing rubrics, developing and planning activities and projects that matched the science and social studies units they were currently teaching) for the two treatment classes (See Appendices L and M). Both thematic units (grades 6 and 7 respectively) were planned based on combined learning outcomes extracted from sections of the science and social studies grade six and seven curricula and it covered a six week period in the treatment classes (See Appendix N). Both treatment classroom teachers had previously been provided with two to three days of professional development in a universally designed yearly/unit/lesson planning continuum, a framework proposed by Dr. Jennifer Katz's "Three Block Model" of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) which incorporates the understanding by design (UBD) or backwards design model, differentiated instruction and assessment for learning.

### **The UDL-Based Literature Circle Intervention**

The UDL-based literature circles' model utilized flexible groupings allowing the classroom teacher to differentiate literacy instruction for all students. Both treatment teachers in separate

locations implemented this literacy model over a six week span (See Appendix N). However, while the researcher was not immersed in the daily implementation of the model over the six-week period, he was able to observe the implementation of the treatment in both classrooms and meet with teachers (pre and post) to discuss the possible effects of the treatment on the students. These observations and discussions with treatment teachers revealed that treatment students felt good about themselves, and empowered by feeling academically and intellectually engaged in their learning, as a result of the change in pedagogy in their classrooms.

The literature circles framework provided a lesson planning model and organisational tool for the six weeks of literature circles' intervention, using multi-levelled texts and multiple text formats selected by the treatment classroom teachers and the researcher, which matched the science and social studies units. Treatment groups met three times a cycle (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays) for 90-minutes each day. The intervention began each day with a 10-minute mini-lesson that included a discussion of thematic unit goals, the essential understandings and questions of the unit, application of focus comprehension strategies and literature circles' group expectations.

During the next 40-minute block, students silently read and responded to texts in their literature circle groups on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Typically, the students read silently for 20 minutes on each day, using multiple text formats and technology/materials such as digitized or scanned copies of texts, strategy stickies, and computer based Microsoft Word's insert text or audio comment features, and met in their literature circle groups or centres to talk about the text for 20 minutes (see Appendix N). During sharing time or literacy centres students worked in heterogeneous groups, discussing "what happened" and "what I think?"

During the final 40 minutes block, students had three tasks to be completed in rotation, one each on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. On Mondays students completed their double entry journals, on Wednesdays they completed one comprehension performance task of their choice (bloom's taxonomy comprehension choice board – Appendix J) and on Friday they worked in their MI centres. During the centre time, each group began to work on their inquiry project. Each group had the task of presenting two culminating performance products (inquiry projects) to the entire class using any of the multiple intelligences of their choice. The first group presentations took place during the third week and the second group presentations took place during the sixth and final week. However, if a student completed reading a text before any of the group presentations, the student continued with another text. During group presentations, he/she took part in a group discussion of the previous book that he/she read. This flexibility in groupings allowed diverse learners to self-pace their learning. The classroom teacher met weekly with each literature circles' group to instruct and facilitate the negotiation of meaning among group members.

**Week 1.** During week one, treatment classroom teachers also introduced the thematic unit including the essential understandings and questions of the unit. They explained the importance of research skills and introduced the unique approach to literature circles (reading texts and sharing “what happened” and “what I think” in the text); double entry journals and individual performance tasks based on bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domains. Teachers also activated background knowledge and introduced/frontloaded key vocabulary for the unit.

**Week 2.** During the second week, literature circle groups in treatment classes commenced their thematic study. Classroom teachers introduced the first comprehension strategy in a mini lesson – (synthesizing). Students chose and read books at their own pace and applied the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles)

and double entry journals. Students met in heterogeneous or mixed-ability groups, created by the classroom teachers, and commenced literature circle group discussions, negotiating and sharing meanings of their texts, completing student response journals, and individual performance comprehension tasks, while they also began to work on their first group inquiry project at MI centres.

**Week 3.** During the third week, students met in their respective groups and continued their literature circles' group activities – silent reading, group discussions, student response journals and individual performance comprehension tasks based on the blooms taxonomy. Classroom teachers introduced the next comprehension strategy in a mini lesson – (making inferences) and reviewed the previous strategy taught in week 2. Students chose and read books at their own pace and applied the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals. Students also continued their thematic study at MI centres, in preparation for the first group inquiry project presentations. On the third day of the cycle, students presented their first group inquiry project to the entire class using multiple intelligences/modalities (e.g. visual representations, role plays, and so on). Student evaluation was based on authentic performance and demonstration of knowledge in multiple modalities.

**Week 4.** The fourth week followed a similar routine to the third week. Classroom teachers introduced the next comprehension strategy in a mini lesson – (making connections) and reviewed previous strategies taught in weeks 2 and 3. Students chose and read books at their own pace and applied the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals. Students met in their literature circle groups and continued their silent reading, book discussions, student response journals and individual

performance tasks. Students also continued to work at MI centres on their second group inquiry projects.

**Week 5.** On the fifth week, literature circle group activities and MI centres continued just as in week 4. Classroom teacher introduced the next comprehension strategy in mini lesson – (details images) and reviewed previous strategies taught in weeks 2, 3 and 4. Students chose and read books at their own pace and applied the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals. Students began to prepare for their final project or inquiry presentations to the entire class.

**Week 6.** On the sixth and final week, Classroom teachers introduced the final comprehension strategy in a mini lesson – (questioning, reflecting and responding) and reviewed previous strategies taught in weeks 2, 3, 4 and 5. Students chose and read books at their own pace and applied the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals. Students in the treatment classes completed their second culminating group project and presented it to the entire class on the first day of the week. On the second day, post-intervention interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data on students' academic and intellectual engagement. Throughout the week, post-comprehension assessments using the standard reading assessments (SRA) were conducted by classroom teachers for both control and treatment groups, to collect post-reading quantitative data on comprehension and higher-order thinking skills.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data was analyzed in two different sections, based on the two different types of instruments.

**Quantitative Data**

In the quantitative data analysis, data from baseline collection was first checked for any pre-group differences using a one-way ANOVA. Subsequently, a repeated measures MANOVA was used to determine treatment effects for the large sample. Because students were classified according to classroom pedagogy, it was important to next look at whether there was a between-subjects effect for both groups and type of treatment – literature circles or teacher-directed instruction. The independent variable was type of instruction (student-centered literature circles pedagogy or teacher-centered pedagogy), while the dependent variable in this study was higher-order cognition reflected in reading comprehension, represented by higher order thinking skills—such as synthesis, analysis and evaluation—to increase understanding, solve complex problems, or construct new knowledge. Finally, a second MANOVA was run on the subsample groups, to determine if there were differential effects of the treatment for struggling readers who are CLD and students who are proficient readers.

**Qualitative Data**

In the qualitative data analysis, a case study approach was used in an attempt to provide an in-depth analysis of the single experiences of students in treatment classes and explain how they were affected by a UDL-based literature circles' model in comparison to the single experiences of a control group that did not participate in the intervention. A case study analysis approach was chosen as a research method for the obvious reason that I needed to develop a holistic understanding of the impact of the model on the treatment groups viz-a-viz the control groups. Yin (1989) described case study research as a flexible form of investigation best suited for studying a particular empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its natural or real life context. Once interviews had been transcribed, one other graduate student and I then came

together to examine, review and discuss commonalities in the broad themes. This analysis method, in addition to member checks, is intended to establish inter-rater reliability and trustworthiness and is particularly appropriate to address meanings and perspectives of participants (Carlson, 2010).

Two treatment groups of twelve students (six grade six students and six grade seven students) and two control groups of twelve students (six grade five students and six grade seven students) were interviewed pre and post in three separate schools in early March 2014 and in mid-late April of 2014 respectively. Each interview lasted for about 20 minutes. Three of the students from each group were proficient readers and three were students who were culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling readers. Three schools in two urban school divisions were represented in the study. There were two treatment classrooms in two separate schools (Grades 6 and 7) and two control classrooms in one school (Grades 5 and 7) (See Table 4).

*Table 4: Qualitative Student Sub-Sample*

Group	Treatment /Control	Description of Student	n	Grades/School Type
1	Treatment	Proficient	6	3 Grade Six (Grade 6-8)
		Readers		3 Grade Seven (Grade 6-9)
2	Treatment	Struggling	6	3 Grade Six (Grade 6-8)
		Readers		3 Grade Seven (Grade 6-9)
3	Control	Proficient	6	3 Grade Five (K-8)
		Readers		3 Grade Seven (K-8)
4	Control	Struggling	6	3 Grade Five (K-8)
		Readers		3 Grade Seven (K-8)

Student interviews consisted of ten questions to assess students' learning experiences in diverse classrooms (See Appendix K) and the extent of their academic and intellectual engagement in their learning. The interviews were conducted by me during school hours using an audio and text software (smart pen). Recorded notes were then transcribed verbatim. Student responses to the interview questions were then coded by me and analyzed to look for themes in the areas of academic and intellectual engagement for both treatment and control groups, where dependent variables consisted of academic engagement (interest, effort, active participation) and intellectual/emotional and cognitive investment or engagement in learning (passion, determination/motivation and use of higher-order thinking skills).

Qualitative data were analyzed using an emergent thematic coding process. A graduate assistant blind to the purposes of the study and the groupings of the students also originally coded transcribed raw data to add a different perspective to the analysis process. As themes emerged, they were discussed and further analyzed to corroborate with my findings. Subsequently, his themes were compared to my findings. For the most part, our findings were fairly consistent, but in the areas where we had discrepancies, a discussion ensued and all themes were included within the study. Themes and results of the qualitative study were categorized and summarized pre and post based on target groups of the sub-sample of the study, which included professional readers and struggling readers in both treatment and control groups.

In mixed-methods designs however, analytic and interpretive issues such as merging the results of the data may arise, thus making an interpretation based on integrated results challenging because of the unequal emphasis or bias placed on each dataset by the researcher. Therefore, in order to ensure the accuracy or validity of the analysis, data were analyzed separately and then the results were merged and embedded during the discussions to see if there were trends and

connections in the data. This point of interface refers to the stage at which the results from both components are combined or integrated (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). According to Mingers (2001), integrating the analysis in a coherent manner will invariably lead to richer and more reliable results. This mixed-design approach helped to provide a thorough understanding of the research problem by providing a more comprehensive data analysis from multiple approaches and perspectives.

## Chapter 4

### Results and Discussion

In this section, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures are described and results are reported for two research issues: (1) the comparison of reading comprehension scores and higher-order critical thinking for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills, who participated in a UDL-based literature circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension, and (2) the extent to which the implementation of a UDL-based literature circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension affects the academic and intellectual engagement for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills. This chapter concludes with the researcher's positionality statement, which highlights the researcher's reflections on his roles vis-à-vis the roles of the participants, the interaction between the researcher and the participants, and their potential impact on the research process.

The quantitative research consisted of pre and post standard reading assessments that compared reading comprehension scores and higher-order thinking skills. The qualitative research on the other hand included pre and post student interviews conducted five-six weeks apart to determine the extent of students' academic and intellectual engagement before and following the implementation of a UDL-based literature circle instructional pedagogy. This chapter begins with a discussion, interpretation and analysis of the results for both the quantitative and qualitative aspects. Next, the limitations of the study are discussed. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the implication of the findings for educational practice and recommendations for future directions for research on universally designed literature circle pedagogy.

**Quantitative Student Data***Table 5: Quantitative Student Sub-Sample*

Group	Treatment/Control	# Of Students	Type of School	Grade
1	(Treatment) Proficient Readers	6	Urban	3 Grade Six (Grade 6-8) 3 Grade Seven (Grade 6-9)
2	(Treatment) Struggling Readers	6	Urban	3 Grade Six (Grade 6-8) 3 Grade Seven (Grade 6-9)
3	(Control) Proficient readers	6	Urban	3 Grade Five (K-8) 3 Grade Seven (K-8)
4	(Control) Struggling Readers	6	Urban	3 Grade Five (K-8) 3 Grade Seven (K-8)
5	Treatment (Non- Designate)	29	Urban	13 Grade 7 (Grade 6-8) 16 Grade 6 (Grade 6-9)
6	Control (Non- Designate)	6	Urban	3 Grade Five (K-8) 3 Grade Seven (K-8)
	Treatment	41		
	Control	18		
	Total (N)	59		

Data were examined using a process recommended by Katz (2012b). Data collected from the Standard Reading Assessment Rubrics (SRA) on the larger sample of 59 students (41 treatment

students and 18 control students) i.e. all the variables for reading comprehension and higher-order thinking skills (reading level, self-monitoring, prior knowledge, making connections, questioning, literal comprehension, representing images, synthesizing, evaluating, inferring and participation), were initially aggregated and coded numerically using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, for both treatment and control groups. Following the SPSS data analysis, I recoded the data to check for any missing data with imputed means, in order not to lose cases, since the over all sample size for the study was small with a larger percentage in the treatment groups than in the control groups (41 and 18 respectively). This can be accounted for by the fact that most students in the two control classes did not give assent to participate in the study. Due to the limitations of the sample size, it should be noted that students completed multiple questions and one skipped or unanswered question/item on the SRA Rubric rendered the entire student's data as missing. Approximately, 25% of data would be lost if only complete cases were used. For this reason imputed means were used.

An ANOVA was computed to check for pre-test group differences in reading comprehension and higher-order thinking skills. There was no significant difference between the overall control and treatment groups. However, in checking the subgroups, there was a significant pre-group difference for struggling readers ( $F(1,10) = 12.787, p < .01, \eta = .561$ ). For this reason, a repeated-measure MANOVA was used for subsequent analyses (rather than an ANOVA) because I wanted to use the pre-reading scores/variables on the SRA Rubric in a single procedure and account for the difference or group variance between the two means for the control and treatment classes, pre and post.

A repeated measures MANOVA revealed that there was a significant difference in reading comprehension / higher order thinking between the treatment and control groups, but it was small ( $F(1,57) = 8.264, p < .01, \eta = .127$ ). When the overall group (i.e. proficient and struggling readers) means were compared pre and post, the results showed that treatment group means increased from 2.09 to 2.81, while control group means increased from 2.33 to 2.63. The differences reversed in direction from pre to post-intervention results. That is, the control group actually began with higher levels of reading scores than the treatment group, but the treatment group achieved at a higher level post intervention. (See Table 5 and Figure 1.0 below).

*Table 6: Estimated Marginal Means: Treatment/Control – Reading Level – Pre and Post*

Treatment/Control	Time	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Treatment	Pre-Reading Level	2.0864	.43215	41
	Post-Reading Level	2.8059	.60155	41
Control	Pre-Reading Level	2.3333	.48381	18
	Post-Reading Level	2.6343	.64241	18

