Motivating the Unmotivated: A Self-Study About Engaging Adolescent Readers to Read for Joy Before and During a Pandemic

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Abstract

This self-study examines my teaching practice related to adolescent reading motivation and engagement to read for joy and pleasure. Many of my adolescent readers did not like to read and found very sophisticated strategies to avoid reading or perform fake reading during class. In this study, I explore questions related to how I have been changing and studying my teaching practice to foster a love of reading among my teenaged students, and how my teaching practice can create a community of readers. Over a two-year period, I shifted my practice and engaged in practitioner inquiry using the lenses outlined by Buckelew and Ewing (2000). This self-study explores my inquiry over those two years, beginning in September 2019, just prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and concluding in June 2021, while the pandemic was still ongoing. The findings of this study inform and create new thinking about how agency, self-efficacy, and relevance play a role in reading for joy. Findings are presented using the topics choice, relevance, and volume of reading material for independent reading; defining, and re-defining what, or who is a reader; developing students' agency and self-efficacy; student stamina; re-discovering a lost love of reading; and contradictions in personal teaching beliefs and teaching practice. My findings will contribute to research in an urban Western Canadian context related to these topics.

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Most important of all, I am so thankful for my family who have taught me about strength and determination. My mom, Edna, my sister, Lisa, my nephew, Christopher, and my nieces Cathy and Brianne, who love me no matter what. I thank you. You have always supported my dreams.

Finally, to my fellow teachers, I leave you with a quote from Pernille Ripp: “What does it matter if a child can read better but chooses to never read again due to their hatred of the tools we used to get them there?” Foster that love of reading with your students.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the people who journeyed before me and forged a reading path for me to follow: my grandparents, Ernest and Elsie Dickson and Clifford and Thelma Kelsey. You believed in the power of education and encouraged me in every way. You nurtured in me an early love of reading, discovery, exploration, and history. You worked hard, sacrificed much, and gave generously. I love and miss you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I have been thinking about this thesis topic for the past three years. I entered the graduate program thinking I would learn the ins and outs of adolescent literacy. In the letter of intention, written as part of my application into the program, I indicated that I would like to take my literacy passion "one-step further and develop a theoretical background and gain the skills and knowledge that will help me delve deeper into the world of reading remediation, diagnosis, and language development, specifically with adolescent children." I thought I would discover and examine current insights into adolescent brain development, new teaching strategies that I had yet to explore on my own, and perhaps learn about reading programs I could introduce to my students. When I first started my thesis program, the focus of my classroom reading teaching practice was assessment and instruction. Many of my adolescent readers did not like to read and found very sophisticated strategies to avoid reading or perform fake reading during class. This lack of engagement in reading often affected their academic achievement, not only in English Language Arts, but in their other classes as well. I believed that this lack of motivation to read was due to previous gaps in their reading instruction, a lack of reading fluency, and a deficiency in reading comprehension strategies. If I could only find the 'right' reading program, whether digital or in a book, I could turn my students into voracious readers. However, big questions about my teaching practices and my students came fast and hard with the very first course I took in my program. These questions were not about reading remediation, diagnosis, and language development, but within the realm of adolescent motivation and engagement in reading for pleasure.

These questions led me to a single thought: if I cannot get my students motivated to read, it does not matter what reading remediation I try to implement or how I diagnose their reading "ability". Adolescent students who do not like to read, will not read. Period.

These early questions about adolescent reading motivation and engagement became the key to developing my thoughts about a thesis topic, and about my teaching practice. Engaged reading is a strategic, motivated interaction with text (Ivey & Johnson, 2013). Engaged readers are "motivated to read, strategic in their approach to reading and knowledgeable in their comprehension of meaning from the text" (p. 257). Early questions regarding student engagement in reading stayed with me and grew in depth, intensity, and quantity as I progressed through the courses in my program. As I began to immerse myself into theoretical and applied research, the research repeated the same findings: that there was a correlation between motivation, engagement and reading achievement.

As I was still teaching full-time while taking my program, I took these questions and my developing understanding of reading motivation and engagement with me into the classroom every day. I began to question my own identity as a reader, in my adolescence and now, as an adult. I began to pay attention to what motivated me as a reader and questioned my teaching practices. I began to question and observe what engaged my students in the classroom. I took the time to ask them questions about their reading identity and tried to bring their perspective into my thinking. Who were they? What did they like to read? Did they even enjoy reading the material I was choosing for them to read? I examined my classroom library and questioned whose interests were included in this library, and perhaps more importantly, whose interests were not included in the literature I had in my room.

By the second year of my program, I felt apprehensive, but I was ready to begin an inquiry into my practice. I was both excited and anxious to explore the messiness that would be involved with an inquiry into my teaching practices. I will admit it: I am an uber organized, micro-manager with OCD tendencies. Just thinking about changing the comfortable, familiar

way I have approached teaching reading for the past fifteen years was scary. I am one of those teachers who plans and preps lessons well in advance. I have controlled what my students read, how fast they read it—cannot ruin a good prediction—and what questions they should be asking of themselves and answering as they read. I controlled group discussions with pre-determined questions that the students should have prepared to discuss before they met in their groups. I had formative and summative assessments laid out and tied with a neat bow at the start of every novel study. While planning questions to use while teaching is a good strategy, I wanted my adolescent students to have more input and ownership of their reading, and their questioning about their reading. The thought, however, of stepping back from those teaching practices that have been instilled in me since I was a teenager, and came naturally to me, produced a lot of anxiety. The thought of handing over some of the control to my students and putting trust in their ability to guide the pace and format of our classroom was daunting. What was more important, however, than my own anxiety, were the questions I had about my teaching practice. They consumed my thoughts day and night and just did not go away.

During this second year of my program, I continued my research into current studies on adolescent motivation and engagement in reading. I had developed a few inquiry questions into my teaching and was prepared to notice, collect, and observe what was happening in my English Language Arts classroom and really pay attention to my students' engagement. I began to think about and collect the classroom artifacts from my students to best inform my teaching practice. I thought about, then implemented daily conferencing with the students, and provided them with reading inventories and surveys.

And then…2020 came along. Unfortunately, this shift in thinking about my teaching practice came at a time of great uncertainty and upheaval, both personally and professionally.

The first two months of the year was consumed with end-of-semester duties, exams and report cards, the start of a new semester, with new classes, and a scheduled surgery that put me on medical leave for six weeks. I was excited to come back to my students towards the end of the first term of the semester. It meant a fresh start with students I had yet to meet. Within three days of my arrival back at school, however, COVID-19 had hit hard, and classes were suspended just before Spring Break. I did not think much about the closure at first. We were supposed to be gone for three weeks, and then classes would resume once the pandemic had passed us by. That did not happen. Three weeks became three months.

When classes were suspended, teachers had to re-examine their teaching practices and how they taught overnight. It was a powerful time of growth, change, and learning. The steep learning curve, however, was dizzying and disorientating. I was thrust into the forefront of being both a student and a teacher as I tried to understand the technology needed to set my students up for successful online learning. This meant my thesis had to be put on the backburner while I focused how to navigate this unfamiliar form of teaching. How was I supposed to reflect upon my teaching and collect data for a practitioner inquiry when I did not have my students in my room? How could I make observations about my students' responses to literacy activities? How could I examine my teaching practices and know what good teaching looked like in an empty classroom, in front of a computer screen? My students and I were isolated from each other with most communication occurring through our online platform. I did not even know if all my students had access to books at home to continue their independent reading. At this point, I was not prepared to delve into the messiness of an inquiry into my practice.

As the closure continued, however, most of my students' engagement and motivation in continuing with their ELA program dropped at a steady rate. Many of my students reported

feeling lethargic, tired, unmotivated, lonely, depressed, and anxious. As they withdrew from their ELA program, students were also spending more and more time on their devices—streaming videos, playing video games, engaging in social media, clicking and scrolling through various online websites, and of course, engaging in online remote learning. I can only imagine what the increased hours of online time in the past two years has done to my students' reading brains.

I can certainly relate to the effects of pandemic learning on my motivation to read books. Like many of my students during the COVID-19 shut down, I found myself using my electronic devices on a much greater level. After a few weeks of increased online reading, I stopped reading books all together. I arrived home too exhausted from my on-screen time during the workday of remote teaching and learning to concentrate on reading a book during my downtime. Ironically, I ended up in the endless scrolling loop of digital social media; hours of mindless scrolling through *Facebook* and *Instagram* fed into my lack of motivation to read books. I am a voracious reader, but after weeks of over-using my devices and over-stimulating my brain, I had a hard time picking up a book and reading again. Evenings when I tried to read the novels I had waiting on my bookshelf, I had difficulty sustaining my attention on the text for more than a minute at a time. My eyes kept flicking to the television, or outside my window. I had to reread sentences and paragraphs over and over because my distracted brain was not comprehending what I was reading. Initially, after a few minutes of book reading, I would give up and grab my tablet to see what I had missed on social media outlets. I had to make a concerted decision to leave my devices in another room and turn off the television so I could give undivided attention to my book. In addition, I had to resort to quick, easy reads to get me back into novel reading again. It took me days to retrain my brain to sustain focus and attention to what I was reading and learn to find enjoyment and pleasure in it again.

As my students continued to disengage from their remote learning at an alarming rate, I realized how important my inquiry was. Motivating and engaging adolescent students in isolation, in the face of a pandemic became my number one priority. The classroom was gone, so now what? How was I to motivate and engage my students to read when I could not see them? I needed to explore this messiness and be okay with that. These questions were not going away. Moreover, as we moved into the start of the new school year in 2020-2021, I would be teaching a hybrid version of in-person and online instruction. I had my students in my classroom only two days out of a six-day school-cycle. Whether I like it, or not, the pandemic was going to force change in the way I taught and approached motivation and engagement in adolescent students. My teaching practices had to change, regardless of thesis.

It was my hope that this self-study inquiry in teaching would both improve my teaching practice and relationship with my students as readers. Most important, I hoped to develop students' agency and intrinsic motivation to read. I believed that student engagement in reading would be enhanced with instructional decisions and designs that foster choice, self-efficacy, agency, and relevance in English Language Arts classes. By cataloging, examining, observing, talking with my students, and reflecting upon the observations, I hoped to gain insight into how these interventions affected and altered my teaching practice.

Research Problem

As a high school English teacher, I designed this study with a stake in and keen passion for adolescent literacy. I enter this study with personal biases and assumptions regarding my students' relationship with reading. These assumptions are based both on research and my experiences teaching adolescent readers. My teaching career has encompassed over fifteen years in two schools, both of which are in the inner city. My experiences working with adolescent

students and understanding of their intrinsic motivation to read informs my approach because I perceive many of the students I have worked with over the years as unmotivated, disengaged, and apathetic about reading. Throughout the course of my career, I have observed several avoidance behaviours, such as frequent requests to leave to the room, regular cell phone use during class time, observed daydreaming during reading times, a lack of completed homework, difficulty, or an inability to choose reading material, "fake" reading—students pretending to read during designated class time, and outright refusals to read.

I have spent years reading other educators' research and implementing their "best practices" in my English classroom; however, I have not previously spent any time critically examining why these best teaching practices have not seemed to work with many of my adolescent readers. Despite implementing what I perceived as "interventions", such as providing high interest-low readability texts, organizers for comprehension to complete while reading, and so on, many of my students remained disengaged and unmotivated to read. The focus of my classroom reading teaching practice had been with assessment and instruction. I believed that many of my students did not like to read due to one, or more, of the following reasons: previous gaps in their reading instruction, a lack of reading fluency, and/or a deficiency in reading comprehension strategies. I thought they just did not know how to read well. The interventions I implemented in my practice were aimed at levelling readers and instructing readers at the level they tested. It was my job to find the 'right' reading program. With "the right" reading instruction, I could turn my students into voracious readers.

Teachers are desperate to try things that will work and reach their students. However, it is often the case that we do not always take the time to think through whether these new ideas are making an impact with our students in our contexts. Teachers' schedules are busy and often we

cannot find the time into our daily timetable to reflect on teaching practices. My goal in this study was to take an inquiry stance to explore my teaching practice by utilizing self-study as a research methodology to engage in thinking about what was influencing me as a teacher. Through this inquiry into my practice, my objective was to examine what beliefs and actions informed my practice by reflecting upon what I believed and thought about the readers in my classroom. This process involved noting what I was paying attention to, what I was not paying attention to, being more intentional about those observations, and what new questions were formed as I iteratively moved through my inquiry into teaching. It involved forming those questions—making them explicit, writing them down, and exploring them—noting what I did in response to those new questions, and what perceived difference it made with my students' motivation and engagement in reading and in the direction of my teaching.

Self-study added the dimension of critical reflection of my practice combined with an analysis of empirical data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 219). Data included documentation of my inquiry into practice over a two-year period. By using this methodology, my goal was to improve the way in which I motivated, engaged, and developed agency with my English Language Arts students in reading. The purpose of choosing this design was to provide an opportunity for me to reflect on my practice within the scope of my teaching context.

Before undertaking this research, I relied on my own perception of students' relationships with reading, without taking the time to more deeply explore and study how they view their relationship with reading, and identities as readers. By exploring and studying how students view their relationship with reading, and identities as readers, my goals with this study were to develop an understanding of how specific literacy decisions and designs can engage my students in reading for joy, and how I can use that information to inform my teaching practice and

redefine what kind of reading teacher I would like to be. In the past two years, during pandemic learning, this study into motivation and engagement was crucial to my practice. After the school closures in the first year of the pandemic, I taught English Language Arts in a hybrid-learning program with the same students working in my room for one-third of the school cycle, and at home participating in online learning for two-thirds of their schedule. My classroom was gone four days a cycle for my students, so I needed to adjust my practice to motivate the seemingly unmotivated to engage in reading for pleasure in and out of the classroom when I was not with them everyday of the week. This absence from the classroom meant that the students' access to me, to classroom structure and routine, to the books I could match them with, and to activities and discussions about what they are reading were inconsistent.

My positionality is acknowledged in this study. While I was growing up, reading for pleasure was an essential part of my life. Prior to starting this project, I had not put much thought into my own identity and history as a reader. I have always considered myself an avid bookworm. As far back into childhood memory as I can recall, reading has played a huge part in my life. I assumed that love for reading encompassed both my school and home life. In the process of researching student agency and thinking of the early structure of the design of this study, however, I had an epiphany: I identified as a reader at home, but not in school. This was a surprising revelation for me. When I reflected on my memories of reading in high school, nothing really stuck out as being particularly enjoyable. In actuality, the words "boring", "required," "painful," "annoying," "confusing," "pointless," and "depressing" came to mind. As a teenager, I remember thinking that all we seemed to read were books written a long time ago, by old men who were long since dead. I have memories of being forced to read aloud in classrooms, face burning, struggling not to stutter over words and appearing stupid in front of my

peers, counting ahead to the paragraph I would have to read and practicing in my head. Obviously, during these times, I was not paying any attention to what was being read aloud in the classroom because I was too preoccupied with my own reading performance, hoping beyond hope that the teacher would not call on me to answer a question at the end of the reading because I could not recall any of it. I did not possess a great deal of confidence with reading in school, and these school literacy performances worried me. It wasn't just me—all eyes down and on the desk when the class was asked a question. Thank goodness for those same two students who always had the right answer and took the heat off the rest of us!

There were a few stand out books that I recall enjoying—*Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1994) and *In the Heat of the Night* (Ball, 1965)—but most of the reading where I lost myself in a book was done at home. Home reading gave me confidence. I read with ease, with pleasure and accomplishment. My well-worn, much-loved copies of *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967), *The Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 1951), *Deenie* (Blume, 1973), and *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* (Blume, 1970) were so well read, the pages were tattered, crinkled, and falling apart. I must have reread those books dozens of times during my adolescence. I got lost in the story and wanted to recreate that feeling over and over again. I felt like I knew these characters personally and had an invested interest in their lives and the outcome of the book.

I was confident about my reading identity out of school. I was self-assured in my own ability to choose and read books; I had agency and self-efficacy. The books I read had perceived relevance and importance in my life. I also developed resilience and grit as a reader. I did not shy away from books that were difficult to read if I was motivated to read them. *Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 1951) was a difficult read for me at 13-years-old; however, knowing it was on the 'banned' book list at school made me want to read it to find out why.

Like many of the students I teach today, school reading did not engage me and was something I did for function. There was a difference between the reading I did in school and out. There was a disconnect between my literacy identities. In school, I read to find the answers and get a mark, not for meaning and reflection, and certainly not for joy. I loved learning but hated school. As a teacher in the 21st century, I see the benefit a love of reading would provide for my students. For me, reading in adolescence and into adulthood was a saving grace. With books, I was able to connect with characters and plot lines to help me cope with what was happening in my life. Those realistic books seemed to mirror my own life and help me make sense of my world. Through books, I was able to escape the realities of painful times; to immerse myself in fantasy worlds so distinct from my own, helping me see what a different way of life might look like. Books played like a movie in my mind. Reading developed my sense of creativity and wonder. It was a way of learning about the world around me and developing a feeling of adventure during a time when I could not leave home. Reading also provided a means for me to get to know myself better and to figure out my place in the world.

As a developed, motivated reader, I was able to enjoy and engage with multiple topics through a plethora of texts. I read everything from cereal boxes to *National Geographic* magazines, to *Archie* comics, to the *Sweet Valley High* series. Thinking back on my own identity as a reader, I immediately thought of conversations at the dinner table with my grandfather about the history in the magazines I read. The history conversations and reading *National Geographic* led to a desire to start reading historical fiction. Reading also enhanced my background knowledge in a variety of topics and issues and served to develop a love of history and archaeology. The reading I did in my childhood and adolescence improved my problem-solving skills and developed my vocabulary so I could adequately comprehend complicated texts once I

began university. In short, as an engaged, developed reader, I improved my academic achievement in post-secondary education. This competency is what I would love to help develop and instill in my students. It is vital for them to feel able to read at a given moment, or for a particular purpose. This is agency: "the ability to respond with confidence and skill to a given literacy situation" (Williams, 2018, p. x). It is ability, motivation and confidence that provide us with agency.

As Atwell (2015) describes, literature became something I *did* with students. "Pass out class sets of novels, write vocabulary on the board, lecture about background information, assign pages to read (or read them out loud), spoon-feed interpretations, give chapter response questions to make sure they're reading" (Atwell, 2015, p. 17). A few years ago, I started choosing popular 21st century literature for us to read, thinking the students would find current material more relevant and enjoyable. They did enjoy listening to these books; however, I still chose them for my students.

In my book club, which I enjoy with a group of friends, I have never said, "This time, I think I'll make a collage"; I have not recorded new vocabulary on a chart or blackline master—although I may read with a dictionary, when warranted—I have not made dioramas, created chapter tests, nor written any novel summaries. I have not made new book jackets, rewritten a chapter, or tested my adult reading level—I have no clue what my Lexile reading level is. The conversations my friends and I have had about the books we read are not obligatory or superficial; our discussions are filled with arguments, stories, observations, and jokes. We exchange other titles and books with each other. We laugh and we cry together over the literature we share. And we share what we loved about the book, what we did not, and why.

I decide what I read and how I will read it. Even if a friend chooses a novel that is out of my comfort zone or is a title I would prefer not to read, I have choice. I know I can show up at my book club and say, "I couldn't get through this one." My students have never really had the chance to decide the literature we read in my classroom. They read selections I assign at a pace I set out, a fragment at a time, with a stern warning not to read ahead because I had prediction questions pre-prepared for them to write about. Utilizing these teaching practices has served to stagnate reading for meaning and pleasure in my classroom. According to Atwell (2015), reading for meaning and pleasure is developed "through the power to choose great stories to choose among, time set aside to read, and a teacher who knows the literature and his or her students" (p. 21).

It has been my experience that reading programs and strategies cannot help students who will not read. My work with adolescent readers has led me to believe that genuinely engaging students as readers may involve replacing the reading assessments, programs, and strategies that I previously implemented to help create a classroom environment that fosters a love of reading. I believe it is vital to develop, not only the skills necessary for students to think deeply about all kinds of texts, but also a love of reading. I believe that reading can transform us in ways that touch on all aspects of life.

Research Objective, Questions, and Expected Outcomes

The main objective of this self-study was to systematically examine the current teaching practices utilized in my reading program and explore why, despite what I thought were best efforts, these practices did not seem to be encouraging student motivation and engagement in reading for joy. Towards the end of the first year of my study, my central objective was revised

to include an examination into practice during a pandemic when students were disengaging from school at a steady rate and reading in isolation, without the benefit of a reading community.

There was one primary question guiding my teaching practice for this self-study: How can I motivate and engage my adolescent readers to read for joy? There were four secondary questions that I thought about as a larger frame for analyzing my practice:

1. How can my teaching practice develop my students' agency as readers?
2. What does it take to build a community of engaged readers in my classroom?
3. What happens to students' identity and agency as readers when there is a collective and sustained effort, by me, to engage students meaningfully in reading?
4. How has my teaching practice changed over the past two years as I have thought critically about adolescent reading motivation and engagement?

To provide a framework for this study, I also generated a list of questions to pursue in the research and professional literature. The questions that guided my literature review, before the study began, were:

1. What is engagement?
2. Why is engagement important for adolescent readers?
3. What is the theoretical evidence that agency, self-efficacy, choice, and relevance support the development of reading for love?
4. How does social media and technology play a role in reading motivation and engagement among adolescent students?

Given what I have reflected on with my own adolescent, disconnected reading identity, and with the preliminary readings of research of research completed for a literature review, I expected that the outcome of this study would result in new understandings of current teaching

practices. Specifically, I anticipated that the study would reveal the inconsistencies between my core beliefs about reading for joy and the teaching practices I have put in place in my classroom. Ultimately, my goal in this self-study was to align what I have learned about motivating and engaging adolescents to read for joy—from scholarly research, from my personal beliefs about reading for joy, and from the practices I have developed in the classroom to support my students on their reading journey and developing their reading identities.

To support my preliminary inquiry questions and classroom observations, my research into adolescent motivation and engagement in reading has focused on a few key areas. These include student agency, self-efficacy, student choice, relevance, and current research on the effects of technology and social media on teenaged brain development. These areas are outlined in my literature review and provide the research and theoretical basis to illustrate how my study is situated in and related to these areas. Following the review of the literature in chapter two, chapter three will outline the methodology utilized in this study. This includes a description of year one and year two of the study, as well as the methods used to collect and analyze the data informing the inquiry. Chapter four will outline the findings in years one and two, what I learned during the process of this examination into practice, and why this study matters in the field of adolescent reading motivation and engagement. Chapter five includes the implications and limitations of this study, and the impact on my teaching practice, and the potential implications for teachers, administrators, and the field of education.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

A considerable amount of research has gone into reading motivation, engagement, and achievement in adolescent readers. Academic research interests have focused on the declining rate of engagement in book reading among adolescents, a global rise in aliteracy rates, and an increasing interest in the elements of reading motivation in older students (Merga, 2014). Reading researchers report that many students are demotivated, apathetic, or expressly resistant to reading (Guthrie, 2008). Countless students also seldom do homework, their minds drift in class, and they do not see reading as useful in their future.

Citing reading research sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Scholastic's (2019) report stated that reaching reading proficiency by third grade is a clear predictor of academic success. And yet, it is just at this age that children's frequency of reading books for fun begins to drop. Only 35% of nine-year-olds reported reading 5–7 days a week compared to 57% of eight-year-olds. Conversely, the Scholastic report revealed that across all ages most children agreed they should read more books for fun and said that they believed reading mattered. This finding suggests it is possible to not only prevent the decline, but to re-engage a child in reading, provided the experience meets their needs and expectations.

A central component of students' successful reading development is their motivation to read (Neugebauer, 2016). Neugebauer makes the point clearly, "Students who are more motivated to read, read more frequently, persist in reading when encountering more challenging texts and perform better than their less motivated peers on measures of reading achievement" (pg. 391). Children who read regularly grow to become skillful readers, and frequent reading contributes to growth in sight word recognition, vocabulary, verbal fluency, reading

comprehension and general knowledge (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007, p. 165). There are two factors to explain how often a child reads: the first is initial success in acquiring reading skills. The second factor is motivation. Highly motivated children read three times as much out of school as students who are less motivated (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

In an American study on reading for enjoyment, conducted in 2003, 69% of grade twelve students reportedly did not read for enjoyment (Guthrie, 2008). The percentage of students who stated that they had not read a novel throughout their entire high school career was even greater at 90%. Research also shows that intrinsic motivation drives students' amount of reading, which in turn, contributes to achievement in reading. In 1998 and 2002, grade twelve students across the United States took a survey that provided a description of student perceptions of reading (Guthrie, 2008). In these surveys, students reported that in science and history, they almost never read books other than the textbook. Moreover, 82% reported that teachers never gave them time to read the books they choose. In a similar study, Jansen (2013) reported that in a survey of 81,000 U.S. high school students, 75% of student participants said that they were bored because the material taught in school was not interesting. Jansen also highlights a study, which found that school engagement is a key factor in whether students stay in school. These studies in adolescent reading are demonstrating that aliteracy continues to be a real concern for education, meaning that students are capable of reading, but they have not adopted a reading habit, and they do not read for pleasure or enjoyment.

The link between the amount of reading practice and poor readers' lack of motivation suggests an underlying cause of long-term reading difficulties. This is called the "Matthew Effect", a term used to describe a phenomenon in how new readers acquire the skills to read: "early success in acquiring reading skills usually leads to later successes in reading as the learner

grows, while failing to learn to read before the third or fourth year of schooling may be indicative of lifelong problems in learning new skills" (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007, p. 166). An explanation for this finding is that because children who fall behind in reading tend to lack the motivation and interest to read, so they read less, thereby increasing the gap between them and their peers. Later, when students need to read to learn, rather than learn to read, and the supports to learn to read have been decreased or removed, their lack of reading ability creates difficulty in most other subjects. In this way they fall farther and farther behind in school, dropping out of school at a much higher rate than their peers (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). The results from fifteen studies, as reported by Morgan and Fuchs, consistently supported the conclusion that children's level of reading skill correlates with their reading motivation. Evidence from reading research indicates that students' academic motivation and engagement generally declines as they move through middle school and on to high school. Poor engagement in school in the later grades leads to weaker attendance and participation and the danger of dropping out (Anderson et al., 2019).

The Web and the Teenage Brain

The reported decline in volume of reading begins at the middle school level, along with a slow growth of reading proficiency in grades five through twelve (Allington, 2012). This downward movement in voluntary reading by students at the middle and high school levels over the past twenty years suggests that interests, other than reading for fun, is occupying their time. Literary practices enmeshed with digital technologies, such as video games, text messaging, Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok, WhatsApp, Tumblr, Twitter, YouTube, and so on are popular cultural texts and platforms that many adolescents engage with during their free time. The Pew Research Center reported that in 2014, 97% of (American) adolescents and young adults used the Internet consistently, and as of 2018, 28% of the same demographic depended entirely on

smartphones for Internet access at home (Turner et al., 2019). This high level of involvement with digital technology raises serious implications for students engaging in remote learning. Researchers who have conducted studies into digital literacy have recognized several challenges linked with reading online: the need to authenticate the reliability of the website, the reader's skill, their capacity to cope with distractions in online situations, and the importance of overcoming shallow practices to engage in deep, sustained reading (Turner et al., 2019).

In addition, social media has become a common means for information and news seeking. As there are low barriers to creating, sharing, and spreading news online, distribution is much faster and easier than mainstream paper texts, large amounts of disinformation, such as fake or false news, and misinformation, which is false information that is spread, are produced online. The widespread circulation of disinformation can have negative impacts on both individuals and society. First, fake news can impact a reader's confidence in 'news' itself. Second, disinformation often intentionally convinces users to accept biases or false beliefs for political or financial gain. Third, disinformation changes the way people interpret and respond to real news, obstructing their abilities to discern what is true from what is not (Shu, et al., 2020). Ongoing societal restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic has seen the rise of such disinformation on social media in the form of conspiracy theories involving the origin and spread of the disease itself, a rise in antivaccination propaganda, and a distrust of scientific evidence. Many social media users hit "share' on a social media platform without checking the truth of a statement; they have replaced the hard work of thinking with the easier task of blind belief. The openness and privacy of social media makes it simple for users to share and exchange information, but it also makes it susceptible to corrupt activities.

Moreover, Shu et al. (2020) report that "according to social homophily theory, social media users tend to follow friend like-minded people and thus receive news promoting their existing narratives, resulting in an echo chamber effect" (p. 12). Disinformation targets online viewers by manipulating their preexisting cognitive beliefs. With individual perceptive biases, fake news is often seen as real. Young people think they know the truth before they ever begin to investigate it. Separating truth from fiction takes time, information literacy, and an open mind. We love to share immediately, and that makes us easy to influence. As Wolf (2018) explains, "The time needed to process what we perceive and what we read is profoundly important, whether in building memory, in storing background information, or in every other deep-reading process" (p. 121). The quick mindedness of the Internet does not allow for that processing time.

The Internet has become a mire of "stuff" that encourages students to either not read the texts we give them at all, or to read them in a superficial manner. For example, a quick Google search of *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925), while writing this paper, yielded over 65 million results; this is certainly, enough information to quash any ground-breaking and critical-thinking voice out of a reader. For my students, the internet is the primary text they turn to when in need of a literature review and/or text overview. On websites such as *Wikipedia, Sparknotes, Cliffnotes, enotes, LiteraryDevices, and Shmoop,* students can find plot and character analysis, main ideas, important quotes, information on key motifs and symbols, and important themes—everything an English teacher can ask during a novel study. The students do not actually have to read the books with these websites available. Current research indicates that most of the students are not reading the books, so this has important implications for English teachers when choosing and teaching literature in our classrooms. Prior to assigning novels, short stories, narrative poems, and so on, English teachers need to examine their reasons for doing so.

The teenage reliance placed on electronic sources of information becomes problematic for motivating pleasure reading. The reason for this problem is because the brain needs to assign different forms of attention to each of the processes involved in reading. Reading does not come naturally to human beings; it is an unnatural cultural invention. It is something that we must learn. Our brains, however, come well prepared to learn many unnatural things because of its basic design. "The best-known design principle about our brain is neuroplasticity, which underlies just about everything interesting about reading— from forming a new circuit by connecting older parts, to recycling existing neurons, to adding new and elaborated branches to the circuit over time" (Wolf, 2018, p. 18). This plasticity is also why the reading-brain is inherently plastic and influenced by key environmental factors: specifically, what is read, how it reads, and how it is formed. The plasticity of our brain allows us to achieve ever more complex and developed circuits, but, conversely, ever fewer complex circuits (Wolf, 2018).

Attention is central for every reading function that we perform. Expert readers "process and connect our lower-level perceptual information…at near-breakneck speeds. Only such speeds can enable us to allocate attention to the higher-level deep-reading processes" (p. 37). According to Wolf, we face a dilemma as we move from a print-based world into a faster-paced, entertaining, digital-based one: "If information is continuously perceived as a form of entertainment at the surface level, it remains on the surface, potentially impeding real thinking, rather than deepening it" (p. 75). Our quality of attention in reading changes unavoidably as our culture transitions to the digital world.

Carr's (2011) book, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brain,* outlines the history of written text, and how reading alters the physiology of the human brain. More importantly, it also outlines how hypertexts and online reading specifically changes the

physiology of the human brain. The simple act of placing spaces between words in ancient texts by the 13th century, eased the stress in decoding, making it possible for people to read quicker, and with greater comprehension. This fluency had to be learned, however, and structures in the brain had to adapt. It required complicated modifications in the way neural circuits were arranged in the brain: "The accomplished reader…develops specialized brain regions geared to the rapid deciphering of text" (p. 63). As the brain was able to turn decoding complex text into an automatic process, it was able to devote more reserves to comprehension and deeper-level thinking.

To read a long book, silently, requires an ability to concentrate intently over a long period. Developing this mental discipline is not easy. Carr stated, "the natural state of the human brain, like that of the brains of most of our relatives in the animal kingdom, is one of distractedness" (Carr, 2011, p. 63). Our animal tendency is to shift our gaze and attention, from one object to another, to be aware of what is going on around us. To read a book was to practice abnormal thinking. Reading a book demands sustained, unbroken attention to a single, constant idea. Reading long books requires the human brain to strengthen the neural circuits needed to counteract this natural distractedness.

According to an extensive 2009 study conducted by Ball State University's Center for Media Design (Carr, 2011), most Americans, regardless of age, spend at least eight and a half hours a day looking at the television, a computer monitor, or the screen of their phone or tablet. Often, people use two, or even three, devices simultaneously. Oliveira (2018) stated in a *Globe and Mail* article that Canadian Smartphone users spend almost all "free" time staring at screens, which can be as high as eleven hours per day for teenagers aged 11-17. Unfortunately, this form of reading is rarely continuous, sustained, or concentrated; characteristics needed for deep-level

reading. Skimming becomes the new normal for the reading brain. If most of the hours we read is done online, where deep reading is less important and less used, we begin to read that way even when we turn off the screen and pick up a book (Wolf, 2019).

Why should this matter to English teachers? A page of online text, viewed through a computer screen, may seem like a page of printed text, however, the cognitive act of reading draws on both our sense of sight and touch (Carr, 2011). It is physical as well as visual. Shifting from paper to screen does not just change the way we read a piece of writing; it also impacts how much attention we devote to it and the strength of our interest in it. Links in hypertext encourage us to flit in and out of different texts rather than commit persistent time to any one of them. Hyperlinks are designed to grab our attention, so our connection to any one text becomes fragile and temporary, particularly on a website with multiple links. A search engine often draws our attention to a small fragment of text, just those few words or sentences that are relevant to whatever we are searching for, while offering little motivation for reading the whole text. As Carr (2011) explains, "We don't see the forest when we search the web. We do not even see the trees. We see twigs and leaves…whenever we turn on our computer, we are plunged into an ecosystem of interruption technologies" (p. 90). Adolescent students are trying to navigate both worlds of digital and paper texts. They "live in a both/and world. They read print and digital texts, and these texts vary in form: They might be linear, hyper-linked, multimodal, and/or conversational" (Turner et al, 2019, p. 292). When teenagers go online, they enter an environment that promotes superficial reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and perfunctory learning. Logging onto *Sparknotes*, for example, provides the students with a long series of links, spread out over ten pages. Clicking on any of those links provides short, summary texts for any student to write a descent literary paper, without ever having to read the novel. Additionally,

according to a Time Inc. (2021) study, consumers who grew up with digital technology move between devices and platforms 27 times per hour and experience fewer emotional upheavals with media content than with previous generations. “On average they now check their cell phone between 150 and 190 times a day” (Wolf, 2018, p. 71). Wolf recognized ‘hyperattention’ as one of the unavoidable effects of the constant flitting and splicing of our attention across digital medias. Hyperattention is caused by rapid task switching, high levels of stimulation, and a low-level threshold of boredom (Wolf, 2018). Importantly, the more constant the digital stimulation, the more prevalent the boredom expressed, even by very young children when their devices are taken away.

The plasticity of the human brain is especially apparent during adolescence. The ability of the brain to rewire its connections as a response to the environment is more likely during the teen years than at any other time during the human life cycle (Nevills, 2011). As a result, “teenagers are at the pinnacle of learning, a time period for learning that is only equaled during the preschool years” (p. 90). As our human brain is plastic and adaptable, the internet becomes a means to rewire neural circuits swiftly and thoroughly. “It is the kind of sensory and cognitive stimuli—repetitive, intensive, interactive, addictive—that have been shown to result in strong and rapid alterations in brain circuits and functions” (Carr, 2011, p. 116). The interactivity of the internet intensifies this effect as well, especially for teenagers. As they are often using their devices within social media contexts, their social position is always in play and always at risk. This risk factor intensifies their involvement with social media. Teens have a tremendous interest in knowing what is going on in the lives of their peers. Combining this interest with their anxiety about being out means that if they stop interacting, they risk becoming invisible.

Experiments conducted at the University of California, Los Angeles (Carr, 2011), confirmed that book readers have a lot of activity in brain regions associated with language, memory, and visual processing, but they do not display much activity in the prefrontal regions associated with decision-making and problem solving. By contrast, experienced online users present extensive activity in those prefrontal regions when they scan and search web pages. The results of these studies show why deep reading become so difficult online. The need to evaluate links correctly, make maneuvering choices based on those links, and process momentary sensory stimuli requires constant decision-making. This distracts the brain from the work of interpreting the text (Carr, 2011). When we come upon a link, we stop to allow the prefrontal cortex to gauge whether, or not, we should click on it. The redirection of our mental resources, from reading words to making judgements, inhibits comprehension and retention. As the problem-solving regions of the brain are activated, our brains become exercised and overtaxed. It is the very fact that book reading "understimulates the senses that makes the activity so intellectually rewarding. By allowing us to filter out distractions, to quiet the problem-solving functions of the frontal lobes, deep reading becomes a form of deep thinking and comprehension" (Carr, 2011, p. 123). Concentrated effort allows students to learn and remember. An enduring chemical state is critical to learning (Nevills, 2011). "It is the strength and repetition of neural connections that determines if the chemical sequence allows for permanent memory in the brain. Weak signals fail to excite neighbouring neurons, connections are not continued, and the learner simply fails to notice" (p. 36).