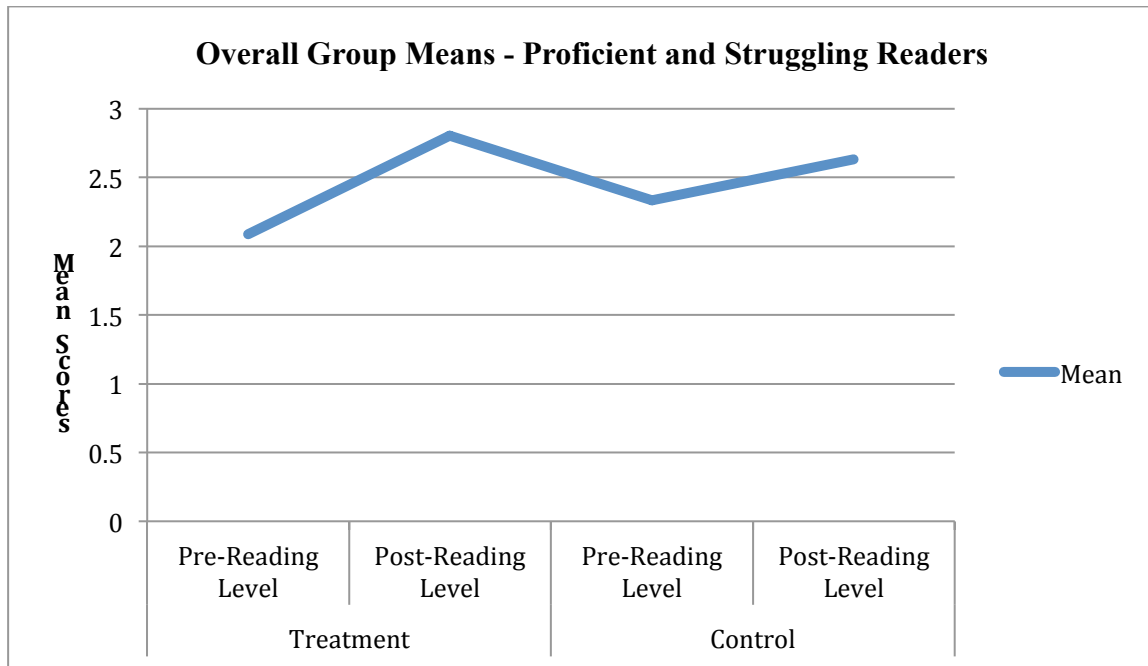


Figure 1: Overall Group Means - Proficient and Struggling Readers

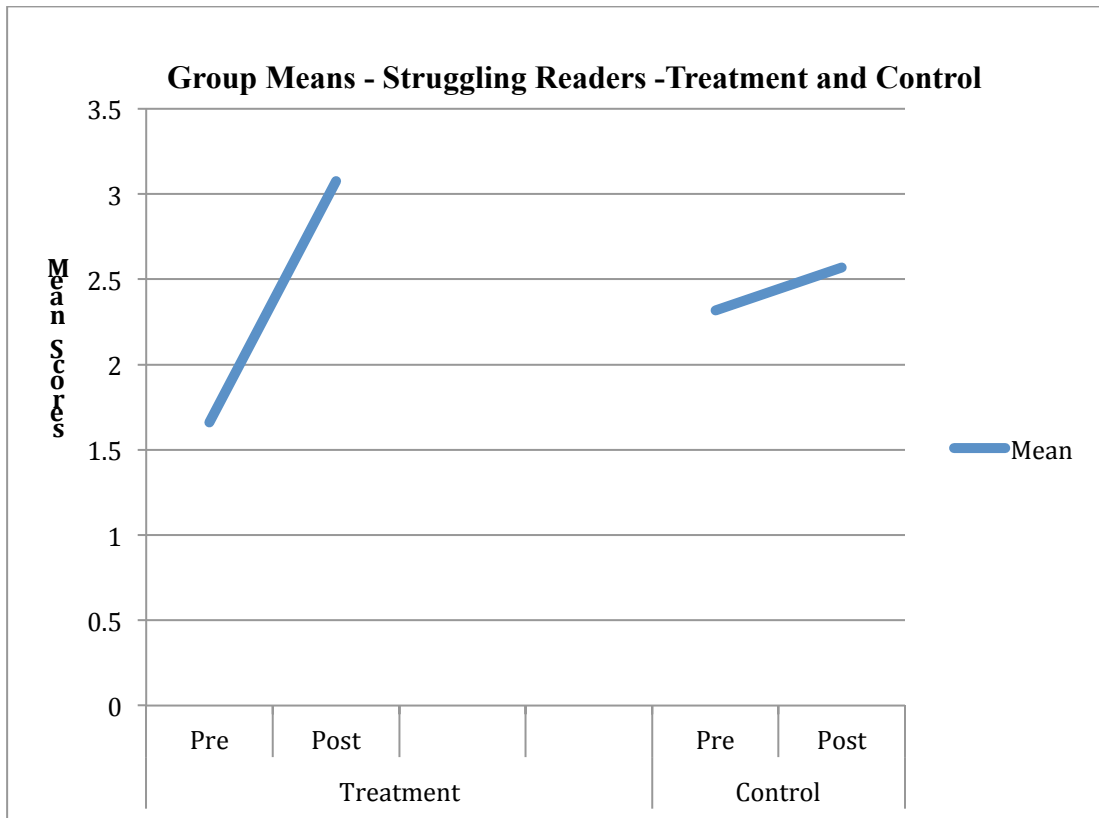
Given that the overall groups were statistically significant, a follow-up MANOVA procedure to test for sub-group differences across treatment and control conditions among proficient readers and struggling readers was then computed. The results of the MANOVA were found not to be significant among the proficient readers. As small group and independent structures, differentiated tasks, and lower levels of whole class instruction were core elements of the UDL-based literature circles' program and have previously been shown to support reading comprehension, one might have expected the proficient readers to record more gains in reading comprehension scores as a result of the intervention. It is possible this is because students were already proficient readers and thus changes were small, or it may be that for proficient readers, instructional practice has a smaller impact. Furthermore, these findings may also be explained by the smallness of the sample

size (less than 10 subjects in each comparison group), which may be insufficient for a conclusive result.

By contrast, post-intervention results showed that treatment means for struggling readers were large, growing from 1.66 to 3.07, while struggling readers in the control group went from 2.32 to 2.57 (See Table 7 and Figure 2.0 below). This resulted in a significant difference and large effect size ( $F(1, 10) = 18.696, p < .01, \eta^2 = .652$ ).

*Table 7: Estimated Marginal Means- Struggling Readers*

Test	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Pre	Treatment	1.6597	.30439	6
	Control	2.3194	.33403	6
	Total	1.9896	.45992	12
Post	Treatment	3.0764	.21797	6
	Control	2.5694	.80046	6
	Total	2.8229	.61881	12



*Figure 2: Group Means - Struggling Readers -Treatment and Control*

This is very significant because control students started off better than the treatment groups, but the treatment groups ended up better than the controls. Struggling readers in the treatment classes were more actively engaged in small-group activities and differentiated reading tasks, which helped boost their reading comprehension and higher-order thinking skills, unlike students in the control classes. This was shown in the results of the qualitative data. For instance, one student said, “I like the projects we do in school”. Another student also said, “We learn new stuff like math, ELA, and science in different ways. We talk a lot in groups instead of the teacher so we learn a lot by talking, and when students lead we understand better but when teachers lead it is boring”. In fact, means almost doubled for struggling readers in treatment classes after the

intervention. As well, the average means of struggling readers in treatment classes was above 3.0. This means that students who had not been meeting expectations were now fully meeting the expectations. Thus it appears struggling readers benefited more than proficient readers as a result of the intervention, and a UDL-based literature circle pedagogical model may likely reduce the reading achievement gap for struggling readers in ELA classes. These results may be explained for struggling students in treatment groups in that as classroom pedagogy changed in the treatment classrooms, students who are CLD and are struggling readers may have become more positive about their classrooms and the type of instruction, which might have led to greater engagement and reading comprehension and higher-order thinking skills.

The quantitative results are also corroborated by the qualitative student data for struggling students in treatment classrooms, which indicated after the study that struggling readers enjoyed the different activities and ways in which they learned in school. For instance, one student said that, "...the learning is interesting e.g. I did not know how slavery started so it was fun to know about how it started; we watched movies- it is easier to learn by watching movies". The same student also rated his ELA class after the study and said, "I can understand in class; it's not boring; it's fun, I like the activities; we watch movies and do projects". Another struggling student in a treatment class shared how she enjoyed the learning in her ELA class and said, "When the teacher alone talks we get bored; it's the same voice all the time; it's more fun when students lead; it's not boring because we share connections to real life and to self". The same student described her self-efficacy in ELA and said, "I feel good, we talk a lot in groups instead of the teacher, so we learn a lot by talking; we learn how to read; I like talking about the books; I like to listen and to do a little bit of writing". These comments are reflective of the change in classroom pedagogy in treatment classrooms, which may have impacted the learning outcomes of struggling students.

In terms of reading comprehension achievement, the quantitative results are also supported by previous research studies, which validate the claim that literature circles increase reading comprehension outcomes for students who are CLD or second language learners (L2). For instance, these results concur with Carrell's (1998) extensive research review, which found that the inclusion of meta-cognition in reading strategy instruction significantly improved the second language reader's understanding of the text and their motivation to read. It also corroborates McElvain's (2010) study of at-risk English language learners (ELLs) which noted an increase in their reading comprehension, reading self-efficacy, engagement, motivation to read and a willingness to participate in whole class discussions because of the combined use of collaborative conversations and strategic instruction. This perspective implies that school success in reading comprehension for children who are CLD and are struggling readers should involve interactions with multiple text formats and authentic learning activities that are guided by the learning styles of the students. Clearly the struggling students who participated in this study felt good about school, good about themselves, and empowered by feeling academically and intellectually engaged in their learning, which fits with results from the larger study by McElvain (2010), and perhaps corroborates these findings.

It should be noted that although the Partial Eta scores for struggling readers showed a profound impact, given the small sample size of the study, these quantitative results must be interpreted with caution but seem to be consistent with larger quantitative studies. Of particular note, this study found that struggling students who are CLD, who participated in this study achieved a higher score in reading comprehension and higher-order thinking skills than proficient readers in the control classes. This is a very significant finding, as it indicates that "the gap" can be

closed, and is corroborated by Katz's (in press) study regarding cross-curricular critical thinking outcomes when UDL is implemented. Therefore, this study supports Brock's (2001) L2 study of how students' textual comprehension is affected when they were allowed to interact and co-construct their ideas and interpretations of stories in small groups and differentiated tasks rather than in whole class instruction, with students waiting passively to be called on one at a time by the teacher.

### **Qualitative Student Data**

Qualitative data suggested change had occurred for proficient readers in treatment groups (Tables 8 and 9). Baseline interviews suggested that proficient readers in treatment groups enjoyed coming to school because it was fun to have different educational activities in school. However, these were not mentioned in relation to ELA. For instance, one student stated that "I love the way we work in our class; I like math stations, gym and band". Students also indicated that they had a high sense of self-efficacy in reading or ELA because they were capable readers, they valued marks or to pass exams, and they enjoyed reading books. They indicated a passion for reading texts that had series or sequels. One student said, "I like reading series like 'Harry Potter'. Overall, most students felt connected to texts and their responses showed that they were academically and intellectually engaged in reading. For instance, one student said that, "Yes, sometimes the book ends with suspense and so you always want to finish the book". While reflecting on their perspectives of student-led literature circles vis-à-vis teacher-directed learning, most students noted that although it was not a very common instructional practice in their classroom, they would prefer students to lead group discussions because they felt that they were accountable and responsible for their learning. For instance, one student noted, "When students lead, responsibility is on their

shoulders”. However, they recognized that demonstration of their learning was not consistent with multiple intelligences (MI) and differentiated assessment because academic tasks were completed only through verbal-linguistic intelligence (paper and pencil tasks).

*Table 8: Pre-Interview Themes for Proficient Readers in Treatment and Control Classes (Quotes included)*

	<u>Treatment</u>		<u>Control</u>
Themes	Supporting Evidence – (Quotes)	Themes	Supporting Evidence – (Quotes)
Learning in school is fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I love the way we work in our class; I like Math stations, gym and band’</li> </ul>	School is fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Its fun, I get to be with my friends and learn different things’</li> <li>• ‘Yes, gym and choir and my friends’</li> </ul>
Feeling of self-efficacy in Reading/ELA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘I am good at reading, most of the time I have no trouble reading’</li> </ul>	Feeling of self-efficacy in Reading/ELA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Average to high participation; I read a lot especially books I like; I read very often. This makes my participation very high’</li> </ul>

<p>Feeling responsible and accountable for their learning (Academic Engagement)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘I like getting my work done on time. I don’t need a teacher to help me understand’</li> </ul>	<p>Feeling responsible and accountable for their learning (Academic Engagement)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Very good, because I am ahead of the game; I have been reading for a long time since I was a child’</li> </ul>
<p>Demonstration of learning not consistent with MI and differentiated assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘We write down what happened in the book. Sometime we are told to say what happened in the book’</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstration of learning not consistent with MI and differentiated assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Look at the pages, reading word for word, explain to my teacher, sometimes we write what happened in the book’</li> </ul>
<p>Would prefer student led discussions / activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Students should lead group discussions because we get a better idea of texts rather than teachers explaining everything for the</li> </ul>	<p>Would prefer student led discussions / activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘I think when students lead is a good idea because it gives students an opportunity to get their voice heard more and express their feelings about books they are</li> </ul>

	students; students		reading’
	throw thoughts		• ‘We don’t do group
	around the table, not		discussions very often, but
	only teachers giving		when we do I just wing it.
	the ideas’		I don’t have to prepare.
Intellectual	• ‘Sometimes the book	Intellectual	• ‘ELA is too easy; I have
engagement in	ends with suspense	engagement in	lots of interest in reading;
reading, but	and so you always	reading, but	I learnt to read in pre-
not ELA	want to finish the	not ELA	school’
	book. I have done		• ‘No, typically I look
	that twice. The		forward to my breaks. I
	suspense in the book		can’t sit in one spot for
	makes me want to		too long; I loose focus too
	continue’		quickly, so I need to move
	• ‘Rarely, depends on		around’
	the books as well as		
	the teacher and		
	classmates. If		
	students are		
	annoying or teachers		
	shut the discussion		

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down too quickly, I  
am not too deeply  
interested'

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Post interview results for proficient readers in the treatment groups indicated that learning in ELA was fun and more engaging. It was 'not as boring as last year; education, games, not taking notes 24/7, activities that keep me engaged' as one student indicated because they were more engaged in hands-on and authentic inquiry-based activities. After the study, students developed an improved feeling of student autonomy in reading/ELA. They also recognized that instruction in ELA was now differentiated, and thematically connected to science and social studies curricula through student-led literature circles and inquiry-based learning tasks. For instance, one student, commenting on the type of activities said, 'Very good, fun activities, variety of activities, something new, variety of responses, the books are all connected in the unit with similar themes and topics'. As a result of the literature circles, double entry journals, individual performance tasks and inquiry-based projects, students indicated an increased opportunity for independence, student interaction, choice, ownership and responsibility for their learning. Another student said that literature circles helped them 'to self-pace their learning; they find answers to questions by themselves'. Students also acknowledged that demonstration of their learning was more consistent with MI and differentiated assessment. They recognized that they had several text options (multi-leveled texts), learning activities or learning styles to choose from in order to show their understanding of texts or a learning task. For instance, one student said that 'Students get to choose their own books; the discussions are more natural and informal'. To support this view,

another student said, ‘Yes individual inquiry projects and the group projects are very fun, there are a variety of tasks that we do to show our learning’. Students used double entry journals and independent performance tasks to apply comprehension strategies or higher-order comprehension skills. For instance, they made personal connections to texts in literature circles, created timelines, an art piece of an invention, made a poster, created a graph or wrote a poem or song, dance or mime, conducted an interview, or created a power-point slide show. Students also indicated that they were more academically and intellectually engaged because of the connections they made to the texts during the discussions, the variety of hands-on activities available to them, and the change in emphasis from marks to communication. For instance, one student said that literature circles were fun because, they ‘write what happened in the book, draw, create songs, poems, timelines, act it out, pretend to be in the character’s shoes and write their opinion’. They also enjoyed opportunities for student interaction and participation and the exposure to new genres, authors and ideas, and the move toward higher-cognitive tasks and away from the rigid or structured learning paper-pencil tasks and the series that everyone was reading. For instance, commenting on their feeling of academic and intellectual engagement in literature circles, one student said, ‘Yes, researching on diversity, finding different reasons why people come to Canada; some I haven’t thought about; asking classmates and teachers “why”, “when”, and “what” questions during interviews was fun’. Another student also said, she was engaged more than half the time because ‘I can relate and connect to what I am doing e.g. literature circles about the world war’. To support this, another student shared similar sentiments and said, ‘I like the connections to text (text to self) during literature circles discussions’.

In comparison with proficient readers in the treatment groups, students in control group classes expressed similar themes pretreatment, but did not appear to increase in engagement post.

For instance, in both pre and post results, students in control classes noted that school was fun because of recess, their friends, gym and choir, as students in treatment classed had done preintervention. Students recognized that they had a very strong feeling of self-efficacy in reading/ELA because of a strong language background in pre-school, their high interest in reading and the need for good grades in school. However, although students recognized that literature circles were not commonplace in their classrooms, they valued classroom instructional practices that made them feel responsible and accountable for their learning. Students indicated that it was a good idea for students to lead student discussions or literature circles instead of teachers because it gave them the opportunity to express their feelings about texts and learn by themselves. Their comments suggested that students were beginning to see and value their strengths and perceived the need for classroom practices that gave them opportunity for choice, collaboration and independent learning. Reflecting on their learning styles and classroom assessment practices, the responses of the students indicated that demonstration of learning was not consistent with multiple intelligences and differentiated assessment. They recognized that verbal-linguistic intelligence or pencil and paper tasks were the only means of showing their understanding of texts or their learning. One student commented that they were boring tasks and said, ‘We use worksheets, these are kind of boring, then we write book reports’. Another student said, “The teacher asks us to write answers to embedded questions about the novel”. These comments suggest a type of instruction that encourages students to passively receive knowledge without given them the opportunity to deconstruct meanings from texts through activities that develop higher-order thinking skills.

Proficient students loved reading books and were connected to books about adventure and survival. Although most students expressed these sentiments, they also, noted that they only enjoyed learning that was fun and hands-on. In fact, most students felt that they were intellectually

disengaged or not cognitively challenged in ELA because it was boring or uninteresting; they looked forward to their breaks; they lost focus too quickly; they needed to move around; some students had behavior problems and that teachers selected books that were boring. Although this is a small number of students, the students' comments would suggest that they feel that giving students increased opportunities for autonomy and freedom of choice in what they study or how they express themselves is key to determining engagement. These findings are also corroborated in the results of the Three-Block Model of UDL study which also showed that students in treatment classes reported significantly higher levels of student autonomy than did students in control classes, perhaps contributing to group differences in engaged behaviour (Katz, 2013).