Understanding research on the effects of screen time on the teenaged brain is important in teaching practice. Of great importance to ELA teachers are the studies that have shown that reading hypertext often decreased comprehension. Carr (2011) reported that in a 2001 study, 70

people were asked to read a short story. One group read the story in a traditional text format; the second group read a version with links on a web page. The internet readers took more time to read the story, and they reported more confusion and doubt about what they had read. Seventy-five percent of participants reported that they had difficulty following the text, while only 10% of the traditional-text readers reported such problems (Carr, 2011, p. 126). The researchers concluded that many features of internet reading resulted in larger cognitive capacity and may have required working memory capability that exceeded the readers' abilities.

Wolf (2019) attributes several neural factors for the brain's deep reading processes: imagery, empathy, background knowledge, analogy and inference, and critical analysis. She applied a compelling example to illustrate the importance of these processes on reading brain circuits. After making, and winning, a wager with a group of friends, Ernest Hemingway supposedly wrote a story in six short words: *For sale: baby shoes, never worn.* With a minimum number of words, he conjured both a powerful visual image and some of the same deep-reading processes used when reading his longer works. It is those neural factors for deep reading processes that simultaneously interact in this example. As Wolf (2018) stated, "your own background knowledge, imagery, [empathy], and inferential processes helped you to move from your own perspective into the perspective of others, with all the mix of emotions that might add" (p. 42). It is these processes that allow deep reading to significantly change "what we perceive, what we feel, and what we know and in so doing alters, informs, and elaborates the circuit itself" (p. 68).

The research I discovered on the effects of screen time on the teenage brain led me to wonder what would happen if there was a sustained effort to engage students meaningfully in reading. Many of my readers are apathetic and disengaged from reading. Many of my students

reported being "bored" and "tired" when they read. They say they have a difficult time sustaining their attention on the text and their minds wander a lot, so they have a hard time remembering what they have read. If the natural state of the human brain is one of "distractedness", shifting our gaze and attention from one object to another, then according to Wolf (2018), the hours of online scanning that teenagers do must rewire and strengthen the problem-solving pre-frontal cortex. This rewiring to the distracted brain has been amplified during the COVID-19 class suspension. In addition to our students using online media for entertainment and to strengthen their social connections with one another, the school has asked them to be on their computers, in front of their screens for another four to six hours per day. Carr (2011) states that to read a book is to practice an unnatural process of thought. It is unnatural to demand that the brain sustain and maintain unbroken attention to a single, fixed object. This has major implications for my teaching practices. To build a community of readers who perceive self-efficacy in reading for pleasure, the students will need to strengthen the neural circuitry in the language and visual-processing regions of the brain. This is done with repetitive and prolonged reading of books to improve the neural links needed to counter this instinctive distractedness. For me, it initially took easy-to-read, high interest reading material, that I could read efficiently and easily, or something like that.

Much of the problem with reading motivation and engagement is not the students; it is in the way teachers have approached the teaching of literature. Readicide is "the systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in school" (Gallagher, 2009, p. 2). To avoid the systematic killing of the love of reading, I must recognize that knowing what happens in any book is not as important as developing my student's ability to engage in their reading and make personal meaning from their text. If students can navigate the

internet quickly and routinely through the countless websites that provides the answers to novel questions I have given them, what is the point of reading that book? What lessons do I want to teach? What do I want them to come away with from reading a text? Effective teaching practices must be in place to move beyond an "analysis" and into developing the student's critical thinking and meaningful engagement as readers in the world.

Agency and Self-Efficacy

Personal agency and self-efficacy involve the belief that even in the face of challenges, people who believe in their own ability to perform well at a given task will strive and persevere over stumbling blocks and barriers; they will endeavor to overcome perceived deficiencies (Anderson et al., 2019). According to Fisher et al. (2021), self-efficacy is "a person's sense of being able to deal effectively with a particular task. Agency is the ability to engage in efforts to reach a goal, which can include impacting others" (p. 24).

The perception of agency in adolescent readers is not just if a student is able to read, but whether the student feels able to read for a particular purpose. Agency is vital for how students engage in literacy practices, in and out of school (Williams, 2018, p. x). A lack of perceived agency and self-efficacy can weaken a student's self-confidence to engage and apply themselves just a little more when reading gets difficult. A student's self-efficacy in their ability to successfully read a text can improve their tenacity and create an expectation for either achievement or failure. Perceived self-efficacy can become a self-fulfilling prophecy; whether students think they can or cannot, they are right. If general self-efficacy and agency about school is low entering high school, it may relate to increased disengagement and may be challenging for teachers to overcome these mental obstacles (Williams, 2018). "Teenagers who self-identify as poor readers may believe that they have little control over their reading abilities and will be

unsuccessful in comprehending texts and may assume that reading tasks will be challenging" (Hall, 2020, p. 675). Students with low levels of agency are passive about their reading; they believe that learning is something that happens to them. Consequently, if they do not learn something, they may believe it is because of the teacher's inadequacies, or their own weak abilities (Fisher et al., 2021). They do not see their own role in their reading identity. The experiences that adolescents have with reading in school can shape what they believe they can do when engaging with texts, or if they will engage in texts at all.

According to Williams (2018), emotions play a significant role in how we engage. When we come face-to-face with an experience that is familiar to one we have had in the past, we immediately connect to the emotional states we felt the last time we had the experience. To this day, I get anxious and nervous reading aloud in a peer classroom setting. The responses we feel are immediate and physical. This connection between emotion and experience also creates a connection between emotions and perceptions of agency. How we feel about reading is vital to how we will respond to reading a text. Whether it is confidence, anxiety, boredom, excitement, or dismay, we feel things before we think through them rationally. How we feel also becomes crucial to our assessment of whether we feel able or willing to engage in any activity. Students who have learned to feel bored, confused, worried, self-conscious, overwhelmed, or self-doubting towards reading will not do well. Students will approach reading with the negative and disappointing emotional experiences they bring with them. I hear this when they say they do not like reading, or they think they are a bad reader. This raises questions about their experiences, their emotions, their identity as readers, and how to re-create positive and exciting reading practices. How a person self-identifies as a reader can be changed at any point. When readers have positive experiences with reading and gain a belief that they are capable of being

successful, their agency can change. Therefore, depending upon their memories and emotional responses, my students may feel excited and confident, or anxious and depressed as they walk into my classroom before we even read a text.

Positive literacy experiences are important in creating positive emotional thoughts of agency. In my English classroom, this may result in a different set of purposes for literacy tasks. If I want my students to approach literacy practices with a sense of agency and the ability to face and overcome challenges, then emotion should be part of what I consider (Williams, 2018, p. 33). Creating agency means to provide my students with literary experiences that give them a sense of accomplishment and positive emotional experiences with reading.

The process of remembering involves creating stories, "which is always an interpretation of reality, not an objective portrayal of facts" (Williams, 2018, p. 52). Research on memory indicates that people, tend to think back on the story and modify or rethink it even as they are telling the story. At the same time, research illustrates those memories are often inconsistent, inaccurate, and unreliable. Memory is a social process, so as audiences change, so do memories and narratives. An experience may start out positive, but if it ends badly, our memory is re-shaped by how things ended, not how it started out. This raises questions regarding students understanding reading as a learned, ongoing, social process. By encouraging a stronger sense of agency, and more positive, enjoyable experiences, I can offer them different ways of understanding their reading identities (Williams, 2018).

Like me, my students may feel a disconnect between their literate identities in and out of school. Many of these same students who are disengaged in reading in school may have rich literacy lives outside of school that they may not feel translate to school literacy practices. By tapping into their interests out-of-school, these outside experiences, such as online gaming

forums, reading fan fiction, comics and/or graphic novels can be transferred to school literacy practices (Williams, 2018, p. 31).

What would happen if I ensured that students have access and choice to read books from a diverse library, a library that provided a variety of reading material and was inclusive of diverse groups? According to the International Literacy Association Position Statement and Research Brief titled *Engagement and Adolescent Literacy* (2019), valuing students' identities is a characteristic of supporting literacy development. Students must feel a sense of collective belonging and have opportunities to feel safe to take risks. Providing students with a variety of reading material that aims to support their sense of developing identity is powerful. ILA's *Engagement and Adolescent Literacy* brief (2019) states that "offering diverse perspectives on historical issues and narrative stories alike is critical in sharing a wealth of viewpoints instead of prioritizing just one, or just what has been used in years past" (p. 2). It is important to provide books to allow students to see themselves in the stories being told. These stories raise questions about the nature of their experiences and provide opportunities for students to talk about their literate identities.

Increasing students' self-efficacy and agency also relates to increasing a student's stamina. Zeizer et al. (2018) identify perseverance of effort as a major construct of agency. In her book, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance,* Duckworth (2016) stated that "when you don't come back the next day—when you permanently turn your back on a commitment—your effort plummets to zero. Consequently, your skills stop improving, and at the same time you stop producing anything with whatever skills you have" (p. 50). To develop reading resilience in students, the students must put in time every day. Passion in anything involves intrinsic enjoyment and the ability to practice. Self Determination Theory (SDT) defines intrinsic

motivation as "manifestations of the human tendency toward learning and creativity" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 69). Many of my students may feel the stirrings of intrinsic enjoyment, but unless they feel that their reading matters, they will not learn to keep going, especially when things get difficult. Students ascribe value to what interests them. Research into SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) also highlight the importance of social contexts as it pertains to individual differences in intrinsic motivation. SDT asserts the that it is students' psychological needs that are the basis for self-motivation, specifically competence, relatedness, and autonomy, and environmental factors impede intrinsic motivation. SDT suggests that teachers pay attention to a student's current social context, and then to their environments to examine the degree to which their needs for competency, autonomy, and relatedness are being obstructed. By failing to add supports, classroom teachers can contribute to a sense of separation and poor agency. Intrinsic motivation originates from their sense of self. A student whose motivation comes from self typically has more interest, excitement, and confidence which manifests as improved performance, persistence, and creativity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It requires supportive conditions to produce and sustain intrinsic motivation. Cognitive evaluation theory (CET), a sub theory within SDT, has the aim of specifying factors that facilitate intrinsic motivation. It focuses on fundamental needs for competence and autonomy. CET argues that social-contextual events, such as feedback, communication, and rewards that build feelings of competence during reading can enhance a student's intrinsic motivation to read.

Students are more willing to persevere with a long, complex text if they care about what it contains or when they need the information in the text (Jago, 2019). Current, popular literature is testimony to this assertion. I have had many developing readers who reach for a copy of *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2012) or *The Fault in our Stars* (Green, 2014), texts that should be

beyond their reading level; however, with the motivation to read this literature, students persevere through reading this text. They had intrinsic motivation, time to read it, and it was important to them to finish the book. A part of that intrinsic motivation might also be attributed to the students' social capital—the desire to read what their peers are reading, to talk about it with them, to have read the book that goes with the movies, that were very popular. There is an interconnectedness between film and books—the students get a scaffolded sense of the story and characters from the films that helps them persevere or connect to the text even when it may be more difficult for them. They already have the context and some of the schema developed. We make time for the things we value. Therefore, students who think they do not have the time to read will make that time when reading interests them.

Bandura's research (1997) on self-efficacy indicates that perceptions of agency often become self-fulfilling prophecies, whether positive or negative. Confidence leads to persistence and success, while doubt and anxiety lead to poor performance, or even giving up. Duckworth (2016) suspected that a student's belief that nothing he/she does will have any effect on his/her performance involved both repeated failure and students' core beliefs about success and learning that made them feel unmotivated; it was their perceived agency about their own learning. To test this idea, an experiment was conducted in which a group of students were split into two groups for a specified amount of time. One group was assigned to a "success only" program. These students solved math problems, and at the end of each session, they received praise for doing well, no matter how many they had completed. The other group was assigned to an "attribution retaining" program. These students solved the same problems but were occasionally told that they had not solved enough problems during their session; that they "should have tried harder" (p. 178). In the second phase of the experiment, the students were given a combination of easy

and difficult math problems to do. It was thought that if prior failures were the root cause of helplessness, the "success only" problem would boost engagement and motivation. If, however, the problem was how children interpreted their failures, then the "attribution retaining" program would be more effective. The experiment found that the students in the "success only" program gave up just as easily after encountering difficult problems as they had before training. In contrast, the children in the "attribution retaining" program tried harder after encountering difficulty. It seemed the students had learned to interpret failure as a sign to try harder, not a validation that they lacked the ability to succeed (Duckworth, 2016, p. 179).

Educators within the school system have failed to engage and motivate intrinsic reading in many students, in part because we have made reading a painful exercise for our students. We have demanded of readers things we would never do ourselves in our own literate lives (Beers & Probst, 2017). As Gallagher argued, schools have systematically killed the love of reading with the inane, mind-numbing practices we have students perform in schools. We have made reading about extracting facts about setting, characters, theme, metaphors, and so on. "We have lowered our students' visions of all that reading can be" (p. 46). These practices encourage our students to forget about themselves and their narratives while reading, to ignore what the words and stories do to their emotions, to obtain information, facts, and details from, and about, the text. This is the reason my own reading identity became so disconnected across home and school. By understanding this connection from my 80's self to myself as a teacher to adolescent students, I somehow forgot this. As reported by Bandura (1997), when students talk about "out-of-school experiences, words came faster, voices rose, they leaned forward, bounced slightly in their chairs, gestured more…demonstrated a heightened embodied experience." (p. 70). This is the very type of behaviour I am looking for in my students with their in-class reading as well. I want

them to be inundated with emotion when they read. I want their reading to change their lives. Inadvertently, I have reinforced external motivations within my students by emphasizing the goal of assignments in terms of what needs to be done to achieve a high school credit in English. This approach to reading will only somewhat succeed with those students obsessed with grades rather than focused on learning. The key to building positive, long-lasting reading identities in my students rests with understanding how my own disconnect was formed and to approach the teaching of reading differently.

When we feel we have a certain amount of control over the process, when the activity and/or results are meaningful, and when the experience encourages relationships with others, internal motivations are created and sustained (Bandura, 1997). Findings indicate that teaching practices to target academic skills, engagement, and personal agency together may be more successful during the high school transition years. According to Linnebrink and Pintrich (2002), self-efficacy has been positively related to higher levels of achievement, learning, and increased persistence on difficult tasks in both experimental and correlational studies involving students from a variety of age groups. These researchers found that students who have positive self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to work harder, persist, and eventually achieve at higher academic levels. Their studies found that to build students' expectancy for success and achievement, classroom practices should provide students with four key things: First, provide students with opportunities for success to build confidence. This means entering reading activities at an independent academic level to build achievement and self-confidence. Second, create social opportunities for encouraging feedback from teachers and peers. These opportunities can include one-on-one teacher/student conferencing. Third, provide consistent adult modeling and messaging that the new challenges of high school are normal. And, finally,

provide clear opportunities for students to see self-efficacy developed and modeled (Linnebrink et al., 2002).

So, if students are capable of reading, but they are not reading for enjoyment, the question is, why? Strommen and Mates (2004) report in their article that "non-readers claimed to have enjoyed reading until between 9-11 years of age. At this point, they lost interest in childhood favorites and found no alternative reading material that appealed to them" (p. 194). They also stated that while school is not the critical factor in motivating students to read, a teacher's enthusiasm might be. Readers tended to see assigned reading as something to be accomplished quickly to make time for books of their own choice. My adolescent readers very rarely re-read the material I give them for meaning and understanding. Rather, they read the material once, perfunctorily to get the assignment finished. Often, this includes merely skimming the text for the correct answers, which often leads to superficial discussions, reflections, and a lack of recognition of writer's craft. In Strommen and Mates' (2004) article, they also state that readers and non-readers said they scanned assigned materials to locate answers to questions posed by teachers rather than read the assignment in full.

Readers read, no matter what. Over half of the non-readers Strommen and Mates (2004) interviewed in their studies said they were "too busy" to read for pleasure. It appeared, though, that adolescent attitudes about reading determined their choices of how to spend their spare time. Finding time for personal reading was not a priority for non-readers. They read for purpose rather than pleasure. Reading was a means to access needed information, and to manage affairs, such as a job application. Non-readers, even those with excellent reading skills, avoided reading whenever possible. Becoming a reader, it appears, is not a simple matter of attaining fluency. Readers believe that reading is a worthwhile way to spend leisure time because it is pleasurable

and meaningful. Non-readers see reading as boring, tedious, and a waste of their time. Teenagers must see themselves as participant readers in a community that engages in reading as a meaningful and enjoyable leisure activity if reading is to become a lifelong passion (Strommen & Mates, 2004).

My goal for my students is to develop opportunities for success, to build their agency and self-confidence, to develop their resilience, and engage them in reading. The key to achieving this goal is relevance, interest, and agency. It is about what matters to them. It is about using interest to get their attention, and relevance to keep it going. Agency and self-efficacy beliefs are linked with perceptions of control. The importance of control in shaping perceptions of agency reminds me that motivation is not only about what happened at the end of the process, but also the process itself—how motivation takes place, who controls it, and why. This idea is reflected in my own pursuit of knowledge in the field of adolescent literacy. This quest began on an emotional level. The understanding that the teaching practices I was utilizing were not working and were not engaging the students in reading led to an emotional desire to provide my students with the same joys of reading I have enjoyed. My passion for knowledge in this subject stemmed from a desire to figure things out and communicate those ideas to others; to my students and to my colleagues who are struggling with the same thing in their classrooms. Relevance, interest, and agency have provided the personal foundation of my journey into adolescent literacy. I have had control over the goals and processes of my inquiry, and therefore, my commitment and energy has been higher because it is not a subject that has been prescribed to me by others. I have had the advantage of creating my own path, at my own pace. This is what is described as the "Ikea Effect: the idea that the more work we put into creating something ourselves, our motivation increases as does the value we put on the thing we've created." (Bandura, 1997, p.

61). Research into motivation indicates that our level of interest is dependent upon the value we place on that activity. Research in daily literacy practices finds people describing the reading they do as an endeavor to make meaning of the events, ideas, and relationships in their lives. Many teenagers will put in hours of work, writing stories, reading books, making videos, creating blogs, because they know someone will read it and possibly respond to it (Bandura, 1997). Providing more relevance to the literacy practices I assign, as well as and passing more control to the students will lead to greater engagement with books and a stronger sense of agency.

According to Mitchell (2018), putting practices in place that nurture student choice and autonomy are important factors for fostering students' motivation and engagement with reading. Simply providing time for students to read is important in getting students to see themselves as readers, and therefore become more engaged and motivated to read. Classroom time to read is especially important considering what research tells us about the plasticity of the adolescent brain and the effects of hours upon hours of online hypertext reading. Students need to see themselves as a reader to increase their engagement with reading, and motivation to read. Klauda and Guthrie (2014) further outline autonomy as "shared control between the teachers and students" (p. 389). They state that when teachers provide students with opportunities for choice and self-direction, and connect their interests to reading, student engagement increases, which enhances their achievement. Providing the students time to read, allowing students to choose the texts they read, providing access to high interest reading material, and providing an opportunity to talk about the emotions they are feeling and creating while they read are important practices to put in place to foster agency and autonomy. Shih (2008) reported that Taiwanese eighth graders who perceived autonomy support in the classroom were likely to demonstrate high levels of

behavioral engagement in the forms of listening carefully, persisting with hard problems, and participating in class discussions. According to Ivey and Johnston (2013), self-selected reading establishes student autonomy and relevance, and these are recognized conditions for engaged reading.

Relevance

Relevance is what matters to you. Choice is so critical when talking about reading. When students get to choose what they read, they are more likely to choose what is relevant to them. Pursuit of interest, or relevance, is a construct of agency. Students pursue their interests by reading books, talking with others about them, practice, and building their knowledge and skills. An important aspect of this is that the students stick with something they are interested in for a period of time and do not lose interest quickly, regardless of reading level, and consider tough issues (Fisher et al., 2021).

Students begin school as dependent learners, reliant on highly controlled classroom structures and teaching designs and practices. As they develop competencies for independent thinking, students become more selective in their learning by responding to texts that will help them develop mastery in areas of need and interest (Nevills, 2011). Allred and Cena (2020) reports that in a study of middle school students' reading attitudes, teacher-assigned texts were described by students a boring, irrelevant, and difficult to understand. Moreover, it was noted that "lack of reading motivation was exacerbated by gaps between fictional character events and students' real-world life experiences" (Allred & Cena, 2020, p. 27). In high school, teenagers also become more like adult learners. Adult learners have three distinctive developmental attributes as learners: First, adults learn more effectively when they have input into what they will be learning—this is self-efficacy and agency. Second, active engagement with learning

results from desire and internal motivation and not through prompting. Finally, adult learners want to apply what they are learning to what they currently need in their lives—this is relevance. This means that high school students require more choice and control in their learning environment to develop engaged, motivated reading.

Our level of interest is dependent upon the value we place on that activity. School cannot be about teacher talk. Neuroscience reveals that a person can only focus on one thing at a time. So, if a student perceives that the topic has little personal value, the student is most likely concentrating on something else (Nevills, 2011, p. 15). As we have learned, students have the potential to learn when their brains cells are excited, unstable, and wired together. This state does not happen when students are impassively listening to the teacher lecture. In a classroom where the teacher does most of the talking, the teacher is also doing most of the learning, while the students disengage. A disengaged learner cannot learn.

Providing relevance during instruction has been observed to increase reading motivation. Lau (2009) found that when middle and high school students perceived that instruction was relevant to their lives, they showed high rates of reading engagement and achievement. Wilhelm and Smith (2002) studied 24 adolescent boys of all academic levels and found that all the boys in their study read and wrote outside of school, but this reading did not transfer into the classroom. The students often rejected reading and writing in school because it was not related to immediate interests and needs. Fredrick (2006) stated that as teachers we would like our students to see the big picture of how reading can help them in their future lives; however, students are looking to see how reading can help them in the here and now. An emphasis on grades and marks creates external motivations, which "focus on tangible rewards we might gain from an activity, such as money or grades or rewards" (Williams, 2018, p. 65). Reading in an English Language Arts

classroom often encourages motivations in external terms that outshine, or even obliterate, internal motivations. We lower what reading can be in the classroom and overstate the importance of those inane assignments that kill the love of reading. Teachers reinforce internal motivations by emphasizing the goal of assignments in terms of what needs to be done to achieve high grades. My high-achieving students will buy into these teaching practices, they want the highest mark. These students are all readers but may engage in a reading activity for the mark rather than for a love of reading. For my developing readers, or non-readers, these teaching practices may encourage disengaged behaviours as they are not motivated by high grades.

Factors that students identify as central to the formation of internal motivations, such as practices to increase social capital, reading material that was relevant, access to high interest reading material, time to read in class, self-efficacy and agency, were motivations that moved them to act because the activity or goal was meaningful and engaging (Williams, 2018, p. 61). Emotion, specifically desire, plays a role. Obvious desires in reading are the desire for knowledge, the desire for connections, the desire to be entertained, and the desire to become engrossed in a good story. Much of our reading is driven by the desire for learning, whether it is how to cook a meal or what it was like to live in the past. We also often read from the desire to connect our lives and experiences with others, so we continue to read novels and memoirs (p. 64). These desires typically instill positive emotions associated with reading. Positive emotions, however, can be impeded by fear or anxiety. A student may begin or pursue a reading task based on internal motivations, but that desire to learn can significantly depleted with teacher-imposed negative experiences, or anxiety about completing the task.

Summary

Consequently, instructional practices that emphasize agency, self-efficacy, choice, and relevance have been found to improve reading motivation and engagement in adolescent students. The literature reviewed for this study has demonstrated that scholars have addressed motivation and engagement in groups of adolescent students who are alliterate. The specific gap in the literature is a lack of Canadian research, specifically in the diversity of an urban Manitoba classroom, and research into these questions by a teacher inquiring into their practice, over time that my research design can fulfill. Moreover, while the literature I read outlined general classroom instructional factors that were effective in engaging and motivating adolescent students—agency, self-efficacy, relevance, etc.—there was little description of exactly how these factors were translated into practice, what teaching practices were implemented and how, and the degree to which students were engaged. I am hopeful that my inquiry into teaching can bring forth the larger ideas of designing for rich learning experiences to build agency and self-efficacy in my adolescent readers.

Chapter 3: Design and Methodology

Introduction

Inquiry into teaching practice is steeped in educational professional learning and collaboration. Vigorous English Language Arts education is defined by understandings and beliefs about education informed by current research, theory, and practice. In this chapter I explain my purpose for choosing self-study as a methodology, describe the contents for the study, re-visit the primary research question, outline the teaching practices put into place in year one and year two of the inquiry, and describe the processes of data generation and analysis I engaged in. The characteristics of self-study identified by Samaras and Freese (2006) are evident throughout this chapter, woven into these descriptions as I explore self-study as situated inquiry, self-study as a process, self-study as knowledge, self-study as multiple, and self-study as paradoxical.

Context for the Self-Study

Continuous practitioner inquiry has been at the forefront of my professional development for the past decade. Initially concerned about student apathy in reading and writing in English Language Arts, coupled with a professional belief that students 'struggled' with reading and did not apply strategies that were explicitly taught at every grade level, a colleague and I started a school-wide literacy initiative in 2010 at my high school. As the lead teacher in this inquiry into school-wide reading practices, my interests, and those of my colleague evolved from reading comprehension strategies and text structures, to building students' background knowledge, to language development strategies across disciplines, to reading level diagnosis, to reading remediation, and finally into 'quick-fix' reading programs. The focus of the literacy initiative was assessment and classroom instruction. It was believed that the student apathy in reading was

due to gaps in reading instruction, lack of reading fluency, and weaknesses in reading comprehension. Years have past since I began that initial literacy inquiry regarding adolescent literacy. However, despite this time and effort, I still noted student disengagement, a lack of interest, and often outright dislike in reading for joy.

An inquiry into teaching practice involving adolescent reading engagement was a logical continuation of this ongoing professional development, since I had noted that it has not mattered what reading remediation was implemented or how the students' reading "ability" was diagnosed; adolescent students, who did not like to read, did not read. Period. My goal in starting this personal, professional inquiry into adolescent engagement two years ago was to improve and modify my ELA teaching practice so I could learn how to build my students' identity as readers and foster a love of reading in my classroom.

The academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, have been fraught with professional and personal change. Along the way, as this inquiry developed and evolved, so too did my inquiry questions and teaching contexts. There was no way for me to predict at the start of this study that the past two years would bring profound change to my classroom context, to my teaching practice, and to school constructs and paradigms. This inquiry into practice has witnessed ups and downs involving personal health issues, which included surgery that took me out of my classroom for an entire term, and a pandemic, that initially shuttered schools and forced teachers and students into an alien online forum, then transformed into hybrid-style learning. The hybrid teaching model only allowed me to see the same group of students in my classroom every third day as we simultaneously juggled in-person and online learning. These personal and professional shifts were amplified with the development of a new provincial ELA curriculum and a new provincial bill that could potentially completely re-organize the educational system. There were

many pivotal moments in my inquiry into my teaching practice about adolescent learning, motivation, and engagement.

The high school where I teach is a large school in an urban setting. The school is in a neighbourhood which is a primarily working-class residential area. There are approximately 14,000 residents and the average household income is about 75% of the city average (City of Winnipeg, Neighbourhood Profiles).

In 2019-2020, the school encompassed grades 7 through 12, with 259 students in grades 7 and 8 and 582 students in grades 9-12. In 2020-2021, the school had 245 students in grades 7 and 8 and 545 students in grades 9-12. In addition, internal data collected by the school was used to list its features:

- There were 52 teachers, across all subject areas
- 35% of students lived below the Low Income cut off. This level was determined by the Market Basket Level, Canada's official poverty line.
- 43% of homes were single parent
- In June 2018, the graduation rate was 76%
- In June 2020, the graduation rate was 82%

Due to its demographics, the high school addresses issues of poverty and strives to support students academically and social-emotionally through developing ways to identify students at risk of not being successful. The school embraces the whole child philosophy that helps ensure the students are engaged, supported, challenged, healthy, and safe.

The Student Success Centre (SSC), a provincially funded program, and one developed using a model in a downtown Chicago high school, identifies "off-track" students as those who fail English and/or Mathematics; fail two, or more, courses; have an academic average below

55%; and, have 10, or more, absences in any class. November 2019 data collected by the school showed the following percentages of "off-track" students attending the high school: Grade 9 - 35%, Grade 10 – 53%, and Grade 11 – 60%.

In addition to SSC, the school supports students in several other ways, such as providing inclusion support for students who require special academic accommodations, an EAL/LAL program that accommodates approximately 50 newcomer and refugee students, an Off-Campus program, and a young parent infant program.

For the past nine years, I have taught ELA at the same school and have noted that the range of reading ability varies greatly in each of the grades I teach. The school's ELA students are tested when they enter grade 9. Using the *Ontario Comprehension Assessment* test, comprehension levels are assessed at a range of below, at, or above grade level.

Many of our students are not only developing readers, but many are also apathetic and disengaged from learning. This disengagement from school likely started a long time ago because of school practices put in place that did not support them. This same lack of school support has also failed to foster effective problem-solving strategies in many of these students, so they have little to sustain them through abstract critical thinking, and they demonstrate a range of avoidance behaviours in class, and sometimes-verbal outbursts due to frustration. Many of these students believe they are "stupid" and that they can not learn how to read and write proficiently. They do not see themselves as readers and writers. In addition, due to the nature of their learning disabilities, some of these students have difficulty with abstract thought and problem solving. These behaviors are learned from ongoing school practices. The students are in an education system that has not effectively supported them. Multiple years of frustration and placement into the next grade, without successfully completing curricular outcomes, has resulted in students

who have little reading stamina. As stated earlier, the learned helplessness in my students is a result of both repeated failure and their beliefs about success and learning that make them feel unmotivated and disengaged. For many students, school is an ongoing series of negative emotional experiences that do not promote positive dispositions toward school or reading when they walk in the classroom door. They have not been taught in ways that support them as learners, and thus are unable to persist and persevere with texts that are perceived as difficult.

Williams (2018) has stated that emotions play a significant role in how we engage. When many of my students have come face-to-face with an experience that is familiar to one they had in the past, they connect to the emotional state they felt the last time they had the experience. Students who have learned to feel bored, confused, worried, self-conscious, overwhelmed, or self-doubting towards reading will approach it with the negative emotional experiences they bring with them. My students bring these memories and experiences into my room before we have even opened a book.

Principal Research Question

At the center of this study is the question: How can I motivate and engage my adolescent reader to read for joy? I explored and researched information about this question prior to the start of the 2019 school year. As I delved into the theoretical published research on adolescent reading engagement, I asked myself the following questions: “Why do I feel so strongly that adolescent students should read for joy?”; “What does it take to build a community of engaged readers?”; “How can I my teaching practices build my students’ agency?”; “What happens to students’ identities and agency as readers when there is a collective and sustained effort to engage students meaningfully in reading?”; “How will I recognize my students’ level of reading engagement?”; “Will this study alter my own reading identity?”; and “How will my teaching practice change

during this inquiry?". These questions animated my search for answer in the research and professional literature and were constantly on my mind as I engaged in this study.

By examining and analyzing my teaching practice over the past years, I have come to recognize that I am a teacher of contradictions and of habit. My inner-most hopes and aspirations for my practice and what I hope to instill in my students are not always realized in my instructional focus and the pedagogical moves I try in my ELA classroom. As noted in my introduction, I am a self-aware, super-organized, micro-manager with some habitual OCD tendencies. Prior to conducting this research, I approached reading in the high school classroom from an overly scheduled, teacher-directed agenda. The students had minimal opportunities to be active agents in their own reading. Moreover, my lessons were written more for instruction and assessment, rather than for purposes of student engagement and providing opportunity to get lost in the imaginative world of a good story. Although the thought of restructuring my teaching environment and delving into this inquiry stance was a daunting prospect, I was willing to try. It became apparent to me in the first term of the 2019-2020 school year that overcoming my scheduled, teacher-directed instruction was going to be a challenge and would require ongoing practice.

Year One: 2019-2020

It is strange to look back on this time and appreciate that this was really the last "normal" teaching term I would have for a long time. In the first term of the school year, I taught one grade 9 class and two grade 11 classes. We are a semester school, so I had my grade eleven students from September until the end of January. Fortunately, the grade 9 ELA program is a full year, so I taught these students right until June of 2020.

Current literacy research and theory suggests instructional practices that emphasize agency, self-efficacy, choice, and relevance have been found to improve reading motivation and engagement in adolescent students. With this in mind, I pondered a logical entry point into this inquiry with the students. My instructional focus at the start of September was to explore students' reading identities and begin to build a reading community in my classroom. As Williams (2018) noted, if I wanted my students to approach literacy practices with a sense of agency and the ability to face and overcome challenges, I had to initially provide my students with literary experiences that would give them a sense of accomplishment and positive emotional experiences with reading. To explore this, I tried several new pedagogical practices. This section will outline the new things I tried in my classroom. My reflections on what I learned in the process will be discussed in the data analysis and discussion section in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

To set the tone for daily, choice reading, the students and I jumped into reading on the first day of school. The first day is typically reserved for orientation tasks, such as reviewing the course outline, school and classroom rules, icebreakers, and so on. However, I wanted to highlight the importance of reading for joy from the moment the students stepped into my room, so we began our program with "Speed Book Dating" (adapted from Gallagher & Kittle, 2018) and I left the orientation tasks for the second day. At the start of class, 10-15 books were placed on each of the 9 table groups, and students were provided with time (2-4 minutes) to explore the titles and plots of the books before rotating to the next table.

Figure 1

Classroom Library

Students were invited to make notes of any titles or genres that interested them and add them to a personal potential reading list. Based on experience, I expected that some of the students entering my classroom would be non-readers, and often these students require book recommendations. I felt this was a stress-free way to explore some of the book in our classroom library and to spark curiosity in books they might be interested in reading. I also talked to the students about independent reading time, which would be starting the next day, at the start of class, and encouraged them to choose one of the books they had just dated or bring a book from home or our school library.

When I initially thought about how much of my 60-minute class I could spend dedicated to reading, I was not sure how much time to allot. I settled on 10 minutes for grade 9 and 20 minutes for grades 11. The initial 10 minutes of time for grade 9 students was increased to 15 minutes in the second semester as they developed their reading stamina.

Why this amount of time? Research did not reveal a specific amount of time I should allow for students to read, however, Beers and Probst (2020) outline what happens when students' time reading is increased by only 10-20 minutes a day. With only 10 minutes of reading per day, a student's baseline words read per year is 622,000; with 20 minutes of reading per day, a student's baseline words read per year is 1,822,000 (p. 161).

With the information from Beers and Probst (2020) in mind, I initiated independent reading on the second day of classes. Time to read in English was essential for developing student agency and encouraging a love of reading. I typically had not previously provided consistent time for students to read during class. I think this is a problem prevalent in many high schools as our time with the students is limited on a daily basis. My class times are an hour, so it is a commitment to provide 10-20 minutes of daily student-choice reading. To assist the students in formulating reasonable reading goals, I had them assess their reading rate and track the amount that they were reading each day, I provided them with a reading log (*Appendix C),* adapted from Gallagher and Kittle (2018). At the time, I felt that these strategies would develop their agency and self-efficacy as readers, as well as keep their reading on track everyday. In the context of my self-study, this strategy raised questions about agency and self-efficacy in relationship to accountability and assessment, which will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

After observing and reflecting, I decided to include additional instructional practices to help my students discover books they might like to read. I encouraged those students who were actively reading to recommend and talk up books to their peers, and I began to conduct daily book talks, which continued the introduction of the wide variety of texts accessible in my classroom.

Book sharing commenced on the second day of English classes after choice reading was over. After this class, the daily book shares began with me choosing three to four books from the classroom library every day to share. Every day I tried to choose different forms and genres of texts, such as graphic novels, fiction, books made into movies, top ten novels, memoirs, reference books, and so on. Depending upon the book I choose, I had different methods to share the book. If it was a book I had read before, I was able to describe highlights of the book and

offer a recommendation. If it was a book I had not read before, I typically read the back of the book, read the first page, or two, or examined the cover and made predictions about the characters, setting and plot. This served as an invitation to students to read and find out if I was right. I often turned to YouTube as well to share books. Many books have a book or movie trailer created by either production companies or by other students who have read the book. Regardless of how the book was shared, I was hopeful that this practice would lead to other students volunteering book shares as well, so there would be peer-to-peer book recommendations; however, this did not happen. I will return to this matter and explore it further in my analysis.

Gallagher and Kittle (2018) recommended that teachers put their own reading on exhibit in the classroom with a "What I just finished reading", "What I'm reading now", "What I want to read next" display with the books they are currently reading. I set up a section along my white board with these signposts and brought my own books from home into the classroom.

Figure 2

What Ms. Dickson is Reading

In the first year of my self-study, I also read my own novel during independent reading time. It was my intention to show, by example, how important reading is, and to model talking about what I had read for the students. I did not continue this practice for more than a week, or so, but I felt it was important for the students to see me doing what I was asking them to do. This would have been a nice practice to continue, however, once I implemented reading conferences with the students, I needed this time to sit and talk to a few students about their reading.

After introducing the book that I was currently reading to the students, I also made them aware of a website that I use to track the books I read on an annual basis and set personal reading goals. Good Reads (https://www.goodreads.com/challenges/show/11650-2021-reading-challenge) is a website I felt might attract some of my students due to the social aspect. A form of social media, Good Reads users can connect with friends, leave notes for each book, and receive notices when their friends have added a new book to their "want to read" or "read" lists on their profile. In this way, the can "share" what they are reading with others. In addition, there is a larger community discussion forum that the students can make use of to connect with others who are interested in talking about the same books. This platform was a suggested activity for the students to try, but not one I tracked and checked on.