*Table 9: Post -Interview Themes for Proficient Readers in Treatment and Control Groups (Quotes Included)*

<u>Treatment</u>		<u>Control</u>	
Themes	Supporting Evidence – (Quotes)	Themes	Supporting Evidence – (Quotes)
Learning in school is fun and engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Yes, it is not as boring as last year; education, games, not taking notes 24/7, activities that keep me engaged’</li> <li>• ‘Yes, to see my friends, gym, band, literature</li> </ul>	Learning in school is fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Yes, to see my friends, get to learn new things, like things that are interesting’</li> </ul>

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		circles, individual inquiry projects'		
Improved feeling of student self-efficacy in Reading/ELA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Very good, I can relate to things easily; I have no trouble making connections; I use all reading strategies while working on the unit e.g. reading back, making connections, inference, synthesizing'</li> </ul>	Feeling of self-efficacy in Reading/ELA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Very good, because I understand a lot of books and I can read and write very well'</li> </ul>	
Instruction in ELA is differentiated and thematically connected to science and social studies curricula/ MI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Write what happened in the book, draw, create songs, poems, time-lines, act it out, pretend to be in the character's shoes and write their opinion'</li> <li>• 'Very good, fun activities, variety of activities, something</li> </ul>	Demonstration of learning not consistent with MI and differentiated assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Normally its either talking or writing something down like reflections of the text; mostly we verbally talk about the book'</li> </ul>	

new, variety of responses, the books are all connected in the unit with similar themes and topics’

Increased opportunity for independence, student interaction, choice, ownership and responsibility for their learning (focuss on learning)

- ‘Students get to choose their own books; the discussions are more natural and informal’
- ‘It’s a good idea because it helps students to self-pace their learning; they find answers to questions by themselves’
- ‘It’s a good idea because it helps students become better leaders, talk about what we know, make corrections to our learning, add on, share how we feel about books;

Feeling responsible and accountable for their learning (focused on grades)

- ‘Yes, not to fall behind in class, get good grades, to be on top of my school work’

it makes us better learners’

Feeling of increased academic engagement in ELA

- ‘Yes, I prepare sticky notes to share and to help me remember what to share; yes I complete all my tasks because I read my books before the discussions; I listen very well and take notes when I listen for interesting things’
- ‘Yes, very often; more than half the time because I can relate and connect to what I am doing e.g. literature circles about the world war’
- ‘Yes individual inquiry projects are very fun,

Feeling of academic engagement in ELA depends on how fun the learning/text is

Feeling of intellectual disengagement in ELA

- ‘It depends – I don’t really take my time to prepare, I just speak my mind. Yes I complete all my tasks but if it’s a boring topic then its not very good’

- ‘Too easy, I have been doing my class work since pre-school;
- No, extraordinarily rarely, because I just want to go home’
- ‘We use worksheets, these are kind of

- there are a variety of tasks that we do to show our learning’
- ‘Yes, researching on diversity, finding different reasons why people come to Canada; some I haven’t thought about; asking classmates and teachers “why”, “when”, and “what” questions during interviews
- boring, then we write book reports, rarely but sometimes he does use the smart board;
- ‘Not really, usually it ends in perfect timing and I am kind of done with it and I want to move on with something else – it depends; the teachers don’t pick interesting books, they have a good ending and I am kind of done with it’

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**Pre and Post Interview Themes for Struggling Readers.** Qualitative data suggested significantly different outcomes pre and post for struggling readers in the treatment group as compared to the control group (Tables 9 and 10) because struggling readers in the treatment groups indicated that school was now not only attracting them because of their social connections,

they also noted that learning tasks were fun and engaging. Baseline interviews indicated that the students valued school because of the fun at gym, and the opportunity to socialize with their friends at recess. However, it was evident from the interviews with treatment group students that some students had a low self-esteem in reading/ELA because they were not good at spelling and reading, and found the material hard to understand. Other students noted that instruction in ELA was not challenging. For instance, one student said, “It does not seem too hard to understand and it’s kind of boring as well”. Reflecting on classroom instructional practices, most students indicated that they valued classroom practices that provided opportunities for student-led discussions, student collaboration, cooperative learning and student ownership of their learning. While acknowledging that literature circles were occasionally practiced in their class, they were quick to point out that it was based on a role model approach, with each student assuming a role that corresponds to specific cognitive tasks. This type of model provides a rigid structure for the discussions, very different from the UDL-literature circle based model adopted in this study which offers students informal opportunities to talk with their classmates about what they are reading-in small groups, where all voices are respected and heard and where all students are included and are engaged in making sense of the text, creating images, asking questions, making connections, drawing inferences, predicting, analyzing, synthesizing, and responding passionately to texts.

Furthermore, many of the students also indicated in the pre interviews that classroom assessment practices were not consistent with students’ multiple intelligences and differentiated assessment practices. Students acknowledged that they demonstrated their learning through pencil and paper tasks (verbal-linguistic intelligence). For instance, one student said, “The teachers write the questions on paper and we write the answers down”. Another student said, “We tell what the book is about, we explain what the characters did and write paragraphs”. These comments suggest

that the learning tasks were not differentiated to meet the different learning styles and intelligences of the students. However, students felt academically and intellectually engaged in reading mostly because of the type of books or series they were exposed to such as “The Diary of a Wimpy Kid” because of the personal connections to the text. Some students also indicated that they felt engaged only when they worked on projects that were fun, creative and hands-on.

*Table 10: Pre- Interview Themes for Struggling Readers in Treatment and Control Classes (Quotes Included.)*

<u>Treatment</u>		<u>Control</u>	
Themes	Supporting Evidence – (Quotes)	Themes	Supporting Evidence – (Quotes)
Learning and fun with friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘Playing with my friends. Doing activities like science, gym, art and sometimes Math. I enjoy learning’</li> </ul>	Learning and fun with friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘To see my friends, its fun, I like to learn, play with my friends at recess and laugh with them’</li> </ul>
Low self-esteem in Reading/ELA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘I am good at Math but not that good at spelling and reading’</li> </ul>	High self-esteem in Reading/ELA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good learner, very good reader because I read a lot especially chapter books, I have lots of books and I like reading’</li> </ul>
Prefer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘You get to discuss with</li> </ul>	Would value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘If students lead it will</li> </ul>

<p>collaboration, cooperative learning and student ownership of learning</p>	<p>our friends; helps with group thinking’ • ‘I understand the book better when students lead’</p>	<p>opportunity for student voice and ownership of learning</p>	<p>be great because they could see it from another kid’s perspective’ • ‘I think students should lead; for kids it will help them to speak out especially the quiet or shy ones, it will help them speak out in class. If teachers lead they can only lead the discussions where they want’</p>
<p>Demonstration of learning not consistent with MI and differentiated assessment (mostly verbal- linguistic)</p>	<p>• ‘We tell what the book is about, we explain the characters, names, I write paragraphs about the book’ • ‘The teachers write the questions on paper and we write the answers down;</p>	<p>Demonstration of learning not consistent with MI and differentiated assessment verbal-</p>	<p>• ‘The teacher asks questions about the details of the book such as what did the character do, and we answer the questions verbally and sometimes we write</p>

sometimes I picture the (linguistic) our responses down’  
 answers in my head and I  
 say it verbally’

Feeling  
 academically  
 engaged in  
 Reading/ELA

- ‘In projects I want to finish it up and get it all done at once. I don’t want to stop because if I stop I don’t want to do it again, its easier to get it all done’
- Teacher-directed learning reduces the fear of student control in learning

- ‘Some kids they might talk a lot and take over the whole discussion and not let anyone else talk; this is not fair to other kids who have ideas. I think teachers should lead because kids tend to talk more when the lead’
- ‘I prefer teachers to lead because they know more about books’

Feeling  
 intellectually  
 engaged in  
 Reading

- ‘Yes, in some books they put so much information into it and I put so much interest into it’
- Low intellectual engagement in ELA/Reading

- ‘No I don’t like books, reading is not fun, I prefer to be outside for sports’

By contrast, post interview results for struggling readers in the treatment groups indicated that school was now not only attracting them because of their social connections, they also noted that learning tasks were fun and engaging. For instance, one student said, “I like the projects we do in school”. Another student also said, “We learn new stuff like math, ELA, and science in different ways”. When I prompted them about their learning, it was obvious that most of the students indicated an improved self-esteem in reading/ELA because the learning tasks were engaging, authentic, hands-on and thematically connected to curricula in science and social studies. After the study, students acknowledged that they were exposed to a variety of texts, genres, and authors, differentiated learning tasks and opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge. Students acknowledged that their learning was no longer boring because of the improved student-to-student interactions and personal text-to-text and text-to-self connections during student led literature circles. One student said, “We talk a lot in groups instead of the teacher so we learn a lot by talking”. They also acknowledged increased opportunities for collaboration, student voice, choice and cooperative learning in student-led literature circles. For instance, one student said, “Students give different voices to texts when they lead discussions”. Another student said, “When students lead we understand better but when teachers lead it is boring”. It was also evident from the results that students recognized increasing opportunities to demonstrate their learning with multiple intelligences and differentiated assessment practices. Students worked individually and in groups and demonstrated their learning either individually in individual performance tasks or in group inquiry projects. Perhaps as a result, risk-taking increased and students emerged as leaders who previously had not felt safe to do so. This also suggests that, because students were given the responsibility for working with each other, learn in diverse ways and make decisions in accordance

with their needs and interests, UDL-based literature circles provided a low-risk environment to help struggling readers feel empowered and engaged in their learning.

Unlike struggling readers in the treatment groups whose engagement showed change, results indicated similar outcomes pre and post for struggling readers in control groups. In both pre and post interviews, struggling readers in control classes indicated that school was fun because they enjoyed learning activities such as gym and field trips and having fun with their friends. They acknowledged that they loved reading/ELA and had a high self-esteem for both, despite teachers' perceptions they were struggling as readers. This they attributed to a very high language background in elementary school, their love for reading books and to earn high marks in class. In the pre interviews, students had mixed feelings about student-led discussions/literature circles or teacher-directed learning. While acknowledging that literature circles were not a common practice in their class, students recognized that student-led discussions would provide an opportunity for student voice and ownership of their learning. For instance, one student said, "If students lead it will be great because they could see it from another kid's perspective". However, some students expressed concerns about students leading small group discussions. They claimed that teachers should lead discussions because teacher-directed learning reduces the fear of individual students taking control of student discussions, which might reduce the chances of shy students taking part in the discussions. Struggling students expressed similar sentiments in the post interviews in control classes. Thus while struggling students were beginning to see and value the need for an open, informal and equitable environment for learning discussions where all students have a right to participate and contribute to knowledge, they do not appear to have trust in the social interactions of their peers.

Pre and post interview results also showed that struggling readers in control classes indicated that classroom assessment practices were not consistent with multiple intelligences and differentiated assessment. Assessment opportunities provided were mostly verbal-linguistic (paper-pencil) tasks. One student said, “We use chapter questions, we discuss them in class, recap what happened in the last chapter, sometimes we write sentences about what happened in the book, sometimes we ask out teacher questions”. Although, some students felt academically motivated to read books that were series or had cliffhangers, most students noted that they were generally intellectually disengaged in their learning. For instance, one student said, “I don’t have any reason to want the learning to continue”. Another student commented, “No, I don’t want to keep learning, I like to get out for recess, I don’t like to learn all day, I like to hang out with my friends”. These comments suggest that in order to reverse the trend of disengagement in classrooms, students must be given opportunities to have autonomy in the classroom through authentic hands-on activities.

*Table 11: Post-Interview Themes for Struggling Readers in Treatment and Control Classes (Quotes Included)*

<u>Treatment</u>		<u>Control</u>	
Themes	Supporting Evidence – (Quotes)	Themes	Supporting Evidence – (Quotes)
Learning activities are fun and engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘Yes, like the activities like arts, science, ELA and to</li> </ul>	Learning and having fun with friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘Yes, hang out with my friends, go out for recess,</li> </ul>

	learn’		gym’
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Yes, because I want to make connections to the text and I want to share what I have read’</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Yes, to learn, hang out with my friends, meet new people and friends’</li> </ul>
Improved self-esteem in Reading/ELA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Yes, to share what I have read, it is easier to work in a group’</li> <li>• ‘I can understand in class, its not boring, its fun; I like the activities, we watch movies and do projects’</li> </ul>	High self-esteem in Reading/ELA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Between average and very high because I get the best mark in English in my report card; its kind of easy; I put a lot of effort because I like to learn about English, I don’t like social studies as much’</li> </ul>
Improved student-to-student interactions and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘I feel comfortable to talk to students than teachers; I am not shy</li> </ul>	Teacher-directed learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Teachers should lead, they know what they are</li> </ul>

<p>opportunity for collaboration, student voice, choice and cooperative learning</p>	<p>to share my ideas with them; it would be more interesting to find answers from students’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, very often; I like making connections with the text, friends are also reading the text, so it’s a well talked about book’</li> </ul>	<p>reduces the fear of student control in learning</p> <p>Demonstration of learning not consistent with MI and differentiated</p>	<p>doing, its their job to lead, students don’t know what they are doing and they just fool around.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Sometimes students dominate the discussion so its best for teachers to lead so that they will decide how to run the discussion and avoid students taking control of the discussion’</li> <li>• ‘We use chapter questions, we discuss them in class, recap what happened in the</li> </ul>
<p>Improved demonstration of learning consistent with MI and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Make a poster of the book, comic strips, time lines, interview a student’</li> <li>• ‘The books are</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstration of learning not consistent with MI and differentiated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘We use chapter questions, we discuss them in class, recap what happened in the</li> </ul>

differentiated assessment, cross- curricular	interesting, they are similar in themes and topics are very well connected'	assessment (mostly verbal- linguistic)	last chapter, sometimes we write sentences about what happened in the book, sometimes we ask our teacher questions'
Improved academic engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'I like the hands-on activities e.g. writing, making things, drawing diagrams'</li> <li>'Sometimes, especially when what we are doing is fun and interesting like working on projects, brain storming with friends'</li> </ul>	Feeling academically engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Yes, to read instructions and read to become smart'</li> <li>'Yes, if I like the book, yes I stay focused and complete all my tasks'</li> <li>'Yes, I come prepared for everything'</li> </ul>
Improved intellectual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Yes, I like to continue the learning</li> </ul>	Low intellectual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'No, I don't want to keep learning, I</li> </ul>

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engagement	to find out how people experienced their stories'	engagement in ELA/Reading	like to get out for recess, I don't like to learn all day, I like to go out for recess and hang out with my friends'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Yes if the book has very interesting information I want to continue reading the book'</li> <li>• 'Yes, I like the details that happen in the learning such as when I read something we find pictures about what we read and create book reports, I like the interesting tasks we do during our individual inquiry projects'</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'No I don't have any reason to want the learning to continue'</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

The research question initially inquired as to whether the implementation of a UDL-based

literature circle instructional pedagogy would help to facilitate reading comprehension and authentic engagement in students. More specifically, would a UDL-based literature circle pedagogy improve reading comprehension scores, academic and intellectual engagement for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills? From the quantitative data provided in this study, we see that the research showed small but significant gains in the reading comprehension and higher-order thinking skills for proficient readers in treatment classes. Perhaps more importantly, results indicated that students in treatment classes who are CLD and are struggling readers made significant gains in reading comprehension and higher-order thinking skills, closing the gap toward reading proficiency. Based on the results of the qualitative study, proficient and struggling readers in treatment classes felt very positive about the impact of the change in pedagogy on their learning as compared to their counterparts in control classes, which resulted in an increase in engagement, motivation, and participation in their learning. Treatment group students demonstrated a high sense of self-efficacy about their learning and were able to demonstrate their learning in ways that were consistent with their learning styles and the diversity of their classrooms. It was obvious from the qualitative results that students in the treatment classes were passionate about the authentic learning tasks and the connections they made to texts during literature circles.

In recent years, research studies have focussed on the impact of literature circles as an instructional pedagogy on reading comprehension outcomes. Research and literature have shown that the collaborative setting essential in literature circles provides students with an opportunity “to move from literal, text-based conversations of texts to purposefully reflecting and looking at texts

from more than one perspective” (Long & Gove, 2004, p. 359). This claim is supported in a mixed design study by Mizerka (1999) that examined the effects of using group discussions as a tool for supporting students’ high-level comprehension of text (i.e., critical literacy and reflective thinking about text). Although quantitative results of his study showed that there was no significant difference in reading comprehension scores between the teacher-directed and student-directed literature circle groups, the qualitative data from literature discussion groups showed that the student-directed discussion group was more actively engaged than the students in the teacher-directed discussion groups. By comparison, results of this study did show a significant impact of the UDL-based literature circles model on reading comprehension scores of treatment groups compared to control groups, and qualitative results also showed that treatment groups were more academically and intellectually engaged in their learning. The UDL-based literature circles created an opportunity for student metacognition that, according to Leal (1993), provides a catalyst for meaningful learning.

In response to the higher-order metacognitive comprehension skills of struggling readers Stabile (2009) in her study showed that literature circles constitute a method to help struggling readers become engaged, reflective and critical thinkers because they are in charge of their own learning, and it is this ownership that allows students to think for themselves and make meaningful contributions to the discussion rather than the teacher controlling the discussion. When children are given the opportunity to learn in ways that reflect their learning styles, through authentic tasks, we open up their minds to think and learn beyond the literal meanings of text. Thus, students who do not have the opportunity to take part in interactive language practices may be deprived of an important factor in shaping their higher order mental processes. During this study, struggling

readers in treatment classes developed pride in knowing how their learning had changed. When one student who is a struggling reader described his ELA class and said, “We talk a lot in groups instead of the teacher, we learn a lot by talking; we learn how to read; I like talking about the books, I like to listen and to do a little bit of writing,” and another does not feel boring in her ELA class because, “Students give different voices when they lead discussions,” you realize that you have created an authentic learning environment for learning, not only for proficient readers but for struggling readers as well. When students are involved and engaged in collaborative meaning-making discussions, students are more likely to increase in their reading comprehension ability, critical thinking skills and their overall achievement. The results of this study showed that struggling readers in treatment classes benefited the most from the treatment. During the study, the literature circles model allowed students who are CLD and are struggling learners to practice good reading strategies, allowing them to take risks in their learning. For instance, one student felt very confident in herself and said, “I feel prepared for literature circles because I want to make connections to the text and I want to share what I have read.” Consequently, we can see that literature circles were in fact an effective reading strategy that enabled students who are CLD and are struggling readers to become reflective readers.