Another pedagogical move intended to explore the students' reading identities and build a reading community in my classroom was to include a teacher-led read aloud. We started with *Long Way Down*, by Jason Reynolds (2017). I felt that this was an opportunity to not only share interesting texts, but also to provide students with mentor reading so they could hear the work of constructing meaning in a text, fluent reading, and reading punctuation; reading aloud also provided a shared text for mini-lessons and collaborative writing, as we did through writing

whole-class reading reflection exemplars. I also wanted to see if this would prompt some of the students to read the text on their own, and/or read other novels like this one.

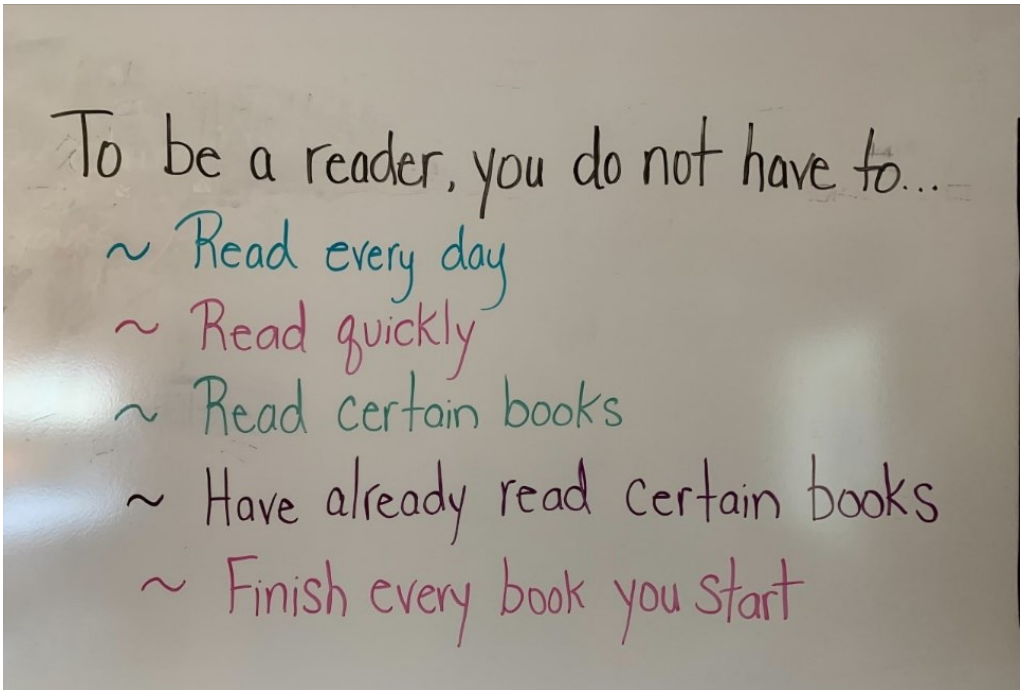
By the third day of school, I had the students create a reading journal that was not for "marking", but rather, was to be used for their own reading reflections as we progressed through the semester. I encouraged the students to track interesting quotations from their novels, sketch scenes from their book, ask questions about their reading, make connections with the characters, setting, and plots of their books, and make note of interesting author craft moves. In this journal, the students also maintained a reading log to track the title of the books they were reading, record their reading rate, and how many pages they read daily. They kept track of a "reading next list" and received encouragement to continually have two to three titles waiting for them on this list (Gallagher & Kittle, 2018). The questions raised related to this practice will be discussed further in the analysis and discussion section.

Within the first week of classes, I provided the students with three tasks to explore reading identity: an anonymous reading inventory, adapted from Guthrie (2008) (*Appendix A);* a reading survey, adapted from Gallagher (2009) *(Appendix B)*; and an open-ended journal response question, "Who am I as a reader?". As stated in the literature review an early 21st century study on reading for enjoyment concluded that a whopping 69% of grade twelve students reportedly did not read for enjoyment (Guthrie, 2008), and that the percentage of students who stated that they had not read a novel throughout their entire high school career was even greater at 90%. I admit I was curious to see if these thoughts and actions would ring true with my students as well. Moreover, thoughtful professional reflection on the inventory and survey responses would enhance my understanding of how to assess my students' level of reading engagement and assist the students in early awareness that their reading identities might be more

complex than just limited to how they perform in ELA, or in-school reading tasks, which is important to the development of their reading agency. The responses from *Who am I as a reader?* and the reading inventories provided the basis to create a bulletin board display, titled *To be a reader, you do not have to…* to dispel any misconceptions about who and what readers are. I was responding to what the students' assumptions were about readers and reading.

Figure 3

To Be a Reader, You Do Not Have To…



After approximately two weeks of independent reading time, I asked the students to personally reflect on their reading (*Appendix E*). My goal with this strategy was to provide the students with an opportunity to build their reading agency, think about their reading habits—what they were reading, what books were on their "next" list, what aspects of their reading they were proud of, and what they felt they were struggling with regarding their reading—and provide me with pedagogical information to inform my next teaching strategies. The students had a second opportunity of assessing their own reading and progress again at the end of the first term.

This reading reflection was like the first one they did; however, I added a couple of questions (*Appendix F*), such as:

- What book(s) have you been reading, or have read? What's on your Next List?
- What aspect of your reading habits are you most proud of?
- What are you struggling with right now?
- If you could change one aspect of our reading program in high school ELA, what would it be, and why?
- Think about your reading habits from this term. Using this information, set a reasonable and attainable reading goal for the last term. Your goal needs to start with the words "I will…" Explain how you are going to achieve this goal.

The intention of this second reading reflection was for the students to not only assess their progress in term one, but to set goals for the remainder of the semester.

After I had an opportunity to think about what the students' personal reading reflections revealed, and once I noted that most students were participating in independent reading, I began to conduct daily, brief one-on-one teacher/student conversations to talk with students about what they were reading. My participation in these conversations was to ask initial questions to get the conversation going—using an adapted version of the Burke Reading Interview (*Appendix D*)—record the content of the student's responses and intervene to ask additional questions or make comments if the student needed direction. I also contributed personally to what was said and shared my own reading stories as a co-participant, and I identified connections to students' lives, interests, experiences, and knowledge about other subject areas. These conversations, or conferences, took place at the start of class when the students were reading. As my classes had many students enrolled, I had them come and speak to me at my desk off to the side in my room,

rather than speak to them at their table. Initially, I wanted these conversations to be private, so the student would feel safe to share their thoughts about reading without fear of a peer overhearing them. During a 20-minutes reading period, I could typically speak to three to four students, so it took me about a week to get through my entire class roster. There were times I could get through the class list a little quicker, such as during work periods when the students were occupied with writing pieces.

During these conversation times, the student was invited to bring the book they were currently reading and their reading journal. The questions I chose to ask from the modified Burke interview protocol was dependent upon the student and where our conversation went. I attempted to make these conversations as organic as possible, so I did not stick to a prescribed interview. Often, the student would choose a piece from their journal to share with me. In addition, we discussed their reading inventories and surveys to gain understanding about their reading identity, and the students wrote down reading goals we would revisit during subsequent conferences.

During these conversations I made observation notes to track student progress. These notes were made as the student and I spoke. Reflective notes were made after the conference to note overriding themes and contradictions to inform my teaching practice. These notes are also now being used to study my practice with more rigor. My exploration of reading conferences as part of my practice will be explored further in the analysis section of this paper.

While the first half of our ELA class was spent with reading, the last half was spent on writing. Around the end of the second week of classes in September, I implemented a weekly activity called “Article of the Week” (Gallagher, 2009). Each week, the students received a copy of a current article that they would have to read, annotate, and respond by writing a one-page

reflection. The grade 9-12 students were provided with a different article to read each week, with the expectation that the quality of their writing would be different. At the beginning of the year, while I was getting to know the students and their reading identities, however, I gave the grades nine and eleven students the same article, titled "10 Benefits of Reading: Why you should read every day" (*Appendix G).* After reading the article, the students were asked to reflect upon, then write about one of the following prompts:

- Reflect on your reading habits. Are you reading enough? Explain.
- Which of these reading benefits do you think is the most important? Explain.
- Pick a passage from the article and respond to it.

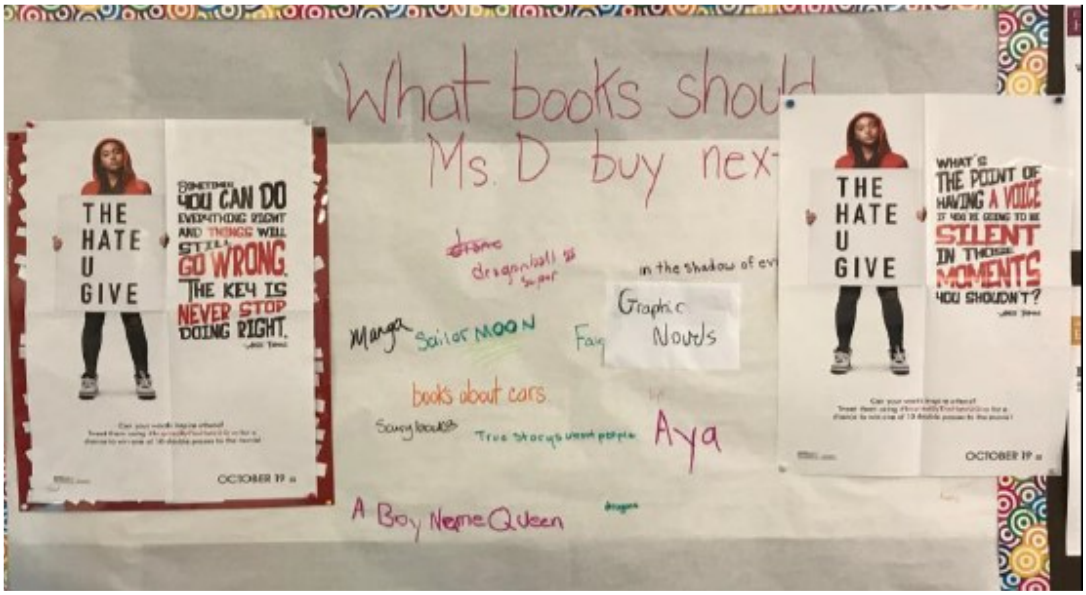
What became clearer to me as I studied my moves in the context of this inquiry will be discussed further in the analysis and discussion section.

The purchasing of reading material continued throughout the year. To aid in this process, I created a blank bulletin board display, titled "What book(s) should Ms. D buy next", and invited students to write book titles on the board. As I conferenced with individual students, we chatted about what books, or genres they would like to see on the shelves in my room. To build positive student agency and provide them with an expectation for achievement, students needed to be successful with reading texts. Moreover, researchers demonstrated that providing students with positive literary experiences that give them positive emotional experiences with reading supports the building of positive agency and self-efficacy. As part of this process, it was important for students to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility building our classroom library and helping select a variety of texts—books that they would want to read and enjoy reading. As Bandura (2019) noted in his research on student agency, when students feel they have a certain amount of control, when the activity and/or results are meaningful, and when the

experience encourages relationships with others, internal motivations are created and sustained. By providing student voice in the purchase of classroom library books, those students who were disengaged in reading in school, but have rich literacy lives outside of school, had an opportunity to feel their interests welcomed into school spaces and translated to school literacy practices. Providing opportunity for the students to suggest new books for our classroom library tapped into their interests out-of-school, thereby increasing their reading motivation and engagement.

Figure 4

What Books Should Ms. D Buy Next?



As part of the rationale for inviting students to choose books for the library, I aimed to provide choice and voice for the diverse readers in my classroom, so students had easy access to lots of high interest reading material that has relevance to their lives. This material includes graphic novels, non-fiction texts, and reference books. It also includes having a wide selection of genres (dystopia, popular fiction, science fiction, poetry, etc.), diversity among authors (Western and non-Western perspectives), and the inclusion of non-stereotypical protagonist characters (LGBTQ, cultural/racial, etc.). All too often, the protagonists in young adult novels contain

characters and conflicts that are cliché, trope, and stereotypical. In high school, white males authored the fiction texts I was typically assigned to read, and the conflict was primarily centered on white protagonists and stereotypical sub-characters. Stock characters, literary archetypes, and negative racial stereotypes were usually portrayed in the plot. To provide for an equitable and relevant literacy environment, students need books that serve as "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors" (Bishop, 1990). Dr. Bishop coined this phrase to explain, not only how students see themselves in books, but also how they can learn about the lives of others through literature. Books can be windows, delivering sights that may be real or imagined. These windows can open into sliding glass doors that readers walk through in their imagination to become part of the world that has been created. Book can also be a mirror and reflect the human experience back to us. It is in the reflection that we see our own lives and experiences as part of a normalized human experience. It is crucial for all children to view themselves in the books they read. When books do not serve as mirrors to children, adolescent, and adults, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are diminished in society (Bishop, 1990), and this can diminish their agency for reading. As Bishop explains at the conclusion of her essay:

> Those of us who are children's literature enthusiasts tend to be somewhat idealistic, believing that some book, some story, some poem can speak to each individual child, and that if we have the time and resources, we can find that book and help to change that child's life, if only for a brief time, and only for a tiny bit. On the other hand, we are realistic enough to know that literature, no matter how powerful, has its limits. It won't take the homeless off our streets; it won't feed the starving of the world; it won't stop people from attacking each other because of our racial differences; it won't stamp out the scourge of drugs. It could, however, help us to understand each other better by helping to

> change our attitudes towards difference. When there are enough books available that can act as both mirrors and windows for all our children, they will see that we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities, because together they are what make us all human. (Bishop, 1990, p 2)

Students, regardless of identity, can learn from diverse literature, experience representation, and develop empathy. It is important for students to read novels that do not perpetuate negative stereotypes, but instead feature diverse protagonists with agency and the capacity to succeed. A position statement and research brief, *Engagement and Adolescent Literacy* (International Literacy Association, 2019), maintains that to effectively engage adolescent students "means offering them the opportunity to use literacy in meaningful ways, interact with a variety of texts, participate in assessment for and as learning, and experience a community of learners in and out of school" (p. 2). Offering diverse perspectives in narrative stories is critical. The colonial impact of the white literary canon is powerful. Building diverse libraries and providing students with a wide variety of books is vital because adolescent students need books in which they see reflections of themselves, and in which they look through and see other worlds and worldviews. In Canadian classrooms, it is especially important to include Indigenous perspectives and history into the curriculum as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

To continue to promote the students to engage in reading and books, I also utilized the bulletin board outside my classroom to post displays to pique their curiosity. For the first display, I printed colour books covers of a variety of high interest young adult novels and, in writing, welcomed the students to write on the bullet board to sign their name next to any book they had already read. My intent was to encourage the students to connect to any of the covers

emotionally and socially I displayed. I hoped it would spur other students to pause and consider who had read certain books, and perhaps inspire them to read the same book. For the second display, I asked a few students in my room to go around the school and ask individual teachers if they would share what they were currently reading and take a photo with their book. The resulting bulletin board display was titled, "What teachers are reading". I will explore these moves, as related to the social dimension of reading, in the findings section in Chapter Four.

Figure 5

Hallway Bulletin Board

Engaging students in reading, exploring reading identity, building student agency and self-efficacy, providing choice and voice in reading material was well-established by the beginning of October. I had a much-needed boost to my own motivation with the 2019 ILA Conference in New Orleans, LA. The theme of the conference was "Building Positive Adolescent Reading Identities Through Relevance, Equity, and Access". This conference was very timely for my inquiry into reading motivation and engagement. After receiving permission

and funds to attend the conference, I was able to join amazing workshops hosted by literacy teacher experts, such as Carol Jago, Cornelius Minor, Donalyn Miller, and Colby Sharp. I also attended panel discussions headed by leading researchers in reading, such as Tim Shanahan, Nell Duke, David Pearson, and Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey. I came back from the conference feeling rejuvenated and full of new ideas. Ironically, this event was a pivotal moment where my inquiry into practice started to go off the rails a little. With report card deadlines looming and a perceived lack of formative assessment, I lost focus of my initial research questions and started to muddy the waters, doing too much, too fast.

In mid-October I introduced daily written reading responses for the students to complete for summative marks. This first reporting period proved to be a turning point in my inquiry as I questioned how to balance this love of reading that I was trying to inspire in my students with the need for summative assessment marks in high school. How could I spend half my time with students performing tasks that are not marked? Could I justify that kind of time without a percentage mark attached to it? These questions will be discussed in the analysis section of this thesis.

I continued this routine of independent reading time, book shares, reading responses, and conferencing into November and December. I continued to observe the students during reading times and during our reading conversations and students submitted written responses and reading journals. I generated some notes on student reading practices and behaviour. What changed during this time, however, is that I stopped using these notes to inform my practice. I got stuck in the inquiry loop. I stopped reflecting on action, which is vital to make changes in professional practice. I became that creature of habit and contradictions again.

By January, classrooms were gearing up for provincial and process exams, end-of-semester writing pieces, report cards, and a semester change in early February. My instructional focus shifted from an emphasis on reading to providing time for the students to complete their summative writing pieces. Moreover, I had a surgery date fast approaching at the end of January. While my students were reading and writing, I was spending my time marking and planning for a substitute to take over in a few weeks. My inquiry just fizzled out at this point.

I was off work to recover from my surgery for almost eight weeks. I had left instructions for my substitute to re-start my September plans, with a focus on reading for joy with my new grade 10 and 12 ELA classes. Although the students completed some of the same tasks at the start of the second semester, I was not there to observe and reflect on teaching practice.

On March 16, 2020, I was excited to return to work and get to know my new students for the couple of weeks we had left until Spring Break. I was prepared to explore their reading identity with them, begin reading conversations and restart my inquiry into practice. These plans become moot. I had four short days with my new students when the government announced that schools would be closing, due to COVID-19 numbers rising, from March 23-27 and April 6-10. I naively thought we would be back in school on April 13th to resume our ELA program. We were expected to be gone for three weeks, and classes would resume once the pandemic had passed us by. That did not happen. Three weeks became three months.

This period was a time of mayhem and turmoil, both personally and professionally. Pandemic teaching forced me to re-examine my teaching practices, yet again, overnight. 2020 was a formidable period of growth and transformation; however, the steep learning curve was anxiety-ridden and disorientating. I had to be both a student and a teacher as I tried to grasp the technology needed to set my students up for successful online learning. At the time, I felt it was

necessary to put any self-study on hold while I figured out how to navigate this new form of teaching. I did not think I could I examine my teaching practices and know what good teaching looked like in an empty classroom, in front of a computer screen. My students and I were isolated from each other with most communication occurring through email or through Google Classroom. I did not even know all my students by name at this point. My grade 10 class had 38 students in it, and I had only had four days of in-class teaching with them. Whenever I conversed with a student, I had to look on MAYET—our division's student recordkeeper—for their picture, so I could put a face to their name. I did not know if all my students had access to books at home to continue their independent reading. At this point, I was not prepared to take on the complexity of an inquiry into my practice.