In the qualitative data, the results were clear that student engagement, participation and motivation increased in the treatment classes. The authentic learning tasks allowed students to become cognitively invested in their learning because it was presented in ways that students were able to process multi-modally. Students worked individually, in groups and as partners on group projects, double entry journals and on individual inquiry tasks. One student shared how he demonstrated his understanding in ELA and said, “Through double entry journals, make

predictions about text, make connections to text and self, create timelines of events in a book, create an art piece of an invention, share my connections with others and ask questions.” In addition to this, by working in these groups, the students were given more opportunity to interact with their peers and self-direct their own learning. One student said, “We talk a lot in groups instead of the teacher, so we learn a lot by talking.” As stated by Casey (2008), students become more engaged when they are able to make choices and share accountability for their reading.

Long and Gove (2003) also found similar outcomes, although their study did not incorporate elements of UDL into the literature circles model. Their study showed that by combining literature circles and engagement strategies such as asking open-ended questions, making inferences, and analyzing critically evaluating texts, students become more reflective, and push themselves to read, talk, question, feel, and think outside of the box, thus displaying higher-order thinking skills and the affective variables of intellectual engagement. These findings also corroborate with the findings of the study by Katz (2013) whose larger study assessed the same dependent variables using the Three-Block Model of UDL as an intervention tool for inclusive education. Findings from her study suggested that the intervention significantly increased students’ engaged behavior, particularly active engagement, and promoted social engagement through increased peer interactions, student autonomy, and inclusivity.

“Overall engaged behavior was significantly different between the treatment and control groups post intervention. Students in the treatment classes were significantly more engaged than students in control classes, with treatment group students’ scores increasing overall and control group students’ scores decreasing. This pattern of decreasing scores for control

groups (i.e., students who have had no intervention) is commonly found in the literature” (Katz & Sugden, 2013, p.9-10).

Clearly the treatment students interviewed in this study were feeling good about school, good about themselves, and empowered by feeling academically and intellectually engaged in their learning, which fits with results from the larger study by Katz, and perhaps corroborates these findings. After this study, the students in the treatment classes developed a positive attitude towards their learning because they believed that they were in control of their learning. They felt motivated by the material, used multiple strategies to ensure comprehension, and were able to make connections and construct new knowledge as a result of the interaction with the text, and draw on social interactions to mediate the literal processes involved in their learning. One student said that it was important for students to lead their learning because, “It helps students to self-pace their learning and find answers to questions by themselves.” Consequently, when another student said, “It helped them to talk about what we know, make corrections to our learning, add on, share how we feel about books; it makes us better learners,” we can see that students are taking responsibility and ownership of their learning.

Previous research studies have focussed on the impact of literature circles as an instructional pedagogy on reading comprehension, without applying the principles of UDL. Several research studies have identified the benefits of literature circles in terms of academic and social inclusion for all students including proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling readers. This study contributes to this growing body of research. Also, in the qualitative data, the results were powerful showing that student engagement, participation and motivation increased in the treatment classes both for proficient readers and struggling readers. McElvain’s

(2010) study suggests that the combined use of literature circles and strategic instruction not only resulted in improved reading comprehension for students who are CLD and struggling readers, but also resulted in increased engagement, motivation to read (Margolis & McCabe, 2003) and a willingness to participate in whole class discussions (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola & Vaughn, 2004). Implementation of the Three-Block Model of UDL has resulted in improved social inclusion and engagement (Katz, 2013; Katz, 2012b,2012c), and critical thinking (Katz, in submission). Similarly, the results of this study, which is set in a UDL context, indicate that a combined UDL-based literature circles instructional pedagogy improves reading comprehension outcomes for all students, particularly students who are CLD and struggling readers, and academic and intellectual engagement for both proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling readers.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The research findings in this study should be perceived in light of a number of strengths and limitations, which help to generate implications for future research. This was the first UDL-based literature circles unit these treatment teachers had tried and with only 2.5 days of training, all results have to be interpreted conservatively. Also, this study represents an initial exploratory study of the effects of a UDL-based literature circles instructional pedagogy on reading comprehension and higher-order thinking, and student engagement with a small sample. Because of the scarce research on the combined application of UDL principles and literature circles instructional pedagogy, it was important to conduct this study. However, further in-depth and larger scale investigations need to be conducted to provide clearer insights into using this reading

approach to improve and/or monitor the reading comprehension of both proficient readers and students who are CLD and struggling with reading.

**Research Design.** The research design was a between-subjects analysis which quickly became very complex due to the number of confounding variables. Several modifications to the design of the study would have helped to generate accurate results and reduce the chances of differences between the groups having an effect. Firstly, this type of design requires a large number of participants to generate confidence in its findings. It was difficult to maintain homogeneity across the groups due to individual variability amongst students and schools; with all of their subtle differences. Age, gender and social class or socio-economic backgrounds are just some of the obvious compounding variables but background in reading and other personality constructs such as intelligence could have also influenced the results of the study. Another limitation to the research design is the environmental factor. Due to time constraints, I interviewed some students in the morning and some in the afternoon. The classroom teachers also administered the standard reading assessments at different times during the day in both treatment and control classes. The possibility of tiredness or boredom may have existed for some students, which will certainly have created an environmental bias in the results.

**Sampling.** Several limitations may have existed due to the sampling method and sample size. First, the sample selection criteria were based on the schools' pre-existing classroom-based assessment and screening process. This may have been different for each of the three schools. One limitation was the researcher's reliance on the schools' determination that some students were proficient readers while some were CLD and struggling readers. Although the analysis used in the study addressed this to some degree by employing ANOVA to analyze the posttest performance

adjusted for pretest scores, it is possible that unknown group differences influenced the outcomes. Future research should use pretest information to stratify students based on reading, language, and cognitive abilities and randomly assign students to treatment. In addition, the use of a purposive small sub-sample of 24 students in both control and treatment groups resulted in an underpowered design and did not allow for making any definitive conclusions. The overall sample size in this case was 59 with a larger percentage in the treatment groups than in the control groups (41 and 18 respectively). A larger sample size may have produced clearer insights and increased accuracy as to whether participation in a UDL-based literature circles instructional pedagogy improved students' reading comprehension and engagement.

**Length of Treatment.** Another limitation is the length of treatment. This study was designed for a six-week period of time, so as not to interfere with start of school procedures, holidays, or end of year activities. It would be interesting to see whether results maintained, increased, or faded over longer periods of time.

**Researcher Bias/Teacher Effect.** Although the researcher was not aware of any known bias, this phenomenon is common when the researcher acts as a participant and observer. To start with, I was the researcher, the data collector, interviewer and data analyst for both quantitative and qualitative data, with some support from a graduate student and faculty advisor. Although I ensured that a measure of impartial feedback from cohorts and faculty advisor were in place, I have to admit that there could be elements of subjectivity in the process of examining the purposes of the study. I provided 2.5 training days for treatment teachers and helped guide instruction throughout the study. Secondly, the training and experience of treatment teachers may have impacted the results. One of the treatment classes had a great teacher who was more knowledgeable in literature circles or UDL and seemed to be much more motivated than the other,

a factor that would undermine the validity of the experiment. Although both of the treatment teachers had only taken one-two day's professional training in UDL, one of the treatment teachers was more experienced in literature circles and UDL than the other, but at the same time was implementing a role-based model of literature circles, developed by Daniels (1994) which was very different from the one adopted in this study. Because this study involved two different treatment teachers with different backgrounds, experience and training, teacher effects must have affected the conclusions of the study. To avoid this, randomization and matched pairs should have been used to smooth out the differences between the groups.

**Measures and Assessments.** One should also consider the type of reading comprehension assessment used in this study. To meet the requirements of scientifically-based research, a standardized reading measure (Standard Reading Assessment) was administered to all students in both treatment and control classes pre and post to determine the impact of the treatment. Although this measure has been found to be reliable and valid, a second measure that also assesses the same variables in reading comprehension may have produced different results, or may have corroborated the results of the SRA. Using multiple measures to assess the same variables in order to enhance convergent evidence between instruments or concurrent evidence based on relations to external variables (e.g. other characteristics of the subjects) is a possible recommendation for future studies. Also, the use of test experts or other classroom teachers to examine the internal structure of the measures (content validity) and how the items supported the variables in the study is also a possible recommendation for further studies.

**Implications and Future Research**

Instructional practices in use in classrooms today must address the needs of a diverse classroom. Clearly, this study showed improvement in reading comprehension for students who are CLD and are struggling readers and an increased academic and intellectual engagement for treatment groups. If the claim by Parker, Quigley, and Riley (1999) that students who are struggling learners benefited the most from literature circles is true, then based on the evidence presented in this study, it is clear that a UDL-based literature circle instructional pedagogy is a valid method of instruction for students who are CLD and are struggling readers. These research findings demonstrate that UDL-based literature circles do have promise, and could, with research and development, prove to be an effective way to improve reading comprehension. If further studies prove a UDL-based literature circle model to be a successful approach to reading instruction, they may also be a viable alternative for meeting the needs of students who are CLD and are struggling with reading. Literature circles have great potential, but more empirical research studies on this popular instructional approach is clearly needed. This study may be a spring board for further studies regarding combining the principles of UDL and literature circles to support reading comprehension instruction for all students.

**Research Positionality**

I am a Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) at Dufferin School, a N-6 elementary School, in Winnipeg School Division. The school is located in the hub of the inner city school district of Winnipeg, Manitoba, in the centennial community. It has a diverse student population of about 300 students. Prior to conducting the research study, my role as “special educator” or “resource teacher” had been primarily to adapt and modify individual plans focusing on remediation and special programming (Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports) in reading instruction for

struggling readers only. In my view, this model presupposes that such learners are passive receivers of factual material, and so they would need systematic instruction in segregated settings. Although this is not to say that I do not recognize the value of Tier 2 and 3 supports, however, it underpins the fact that such a model is a deficit model. Therefore, with increasing evidence that the Three-Block Model of Universal Design for Learning can be effective for all (Katz & Epp, 2013), and that learners differ in ways that they perceive and comprehend information that is presented to them, I undertook the research project with the hope of developing an understanding of the ways in which students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling with reading comprehension and are pulled out for remedial instruction, can learn alongside their peers, especially proficient readers, rather than being separated and instructed one-on-one or in small groups by the SERT/RT or Educational Assistant, because of an “intrinsic” or “deficit” condition that can supposedly be treated separately from their peers.

Prior to the study, I had explored the use of literature circles in a grade six classroom at my current school, in collaboration with the grade six classroom teacher, following my desire to facilitate higher-order thinking skills in reading comprehension and student engagement in a general education classroom for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. The grade six classroom teacher and I implemented literature circles with scripted lessons and utilized roles. We were hoping to see more exploratory talk- to have both proficient readers and struggling readers elaborate reasoning, make inferences and back up their claims with text evidence. However, due to organizational and behavioral challenges, difficulties in acquiring multi-leveled texts, and the possible fact that the literature circles were based on assigned roles, and not based on UDL principles or thematically connected to science and social studies curricula, the literature

circles were rather artificial conversations and did not go beyond the minimum expectation. Therefore, I decided to embark on designing a UDL-based multi-text literature circle inquiries and thematic study in order to investigate whether the outcomes would be different with the incorporation of UDL principles, and if it would help all students particularly students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, to comprehend texts, improve student reading engagement, participation, and high-order thinking skills in an inclusive sixth grade classroom.

### **The Research Process through my Positionality**

Following the completion of the research project, I began to reflect more deeply on my experiences beyond the actual study. Specifically, I asked myself questions about the experience:

1. What role did my positionality as a researcher studying issues of reading comprehension, higher-order thinking skills and student engagement play?
2. How did I use my positionality in different ways?
3. Did my positionality influence the interactions that I had with the different schools, students and teacher participants that took part in the study?

As I conducted interviews with students and engaged them in frank discussions about their experiences with the literature circles pedagogy or teacher-directed instruction, I expected that my position as a researcher and preconceived beliefs about reading comprehension instruction and literature circles would aid me in connecting especially well with proficient readers, while requiring me to make special efforts to connect with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and are struggling readers. Such expectations would seem reasonable, and at least in some part grounded in logic, based on the fact that proficient readers were already meeting learning

outcomes. But what occurred was quite the opposite. Proficient and struggling readers in treatment classes felt very positive about the impact of the change in pedagogy on their learning as compared to their counterparts in control classes, which resulted in an increase in engagement, motivation, and participation in their learning. To my amazement, my own preconceived notions about the importance of my positionality were overturned by the results of the data, which showed that struggling readers in treatment classes benefited the most from the treatment. In being cognizant of my positionality as a researcher attempting to engage students in discussions about reading instructional pedagogies, through planning thematic units with classroom teachers, this literature circles model showed that student-directed discussion groups were more academically and intellectually engaged than the students in teacher-directed instructional models, and that when struggling readers are given the opportunity to learn in ways that reflect their learning styles, through authentic tasks, they become engaged, reflective and critical thinkers because they are in charge of their own learning.

The ways in which I interacted with treatment and control teachers was based on my own lived experiences as a Resource Teacher, and the ways in which I perceive issues of reading comprehension instruction. Not only was the product of this research mediated through my positionality, but the participation of the students and the teachers was also mediated through my positionality. As became apparent in my discussions with the two treatment teachers, both of whom had some training in UDL and The Three-Block Model, both teachers indicated that the authentic learning opportunities in treatment classrooms had provided opportunities for student metacognition and higher-order thinking. Through the dominance of a student-centered approach in treatment classrooms, students in treatment classrooms responded to my sincere interest in their

learning experiences as an opportunity to engage in a discourse of reading comprehension, higher-order thinking skills, participation and engagement. Conversely, the reticence of control students to participate may also be linked to my positionality, in that they might have viewed my research as attempting to debunk the teacher-centered approach to instruction in their classrooms.

Interestingly, however, some students in control classrooms identified with my positionality and indicated that the teacher-centered approach was not engaging.

There were assumptions I made as a researcher regarding access and my positionality that relate to a concept of insider/outsider. As the research was conducted, I was an insider with all of the treatment teachers. Although I was a graduate student while they were undergraduates, we shared a common bond; one of struggling to close the achievement gap between struggling readers and proficient readers. I may have also achieved a greater sense of solidarity with students in treatment classes as most of whom I spoke with were already engaged in some form of literature circles. In reflecting on the research experience, I noticed something regarding my position as an insider as a researcher. As I introduced myself in conversations with treatment students, and moved each discussion forward, I drew on my insider status more so than when I interacted with control students. As someone concerned with creating instructional environments in ways that increase accessibility, I became an insider with students in treatment classes, as my research interest is their lived learning experience. But on the flip side, the control students and teachers with whom I interacted had little to no personal experience with the researcher's position and were unable to relate to it, and by extension, were unable to relate to me.

This study has created for me a fundamental shift in the way I view my role as a Special Education Resource Teacher. The UDL-based literature circles model has made clear that the

planning and instructional process must be focused on improving our use of Tier 1 intervention, which means programming according to UDL principles, and a gradual shift away from pullout models of support to push-in models of support, whereby both special education resource teacher and the general education teacher focus on supporting all students in their efforts to achieve success in their classrooms. This study has also created a feeling of satisfaction, which has been fueled by the excitement that I experienced as I mentored fellow educators and celebrated their success. It also gave me the opportunity to move into an instructional coach position where I co-planned with teachers and helped them to increase engagement in their classrooms. This shift in pedagogy was a difficult transition for me at first because I loved working with small groups and helping them attain proficiency in language and literacy skills. However, after the study, I came to the realization that I could make a greater impact by helping struggling learners be successful in their own classes as opposed to the impact that I would make if I only served struggling students in pullout programs.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

## The Three Block Model of UDL

Developed by Dr. Jennifer Katz

**System & Structures**

- Inclusive Policy – No “Except!”
- Hiring of administrators with expertise/vision
- Distributed Leadership
- Professional Development
- Staffing to support collaborative practice
  - Team planning time, scheduling in cohorts/teams
  - Resource / EA allocations to classrooms / cohorts, not individual children
  - Co-planning, Co-teaching, co-assessing
  - Consistent, authentic assessment across classes – rubrics
- Budgeting
  - Changed from segregated practices/funding allocations
  - Assistive technology
  - Multi-leveled resources

**Inclusive Instructional Practice**

- Integrated Curriculum
- Student Choice
- Flexible Groupings / Co-operative Learning
- Differentiated Instruction
- Differentiated Assessment
- Assessment for learning / Class Profiles / Strategic Teaching
- Technology
- Discipline Based Inquiry
- Meta-Cognition – Assessment as learning
- Understanding by Design / Essential Understandings
- Social & Academic Inclusion of Students with Exceptionalities

**Social and Emotional Learning – Developing Compassionate Learning Communities**

- Respecting Diversity (RD) Program
- Developing Self-Concept
  - Awareness of and pride in strengths and challenges
  - Sense of belonging
  - Goal setting and planning – building a vision for the future, self-efficacy, hope
  - Leadership skills / opportunities
- Valuing Diversity
  - Awareness of the strengths and challenges of others
  - Valuing of diverse contributions to community
  - Sense of collective responsibility for well-being, achievement of all
  - Empathy, Perspective taking, Compassion
- Democratic Classroom Management
  - Collective problem solving, recognition of rights and responsibilities
  - Promotion of Independent learning, student choice & empowerment, leadership
  - Increase in student engagement, ownership

**Appendix B****Letter to School Superintendents**

A Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Based Literature c Circle (LC) Model: Effects on  
Higher-Order Reading Comprehension Skills and Student Engagement in a Diverse Sixth Grade  
Classroom

Dear Superintendent,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. Currently, I am conducting a study, which is a requirement for my Masters in Education at the University of Manitoba. I am seeking your permission to conduct this study in your school district. Specifically, I am requesting the participation of two elementary school Principals who would allow research data to be collected in their schools within your school district. I hope to collaborate with four teachers (2 grade six treatment classes in school A and 2 grade six control classes in school B) to implement the study in four classrooms. Pre and post data (classroom-based and standardized reading assessments, semi-structured student interviews and observations) involving two instructional conditions (2 treatment classes using the UDL-based literature circles intervention and 2 control classes not using the intervention) will be collected before and after an intervention period of 6 weeks (one week before the intervention in December 2013 or January, 2014 and one week at the end of the intervention between mid to end of February, 2014). This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not

included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This research examines a problem that many mainstream teachers face today: how to successfully improve outcomes in reading comprehension for all students, including proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) or designated as English as an Additional Language Learners (EAL) and are struggling readers in an English-only environment? Creating instructional environments as well as implementing instructional pedagogies to support student learning outcomes for this student population have become essential for classroom teachers. This research is an attempt to investigate the effects of a pedagogical reading intervention model (a universally designed literature circles model) on the reading comprehension, student engagement and higher-order critical thinking of sixth-grade students in two elementary schools. The intervention integrates the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and research-based literature c circle (LC) comprehension strategies in the classroom, to form a unique UDL-based approach to literature circles for all students in the mainstream classroom. Two elementary schools (K-6) will be targeted with two control classrooms from school A and two treatment classrooms from school B.