On March 30, the government announced that Manitoba schools would remain closed indefinitely for the remainder of the school year. As the closure continued into April and May, most of my students' engagement and motivation in continuing with their ELA program declined at a steady rate. The province had announced that no student would be held back because of COVID-19 and grades would be held at what they were before classes were suspended, but students could improve (this directive changed at the start of year two). Many of my students who were doing well opted out of ELA at that announcement, deciding that they would just take the mark they had. They did not feel the incentive to continue their program. Regardless of provincial announcement, however, as my adolescent students spent day after day alone in their bedrooms with their phones and/or computer, they reported feeling lethargic, tired, unmotivated, lonely, depressed, and anxious. As they withdrew from their ELA program, students also spent more and more time on their devices, and, as the literature review reported, this increased amount of time on their devices was detrimental to their reading brain.

As the 2019-2020 school year ended, I felt that I had done very little inquiry into my practice. But as my students had continued to disengage from their remote learning at an alarming rate, I realized how important this inquiry was. Motivating and engaging adolescent students in isolation, in the face of a pandemic became the number one priority of most high school teachers.

The start of the new school year in 2020-2021, would prove to be a challenge. We were told in late August that our high school would be moving to a hybrid version of in-person and online instruction. The students in each high school class were placed in one of three groups and attended on alternate half-days, with two school days off every cycle. For ELA, this meant that I had the same students in my classroom only two days out of a six-day school-cycle—one day in the classroom, and two days of remote learning. The pandemic forced change in the way I taught and approached motivation and engagement in adolescent students.

Year Two: 2020-2021

Students who entered my classroom in September 2020, did so for the first time in five months. The students entered the new school year with a variety of recent experiences and emotional needs. Based on conversations I had with my students during class suspension in the Spring of 2020, some students were responsible for looking after younger siblings and cousins all day while parents and guardians worked; some students took advantage of the school closure to work extra hours during day at their own part-time jobs; some students disengaged in English to focus on perceived difficult classes, such as pre-Calculus and Physics; some of our students had food hampers delivered to them by the school because there was no food in the house, and they were not eating consistently. Some students left the city for the safety of their reservations and may, or may not, have continued school in their home communities. Some students opted out

of engaging in school all together for the last three months of school, while some students were fully engaged and found success with online, distance learning. Some students struggled with the isolation and spent hours either crying, or withdrawing into gaming and social media, staying up all hours of the night and sleeping most of the day. For these students, the pandemic proved to take its toll on their mental health. A review of 51 articles evaluating the mental health impact of COVID-19 on young people ranging in age from 6-21, researchers found levels of depression and anxiety ranging between 11.78 and 47.85% across China, the United States of America, Europe, and South America (Waters et al., 2021). Adolescence is a crucial stage for identity formation where teenagers strive for control and independence, while at the same time gravitating toward their peers. The pandemic has significantly restricted the conditions for teens to meet their developmental needs. Waters et al. (2021) argue that adolescents are "more vulnerable than adults to mental health problems, in particular during a lockdown, because they are in a transition phase… with increasing importance of peers and struggling with their often-brittle self-esteem" (p. 2). It is also important to note that some of my students were strengthened by this pandemic. Waters et al. (2021) noted in their article that a recent study found that more than 40% of their teen and early adult samples reported improved social relationships, greater self-reflection, and greater self-care. Moreover, some students who had prior diagnoses of anxiety and depression may have done better with learning online. In addition, some who had social difficulties might have also felt safer at home.

I tried to make note of incoming mental health issues and understand students' new sleeping and eating schedules, the weaning off video games, internet browsing, and social media interaction, and preparing the students for the potential of sudden re-closure of the school. The next phase of my inquiry was to take the appropriate steps to benefit my students; therefore, for

the first few weeks of school, I planned on implementing specific initial actions to inform my practice and think about next steps. The most appropriate step to take with my students at this time seemed to be preparing them for the possibility of another closure. When schools were closed and classes moved online in April of 2020, teachers and students were not prepared. We had not pre-planned and taught the students how to use the online platforms we would be asking them to use. Our usually technologically advanced students can build a new world on a video game, but many of them did not know how to attach an assignment to an email, or record and upload a video of themselves on *Padlet*. Therefore, I had two instructional foci in early September: building reading agency and identities and developing technology literacies.

The start of the 2020-2021 school year was very confusing for school staff and students. It required a copious amount of organization and colour-coding. Each of my classes was split into three groups, which were labelled, *Group A, Group B,* and *Group C*. Each group had 11-13 students enrolled, so with four classes, I had twelve groups of students to keep track of—four who were in my classroom for instruction everyday, and eight groups who were remote learning from home. As there were three groups of students, it took me three school days to cycle through one lesson. Therefore, I called three school days a "cycle of learning" and numbered those to try and keep lessons and assignments organized. For example, September 8 – September 10 was *Cycle One*, with a new cycle of learning beginning on September 11, 2020. It became a little more confusing on in-service days and holidays as one group of students would loose out on the in-class instruction and would have to learn that cycle completely at home. I remember feeling very much like Bill Murray in *Groundhog Day* (1993). The repetitive nature of the lessons felt surreal and a little boring, especially by the third day.

The students were masked and socially distanced by two metres of space. Prior to COVID-19, my classroom was set-up in nine table groups that could seat three to six students.

Figure 6

Table Set-Up Prior to Pandemic Learning – Year One

With hybrid learning, most of the tables were removed from my room, so I was left with 13 individual tables, in rows, all facing the front.

Figure 7

Table Set-Up During Pandemic Learning – Year Two

This arrangement of the physical space and tables in the room provided a dynamic that was challenging to building a community of readers. In addition, student face masks, hoodies, and hats further added to the subdued atmosphere. The setup and health restrictions made it difficult for students to talk, and they seemed isolated from one another. It also made it difficult for me to connect with them. Face recognition helps me remember student names and that was gone. Moreover, for contact tracing, I had to have a seating plan for the first time. Dividing the students into groups divided friendship groups. This division resulted in having group of students that were very different. Some of the groups were very low energy and flat. These students were the hardest to teach, in part because I could feel my own energy depleting to match theirs when I did not get a response from them. On the other hand, a few of my groups were very animated and excited when they came in. Their energy was higher, and they interacted with the lesson, with me, and with their peers.

I wanted to start the second year of my inquiry much the same as the first, however, due to the restrictions I just listed, I had to alter some of the those plans. To begin the year, I maintained providing time and choice for the students to read for pleasure, however, rather than

begin the grade 9 students with 10 minutes of reading time, I started with 15 minutes. The grade 11 students still had 20 minutes of time to read at the start of class. What changed this year was the small amount of in-class reading. In year one, the grade 11 students were reading 20 minutes/day, for a total of 120 minutes every week. In year two, the Grade 11 students read still read for 20 minutes every school day, however, this year I had to trust that they were reading at home during their ELA remote learning time. I was still expecting 120 minutes every week, but I couldn't witness most of that reading time. Therefore, to try and ensure that they were reading, I asked my students to complete a reading response everyday they read at home and submit those reading responses for summative marks.

To set the tone for daily, choice reading, the students and I jumped into reading on the first day of school again in year two. We began our program again with "Speed Book Dating" on the first day of classes, and I left the orientation tasks for the second day. As with year one, at the start of class, 10-15 books were placed on each table, and students were provided with time (2-4 minutes) to explore the titles. I still had the students rotate from table to table, however, this year they had to stop and sanitize their hands after handling the books. Students made note of any titles or genres that interested them and added them to a personal reading list.

I also continued to encourage reading students to recommend and talk up books to their peers, and I continued to conduct daily book talks. As with year one, I was hopeful that this would lead to other students volunteering book shares as well, so there were peer-to-peer book recommendations; however, again, this did not happen. I explore the questions this raised for me in the next chapter.

I continued with Gallagher and Kittle's (2018) recommendation that teachers put their own reading on exhibit in the classroom with a "What I just finished reading", "What I'm

reading now", "What I want to read next" display with the books they are currently reading. I kept the signpost on the whiteboard and brought in the books I was currently reading. However, unlike year one, I had to abandon reading my own novel during independent reading time. With the level of organization required to simultaneously maintain twelve groups of students, I could not spend the time reading with the students. I also had to abandon oral reading with a read aloud. With only one hour of in-class learning, I could not spend 5-10 minutes of that time with a read aloud.

The students created a reading journal in year two, again that was not for "marking", but rather, was to be used for their own reading reflections as we progressed through the semester. I encouraged the students to track interesting quotations from their novels, to sketch scenes from their book, to ask questions about their reading, to make connections with the characters, setting, and plots of their books, and to make note of interesting author craft moves. They also maintained a reading log to track the title of the books they were reading, record their reading rate, and how many pages they read daily. They kept track of a "reading next list" and received encouragement to continually have two to three titles waiting for them on this list.

Within the first week of classes, I again provided the students with three tasks to explore reading identity and agency: an anonymous reading inventory, adapted from Guthrie (2008), a reading and interest survey, adapted from *Reading for Understanding: How reading apprenticeship improves disciplinary learning in secondary and college classrooms* (2012), and a personal, well-being and access to technology survey that was co-created by myself and a teaching partner (*Appendix J*). It seemed a bit excessive to have the students complete so many surveys at the start of the year, but after remote learning, and moving to hybrid learning, I needed to collect a lot of information from the students. The reading and interest survey (*Appendix G)* is

quite long and detailed, but it provided much-needed information about the students and their reading identities. The purpose of the personal inventory was to assess the students' level of participation in school during the COVID-19 school closure in the Spring of 2020 to gain an understanding of the support they might require. I understood at the start of the year that the students would need additional supports outside the classroom to navigate hybrid instruction and learning. Both the reading inventory and the survey were intended to help provide a basis for my students' reading identities and their experiences and feelings about how they approach reading. The students also completed a post-survey towards the end of the semester to gauge if their attitudes about and interests in reading had changed during their time in my course. Prior to distributing the inventory and survey, students were told that answering these questions was about understanding them as readers.

To promote student agency, I continued with reading self-assessment, reflection, and goal setting. However, the students did not complete the two-week reflection in September that was done in year one. As I only had the same group of students in my room once every four days, after two weeks, I had only completed three cycles of learning. As I learned that not many of my students were not reading at home, I felt that this was not enough time to reflect on reading. Instead, the students reflected on their own reading and progress at the end of the first term in October 2020 (*Appendix F*). As with their reflections, the purchasing of reading material continued throughout the year in year two. I re-created a blank bulletin board display, titled "What book(s) should we buy next", and invited students to write book titles on the board.

One of the most important changes during year two was removing the scheduled reading conversations I had with students while they read. With hybrid learning, I had to use their 20 minutes of reading time to attend to student remote learning from home. This conferencing time

was missed and made a significant difference in student reading engagement. This will be discussed further in the analysis and discussion section.

Learning is an inherently social act, typically constructed with other humans (Fisher, et al., 2021). Students have had to navigate a learning landscape they were not prepared for. In the absence of the environmental cues of the classroom, many had to settle learning in a home environment more readily associated with sleeping, eating, or play. When school were closed to students and we went to remote learning, teachers were provided with the option of working from their classroom or working from home. For the reasons stated above, I choose to continue working from school. My home is my sanctuary, and I did not want to turn it into a place of work. Moreover, I seriously doubted my own ability to concentrate on school with all the distractions of home. In addition, as I live by myself, it was socially isolating to remain at home. Many of my students faced that reality for months. With their parents working during the day, they were forced to create their own schedules. That is an almost impossible task for some young teenagers to do. As an adult, I knew I would struggle with this, and our students did not have a choice. The proximity of the teacher and students, social gestural cues, and physical prompts like a hand on a shoulder to redirect, had disappeared, either caregivers had to run interference instead, or students had to do this on their own. Fewer instructional minutes meant that there was a greater reliance on independent learning, but with less supervision and encouragement than comes when it is happening in a live space. A chart outlining an overview of similarities and differences of the strategies and practices I utilized in year one and year two of my self-study can be viewed in the Appendix *(*Appendix K).

Design

A research design refers to the framework of research methods and techniques that are undertaken by a researcher. The design that is chosen allows the researcher to utilize the methods that are aligned with the research questions. I have spent over a decade attempting to improve my teaching practice, but I have ultimately repeated the same teaching mistakes over and over again. My problem has not been an unwillingness to try and effect change in my classroom. I attend an abundance of professional learning opportunities, such as workshops, seminars, and conferences on adolescent literacy. I read dozens and dozens of teaching resource books outlining the latest pedagogical classroom moves. I have attempted to implement a plethora of teaching practices to engage and motivate my students to read for pleasure. What I have not done, however, is spend any time critically and systematically examining the questions I have about my practice, about myself as a reader, and about my understandings of reading as a reading teacher. The problem effecting change in my classroom instruction is that I have not given myself permission as an educator to open up and engage in the process of studying my learning and growth—even while I expect that for my students. Renowned researcher, Lisa Delpit, was asked how it was possible to prepare teachers for the diverse range of student backgrounds, academic abilities and challenges they will face in a classroom. She listed three key ideas: The first is to acknowledge that teachers have things to learn from students. Second, teachers should approach their instruction with a sense of inquiry, asking questions about their students to guide their teaching. Finally, teachers should have a willingness to share their own story (Buckelew & Ewing, 2019).

In deciding how to structure this thesis, I found myself reflecting on my story, documenting past experiences and pedagogical practices, listening more carefully in the present, and imagining the possibilities for the future. The structure of this thesis, therefore, serves the

purpose of creating space for me to reflect on who I am as a teacher of reading, specifically one who does not just want their students to read for functions, but also for joy. I want to think about my core personal and professional beliefs, notice moments in my current practice that reflect those beliefs, and perhaps most importantly, to identify and interrogate those moments in my current practice that do not reflect those beliefs. I want to consider how connections across my experiences are constructive of meaningful pedagogy. It is an opportunity for me to consider how this inquiry in practice has transformed my identities as a learner and a teacher and how it will continue to shape the teacher I am becoming.

Two years ago, I was prepared to observe my classroom practices. I gathered my tools, prepared for my inquiry exploration, and developed several questions to help me get started on my inquiry into practice. I understood that many of my students were unmotivated and disengaged in reading. I attempted to implement various actions and practices with my students; however, without the requisite knowledge of the skills necessary for critical, rigorous, and trustworthy research, these interventions did not stick.

There were two different issues with my original approach to classroom inquiry—one had to do with the theoretical research, and lack of research skills, and the other was with my approach to teaching practices. I did not initially enter my inquiry with a thorough understanding of what I was looking for and what data I needed to collect and analyze. A lack of practicing reflection "for action, in action, and on action" (Buckelew & Ewing, 2019, p. 22), as well as not revising my inquiry questions when the COVID-19 class suspension began was what caused my inquiry into teaching to fall apart.

The thought of restructuring my teaching environment to allow myself to delve into this inquiry stance was a daunting prospect. However, unless I was actually prepared to restructure

my classroom environment and embrace this inquiry in all phases of the process, I was doomed to continue to repeat the same teaching mistakes, again and again. As Donald Graves said, "It is entirely possible to read about children, review research and textbooks about writing, teach them, yet still be unaware of their processes of learning" (Buckelew & Ewing, 2019, p. 6). It was not enough to just ask questions about my instruction and the students' role in education without systematic study and a willingness to have my story and practice scrutinized as part of that study. At the heart of this inquiry is an understanding that this inquiry is about me—about me as a reader, about me as a teacher of reading, about the contradictions in my identity as a reader and the instruction in reading I share with my students. It is about the decisions and pedagogical moves I tried in my classroom, what I observed, noticed, documented, and analysed, and how that raised new cycles of inquiry. It is a dialogue I had with myself and with my audience: those peers and colleagues who are struggling with the same questions and concerns about reading for joy.

Designing a method around my research questions has been challenging. The learning and questioning that I have experienced in the past few years are multiple and multi-layered, and I have searched for a methodology that would create space for me to reflect on who I am as a reader, and a teacher of reading—to share my story and my process. What is my reading identity and is my identity reflected in my teaching practices? I needed a space to reconceptualize my beliefs and notice moments in my practice that reflect those beliefs, or, to note if my practice did not reflect my beliefs. Self-study research allowed me to openly ask questions about my teaching practice as situated in the context of an inquiry into motivating students to read for joy.

A self-study methodology seemed the best fit for the research questions I had and the larger purpose of the inquiry I was trying to do in terms of wrestling with issues in my practice in

ways that only I could do. Reflection on practice and self-study are defined as "a participant study of experience" (Loughran & Northfield, 2020, p. 24). Self-study is the study of oneself, actions, and ideas, as well as the "not self" (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998). Self-study examines practice for "living contradictions" between what I say I believe and what I do in my practice (Samaras, 2011). It is inquiry-based, personal, and reflective. It draws on autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political contexts, it allows me to draw on my life's experiences. It also involves a thoughtful consideration of the texts I have read, experiences I have had, people I have known, and the ideas I have considered (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998). It is all these aspects of self that are investigated for their relationships into the questions I have surrounding my teaching practice. Moreover, the strength of self-study as a methodology was suitable to the long-term learning and questioning that I have experienced. Self-study is detailed involvement in multifaceted contexts over time by a researcher who is dedicated to better understanding the situation. This strength defines the goal of my inquiry—to create a space for me to reflect on who I am as a reader, who my students are as readers, and who I am as a teacher of reading.

The following sections on data collection and analysis outline how I collected the data, what the data looked like, what I did during my study, and how I used this information to systematically critique my teaching practice. It is this section of my study that captures some of the complexities and contradictions of my practice over time and the issues and questions that I have been grappling with through my research. It is with this purpose in mind to study the gaps between my beliefs and practices and the questions they revealed—that I hoped to learn more about my practice and my ongoing efforts over theses last two years to motivate and adolescents to read for joy.

Data Generation and Analysis

At this point, it is important to emphasize that the focus of my self-study was to learn from my own inquiry into practice—to gain knowledge and understanding in terms of my professional theoretical insights and practices in relation to adolescent motivation and engagement in reading for joy. It is important that readers understand this. My intention was not to report on the students' activities and specific conversations arising during reading times that were part of my practice as I shifted my focus to prioritize reading for joy. Rather this self-study is about me learning about myself. This study is situated in the mind of the researcher as I tried to make sense of what I was learning from my efforts to shift my practices in ways that would prioritize motivating adolescent readers to read for joy as a pedagogical goal. To that end, in my everyday practice as an ELA teacher, I observed students during reading, took an interest in and noted their choices, read their written reflections, engaged in countless conversations and interactions with them as readers, invited them to conduct self-assessments, and so on. In my efforts to sustain an inquiry into my practice, I was engaged in an ongoing process of learning more about adolescent literacy in my teaching practices and decisions. It was my decision in this self-study to focus on my learning, and not use any data generated by students in my day-to-day teaching and instruction. Thus, this study does not include student data. Instead, the data generated through self-study focuses on my exploration and analysis of the ideas, issues, and themes related to my practices as I attempted to shift my pedagogy to prioritize reading for joy in my teaching. My in-class observations and notes generated through my inquiry over a period of two years were used for reflection and analysis in this self-study as I looked for patterns and themes to help me better understand my practice related to the research on reading motivation and engagement—the importance of building agency and self-efficacy, providing choice and relevance of reading material, and how that informed what I know about adolescent literacy.