It is hoped that 100 students (approximately 50 students total in 2 control classes in school A and approximately 50 students total in 2 treatment classes in school B) will be identified to take part in the study. Students in both control classes will receive ELA instruction by their control classroom teachers using the ELA curriculum while students in both treatment classes will receive a UDL-based literature c circle model of instruction by their treatment teachers (combined ELA, science and social studies). Teachers in treatment classes will be volunteering to implement literature

circles (they are already implementing UDL), and all teachers (control and treatment) will be volunteering to allow data to be collected in their classrooms – no data will be collected from teachers. All the students in the sample (100 students) will participate in performance standard reading assessments twice (once before the intervention and once after the intervention) and it will last for approximately 20-25 minutes per student during each administration. Teachers will conduct the assessment as part of their regular instructional practice with their entire class. Copies of student's rubrics indicating their performance will be collected for those students who have volunteered for the study.

However, a sub-sample for this study will consist of approximately 24/100 students (12 each from control and treatment classes) who will be identified by classroom teachers using a purposeful criterion selection method that is based on the schools' pre-existing classroom-based assessment and screening process – students' reading assessment results (Fountas & Pennell benchmarks) and EAL enrollment data for both proficient readers and struggling readers. Student participants will be expected to participate in student interviews, reading comprehension assessments, observations of engaged behavior and comprehension performance tasks. Student participants will be identified by their classroom teachers for the sub-sample based on the following criteria in order to create a heterogeneous and academically and culturally diverse sub-sample:

1. Group A: Students who are proficient readers, performing at least at grade level or above, and enrolled in intervention classes (6 students).
2. Group B: Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), are able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may struggle with academic terminology, but can talk to their peers and teachers), but are struggling to

acquire literacy skills and are therefore attending ESL instruction and enrolled in intervention classes (6 students).

3. Group C: Students who are proficient readers, performing at least at grade level or above, and enrolled in control classes (6 students).
4. Group D: Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), are able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may struggle with academic terminology, but can talk to their peers and teachers), but are struggling to acquire literacy skills and are therefore attending ESL instruction and enrolled in control classes (6 students).

The specific research question of this study includes;

1. Is there a significant difference in reading comprehension scores and higher-order critical thinking for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills, following the implementation of a UDL-based literature c circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension?
2. Is there a significant difference in academic and intellectual engagement for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills, following the implementation of a UDL-based literature c circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension?

There is no cost to your school district, and all participation is voluntary. Participant teachers in both schools will be selected based on the following criteria: a) both schools have a diverse student population that reflects the interests of the researcher – academic and cultural diversity; b) both

treatment classroom teachers would have been provided with two to three days of professional development in a universally designed yearly/unit/lesson planning continuum, a framework proposed by Dr. Jennifer Katz's "Three Block Model" of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) which incorporates the understanding by design (UBD) or backwards design model, differentiated instruction and assessment for learning. Once the principals express interest, teachers will be approached to participate. If more than two schools/four teachers volunteer, two schools and four teachers will be randomly selected. Two teachers will represent the treatment group and 2 will represent the control group. Any involvement by the teachers will be strictly voluntary and they will be at liberty to withdraw at any time.

Once the treatment teachers have been selected, the researcher would then meet with the treatment teachers during two after school sessions for about 90 minutes each to co-plan a UDL-based literature circle's thematic unit (combined social studies and English Language Arts) based on what they are already doing, at a convenient time and place that suits their needs. The thematic unit will cover a six week period.

In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, only the aggregated results of the research will be shared with classroom teachers who participate in the study. However, specific aggregated results in treatment classrooms will not be shared with control classroom teachers or vice versa. Interview transcripts will have a cover page with participant's name. This cover page will be removed after a numerical code is assigned to the participant. Interviews will be initially transcribed verbatim and anonymized by the researcher. Then a selective coding of responses by a graduate cohort that the researcher belongs to, who are familiar with thematic content analysis but unfamiliar with the study goals will follow. All data entry will contain only

these numerical codes, thus only the researcher will have access to the names of participants. All data (statistical inferences and interview notes etc.) will be kept in locked files and access will be restricted to the investigator and research supervisor. At the conclusion of the study, all data (primary data or data held in electronic format) will be kept for a period of 5 years in a locked cabinet in the office of the Research supervisor, after which it will be destroyed by shredding, cutting or smashing at the end of the specified data retention period of 5 years (January, 2019).

There are no known risks to this research for subjects beyond what is already possible within the learning environment – discomfort, frustration or anxiety due to the learning task. For instance, a student may find one of the tasks challenging, and respond negatively to this challenge. It is expected that teachers or school Resource Teachers will be able to handle this situation should it arise, as they would do in the normal course of their teaching day – allow student to calm down and provide redirections to the learning task when appropriate. However, in order to protect the interests of the student and avoid any abuse of children, the researcher will let students to know (during the process of providing assent) that if they detect any harm or abuse at any point during the course of the study, they should inform their classroom teacher (as is the normal practice) or call the researcher and he will follow standard procedures for reporting abuse to legal authorities in school and the Child and Family Services Agency.

Benefits of this study are many – research has shown implementation of literature circles to improve reading comprehension achievement scores and higher-order critical thinking skills while research in the Three Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has also shown to increase students' engaged behavior, particularly active engagement, and promoted social engagement through increased peer interactions, student autonomy, and inclusion of all students.

Results from the study, may also be used for publishing articles, conference presentations, and school planning/program evaluation.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I (PRINT NAME), \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in the above study conducted by the above named researcher by proceeding to contact Principals who would like their classroom teachers to participate in this study. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form.

Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Superintendent: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like a summary of the results of the study, please provide an email or home address below, and we will send you a summary of the results.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like a summary of the results. Please send it to:

\_\_\_\_\_ Email : \_\_\_\_\_ or

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to participate in this study kindly send the signed copy of this consent to either the Principal investigator or the Research supervisor by fax or mail as indicated below:

Principal Investigator:

Charles G. Bendu: (Fax) 204-774-6167 c/o Dufferin School, 545 Alexander Ave. R3A-OP1, MB, Winnipeg.

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Jennifer Katz: (Fax): 204-474-7550 c/o University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education, Associate Professor, Fort Gary Campus.

**Appendix C****Letter to Principals**

A Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Based Literature c Circle (LC) Model: Effects on  
Higher-Order Reading Comprehension Skills and Student Engagement in a Diverse Sixth Grade  
Classroom

Dear Principal,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. Currently, I am conducting a study, which is a requirement for my Masters in Education at the University of Manitoba. I am seeking your permission to conduct this study in two separate elementary schools (school A and B).

Specifically, I am requesting the participation of four elementary school teachers (2 grade six treatment classes in school A and 2 grade six control classes in school B) who would allow research data to be collected in their classrooms. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Explicit instruction in reading comprehension can play a role in improving student comprehension and engagement in reading material. This research examines a problem that many mainstream teachers face today: how to successfully improve outcomes in reading comprehension for all

students, including proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) or designated as English as an Additional Language Learners (EAL) and are struggling readers in an English-only environment? Creating instructional environments as well as implementing instructional pedagogies to support student learning outcomes for this student population have become essential for classroom teachers. This research is an attempt to investigate the effects of a pedagogical reading intervention model (a universally designed literature circles model) on the reading comprehension, student engagement and higher-order critical thinking of sixth-grade students in two elementary schools. The intervention integrates the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and research-based literature circle (LC) comprehension strategies in the classroom, to form a unique UDL-based approach to literature circles for all students in the mainstream classroom. Two elementary schools (K-6) will be selected with two control classrooms from school A and two treatment classrooms from school B.

It is hoped that 100 students (approximately 50 students total in 2 control classes in school A and approximately 50 students total in 2 treatment classes in school B) will be identified to take part in the study. Teachers in treatment classes will be volunteering to implement a UDL-based literature circles' model (they are already implementing UDL - combined ELA, science and social studies), while teachers in control classes will be providing regular ELA instruction. All teachers (control and treatment classes) will be volunteering to allow data to be collected in their classrooms from student participants – however no data will be collected from teachers. All the students in the sample (100 students) will participate in performance standard reading assessments twice (once before the intervention and once after the intervention) and it will last for approximately 20-25 minutes per student during each administration. Teachers will conduct the assessment as part of

their regular instructional practice with their entire class. Copies of student's rubrics indicating their performance will be collected for those students who have volunteered for the study.

Teachers will also be required to contact the parents of the student participants to provide a written consent before students are identified by the classroom teachers to participate in the study. Pre and post data involving two instructional conditions (2 treatment classes using the UDL-based literature circles intervention and 2 control classes not using the intervention) will be collected by the researcher before and after an intervention period of 6 weeks (one week before the intervention in December 2013 or January, 2014 and one week at the end of the intervention between mid to end of February, 2014).

However, a sub-sample for this study will consist of approximately 24/100 students (12 each from control and treatment classes) who will be identified by classroom teachers using a purposeful criterion selection method that is based on the schools' pre-existing classroom-based assessment and screening process - students' reading assessment results (Fountas & Pennell benchmarks) and EAL enrollment data for both proficient readers and struggling readers. Student participants in the sub-sample will be expected to participate in student interviews, reading comprehension assessments, observations of engaged behavior and comprehension performance tasks (double entry journals and comprehension activities of their choice). Student participants will be identified by their classroom teachers for the sub-sample based on the following criteria in order to create a heterogeneous and academically and culturally diverse sub-sample:

1. Group A: Students who are proficient readers, performing at least at grade level or above, and enrolled in intervention classes (6 students).

2. Group B: Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), are able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may struggle with academic terminology, but can talk to their peers and teachers), but are struggling to acquire literacy skills and are therefore attending ESL instruction and enrolled in intervention classes (6 students).
3. Group C: Students who are proficient readers, performing at least at grade level or above, and enrolled in control classes (6 students).
4. Group D: Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), are able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may struggle with academic terminology, but can talk to their peers and teachers), but are struggling to acquire literacy skills and are therefore attending ESL instruction and enrolled in control classes (6 students).

The specific research question of this study includes;

1. Is there a significant difference in reading comprehension scores and higher-order critical thinking for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills, following the implementation of a UDL-based literature c circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension?
2. Is there a significant difference in academic and intellectual engagement for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills, following the implementation of a UDL-based literature c circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension?

There is no cost to your school district, and all participation is voluntary. Participant teachers in both schools will be selected based on the following criteria: a) both schools have a diverse student population that reflects the interests of the researcher – academic and cultural diversity; b) both treatment classroom teachers would have been provided with two to three days of professional development in a universally designed yearly/unit/lesson planning continuum, a framework proposed by Dr. Jennifer Katz’s “Three Block Model” of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) which incorporates the understanding by design (UBD) or backwards design model, differentiated instruction and assessment for learning. If you express interest, teachers will be approached to participate. If more than two schools/four teachers volunteer, two schools and four teachers will be randomly selected. Two teachers will represent the treatment group and 2 will represent the control group. Any involvement by the teachers will be strictly voluntary and they will be at liberty to withdraw at any time.

Once the treatment teachers have been selected, the researcher would then meet with the treatment teachers during two after school sessions for about 90 minutes each to co-plan a UDL-based literature circle’s thematic unit (combined social studies and English Language Arts) based on what they are already doing, at a convenient time and place that suits their needs. The thematic unit will cover a six week period.

In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, only the aggregated results of the research will be shared with classroom teachers who participate in the study. However, specific aggregated results in treatment classrooms will not be shared with control classroom teachers or vice versa. Interviews will initially be transcribed verbatim and anonymized by the researcher. Then a selective coding of responses by a graduate cohort that the researcher belongs

to, who are familiar with thematic content analysis but unfamiliar with the study goals will follow. Interview transcripts will have a cover page with participant's name. This cover page will be removed after a numerical code is assigned to the participant. All data entry will contain only these numerical codes, thus only the researcher will have access to the names of participants. All data (statistical inferences and interview notes etc.) will be kept in locked files and access will be restricted to the investigator and research supervisor. At the conclusion of the study, all data (primary data or data held in electronic format) will be kept for a period of 5 years in a locked cabinet in the office of the Research supervisor, after which it will be destroyed by shredding, cutting or smashing at the end of the specified data retention period of 5 years (January, 2019).

There are no known risks to this research for subjects beyond what is already possible within the learning environment – discomfort, frustration or anxiety due to the learning task. For instance, a student may find one of the tasks challenging, and respond negatively to this challenge. It is expected that teachers or school Resource Teachers will be able to handle this situation should it arise, as they would do in the normal course of their teaching day – allow student to calm down and provide redirections to the learning task when appropriate. However, in order to protect the interests of the student and avoid any abuse of children, the researcher will let students to know (during the process of providing assent) that if they detect any harm or abuse at any point during the course of the study, they should inform their classroom teacher (as is the normal practice) or call the researcher and he will follow standard procedures for reporting abuse to legal authorities in school and the Child and Family Services Agency.

Benefits of this study are many – research has shown implementation of literature circles to improve reading comprehension achievement scores and higher-order critical thinking skills while

research in the Three Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has also shown to increase students' engaged behavior, particularly active engagement, and promoted social engagement through increased peer interactions, student autonomy, and inclusion of all students. Results from the study, may also be used for publishing articles, conference presentations, and school planning/program evaluation.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I (PRINT NAME), \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in the above study conducted by the above named researcher by proceeding to contact teachers who would like their students to participate in this study. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form.

Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like a summary of the results of the study, please provide an email or home address below, and we will send you a summary of the results.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like a summary of the results. Please send it to:

\_\_\_\_\_ Email : \_\_\_\_\_ or

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to participate in this study kindly send the signed copy of this consent to either the Principal investigator or the Research supervisor by fax or mail as indicated below:

Principal Investigator:

Charles G. Bendu: (Fax) 204-774-6167 c/o Dufferin School, 545 Alexander Ave. R3A-OP1, MB, Winnipeg.

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Jennifer Katz: (Fax): 204-474-7550 c/o University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education, Associate Professor, Fort Gary Campus

## Appendix D

### Script for Teacher Invitation

I am going to be conducting a study exploring the outcomes of UDL and literature circles for students reading comprehension. I want to find out whether combining UDL and literature circles will support the development of reading comprehension and student engagement in reading for diverse learners.

I would like to invite you to be a part of the study. It is completely voluntary, of course. A consent letter will be issued to you during a staff meeting at your school to seek your permission to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, I will ask you to work with me to implement a six week literature circles program connected to the curricular units in science and social studies that you are doing. I will co-plan the unit with you, and conduct assessment to determine whether the program is effective. Based on your schools' pre-existing classroom-based assessment and screening process, (Fountas & Pennell benchmarks and EAL enrollment data), I will expect you to select a sub-sample of approximately 24 students based on the following criteria:

1. Group A: Students who are proficient readers, performing at least at grade level or above, and enrolled in intervention classes (6 students).
2. Group B: Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), are able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may struggle with academic terminology, but can talk to their peers and teachers), but are struggling to acquire literacy skills and are therefore attending ESL instruction and enrolled in intervention classes (6 students).

3. Group C: Students who are proficient readers, performing at least at grade level or above, and enrolled in control classes (6 students).
4. Group D: Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), are able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may struggle with academic terminology, but can talk to their peers and teachers), but are struggling to acquire literacy skills and are therefore attending ESL instruction and enrolled in control classes (6 students).

I will select of the sub-sample of students in your room to interview, some of whom are proficient readers, and some of whom are learning English and struggling with reading comprehension. Each student will be interviewed for 30 minutes before the program begins, and at the end of the program. After the first interviews, I will work with you to develop and co-plan a UDL and literature circles unit for your class. I will meet with the treatment teachers during two after school sessions for about 90 minutes each to co-plan a UDL-based literature circle's thematic unit (combined social studies and English Language Arts) based on what you are already doing, at a convenient time and place that suits their needs. The thematic unit will cover a six week period.