The research utilized in my self-study is embedded in practice and will be informing my ongoing decision-making as a teacher. As a teacher, I am always gathering information from my students to inform my teaching and assess my students. According to Buckelew & Ewing (2019), "Educators spend their entire working lives in data-rich environments. Whenever school is open, data are produced" (pg. 81). Data typically comes in the form of reading surveys or inventories, reading responses, reading journals, quick writes, tests, student self-assessments, one-on-one conferencing, and so on. This is the 'stuff' generated by students for me to not only examine and determine what my next teaching move should be, but typically also contributes to the summative assessments for their grade.

Samaras (2011) asserts that when conducting a self-study inquiry, it is important to ensure that the data generated aligns with the research questions. "Self-study is purpose-driven research" (p. 164). What am I trying to do? What is the main purpose of conducting my research? At the crux of this inquiry is a desire to explore how my teaching practice can motivate and encourage students to read for joy. With this purpose in mind, I studied my practice through analyzing data that was generated by my day-to-day inquiry into practice as I hoped to better understand the impact of my pedagogical strategies as a teacher.

The data generated over the two-year period of my inquiry took the form of field notes and journal reflections, produced by me in the process of shifting my practice and pedagogical goals related to reading in my ELA classroom. Making observational field notes is a common teaching practice that enables teachers to assess and evaluate the growth of student learning and to support potential curricular and pedagogical next steps for students. These daily written records of professional observations have been part of my regular practice for the past two years. I made it a practice to record brief notes while I was observing during reading time and reading

conferences in as much detail as possible, including direct quotes or close approximations of what was said. The notes in my journal were not for assessment purposes, rather they were often made later, reflectively, and did not include any student names. I have another system in place—conference record templates—for the purpose of assessing. These brief notes were often later expanded by adding greater detail of what was observed, and, if applicable, by including preliminary interpretations. This journal contained anonymous, reflective notes make after the fact to inform my inquiry into practice. The journal contained:

- research notes
- observation notes and reflections made after one-one-one reading talks with students. These reflective notes were made after the fact, and they were anonymous, meant to inform my inquiry into practice
- noticings generated by student reading surveys and reading inventories
- preliminary ideas related to the implementation and assessment of pedagogical strategies
- reflective notes inspired by discussions with colleagues related to teaching practices

As a teacher, my intent in my inquiry into practice was to use different types of data collection to ensure that I would be able to collect data and analyze my pedagogical practices in a meaningful way that could contribute to my theoretical and pedagogical understandings of teaching reading and promoting learning.

My self-study of my inquiry was designed to enhance my understandings of my own teaching in the context of my inquiry into practice. Thus, I focused on analyzing my practices in relationship to the larger questions I had about motivating students to read for joy: What was I

paying attention to? What was I not? What gaps did I see in my practice and what I had learned from the research and professional literature on motivating students to read for joy.

In the process, I generated:

- narratives about critical moments in my teaching experience
- a personal history outlining who I am as a teacher, and my teaching identity
- an overview of specific practices and events in Year 1 and Year 2

This self-study encompasses my two-year inquiry into practice. Admittedly, there were times when I was more, or less, focused on inquiry into practice. At times, when I was deeply engaged in studying my practice, I was more intentional and consistent exploring my practice as I went—in the moment. At other times, there was more distance in time between my decision-making and intentional, consistent inquiry. However, data was still being generated, allowing for analyses of practice over these two years. There were more notes produced at those times when I was really active in my research, and there were gaps when I was really focused on the day-to-day work because of the drastic changes the pandemic had on my practice. The study includes both—the data that was generated in the process of teaching specifically for/as part of the study, but also what was generated in the process of practice that I did not have time to examine in the moment, but that I could analyze retrospectively. Reflecting on my study of practice, each semester during my two-year study provided pivotal changes in my personal and professional life. I can note now that my teaching practices were most consistent in the first semester—from September to December 2019. This was due, in part, with my own motivation and excitement to delve into my study of practice. It was primarily due, however, to having all the students in my room, consistently, from Monday to Friday. Having the students full-time in my room lessened the need to rely on home study and reading, which I could not guarantee was an honest portrayal of

the time the students spent reading. Informal observation did not take place during the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year. Rather, reflection on teaching practices during this time took place at the start of the second year of the study. Consistency of observation of teaching practices occurred during the second year of my study. With low student energy and motivation, and fewer students in my classroom, I was provided with more material and time to reflect and write during the second year.

Regardless of consistency, I attempted to make time to write down what I was seeing, how I interpreted what I was seeing, and the new questions that came to mind as I reflected on practice. During year one of my inquiry, I was able to document informal observations during reading conversations with students, in between classes, at lunch, and at the end of the school day. Times when the students were working and I saw something worth noting, if I did not have the time to pull out my teaching journal, I wrote it down on a post-it so I could reflect on it later in the day. It was during year two that informal observations became more difficult. It was an organizational challenge to study twelve groups of students over three school days as I implemented new teaching practices. I was not always able to create consistent notes for all three groups as time was dependent on the needs of the students in that group.

Practitioner inquiry is an iterative process, using the data to guide instruction in an ongoing, formative way, but also pausing to reflect on the data and summarize what has been learned (Buckelew & Ewing, 2019). Practicing reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action helped alleviate some of my anxiety about risk-taking. Reflection-in-action examined the results of my interventions and my students' actions as we moved through the school year. Embarking on reflection-in-action meant that I examined and analyzed the results of my teaching practices as I implemented them. For example, after providing time for choice and personal reading, I

noticed that some of the students had difficulties finding and choosing a book to read. This examination resulted in implementing book shares and a read aloud to introduce high-interest titles for the students to read. As I progressed through this cycle of teacher inquiry, I examined the most useful data to ensure that my teaching strategies enhanced student motivation and engagement.

A finding from my self-study, which emerged through analysis, was that reflection-in-action was the stage of inquiry into practice where I stopped during the second half of year one. I stopped reflection-in-action and focused more on reflection-for-action. I continued to decide on courses of action to use to enhance student learning, but I did not examine the results of what I was doing to see if it was working. Reflection-for-action in my study did not resume until year two of my study.

Reflection-on-action involved searching for patterns in my data to inform my next steps and where my inquiry was headed next. These practices led me to "move in and out of data, looking at discrete parts to whole views in order to make changes to [my] classroom practices as needed" (Buckelew & Ewing, 2019, p. 107). Self-study is an extension of reflection on practice with goals that go beyond professional development and move to wider communication and publication.

It was while I reflected-on-action that I engaged in collaborative team planning and engaged in professional dialogue with teacher colleagues. One of the main benefits of hybrid learning was the collaborative nature of the English department at my high school. For the first time, we planned classes together so teaching across grade groups was consistent. It also served to alleviate some of the anxiety about hybrid planning away as we supported each other during this process. Reading for joy was a priority across the department and other classrooms were

implementing the same, or similar, pedagogical practices as I was. This allowed for rich discussions during lunch meetings and common prep time.

Data interpretation involves "patience, a willingness to make mistakes, and playfulness [which] can lead us to a deep seeing of the underlying patterns beneath surface appearances" (Bucking & Ewing, 2019, p. 106). In the second year of my study, I gave myself permission to take time, risk making mistakes, learn from those mistakes, and play with the data. Willingness to take risks and make mistakes with my teaching practice is difficult for me, but it was something I endeavored to do.

The goal of analysis in the self-study was to uncover emerging themes, patterns, insights, and understandings related to my inquiry into practice. By critically analyzing my inquiry into practice, as it connected to my teaching practice, I continued to keep in mind the larger questions framing my purpose for the study, questions around motivating and engaging students in reading for joy. In the analysis for the self-study, I asked myself questions related to my inquiry into my practice: What was I paying attention to, and why? What new questions did I have based on my reflections and observations? What did I do in response? What difference did these interventions make in reading engagement and motivation in my students? What impact did they be having on my students' reading identity?

When I examined my data, I used the following lenses as outlined by Buckelew and Ewing (2000) to guide me:

1. I identified and acknowledged my own expectations. I thought about what I expected to happen in response to particular pedagogical moves or strategies. What was my hypothesis? I noted surprises and attempted to embrace the unexpected and be okay with those moments that did not fit neatly into my hypothesis.

2. I hypothesized and theorized based on data and then dug deeper to confirm or nullify my theories. What assumptions did I make about my students and my teaching practices, and did I challenge those assumptions?
3. I categorized and looked for patterns. When analyzing my data, I looked for repeated words and phrases, not only in language, but also patterns in my practices, assumptions, and insights. I thought about how I could refine data categories in different ways.
4. I triangulated the data. As I planned on using several methods to collect and analyze the data (field observation notes, noticings and reflections after students reading conferences, surveys, reading inventories, etc.), I found different ways to think and make meaning related to my research questions across data sources.
5. I (tried) to remain flexible. Studying self in the context of teaching during a period of great uncertainty made this lens especially important. I appreciated the significant changes and their impact on my practice. I recognized the tensions in my own efforts to be flexible and to live with uncertainty, and that became a key theme in this study.

The data generated through the process of this self-study were prompted by my questions, finding from my literature review, and an examination of my practice through my experiences and reflections over the course of two years. The literature review deepened and focused my questions and exploration of my practice in relationship to topics emerging from my notes and reflections from my teaching journal over the course of my inquiry. Re-reading and re-engaging with the literature and my inquiry generated new thinking related to topics connect to *my role, artifacts, conversations, student agency, a-ha moments,* and so on. Exploring these topics helped me get started in writing longer reflections, where I tried to give myself permission to write whatever came to mind. Through the iterative process of writing and reflection, and the creation

of narratives and artifacts over time, I generated data in the process of this study that allowed me to analyze my practice, explore ideas and examples more deeply, make connections to the literature, and probe contradictions, issues, and tensions.

Entries in my journal reflect my efforts to systematically explain my role in motivating and engaging adolescent readers to read for joy, how my teaching practices built my students' agency as readers, what it took to build a community of engaged readers in my classroom, and what happened to students' identity and agency as readers when there was a collective and sustained effort to engage students meaningfully in reading. On September 11, 2019, for example, I wrote:

> *Give them books and they will read! This is not an adage I can use with my students…yet. I thought if I had strategies in place, good books on my shelf, and a can-do attitude, students would feed off my enthusiasm and want to read. It hasn't happened that way. [My perception of] My grade 9 students [is that they] seem emotional and apathetic. "I don't read", "I can't read", "I don't like to read" are all statements that have been repeated in my room. Moreover, even sustaining 10 minutes of independent reading is difficult for many of the students. So, where do I begin? I need to build resilience, stamina and build their confidence. That means building agency and helping them engage in learning, not just reading.*

This is an example of the self-reflective nature of my journal reflections, which include observations, speculations, ideas and thoughts about emerging themes, opinions, attitudes, biases, and connections to my own reading stories.

When it came time to analyze the data I had accumulated from my inquiry into practice, I was not sure if I should combine year one and year two of the data to arrive at my findings, or if

I should treat them as separate entities. The two years of this inquiry into practice were so dissimilar in terms of classroom structure, the nature of my teaching practice, and the development of my new understanding about reading for joy. What remained constant, however, was my purpose and primary research question: How can I motivate and engage my adolescent readers to read for joy? Therefore, I opted to code emerging topics and discover common themes across both years of data. The insights from my analysis in my self-study, along with the larger question around motivating my students to read for joy, became principles that guided my practice. Common principles between the two years will come together in the findings and implications section of Chapter Four.

The recurring topics from my analysis contributed to identifying the following principles, which I also identify as findings:

- Defining and re-defining what, or who is a reader
- Developing student agency and self-efficacy
- Providing choice, relevant, and volume of reading material for independent reading
- Student stamina during reading time
- Re-discovering lost love of reading
- Contradictions in personal teaching beliefs and teaching practice

These themes are intertwined and many of my findings could potentially fit in a couple of them at the same time. Although there was some overlapping of themes with my findings, I discuss each finding only once under the sub-heading of the most appropriate theme.

In this study I was not looking for final, definitive "answers" to my questions about creating contexts to motivate adolescent reading and engagement. Instead, I was engaged in a rigorous, systematic examination of literacy assumptions I was still holding onto, as well as the

contradictions in my beliefs about reading for joy and the actual teaching practices I was implementing in my classroom. The point of this examination was to generate new knowledge and to convey my increased understandings. I was engaged in deep, critical thinking as I considered how I could grapple with the new understandings that grew out of my inquiry. Based on the level of research already published, I am certainly not the only high school teacher posing questions about adolescent reading motivation and engagement. In fact, conversations with colleagues across all grade levels demonstrated that teachers worried about student engagement during pandemic learning. In this study, I explored myself as a reading teacher. I developed understandings of myself and of my practice in the context of my inquiry and day-to-day practice. Other teachers can connect their own ideas from my self-study to their context if it at all resonates with them. It is my hope that they can; one of the means to evaluate the reliability and validity of the findings in self-study is through the reader and their connections to their own contexts.

Chapter four is where I methodically analyze the three sources of data of notes and reflections, my thinking as a result of professional dialogues with colleagues, along with my continuing engagement with current research in adolescent reading motivation and engagement—resulting in emerging understandings regarding my teaching practice. This part of the self-study is the scholarly, organized analysis of my understandings of how I can motivate and engage my adolescent readers to read for joy. It begins with understanding what I thought I believed about engaging adolescents to read for joy before this self-study, and the changes that evolved out of the process of my self-study.

Chapter Four: Findings

I used to believe that teaching reading began with implementing what I perceived as "interventions" and focusing on reading assessment and instruction. I used to believe that many students did not like to read due to previous gaps in their reading instruction, a lack of reading fluency, and/or a deficiency in reading comprehension strategies. I thought they just did not know how to read well. Prior to this self-study of my inquiry into practice, the interventions I implemented were aimed at levelling readers and instructing them at the level they tested. I believed that with "the right" reading instruction, I could turn my students into voracious readers. My experience, however, is that reading programs and strategies cannot help students who will not read.

I still believe that reading can transform us in ways that touch on all aspects of life. Before undertaking this inquiry into practice, I relied on my perception of students' relationships with reading, without taking the time to understand, systematically study, or inquire into how they view their relationships with reading and their identities as readers. The goals of my initial two-year inquiry were to develop an understanding of how specific literacy decisions and designs could motivate and engage my students in reading and how I could use that information to inform my teaching practice and redefine what kind of reading teacher I would like to be. The goal of my self-study was to critically reflect on my practices as a teacher and what I have learned about my practices in relationship to making reading for joy a priority in my classroom.

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings that resulted from the questions, contradictions, ideas, and practices that emerged through my self-study. Specifically, I address the research questions presented at the start of this study:

- How can I motivate and engage adolescent readers to read for joy?

- How can my teaching practice develop my students' agency as readers?
- What does it take to build a community of engaged readers in my classroom?
- What happens to students' identity and agency as readers when there is a collective and sustained effort, by me, to engage students meaningfully in reading?
- How has my teaching practice changed over the past two years as I have thought critically about adolescent reading motivation and engagement?

The ideas presented in this chapter highlight the topics generated through my analysis and their relationship to the research questions. New understandings and insights regarding my primary research question—How can I motivate and engage my adolescent readers to read for joy? —are woven into discussion. Through this research, I have identified several practices, each of which I will explore in further detail: providing choice, relevance, and volume of reading material for independent reading; defining and re-defining what, or who is a reader; developing student agency and self-efficacy; student stamina and grit in reading time; re-discovering a lost love of reading; and exploring contradictions in personal teaching beliefs and teaching practice.

Providing Choice, Relevance, and Volume of Reading Material for Independent Reading

What does it take to build a community of engaged readers in my classroom? My instructional focus at the start of every semester—September and February—over the past two years remained the same: to explore with the students their reading identities and begin to build a reading community in my classroom. Research has demonstrated that at the heart of positive reading agency are positive emotions and experiences associated with reading. When students feel they have a certain amount of control over their reading, when the activity and/or results are meaningful and relevant to their lives, and when the experience encourages relationships with others, internal motivations in reading are created and sustained (Bandura, 1997).

I noted in chapter three that to set the tone for daily choice reading, we jumped into reading on the first day of classes. I noted that the students seemed to react positively to "Speed Book Dating" (adapted from Gallagher & Kittle, 2018). As students were vocal in requesting particular books, I realized that I needed to get student input regarding purchasing new books to order for our library. To build positive student agency and provide them with an expectation for achievement, it was important for the students to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility to build our classroom library and help select a variety of texts – books that they wanted to read and enjoy reading. The simple strategy of adding a "Books to Buy" chart (Figure 4) in the classroom became an opportunity for those students who were disengaged in reading in school, but had rich literacy lives outside of school, to feel that their interests translated to school literacy practices. By providing the opportunity for the students to have voice in which books were purchased for our classroom library, it tapped into their interests out-of-school, thereby increasing their reading motivation and engagement. As the books specific students ordered began to arrive in the classroom, they were quick to snap up that title and begin reading. It also had a trickle effect of their friends and peers who wanted to read those books after their friends were done. I had students ask me to set specific books aside for them and hold them when they came back. If a specific title proved especially popular, I made sure to order additional multiple copies, so they were available much faster. I did not want these students to lose the interest they expressed and tried to get the book in their hands quickly.

The students were enthusiastic and outspoken when helping to purchase books for the classroom, as they immediately began to write down the titles or genres of books they wanted. By far graphic novels, Manga, and sports books—both fiction and nonfiction—were initially the most requested books. This preference for book genres highlighted an important understanding

in my teaching practice, an ah-ha moment that I needed to address. As an ELA teacher, I have a love of literature. A love of novels with rich story elements and figurative language. A love of novels with beautiful, haunting, terrifying messages about the human experience. I had filled my library with hundreds of novels. There were a wide variety of genres available, such as fantasy, dystopia, realistic fiction, horror, and adventure, however, there was not much in terms of non-fiction, graphic novels, Manga, comics, reference books, and memoir/biography. Non-fiction and graphic novels are not genres I typically read, so I did not give much attention to, or spend money on purchasing books of this type. I was too absorbed in the providing books I loved and wanted to share with my students. For many of my students, however, these were not the books they wanted to spend their time reading. So, I made note of titles they specifically asked for, I re-read the reading inventory *(*Appendix A*)* and reading inventory and interest survey (Appendix H*)* responses to discover titles and genres of books, and spent time researching additional titles, series, and topics to purchase. It was remarkable to note how many of those pre-supposed non-readers started reading once I had additional genres represented in our classroom library. As researchers note, it is crucial for all children to view themselves, and their interests, in the books they read. These students found books they could use as "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors" (Bishop, 2015).