After the literature circles have been running for five weeks, I will also interview some students about their learning and engagement. Again, they will not be asked to evaluate their class or teacher or peers! Questions will be asked such as, "How would you describe yourself as a learner or reader in language arts class – very good, good or not good? Why?" and "Have you ever read a book you liked so much to the point that you didn't want the book to end? If yes, why? How often? If not, why not?" We will also monitor student learning with these students – that is, we will assess reading comprehension, using standardized and non-standardized assessments. We

want to see whether teaching and learning through UDL and literature circles supports student learning.

Your students' data on their learning will be confidential and anonymous. No one will know what any particular individual said or did, other than me. I am going to now distribute letters of consent that give you more information about the study and your role within it. At any stage of your involvement you may either request clarification on any issue regarding the project or withdraw your support from the study by contacting the researcher or research supervisor by phone or email.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I (PRINT NAME), \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in the above study conducted by the above named researcher. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form.

If you would like a summary of the results of the study, please provide an email or home address below, and we will send you a summary of the results.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like a summary of the results. Please send it to:

\_\_\_\_\_ Email : \_\_\_\_\_ or

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to participate in this study kindly send the signed copy of this consent to either the Principal investigator or the Research supervisor by fax or mail as indicated below:

Principal Investigator:

Charles G. Bendu: (Fax/Tel) 204-774-6167/204-881-5767) c/o Dufferin School, 545 Alexander Ave. R3A-OP1, MB, Winnipeg (umbendu@cc.umanitoba.ca)

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Jennifer Katz: (Fax/Tel): 204-474-7550/204-474-6109 c/o University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education, Associate Professor (jennifer\_katz@umanitoba.ca)

## Appendix E

### Letter to Teachers

#### A Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Based Literature c Circle (LC) Model: Effects on Higher-Order Reading Comprehension Skills and Student Engagement in a Diverse Sixth Grade Classroom

Dear Teacher,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. Currently, I am conducting a study, which is a requirement for my Masters in Education at the University of Manitoba. I am seeking your kind permission to conduct this study in your grade six classroom. Specifically, I am requesting the participation of four elementary school teachers (2 grade six treatment classes in school A and 2 grade six control classes in school B) who would allow research data to be collected in their classrooms. Pre and post data (classroom-based and standardized reading assessments, interviews and observations) involving two instructional conditions (2 treatment classes using the UDL-based literature circles intervention and 2 control classes not using the intervention) will be collected by the researcher before and after an intervention period of 6 weeks (one week before the intervention in December 2013 or January, 2014 and one week at the end of the intervention between mid to end of February, 2014). This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It is a summary of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The research you are being asked to participate in is an attempt to investigate the effects of a pedagogical reading intervention program (a universally designed literature circles model) on the reading comprehension, student engagement and higher-order critical thinking of all students, including proficient readers, and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) or designated as English as an Additional Language Learners (EAL) and are struggling readers, in an English-only environment. The intervention integrates the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and research-based literature circle (LC) comprehension strategies in the classroom, to form a unique UDL-based literature circles' model of literacy instruction.

It is hoped that 100 students (approximately 50 students total in 2 control classes in school A and approximately 50 students total in 2 treatment classes in school B) will be identified to take part in the study. Students in both control classes will receive ELA instruction by their control classroom teachers using the ELA curriculum while students in both treatment classes will receive a UDL-based literature circle model of instruction by their treatment teachers (combined ELA, science and social studies). Teachers in treatment classes will be volunteering to implement literature circles (they are already implementing UDL - combined ELA, science and social studies), and all teachers (control and treatment) will be volunteering to allow data to be collected in their classrooms – no data will be collected from teachers. All the students in the sample (100 students) will participate in performance standard reading assessments twice (once before the intervention and once after the intervention) and it will last for approximately 20-25 minutes per student during each administration. Teachers will conduct the assessment as part of their regular instructional practice with their entire class. Copies of student's rubrics indicating their performance will be collected for those students who have volunteered for the study. Teachers will also be required to

contact the parents of the student participants to provide a signed written consent before students are identified by their classroom teachers to participate in the study through a signed written assent form.

However, a sub-sample for this study will consist of approximately 24/100 students (12 each from control and treatment classes). They will be identified by their classroom teachers using a purposeful criterion selection method that is based on the schools' pre-existing classroom-based assessment and screening process (Fountas & Pennell benchmarks and EAL enrollment data).

Student participants will be expected to participate in student interviews, reading comprehension assessments, observations of engaged behavior and comprehension performance tasks. Participants will be identified for the sub-sample based on the following criteria in order to create a heterogeneous and academically and culturally diverse sub-sample:

1. Group A: Students who are proficient readers, performing at least at grade level or above, and enrolled in intervention classes (6 students).
2. Group B: Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), are able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may struggle with academic terminology, but can talk to their peers and teachers), but are struggling to acquire literacy skills and are therefore attending ESL instruction and enrolled in intervention classes (6 students).
3. Group C: Students who are proficient readers, performing at least at grade level or above, and enrolled in control classes (6 students).

Group D: Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), are able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may struggle with academic terminology, but

can talk to their peers and teachers), but are struggling to acquire literacy skills and are therefore attending ESL instruction and enrolled in control classes (6 students).

The specific research question of this study includes;

1. Is there a significant difference in reading comprehension scores and higher-order critical thinking for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills, following the implementation of a UDL-based literature c circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension?
2. Is there a significant difference in academic and intellectual engagement for students who are proficient readers and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills, following the implementation of a UDL-based literature c circle instructional pedagogy in reading comprehension?

Participant teachers in both schools will be selected based on the following criteria: a) both schools have a diverse student population that reflects the interests of the researcher – academic and cultural diversity; b) both treatment classroom teachers would have been provided with two to three days of professional development in a universally designed yearly/unit/lesson planning continuum, a framework proposed by Dr. Jennifer Katz’s “Three Block Model” of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) which incorporates the understanding by design (UBD) or backwards design model, differentiated instruction and assessment for learning. If more than two schools/four teachers volunteer, two schools and four teachers will be randomly selected. Two teachers will represent the treatment group and 2 will represent the control group. Any involvement by you will be strictly voluntary and you will be at liberty to withdraw at any time.

Once the treatment teachers have been selected, I will meet with you during two after school sessions for about 90 minutes each to plan a UDL-based literature circle's thematic unit (combined social studies and English Language Arts) based on what you are already teaching in science and social studies, at a convenient time and place that suits your needs. The thematic unit will cover a six week period.

I will ask you to help select students for the study. You will select approximately 24 students (12 from the control group and 12 from the treatment group - each subgroup will consist of 6 students who are proficient readers, and 6 students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and struggling to acquire literacy skills) and group them into categories based on the following benchmarks:

- a. Students who are proficient readers and whose reading levels are at grade level or above.
- b. Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), are able to communicate orally in English for social participation (i.e. they may struggle with academic terminology, but can talk to their peers and teachers), but are struggling to acquire literacy skills and are therefore attending ESL instruction.

In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, only the aggregated results of the research will be shared with classroom teachers who participate in the study. However, specific aggregated results in treatment classrooms will not be shared with control classroom teachers or vice versa. Interviews will be transcribed verbatim and anonymized by the researcher before sharing with a graduate cohort for selective coding. Interview transcripts will have a cover page with participant's name. This cover page will be removed after a numerical code is assigned to the participant. All data entry will contain only these numerical codes, thus only the researcher

will have access to the names of participants. All data (statistical inferences and interview notes etc.) will be kept in locked files and access will be restricted to the investigator and research supervisor. At the conclusion of the study, all data (primary data or data held in electronic format) will be kept for a period of 5 years in a locked cabinet in the office of the research supervisor, after which it will be destroyed by shredding, cutting or smashing at the end of the specified data retention period of 5 years (January, 2019).

There are no known risks to this research for subjects beyond what is already possible within the learning environment – discomfort, frustration or anxiety due to the learning task. For instance, a student may find one of the tasks challenging, and respond negatively to this challenge. It is expected that teachers or school Resource Teachers will be able to handle this situation should it arise, as they would do in the normal course of their teaching day – allow student to calm down and provide redirections to the learning task when appropriate. However, in order to protect the interests of the student and avoid any abuse of children, the researcher will let students to know (during the process of providing assent) that if they detect any harm or abuse at any point during the course of the study, they should inform their classroom teacher (as is the normal practice) or call the researcher and he will follow standard procedures for reporting abuse to legal authorities in school and the Child and Family Services Agency.

Benefits of this study are many – research has shown implementation of literature circles to improve reading comprehension achievement scores and higher-order critical thinking skills while research in the Three Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has also shown to increase students' engaged behavior, particularly active engagement, and promoted social engagement through increased peer interactions, student autonomy, and inclusion of all students.

Results from the study, may also be used for publishing articles, conference presentations, and school planning/program evaluation.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I (PRINT NAME), \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in the above study conducted by the above named researcher. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form.

Signature

Date

Participant Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date

Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like a summary of the results of the study, please provide an email or home address below, and we will send you a summary of the results.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like a summary of the results. Please send it to:

\_\_\_\_\_ Email : \_\_\_\_\_ or

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix F****Letter to Parents**

*A Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Based Literature Circle (LC) Model: Effects on Higher-Order Reading Comprehension Skills and Student Engagement in a Diverse Sixth Grade Classroom*

Dear Parents,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. Currently, I am conducting a study, which is requirement for my Masters in Education at the University of Manitoba and I am seeking your consent to allow your child to participate in a six week study. Pre and post data for this study (reading assessments, interviews and observations) involving two instructional conditions (2 treatment classes using the UDL-based literature circles intervention and 2 control classes not using the intervention) will be collected in your child's classroom with the consent of his/her classroom teacher before and after an intervention period of 6 weeks (one week before the intervention in December 2013 or January, 2014 and one week at the end of the intervention between mid to end of February, 2014). This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Your child's class is participating in student led literature circles, (a UDL-based literature circle reading comprehension program), discussing with peers about texts and sharing his/her understanding through visual, written, oral, and other creative ways. This will take place three times per week over a period of six weeks. We want to know what the outcomes of this program are. Do kids enjoy reading this way? Does it help them make sense of the book? Specifically, your child will be expected to participate in reading comprehension assessments and performance tasks in class to find out how they comprehend texts and engage in discussions with their peers. The effect of the program on your child's reading comprehension skills will be measured using classroom-based assessment tools twice (once before the intervention and once after the intervention). This reading assessment will take place for about 20-25 minutes per student during each administration (pre and post). This means I will look at their work and discuss it with them, and some students may be given a short assessment to see how their reading is progressing. Teachers will conduct the assessment on all the students as part of their regular instructional practice with their entire class. Copies of student's rubrics indicating their performance will be collected for those students who have volunteered for the study. Your child will simply be participating in the normal academic activities of the class, and I hope your child will benefit from the opportunity to participate in a variety of learning activities. Also, once a week your child will be asked to complete double entry journals and comprehension performance tasks of their choice as they take part in book discussions with their peers.

Your child will also be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews both before and after the intervention (pre and post) to assess the effects of the program on their engagement or learning. A total of 10 questions will be asked by the researcher and students will be expected to provide very

short and simple answers to the best of their knowledge about their learning. Student interviews will take place for approximately 20 minutes per student during each administration.

Your child's participation in the program may also be measured by observing them during their literature circles in class. I will sit off to the side, not disturb their learning, and observe some students for approximately 30 minutes as they engage in discussions and activities, on two separate occasions in class, at the beginning and at the end of a six week period. I will use an observation tool called a time sampling data collection sheet to observe the active/passive/non-engagement of students in their learning. I want to see whether they are on task or actively engaged in their learning, and whether they are thinking deeply about the books they are reading.

In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the student participants, only the aggregated results of the research will be shared with classroom teachers who participate in the study.

However, specific aggregated results in treatment classrooms will not be shared with control classroom teachers or vice versa. Interviews will be transcribed verbatim and anonymized by the researcher before sharing with a graduate cohort for selective coding. Interview transcripts will have a cover page with student participant's name. This cover page will be removed after a numerical code is assigned to the participant. All data entry will contain only these numerical codes, thus only the researcher will have access to the names of participants. All data (statistical inferences and interview notes etc.) will be kept in locked files and access will be restricted to the investigator and research supervisor. At the conclusion of the study, all data (primary data or data held in electronic format) will be kept for a period of 5 years in a locked cabinet in the office of the research supervisor, after which it will be destroyed by shredding, cutting or smashing at the end of the specified data retention period of 5 years (January, 2019).

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their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

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I (PRINT NAME), \_\_\_\_\_ consent to allow my child to participate in the above study conducted by the above named researcher. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form.

Parents' Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Principal Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX G****Participant Assent Form**

Principal Investigator: Charles G. Bendu

I am doing a reading project called literature circles with grade six children in diverse classrooms. I am really interested in finding out how students talk about texts with their peers and share their understanding in different ways. I particularly want to find out how this reading program helps your learning. For instance, I want to know if you enjoy reading this way. Does it help you make sense of the book and think deeply about it? Does it help you to take part in class discussions?

I will come three times each week for six weeks. During the first week, I will first meet with your teachers to plan some new ways of teaching and learning in your classroom. I will also be asking you ten (10) questions (about 20 minutes) to know how you feel about your learning. I might also come and observe in your classroom for a brief period of time (about 30 minutes) to see what kinds of activities you are doing in the class. I will also be testing your reading (about 20-25 minutes) during class time, to find out how deeply you are thinking about the books you read in class. Towards the end of the six weeks, I will repeat the interviews, observations and assessments to find out how you felt about your learning during the six weeks.

All of the things we will do during these six weeks will help me and your teachers know how to make classrooms and learning more fun, how you learn best, what encourages you, and what might make learning more rewarding for you. Everything I do with you is private and confidential. Your teachers and principal will not see any of your responses. Only the people I work with and I

will read what you tell me. Of course, if you tell me about any harm that has come to you, I will call the appropriate authorities to get you help.

You can ask me questions any time you want, and you can stop working on the project if you want. Just say to me “I do not wish to participate” and I will destroy your interview. If you would like to be part of this project, please sign this form and return it your class teacher. I really appreciate your input and help!

I agree to participate in this study

---

Signature

---

Date

**APPENDIX H****Sample Standard Reading Assessment****Exploring Extreme Environments (6)**

On the next two pages, you will be reading about exploring space. What do you already know about it? Using a web, words, chart, or pictures, show what you predict some of the information might be.

**Space Exploration**

Explorers are people who go to places very few people have been before. For thousands of years people have wondered what it was like in space. Some ancient people thought the Earth was actually inside a glass ball. They believed that if you could go up high enough you could touch the glass. Other cultures have thought that space was inhabited by gods and angels.



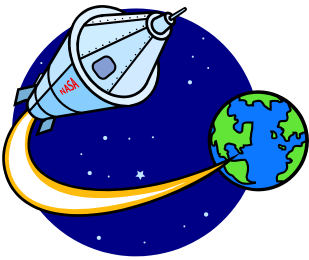
Star Gazing

Today we no longer wonder. We are not limited to merely guessing or imagining. Now we can actually leave the Earth and see for ourselves.

The History of Space Exploration

In the beginning, space exploration started from earth. People studied the movements of the stars and planets from here, because they didn't have rockets to take them into space. During the centuries when space travel was only a fantasy, scientists tried to figure out what the environment in space was like. Greek philosophers discovered that the earth is a sphere. Then astronomers learned that the earth moved around the sun. Hipparchus, another Greek, prepared information about stars and the motions of the moon.

### **Rockets Away!**



Rockets were invented long ago. Ancient rockets used gunpowder like fireworks do today. In China a long time ago people defended themselves in a war using rockets. In Europe too, armies used rockets to fight. In 1804 the British army even had a rocket corps! In the U.S., scientists began experimenting with rocketry in the early 1920s. They launched the first rocket on March 16, 1926. At the same time, studies on spaceships and rockets were being conducted in several parts of the world.

When World War II started, armies tried to develop rockets that could be fired at countries far away. The most successful were the Germans. They developed the V-2, a rocket used in the bombing of London. Now long-range rockets are used to explore space!

### **Humans In Space.**

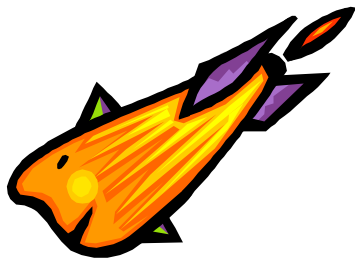
Space is a dangerous place for humans in a number of ways. It doesn't have air or oxygen, so human beings can't breathe. The pressure in space can destroy a human



body in a few seconds. Your body will literally explode! Temperatures in space close to a planet are freezing cold. On the other hand, temperatures can become deathly hot close to the sun's rays.

When humans travel into space, they are protected against the space environment. They are inside a sealed cabin or space suit. They have a supply of air or oxygen. Air conditioning controls the temperature and humidity inside the cabin or space suit.

All  
design  
heat.

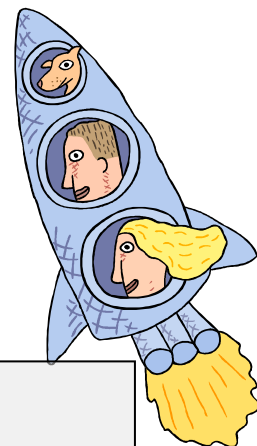


these things also affect the spacecraft. When scientists and build them they have to consider the space environment. They put material to absorb and reflect That way the spacecraft doesn't burn up. In the future,

long trips between planets may mean that spacecraft need heavy shielding.

Today only astronauts go into Space. A space trip is very expensive.

However scientists are developing new spacecrafts. These spacecraft will make it cheaper to fly a space mission. Eventually, everyone may be able to take a vacation in space. Some people worry that we will pollute space if everyone travels there. What do you think?



**Criteria:**

On the paper below, show what you understood from your reading (you can use extra pages, too). Using a web, words, pictures, and /or charts, your response should:

1. Show or describe the main ideas in the passage, accurately and completely.
2. Give some supporting details.
3. Organize notes and ideas into categories related to the main ideas (this means use title or headings, and organize the information)
4. Show or describe the images in your mind as you read.
5. Interpret the text and graphic features (pictures, charts, etc.) – what does this text really teach you?

**Space Exploration Miscue****The History of Space Exploration**

In the beginning, space exploration started from earth. People studied the movements of the stars and planets from here, because they didn't have rockets to take them into space. During the centuries when space travel was only a fantasy, scientists tried to figure out what the environment in space was like. Greek philosophers discovered that the earth is a sphere. Then astronomers learned that the earth moved around the sun. Hipparchus, another Greek, prepared information about stars and the motions of the moon.

***Strategies used:***

\_\_\_\_\_ Rereads . self-corrects for meaning

\_\_\_\_\_ Uses word structure

\_\_\_\_\_ Uses graphic clues

\_\_\_\_\_ Uses context clues

\_\_\_\_\_ Uses prior knowledge

***Fluency:***

\_\_\_\_\_ Halting    \_\_\_\_\_ Word for word    \_\_\_\_\_ Fluent    \_\_\_\_\_ Expressive

**Space Exploration Conference Record**

1. Find the part of the passage that talks about rocket propulsion. What do you think a “corps” is?

\_\_\_\_\_ skim/scan                      \_\_\_\_\_ uses text features (headings)

2. Why do you think some people are worried about pollution in space? (infers)

3. What is something new you learned that you didn’t know before? How does it connect to what you already knew? (connections)

4. What were some of the questions in your mind as you read this? (questions)

5. Do you think people should take trips into space? Why or why not? (Opinions)

**Early 6**

Readability – 6.3

F&P Level – U

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

### READINFO: Performance Standards in Reading for Information, Grade 6

Student is...	Beginning to develop (C-)	Approaching expectations (C)	Fully meeting expectations (B)	Exceeding expectations (A)
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-correcting</li> <li>• Word solving</li> <li>• Locating detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often focuses strongly on decoding and does not check for understanding; needs help to select and use appropriate comprehension strategies</li> <li>• Tends to sound out new words; may give up easily</li> <li>• Needs assistance to use text features (e.g., headings, diagrams)</li> <li>• Guesses or tries to recall details instead of rereading text to find details needed for question or activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checks understanding and adjusts comprehension strategies if prompted</li> <li>• Uses sounding out, context clues, and dictionaries; may not notice word parts in technical or specialized language</li> <li>• May need prompting to use text features</li> <li>• Can locate some information needed for a question or activity; often incomplete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checks for understanding; adjusts comprehension strategies to deal with specific problems or features of the material</li> <li>• Uses context clues, word structure, graphic cues, glossaries, and dictionaries to figure out technical and specialized vocabulary</li> <li>• Uses text features effectively to preview and locate information</li> <li>• Rereads and aims to find relevant, specific details to complete questions or activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluates own understanding; makes deliberate and effective choices about how to approach challenging material</li> <li>• Independently uses context clues, word structure, graphic cues, glossaries, and dictionaries to figure out technical and specialized vocabulary</li> <li>• Uses text features effectively to preview, locate, and organize information</li> <li>• Quickly and efficiently finds specific details to complete questions or activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Setting a goal...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• before reading</li> <li>• after reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires support to set appropriate goals for language use</li> <li>• Formulates questions for inquiry with a template</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets goals for language use</li> <li>• Formulates questions for inquiry; needs support to focus and narrow topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assesses personal language use; revises personal goals to enhance language learning and use</li> <li>• Formulates relevant questions to focus information needs for an inquiry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assesses language use; revises goals; creates a realistic plan</li> <li>• Formulates relevant questions to focus information needs for an inquiry; extends understanding</li> </ul>
<p><b>Using prior knowledge</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has difficulty predicting content; may offer illogical guesses</li> <li>• Makes connections between prior knowledge and a variety of texts when prompted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes simple logical predictions about content based on text features and prior knowledge</li> <li>• Seeks connections between prior knowledge and a variety of texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes logical predictions about content based on prior knowledge and text features; may be able to predict structure</li> <li>• Seeks connections between previous experiences, prior knowledge, and a variety of texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipates content and structure by drawing on prior knowledge and text features</li> <li>• Seeks connections between previous experiences, prior knowledge, and a variety of texts and ideas/concepts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Making connections</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have difficulty seeing how new information connects to prior knowledge; prior knowledge may be limited</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes some simple, obvious connections between new information and prior knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes logical connections between new information and ideas and prior knowledge and beliefs about the topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compares new information and ideas and prior knowledge and beliefs about the topic; may show insight through analysis or explanation</li> </ul>
<p>SELF-MONITORING</p> <hr/> <p>COMPREHENDING</p>				

**Appendix I****Double Entry Journals****Criteria for Reading Literature c (Double Entry Journals)****What Happened?**

- ❑ Accurate information
- ❑ Uses examples from the text
- ❑ Describes characters, settings using language for impact
- ❑ Describes conflicts, events accurately and powerfully
- ❑ Identifies relevant details
- ❑ Uses own words, except for quotations
- ❑ Makes the book / passage / poem sound interesting

**What I Think?**

- ❑ Synthesizes – summarizes and explains cause and effect
- ❑ Infers
  - Makes logical predictions
  - Discusses characters feelings, motivations, and points of view
  - Gives insight into underlying themes, author's message
- ❑ Makes connections
  - Text to self
  - Text to text
  - Text to world
- ❑ Details images – shows ability to place self within the context
  - Describes visual images, other sensory reactions (e.g. sounds, smells, tastes)
  - Discusses feelings, experiences
- ❑ Questions
  - Poses questions about events, characters actions, feelings, author's decisions
  - Discusses areas of confusion
- ❑ Reflects and Responds
  - Gives opinions, reactions with some support (tells why, refers to sections of text)
  - Talks about personal impact on feelings, values, beliefs, knowledge

**APPENDIX J****Comprehension Choice Board – Individual Performance Task (Blooms Taxonomy)**

Diversity Unit - MI Centers: Instructional Planner - Six Weeks UDL Centers

**(Sample Unit-Treatment Classes)**

You will be working INDIVIDUALLY to complete the comprehension choice activities at each MI center under each of the domains in the blooms taxonomy. You will have the choice to select one MI activity in each domain each week and continue in rotation every other week, choosing different MI each week.

Week	Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation

Week 1	<p>In sequence, list all the main events in any text you have read and create a timeline of the events.</p>	<p>On a poster, design an idea gram (a visual display of pictures, quotes and drawings) to represent the theme of any novel you have read.</p>	<p>Design a graph that shows the impact of immigration on Canadian society.</p>	<p>Create a song with your own lyrics that reflects the theme of immigration and its effects on quality of life in Canada. Your song must include the importance of human rights and responsibilities in guiding our decision-making as an individual and as a democratic country.</p>	<p>Reflect on the factors and events that have shaped Canadian life. Write your thoughts about how it makes you feel and what needs to be done to change the situation.</p>	<p>Interview another student and record his or her responses to these questions: 1) Describe the experiences of a new Canadian immigrant? 2) Would their life be better off in Canada or at home? Give specific examples and reasons.</p>
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Week 2	<p>Using a fact-based sheet, write, draw and explain all the factors that help shape the life of a new Canadian immigrant. Include any questions you may have and suggestions for new immigrants.</p>	<p>On a poster, design an idea gram (a visual display of pictures, quotes, personal responses, and drawings) to represent the theme of “diversity and multiculturalism”</p>	<p>Write a script and perform a dance or a mime to act out the need to take action to support quality of life of immigrants in Canada.</p>	<p>Imagine you and your family are moving to Canada newly. How will your life be different? Will it be the same as it was in your homeland? Create a Venn diagram, write or draw to show the comparison and/or contrast.</p>	<p>Write a journal entry to reflect the changes in the feelings and emotions of any character in a novel you have read who emigrated from home. Explain how it affects them in their new country.</p>	<p>In Canada, citizens have rights and responsibilities. Create a role play showing how these rights and responsibilities sustain our democracy.</p>
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Week 3	Imagine that you are a new immigrant in Canada. Make a timeline of events right from your departure from your homeland to your arrival in Canada.	Make a carton strip showing the sequence of main events in any book you have read. Illustrate using pictures to represent each main event.	Create a mural (a piece of art work) to depict the diversity of people in Canada.	Based on a book you have read write a journal of the experiences of the main character during the time period discussed in the book.	Using a web search, library and media resources prepare a power point presentation on ONE historical event or invention that has helped to shape Canadian life. Your presentation should include visuals.	Write a letter to your School Principal explaining your views about the Canadian immigration policy and its impact on new immigrants. Explain how and why the policy has helped Canada to become a multicultural society.
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Week 4	<p>Make up words for a radio jingle about what “diversity and multiculturalism” means to you.</p>	<p>Write a poem, in any style you choose, representing your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the importance of rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic country.</p>	<p>Imagine your family has newly moved to Canada. Write a letter to a friend or relative in your homeland describing life in your new home. How is it similar? How is it different? Explain how you have adjusted to life in your new home.</p>	<p>Create a piece of Art depicting ONE Canadian invention that has helped to shape Canadian life. You may use any material (e.g., paint, plasticine, pastels), Be creative. Write a short paragraph to describe your invention.</p>	<p>Imagine you and your family have moved to Canada. Compose a song that expresses your thoughts and feelings about your new life now. What do you like about living there? What do you miss about life in your homeland?</p>	<p>What does the word multiculturalism mean to you? Draw, create an art work, and write your response.</p>
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Week 5	<p>List your picks for the three most important scientific research and technologic al advancements that have helped to form Canada. Give reasons for your choice.</p>	<p>Design a web using the word “diversity” at the center. Include both your own general understanding of the word and as many examples as possible (e.g., different races, religions, languages).</p>	<p>Classify the factors that have helped to shape Canadian life. Create a web to illustrate each factor. Give examples of each factor.</p>	<p>Prepare a list of factors that have helped to sustain a multicultural society in Canada. Explain the reasons for your choice of factors.</p>	<p>What if you were the Immigration Minister of Canada! What would you propose as the solution to sustain multiculturalis m in Canada?</p>	<p>Prepare a bibliography (a list of sources e.g. books, journal articles, Web sites, videos etc.) that you could consult in your study about “Diversity and Multiculturalis m in Canada”. Describe the main idea of each source and why the source is useful.</p>
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Week 6	List your picks for the three most important events in any novel you have read. Give reasons for your choice	Design a semantic map or graphic organizer to summarize a novel you have read. Use captions and illustrations to show your understanding.	Make a carton strip to illustrate the characters and events in a novel you have read. Write a summary of your text.	Prepare a top 5 list of things you consider to be the most important for a new immigrant to Canada to do in order to become integrated into the society. Explain the reasons for your choice.	What if you were the Prime Minister of Canada; Suggest ways in which immigration may be improved within the country.	You are a participant in a class debate on the issue of immigration to Canada. Write a report to argue your case for or against the motion to your classmates.
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**APPENDIX K****Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

1. Do you enjoy coming to school? Why or why not?
2. Is it important to you to be a good reader? Why or why not?
3. How do you feel about students leading and taking control of literature c circle discussions instead of teachers?
4. How would you rate your interest, effort and participation in your language arts class - very low, average or very high? Why?
5. Do you often come to group discussions in reading well prepared to share what you read? Why or why not?
  - A. Do you often complete all your assigned reading and writing tasks in class by yourself and on time? Why or why not?
  - B. How would you rate your listening skills in language arts class- very good, good, or not good? Why?
6. Have you ever read a book you liked so much to the point that you didn't want the book to end? If yes, why? How often? If not, why not?
7. How do you usually demonstrate your understanding of a novel in a language arts class or a book study group?
8. Do you ever become so deeply interested in your learning that you don't want to stop? If yes, why? If not, why not?
9. How would you rate your language arts class - too easy, just right or too hard? Why?

10. How would you describe yourself as a learner or reader in a language arts class – very good, good or not good? Why?

**Appendix L****GRADE 6 Unit (social studies and science)****Grade 6 - Term 3****Theme: Diversity in Canada**

This is a term 3 Unit in a grade 6 Class that combines the topics of diversity of living things and Canada today/shaping contemporary Canada.

**Inquiry Projects – MI Centers**

**GROUP PROJECTS:** You will be engaged in two group projects as part of our inquiry unit. The first project will be presented in week three while the second project will be presented in week six. You will have 4 members of your group. Divide up the work! Every member must participate in the research, and every member must be part of the presentation – everyone must speak!

**1. Inquiry Project #1 – Due at the End of Week 3**

**Choice #1:** How can we accept, celebrate and promote diversity in AAL

Pick 1-3 aspects of diversity and create a plan to promote it with AAL.

Your plan should include:

- 1) Examples of change since confederation
- 2) Prominent Canadians who have helped to advance this cause
- 3) What is the current state of affairs in AAL? Be specific.
- 4) Recommendations for further change/advancement in AAL

**Choice # 2:** Immigration: was it worth it?

Students will choose one option from the For Better or for Worse document to show the progressions of the immigration experience. If I had the opportunity, would I stay or would I go?

Your project should include:

- 1) Explanation of situation in the homeland
- 2) Explanation of the situation in Canada
- 3) Choice from the perspective of the immigrant
- 4) Justify choice using the evidence.

For Better or Worse?

You have learned many interesting things about your immigrant group before and after immigration. Put yourself in your immigrant group's place and choose one of the following roles to demonstrate your knowledge and feelings about their experience. Your format should conclude with a decision to stay in Canada or return to your homeland.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Strong Verb</b>
<b>Journalist of the time</b>	Homeland Community	PowerPoint	Comparing immigrant life in the homeland and life in Canada	Persuade others to stay in homeland or come to Canada
<b>Immigrant mother</b>	Future generations	Scrapbook	Comparing immigrant life in the homeland and life in Canada	Inform future generations what immigrating to Canada was like
<b>Artist of the time</b>	Members of the community cultural centre	Visual progression with captions	Comparing immigrant life in the homeland and life in Canada	Represent the story of immigration, before and after
<b>Grandma</b>	Family	Quilt with interpretations	Comparing immigrant life in the homeland and life in Canada	Represent the story of immigration, before and after
<b>Immigrant young adult</b>	Childhood friend	Diary entries	Comparing immigrant life in the homeland and life in Canada	Explain what life was like before and after immigration

### **Inquiry Project #2 – Due at the End of Week 6**

This project is a group project. You must work as a GROUP! Your group will present this project during the sixth week. Everybody MUST participate. You are free to choose any MI of your choice.

**Choice # 1:** You have been relocated to the planet \_\_\_\_\_ (choose ONE planet of your choice) and you are responsible for creating and maintaining a viable community. Your community must include organisms for all 5 kingdoms.

Your project should include:

- 1) A description of the climate
- 2) List of organisms and why they were chose
- 3) Rights and Responsibilities, Immigrations Laws
- 4) Why people should move to your community

**Choice # 2:** You have been hired by the Manitoba Museum of Man in Nature. Research any five inventions/developments that we have in Canada. Create an interactive exhibit of Canadian inventions.

Your project should include:

- 1) Description of the invention/development
- 2) How the invention has evolved over time?
- 3) How does this invention meet the needs of the Canadian Society?
- 4) How would our life be different if they did not exist today?

### **Instructional Planner: Timeline**

This unit will be taught in four ways:

1. **Literature circles:**

- Students will be put in heterogeneous groups.
- They will meet in groups of 4-5 students 3 times per week.
- The literature circle will begin each day with a 10-minute mini-lesson that includes a discussion of thematic unit goals, the essential understandings and questions of the unit, application of focus comprehension strategies and literature circles' group expectations.
- Each group will then silently read and respond to texts in their literature circle groups on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Typically, the students will read silently for 20 minutes on each day, using multiple text formats and technology/materials such as digitized or scanned copies of texts, strategy stickies, and computer based Microsoft Word's insert text or audio comment features, and meet in their literature circle groups or centres to talk about the text for 20 minutes.
- During sharing time or literacy centres students will work in heterogeneous groups, discussing "what happened" and "what I think?" However, if a student completes reading a text before any of the group sharing the student will continue on with another text. During group sharing, he/she will take part in a group discussion of the previous book that he/she read. This flexibility in groupings allows diverse learners to self-pace their learning. The classroom teacher will meet weekly with each literature circles' group to instruct and facilitate the negotiation of meaning among group members.

## 2. **Double Entry Journals:**

- Once a week students will individually complete double entry journals to measure reading comprehension and higher-order critical thinking skills of the books they have read and discussed in their groups.
- The purpose of the response journal is to give students time to reflect independently on their reading and practise a previously modelled reading comprehension or vocabulary development strategy. The double entry journal has two sections: a) what happened, and b) what I think.

3. **Culminating Comprehension Performance Tasks:**

- Once a week students will independently complete one culminating comprehension performance product of their choice based on the text they are currently reading. This individual performance task or comprehension choice board will be based on Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains.

4. **Inquiry Projects – MI Centers:**

- During the MI centre time, each group (3-5 students) will begin to work on their inquiry project.
- Each group will have the task of presenting two culminating performance products (inquiry projects) to the entire class using any of the multiple intelligences of their choice.
- The first group presentations will take place during the third week and the second group presentations will take place during the sixth and final week.

**Week 1:**

- Introduce the thematic unit including the essential understandings and questions using the following for brainstorming:
- Videos: DVD's – Canada – A People's history (Episodes 15, 16 & 17)
- Inquiry method of research: Explain the importance of research skills
- Literature circles: Introduce the unique approach to literacy instruction- literacy circles (reading and sharing “what happened” and “what I think” in the text); double entry journals and individual performance tasks based on bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domains.
- Activate background knowledge: Introduce/frontload key vocabulary for the unit
- Discuss disciplines involved in the unit of study

**Week 2:**

- Literature circle groups will commence their thematic study.
- Introduce comprehension strategy in mini lesson – **(synthesizing)**
- Students will choose and read books at their own pace and apply the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals.
- Students will also begin to work on their first group inquiry project at MI centres.

**Week 3:**

- Introduce comprehension strategy in mini lesson – **(making inferences)** and review previous strategy taught in week 2

- Students will choose and read books at their own pace and apply the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals.
- Literature circle groups will continue - silent reading, group discussions, student response journals and individual performance comprehension tasks based on the blooms taxonomy.
- Students will also continue their thematic study at MI centres, in preparation for the first group inquiry project presentations.
- On the third day of the cycle, students will present their first group inquiry project to the entire class through multiple intelligences/modalities (e.g. visual representations, role plays, and so on).

**Week 4:**

- Introduce comprehension strategy in mini lesson – **(making connections)** and review previous strategies taught in weeks 2 and 3
- Students will choose and read books at their own pace and apply the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals.
- Literature circle groups will continue - silent reading, group discussions, student response journals and individual performance comprehension tasks based on the blooms taxonomy.
- Students will also continue to work at MI centres on their second group inquiry projects.

**Week 5:**

- Introduce comprehension strategy in mini lesson – **(details images)** and review previous strategies taught in weeks 2, 3 and 4.
- Students will choose and read books at their own pace and apply the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals.
- Literature circle groups will continue - silent reading, group discussions, student response journals and individual performance comprehension tasks based on the blooms taxonomy.
- Students will begin to prepare for their final project or inquiry presentations to the entire class.

**Week 6:**

- Introduce comprehension strategy in mini lesson – **(questioning, reflecting and responding)** and review previous strategies taught in weeks 2,3,4 and 5.
- Students will choose and read books at their own pace and apply the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals.
- Literature circle groups will continue - silent reading, group discussions, student response journals and individual performance comprehension tasks based on the blooms taxonomy.
- Students will complete their second culminating group project and present it to the entire class on the last day of the cycle.

**Suggested Materials for the Unit Lessons and Activities:****A. Books (Texts, Audio Books and Scanned Copies of Texts)**

- I. Fatty Legs and A Stranger at Home – Level P
- II. Hatchet –Level S
- III. No One Must Know – Level S/T
- IV. Goodbye Buffalo Bay – Level W
- V. A Place Not Home – Level W/X
- VI. Lesia’s Dream – Level – X

**B. Videos: (DVD)**

- I. Canada – A Peoples’ History – (Episode 15, 16 & 17)

**Appendix M****GRADE 7 Unit (social studies and science)  
Term 3****Theme: Diversity, Global quality of life & Forces and Structures**

This is a term 3 Unit in a grade 7 Class that combines the topics of diversity, global quality of life in social studies and the Earth's crust, forces and structures in science.

**Inquiry Projects – MI Centers**

**GROUP PROJECTS:** You will be engaged in two group projects as part of our inquiry unit. The first project will be presented in week three while the second project will be presented in week six.

**Inquiry Project #1 – Due at the End of Week 3**

This project is a group project. You must work as a GROUP! Your group will present this project during the third week. Everybody MUST participate.

Incorporating the Design Process:

1. Winnipeg is having yet another long and cold winter and Siloam Mission and Salvation Army are full every night. The city is in the process of building a brand new shelter to accommodate the amount of people requiring a temporary place to stay. In the meantime, you have been hired as part of an architectural company to design a self-supporting structure for people to stay in as a last resort if Siloam Mission and the Salvation army are completely full. The structure needs to be able to withstand the elements of our environment

and needs to be individualized for privacy. The structures will be located on vacant land close to Siloam Mission and will have security for safety purposes.

Steps to follow:

1. Design a sketch of the structure and consider what supports and materials will be used. (The structure should be warm in the winter, cool in the summer and be strong enough to hold snow on the roof top and withstand heavy rain).
2. Get together with your architectural team to create one plan.
3. Build a model of the structure with your architectural team.
4. Create a mathematical scale to show the size required for the actual structure.
5. Describe the internal and external forces that could apply stress to your structure. Describe examples in which this stress could lead to structural fatigue or structural failure. (Include a diagram with a written explanation)
6. Identify the center of gravity in your model structure and demonstrate that changes in location of your structure's center of gravity could affect its stability. (Include a written explanation of the center of gravity and how it could possibly be changed)

The structure will be tested by being exposed to the elements outside and also by holding text books (the mass will represent the weight of the snow).

### **Inquiry Project #2 – Due at the End of Week 6**

A rural village in Kenya is dependent on the local bridge to help the citizens of the village safely across the Nyando River to fetch clean water from the nearest well. Unfortunately, the current bridge is beginning to show signs of structural fatigue and the government agreed

that a new bridge needs to be constructed quickly! You have been employed as a part of an engineering team to design and construct a model of the new bridge.

Steps to follow:

1. Design a sketch of the model and consider what supports will be used to make the bridge strong (this bridge will need to support pedestrian and vehicle traffic).
2. Get together with your engineering team to create *one* plan.
3. Build a model of the bridge with your engineering team using spaghetti (this will represent the acacia wood of the actual bridge).
4. Create a mathematical scale to show the size required for the actual structure.
5. Describe the internal and external forces that could apply stress to the bridge. Describe examples in which this stress could lead to structural fatigue or structural failure (include a diagram with a written explanation).
6. Identify the center of gravity in the bridge and demonstrate that changes in location of the bridge's center of gravity could affect its strength and stability (include a written explanation for the center of gravity and how it could possibly be changed).

### **Instructional Planner: Timeline**

This unit will be taught in four ways:

#### **1. Literature circles:**

- Students will be put in heterogeneous groups.
- They will meet in groups of 4-5 students 3 times per week.

- The literature circle will begin each day with a 10-minute mini-lesson that includes a discussion of thematic unit goals, the essential understandings and questions of the unit, application of focus comprehension strategies and literature circles' group expectations.
- Each group will then silently read and respond to texts in their literature circle groups on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Typically, the students will read silently for 20 minutes on each day, using multiple text formats and technology/materials such as digitized or scanned copies of texts, strategy stickies, and computer based Microsoft Word's insert text or audio comment features, and meet in their literature circle groups or centres to talk about the text for 20 minutes.
- During sharing time or literacy centres students will work in heterogeneous groups, discussing "what happened" and "what I think?" However, if a student completes reading a text before any of the group sharing the student will continue on with another text. During group sharing, he/she will take part in a group discussion of the previous book that he/she read. This flexibility in groupings allows diverse learners to self-pace their learning. The classroom teacher will meet weekly with each literature circles' group to instruct and facilitate the negotiation of meaning among group members.

**2. Double Entry Journals:**

- Once a week students will individually complete double entry journals to measure reading comprehension and higher-order critical thinking skills of the books they have read and discussed in their groups.
- The purpose of the response journal is to give students time to reflect independently on their reading and practise a previously modelled reading comprehension or vocabulary development strategy. The double entry journal has two sections: a) what happened, and b) what I think.

**3. Culminating Comprehension Performance Tasks:**

- Once a week students will independently complete one culminating comprehension performance product of their choice based on the text they are currently reading. This individual performance task or comprehension choice board will be based on Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains.

**4. Inquiry Projects – MI Centers:**

- During the centre time (afternoon), each group will begin to work on their inquiry project.
- Each group will have the task of presenting two culminating performance products (inquiry projects) to the entire class using any of the multiple intelligences of their choice.
- The first group presentations will take place during the third week and the second group presentations will take place during the sixth and final week.

**Week 1:**

- Introduce the thematic unit including the essential understandings and questions using the following for brainstorming:
- Videos: Slavery, child labor and discrimination, diversity of people around the world
- Inquiry method of research: Explain the importance of research skills
- Literature circles: Introduce the unique approach to literacy instruction- literacy circles (reading and sharing “what happened” and “what I think” in the text); double entry journals and individual performance tasks based on bloom’s taxonomy of cognitive domains.
- Activate background knowledge: Introduce/frontload key vocabulary for the unit
- Discuss disciplines involved in the unit of study

**Week 2:**

- Literature circle groups will commence their thematic study.
- Introduce comprehension strategy in mini lesson – **(synthesis)**
- Students will choose and read books at their own pace and apply the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals.
- Students will also begin to work on their first group inquiry project at MI centres.

**Week 3:**

- Introduce comprehension strategy in mini lesson – **(making inferences) and build on synthesis**
- Students will choose and read books at their own pace and apply the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals.
- Literature circle groups will continue - silent reading, group discussions, student response journals and individual performance comprehension tasks based on the blooms taxonomy.
- Students will also continue their thematic study at MI centres, in preparation for the first group inquiry project presentations.
- On the third day of the cycle, students will present their first group inquiry project to the entire class through multiple intelligences/modalities (e.g. visual representations, role plays, and so on).

**Week 4:**

- Introduce comprehension strategy in mini lesson – **(making connections) and review previous two strategies**
- Students will choose and read books at their own pace and apply the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals.

- Literature circle groups will continue - silent reading, group discussions, student response journals and individual performance comprehension tasks based on the blooms taxonomy.
- Students will also continue to work at MI centres on their second group inquiry projects.

**Week 5:**

- Introduce comprehension strategy in mini lesson – **(details images) and review the previous strategies**
- Students will choose and read books at their own pace and apply the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals.
- Literature circle groups will continue - silent reading, group discussions, student response journals and individual performance comprehension tasks based on the blooms taxonomy.
- Students will begin to prepare for their final project or inquiry presentations to the entire class.

**Week 6:**

- Introduce comprehension strategy in mini lesson – **(questioning, reflecting and responding) and review previous strategies**
- Students will choose and read books at their own pace and apply the comprehension strategy taught during the mini lesson in their group discussions (literature circles) and double entry journals.

- Literature circle groups will continue - silent reading, group discussions, student response journals and individual performance comprehension tasks based on the blooms taxonomy.
- Students will complete their second culminating group project and present it to the entire class on the last day of the cycle.

**Suggested Materials for the Unit Lessons and Activities:**

1. Student copies of the unit rubrics (one copy per student). Discuss criteria with students.
2. Magazines and other materials containing pictures, comics for students to cut out.
3. Access to internet sites on slavery, discrimination and diversity of people around the world (e.g. You Tube) for Videos and statistics
4. Worksheets and graphic organizers e.g. fact-based sheet

**Other Recommended Resources:**

**1. Books:**

Title	Author	Main Idea
Iqbal	Francesco D'Adamo	Child Labour/Exploitation
Child of Dandelions	Shenaaz Nanji	Discrimination/Refugees
Three of Cups of Tea –	Greg Mortenson	Humanitarian/Improving Quality Main

On Man's Journey to Change the World....One Child at a Time	& David Oliver Relin	Main Idea
Bamboo People	Mitali Perkins	Government/Rebels/Affection/Quality of Life
Sold	Patricia McCormick	Child Expoytation/Effects on Quality of Life
Words in the Dust	Trent Reedy	Discrimination – Corrupt Rebel Group – Hope for Quality of life
Underground To Canada	Barbara Smucker	Discrimination/Exploitation/Slavery
Mud City	Deborah Ellis	Poverty/Quality of Life
Sacred Leaf	Deborah Ellis	Child Labour/Quality of Life
The Heaven Shop	Deborah Elli	AIDS/Quality of Life
Miles' Song	Alice McGill	Child/Exploitation/Slavery
Sarny – A Life Remembered	Gary Paulsen	Slavery/Exploitation/QOL
If I Just Had Two Wings	Virginia Frances	Slavery/Exploitation/QOL

	Schwartz	
Pavana's Journey	Deborah Ellis	Government/Rebels/Affection & QOL
My Name is Seepeetza	Shirley Sterling	Racism/Discrimination & QOL
Among the Hidden	Margaret Peterson	Corrupt Government/Unfair Laws & QOL

## 2. Videos: (DVD's)

- a) Underground Railroad
- b) Race to Freedom
- c) Young Stars
- d) Edi's Story
- e) Robin's Story
- f) Right from the Heart
- g) Work
- h) Peace Tree
- i) Slavery and the Making of America (Vol. 1-4)
- j) North to Freedom – The Underground railroad to Canada

k) Fight for Change

l) Indifference is Deadly

## APPENDIX N

**Six Week UDL-Thematic/Instructional Unit Plan/Time Line (90 Minutes per Day – 3 x per Week)**

Week	Plan
Week 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="602 625 1430 947">1. Training/Co-planning UDL-based literature circles unit: Researcher conducted two after school training/sessions in UDL-based literature circles and co-plan a thematic unit (approximately 90 minutes each) with UDL- treatment classroom teachers.</li> <li data-bbox="602 989 1430 1310">2. Pre-test: Both treatment and control classroom teachers administered pre-test in reading comprehension using standard reading assessment passages (SRA) to all students in the sample (59 students) as part of their regular classroom based instructional practice.</li> <li data-bbox="602 1352 1430 1682">3. Pre-interviews: A purposive random sample of students in both control and treatment classes (sub-sample of 24 students -12 students from each group) participated in semi-structured pre-intervention interviews to collect data on their academic engagement and participation in their learning.</li> </ol>
Week 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="565 1724 1377 1829">1. Introduce Independent Comprehension Whole Group Literature Performance</li> </ol>

(3 x a week – 90 Minutes per day) Monday/Wednesday/Fri day	Mini Lessons 2. (10 Minute Sessions – 3 x a week) 3. Introduce unit/literature circles group expectations 4. Pre-teach focus comprehensio n strategies	circles Discussion Groups (40 Minute Sessions – 3 x a week) a. 20 Minutes - silent reading (3 x a week) b. 20 Minutes - sharing/disc ussion (3 x a week)	Tasks/Inquiry Project Presentations/MI Centers (40 Minute Sessions – 1 x per week) a. Monday - Students completed their response journals (40 Minutes) b. Wednesday – Students completed one comprehension performance tasks of their choice (40 Minutes) c. Friday – MI Centers (40 Minutes)
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Week 3	1. Continue as in	1. (40 Minutes	1. Performance Tasks /
(3 x a week – 90	above	Sessions – 3 x a week)	Inquiry Project
Minutes per day)		a. 20 Minutes - silent reading	Presentations (40
Monday/Wednesday/Fri		(3 x a week)	Minute Sessions – 1 x per week)
day		b. 20 Minutes - sharing/discu	a. Monday -
		ssion (3 x a week)	Students
			completed their
			response
			journals (40
			Minutes)
			b. Wednesday –
			Students
			completed one
			comprehension
			performance
			tasks of their
			choice (40
			Minutes)
			c. Friday – MI
			Centers (40
			Minutes). Each

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				Group presented their first final product (inquiry project)
Week 4  (3 x a week – 90 Minutes per day)  Monday/Wednesday/Fri day	1. Continue as in above	1. (40 Minutes Sessions – 3 x a week)  a. 20 Minutes - silent reading (3 x a week)  b. 20 Minutes – sharing / discussion (3 x a week)	1. Performance Tasks/Inquiry Project  Presentations (40 Minute Sessions – 1 x per week)  a. Monday - Students completed their response journals (40 Minutes)  b. Wednesday – Students completed one comprehension performance task of their	

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			choice (40 Minutes) c. Friday – MI Centers (40 Minutes).
Week 5  (3 x a week – 90 Minutes per day)  Monday/Wednesday/Fri day	1. Continue as in  above	1. (40 Minutes Sessions – 3 x a week) a. 20 Minutes - silent reading (3 x a week) b. 20 Minutes - sharing/discu ssion (3 x a week)	1. Performance Tasks / Inquiry Project Presentations (40 Minute Sessions – 1 x per week) a. Monday - Students completed their response journals (40 Minutes) b. Wednesday – Students completed one comprehension performance tasks of their

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	choice (40 Minutes) c. Friday – MI Centers (40 Minutes).
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<p>Week 6  (3 x a week – 90 Minutes per day)  Monday/Wednesday/Fri day</p>	<p>Monday – Friday (Final inquiry project presentations, student post-interviews, post- intervention reading tests using performance standards reading assessments (SRA’s).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Each group presented their second final product (inquiry project) to the class in multiple intelligences.</li> <li>2. Post-interviews: A purposive random sample of students in both control and treatment classes (sub-sample of 24 students -12 students from each group) participated in semi-structured post-intervention interviews to assess their engagement and participation in the performance tasks.</li> <li>3. Post-intervention assessment: Classroom teachers conducted post-reading assessments to measure achievement in reading comprehension using the performance standard reading assessments (SRA’s) on all the students in the sample (59 students) in both control and treatment classes.</li> </ol>
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