The extraordinary interest in so many new topics and genres of books emphasized another important understanding in my teaching practice. I needed to increase the number of middle years and young adult books I read myself. Students asked me for recommendations of specific titles or wanted “books like…”. I needed to make sure I knew these new types of books well enough to be able to recommend titles to the students. I read copious numbers of new books that were put into our classroom library. Sometimes I brought home new titles, before they were

put out, and at other times, I asked the students to recommend books they felt I should read. This practice transformed my reading identity as I was introduced to new books, outside of my previous comfort and interest level, and enjoyed many of them. I developed a new appreciation of memoir, biography, and reference books. Although I still do not enjoy reading graphic novels, I read them so I can recommend titles to those students that do like them.

I found that providing time to read in English was essential for developing student agency and offering choice and relevance of reading material. Although not all students bought into the reading time, most of the students did. At the start of the school year, several students could not find books to read. For those students, I gathered five or six books of varying genres and difficulty levels for them to choose from every time they entered my room. Most were able to pick a book from the ones I provided but had a few students who still chose to sit and not read during this time. The next day, I gathered five or six different books again in hopes of engaging them. I had ah-ha moments where I would touch on a book of interest and the student would read during that class. Success was not consistent, but it was a start. I did not give up on those students and continued to introduce books to them and encourage them to read. This was a strategy that I maintained for both years of my inquiry, from September until June. I should note, however, that when schools were closed in March 2020, it was impossible for me to know if students were reading at home. Moreover, with the chaos and steep learning curve of transitioning to remote learning, I put my inquiry on hold for the remainder of the school year. I regret doing this in hindsight, as motivating and engaging my students in anything related to school became my priority. Regardless, the simple practice of providing time to read proved to be a success.

I knew at the start of this inquiry, that while I was aiming for 100% student buy-in of the strategies that I implement, I would most likely not achieve it. In year one of my study, when I provided time for students to read for choice, relevance, and joy in my classroom, they reacted in a positive way. They requested books and read every day in class. Several students reported during reading conferences (Appendix D) and in their reading reflections and goal setting (Appendices E and F) responses that they continued reading at home and were finding time to build reading into their everyday schedule.

Independent reading was not as seamless in year two, with hybrid learning. The students read every day they were in my classroom, but that was only two days out of a six-day cycle. I asked them to read at home everyday, but I could not tell if they were reading. Falling back on what was familiar, I implemented daily reading responses to try and track their reading, and to encourage their completion made them part of the student's summative mark. To say I lost control of my inquiry at this was a point my inquiry would be incorrect. It was more like I started taking back control, micro-managing the students, and promoting extrinsic motivation to read. I was also grappling with questions and concerns related to assessment in high school. I noted in my teaching journal on November 9, 2020:

> *It's been a long, hard couple of weeks, for both myself and my students. The code "red" is taking its toll in the form of anxiety, lack of motivation, listlessness, overeating, and isolation—for me and the students. Term 1 has just ended, and I had the students reflect on their social/emotional well-being, as well as on their reading at home. Many of the students are not reading at home, reporting that it's either too loud at home, with too much going on, or they're too tired to read once they get home and complete their home learning.*

This proved to be a pivotal moment in my inquiry as I questioned how to balance this love of reading I was trying to inspire in my students, with the need for summative assessment marks in high school and an understanding of their home reading habits. On November 10, 2020, my reflection into assessment continued and revealed a living contradiction:

> *How do I balance encouraging a love of reading with the need for summative assessment marks in high school? I'm losing focus here—reports are coming up, and I'm moving away from my main inquiry question. I'm aware I'm doing this, but I don't know what else to do. We're spending half the class reading and talking about reading. Can I justify that without a mark? How do I know if the kids are reading at home unless I have them write about it? My grade 11 students are already commenting that daily written responses are "boring", "useless", and "repetitive". They say they don't always have something to write about, and this is making the reading boring. The responses are not organic! If I had to do this every time I read for 15 minutes, I wouldn't want to read anymore either.*

In addition to the students reporting during conferencing and class discussions that the reading responses were boring and useless, the quality of many of the responses was such that they did not really need to have read the book to write what they handed in. I kept asking myself what the purpose of the reading responses was, questioned their validity, but did not abandon them. My teaching partner and I just kept finding different ways to have the students do the same thing: provide written reports of their reading.

In the first semester of year one, when the students were verbalizing their distaste for having to complete a reading response every time they read, I had class meetings and brought my students into the conversation I was having with myself. I presented the questions I had in mind

about "assessment" and reading. We agreed together on the following: we looked at the next date of report cards, which was mid-January. The students would be responsible for completing five reading responses by this time. It was then early November, so they had two months to decide what parts of their reading they wanted to write about. We developed the criteria I would use to assess these responses as a class.

This situation was still not ideal. Many of the students still resorted to summary or did not complete the number of responses required. Despite knowing the reading responses were not working, I kept at it for most of the year. I changed the format and criteria, but I did not know what else to do. A retrospective analysis of my notes and reflections revealed that what I should have done was to give myself permission to let this summative assessment go during hybrid learning. Adding this layer of accountability impacted the relationship the students had with their book. Moreover, it was impossible to tell if the students were actually reading at home. Reading logs and reading responses did not provide that information. Many reading logs were either incomplete because the students 'forgot' to enter their reading, or they were made up, so what exactly was I assessing?

Moving forward, my analysis suggests that I must change the way I think about assessment. If reading for the pure joy of it is a teaching priority, then there cannot be "tasks" assigned to it, other than an opportunity to talk about it, if they want to. These tasks only served to stop reading in its tracks, make reading a chore, or make reading extrinsically motivated, rather than intrinsic. To foster a love of reading within my students, it is imperative that they are provided with time and choice of books to read. The questions I struggled with during this study relating to assessment led to questions in contradictions about my teaching—why did I not just abandon the reading response all together? I altered them numerous times during the two years I

conducted this study into practice. I had conversations with students, I reduced the number of responses expected, I changed the style and prompts related to responding, and I tried to substitute them with a reading log. Even though they still proved ineffective, I kept at it.

Regardless of evidence from professional observation and readings from current theoretical literature, I persisted with the reading response. Why did I persist? In hindsight, I understand that I implemented the reading response and reading log for three reasons: accountability; to make sure the students were reading, to track the volume of reading they were doing, and for grades. Daily reading responses to generate summative marks and 'prove' the students were reading proved ineffective. Just because they signed their names to the paper that did not mean they were really reading. More importantly to my study, were they enjoying reading? Did completing the responses and logs mean that they were growing in their identity and relationship with reading? The reading responses and logs were not authentic. As a teaching practice, what did the responses and logs show about student learning? These were often grades of completion, and therefore did not adequately assess student learning. The students found writing daily responses useless, repetitive, and forced, which made reading boring for them. What these reflections about assessment tell me is that if my goal is to ensure students are reading for joy, I cannot use reading responses to assess their interest in reading and provide summative marks for report cards. Rather than use the reading response, I believe that individual reading conferences/ conversations (Appendix D) can take the place of written responses. Fortunately, the new English Language Arts Curriculum Framework (Province of Manitoba, 2019) supports this shift. This approach will be explored further in the implications section in chapter five.

What happens to students' identity and agency as readers when there is a collective and sustained effort, by me, to engage students meaningfully in reading? The major findings regarding providing choice, relevance, and ample reading involved practices to explore and develop reading identities. Successful practices to explore reading identities and agency included speed book dating, introducing large numbers of books to students, and providing for student voice and input when purchasing classroom reading material. To assist with these practices, it was important for me to increase the volume of young adult literature I read so I could recommend and introduce specific titles and authors. To develop reading identity, introducing time to read in class was imperative. In high school this required sacrificing some direct teaching time, however, it was a necessary a time commitment to foster a love of reading with adolescent students. Time to read proved difficult, but not impossible, during hybrid learning in year two. The students obviously had less class time to read, however, and it was impossible for me to know how much the students were reading at home. Dedicating a significant amount of class time for time to read introduced assessment questions and contradictions that I am still grappling with, however, my teaching practice in motivating and engaging the students to read for joy is still developing.

Defining and Re-defining What or Who is a Reader

When I started my inquiry into teaching practice, I did not imagine that I would have to define what, or who, a reader is with students at the high school level. It was remarkable, and a little troubling, to note that even several of my Grade 11 students did not consider themselves readers, even though they were reading, at school and at home. Somewhere along the way in their education experience at school, some students got the idea that a "reader" is only someone who reads novels. It was surprising at this stage in their education that students did not know

how to define what, or who a reader is. As teachers, we are often unaware how powerful our words can be to our students and how those words carry and stay with our students for years and help form their reading agency.

Research into reading agency has revealed that there is a connection between emotion and experience (Williams, 2018). This connection also creates a connection between emotions and perceptions of agency. How we feel about reading is vital to how we respond to reading a text. Whether it is confidence, anxiety, boredom, excitement, or dismay, we feel things before we think through them rationally. How we feel also becomes crucial to our assessment of whether we feel able or willing to engage in any activity. Students who have learned to feel bored, confused, worried, self-conscious, overwhelmed, or insecure about reading will continue to approach reading with the negative and disappointing emotional experiences they bring with them. Upon examination of student responses to the reading inventory (Appendices A and H) and the writing prompt, "Who am I as a reader?", it appears as though, in early grades, some students received a message that reading comics, sports magazines, and graphic novels did not count as "reading"—they perceived "real" reading as reading novels. Therefore, because they did not like reading novels, that must mean that they were not readers. Along similar lines, some students revealed that they remembered specific comments from their elementary teachers that they should be reading different books than those that currently interested them. These students were told that they were too old to read the books they enjoyed reading, that they should be reading books with human protagonists, that some books were too hard for them to read, and so on. These students displayed some anxiety and were worried that they would either not be allowed to read certain types of books in my classroom, or that I would judge their reading

choices negatively. Based on messages they received at an earlier age, they had become secretive and a little ashamed of their reading choices. To these students I said:

> *I'm so happy you've been reintroduced to a series you loved when you were younger. I'm kind of sad that a teacher has made you feel self-conscious about what you're reading. My philosophy with personal reading is "you do you!". Whatever book you find joy in, touches your heart and emotions, and makes you love reading is the right book. Please don't let others deter you from your reading path. Different kinds of books will come and go as you keep reading. It doesn't matter if the characters are human, alien, animal, or robot. One of my favourite all time books is "A Dog's Purpose", written from the perspective of a dog. My message to you is love reading, no matter what genre and what kind of book.*

Researchers state, and my self-study results corroborated, that how a person self-identifies as a reader can be changed at any point. Williams (2019) reported that when readers have positive experiences with reading and gain a belief that they are capable of being successful, their agency can change. How can my teaching practice develop my students' agency as readers? To help my students realize this in their own reading lives, I introduced several teaching practices to encourage them to examine, and perhaps rethink, who and what readers were. I understood that it was incredibly important for me to create opportunities for positive and exciting reading practices. When readers have positive experiences with reading and gain a belief that they are capable of being successful, their agency can change.

Providing students with the open-ended journal response question, "Who am I as a reader?" (Gallagher & Kittle, 2018) provided the basis for me to understand what my students' beliefs were about reading and their reading identity. As a self-identified reader, I did not have

any difficulty understanding what this question meant, and how I would answer it. I did not realize that for some students, this was a huge question that they did not know how to answer. In the time I provided the students to respond to this question, I observed that many students were having difficulty expressing their thoughts. To provide them with some clarity and assist their written response, I broke the question down into smaller sub-questions for them to respond to, providing prompts such as:

- Do you enjoy reading? Why or why not?
- What do you find difficult/easy about reading?
- What is the title of the last book you read? When did you read it? What made you choose this book?

There were still students who did not write anything. Rather than fight them on it in class, I made note of their names and made it a point to pursue these questions orally with them during their conference time. Providing some of these students with an opportunity to talk about their reading rather than write about it was easier and I found greater success. Often having to write things down is a deterrent for some students.

What I learned about students and their understanding of who a reader is that I cannot begin the school year by making assumptions about their reading identity. By examining early teaching practices, such as the prompt *Who am I as a reader?*, the student's responses from reading inventories, and talking to them about their reading identities, I discovered that many of my students felt confused, self-conscious, and insecure about their reading choices. Moreover, several expressed surprise when I said it was okay to abandon a book; that their reading choice can change. Not addressing these issues would have perpetuated these negative feelings about reading. The students needed to understand that reading identities can change at any time,

therefore, my teaching practice had to accommodate opportunities for positive and exciting reading experiences. By not providing these opportunities, I risked affecting their reading agency. Based on this information, I had whole-class discussions about defining who and what a reader is. The information gained from this class discussion was used to create a white board display, *"To be a reader, you do not have to…"* (Figure 3) to clarify misunderstandings of reading identities. This list was organic and something we have added to in the past two years.

Developing Student Agency and Self-Efficacy

The cost to student agency has been great during the pandemic, especially for vulnerable students. Many of my students experienced economic hardships and lack of reliable access to the Internet. Others had difficulty in carving out a figurative and literal learning space in households stretched thin by childcare, unemployment, sickness, and in some cases, substance abuse. It is safe to say that the confidence of many learners has been shaken by the experiences they have had during the past two years.

How can my teaching practice develop my students' agency as readers? As noted earlier in my descriptions of my practice, I believed that time to read in English was essential for developing student agency and encouraging a love of reading. I included additional instructional practices to help non-readers discover books they might like to read. I encouraged avid readers to recommend and talk up books to their peers, and I began to conduct daily book talks, which continued to introduce students to the wide variety of texts accessible in my classroom. I was hopeful that these practices would lead to more students volunteering short book talks as well. On October 7, 2020, I noted in my teaching journal:

> *While introducing the memoir today, I used "Born a Crime", pg. 8 & 9 as an example. They [students] were really interested in the excerpt reading, and it turned into an*

> *impromptu book talk. Two of the students had read the book the year before and talk in-depth about the author and story. This was the first time one of the students took over a book talk and lead the conversation.*

By introducing a book that some students had read, it engaged them in the conversation, and they felt comfortable and confident to take over the book talk. Moving forward, it's important to note that in addition to introducing the students to new books they have not read, I need to bring popular teen literature into our book shares. One of my personality traits that plays centerfield in my teaching practice is my tendency to micro-manage. I must combat this urge to be the one to talk all the time and take a backseat to the students who have something to say. As a strategy, I can take note of the books that students are reading and then choose to share some of those texts or ask the student to share their book.

Sharing my reading provided the students with opportunities to build their agency and self-efficacy. In response to putting my reading on display through a simple exhibit on my whiteboard (Figure 2), "What I just finished reading", "What I'm reading now", "What I want to read next" (Gallagher & Kittle, 2018), the students responded positively. The day after I set my books up, a couple of students signed out my "just finished reading" and my "reading next" books. It was exciting that sharing and highlighting books worked with those students. Within a couple of days, I had a difficult time keeping books in my "reading next" section as students kept signing those books out. I made a point to ask them for book recommendations for my next read if they were taking one book I had chosen.

Another pedagogical move intended to explore the students' reading identity and build a reading community in my classroom was to include oral reading with a read aloud. My goal with this strategy was to introduce a prolific author to the students, and prompt them to read the text

on their own, and/or read other novels like the one we read. I chose the novel, *Long Way Down*, by Jason Reynolds (2017) because it was at the top of the teen book charts, and because I had access to the audio book on Audible. The book is narrated by the author, himself, so I thought it would provide the students with some authenticity. To introduce the book, I shared a brief biography of the author and shared his social media profiles with the students. Using this particular book was successful and had a positive outcome. After completing the novel, several students borrowed copies to re-read on their own, and several students signed out other books by Jason Reynolds to read. Unfortunately, this proved to be the only read-aloud in my two-year inquiry. After we completed this book, the semester was winding down with final writing pieces, final exams, and report cards. It proved too difficult to do the read-aloud during hybrid learning as the students we not in my room frequently enough, so there would be too many days in between readings. There were ways, however, to encourage students to listen to oral readings of their books on their own. While the students were engaged in hybrid learning, the school division ensured the students had access to books at home through SORA, a new reading app that allowed the students to access digital and audio books through their laptop, tablet, or cell phone. Regardless of access at home, there was power in reading the book together, in the classroom. The students and I had shared positive literacy experiences and it developed our reading community through class and student discussion. What I learned from the success in implementing oral reading in year one, is that this is a strategy I would like to start again in the upcoming school year.

To build agency and self-efficacy, I implemented the practice of having the students create and maintain a reading journal that was not for grading but was to be used for their own reading reflections as we progressed through the semester. This strategy was useful for some

students, but not for most. For students who already gravitate towards artistic expression—the ones who draw, write poetry, write song lyrics, sketch, and so on—the reading journals created a positive space for them to express themselves without fear of anyone reading their work. I invited the students to share their pieces with me and I only read the entries they flagged for me to read. For many students though, once they knew I was not going to "mark" anything in the journal, they did not use it. Most of the students did not utilize the reading journal, either because it emphasized the importance students place on extrinsic motivations for grades in high school, or because they did not feel the need to journal while they read. Based on what we observed from our students, I am not convinced that this is a practice I will continue to implement.

End-of-term reading reflections proved to be successful in building student agency and self-efficacy. The students employed the reading reflection to assess their reading progress and set reading goals for the remainder of the semester. Research has shown (Fisher, et al., 2021) that with positive self-efficacy, the students are more likely to work harder and persist at any given task. Cognitive evaluation theory (CET) further supports this idea. Ryan and Deci (2000) assert that CET specifies that feelings of competence enhance intrinsic motivation when it is accompanied by a sense of autonomy. Moreover, choice, acknowledgement of feelings, and opportunities for self-direction were found to increase extrinsic motivation because they allow a greater feeling of independence and ownership. Providing them with self-assessments provided a certain amount of control in our reading community. It was empowering for the students to determine part of their reading mark in the first term. Moreover, creating reasonable, attainable reading goals made them accountable for the next term. The students were able to set their own pace. My responsibility was to provide them with mid-term opportunities to reassess their goals and adjust them accordingly. To build students' expectancy for success and achievement,

classroom practices should provide students with a couple of key things (Linnebrink et al. 2002)—opportunities for success to build confidence and opportunities for encouraging feedback. The reading reflections yielded a few surprising results. First, most of the students identified as "developing". Some were proud that they had finished a book because they do not like reading, but they considered themselves developing because they felt they needed to start reading other genres. These self-assessments provided a cue for me to re-address the definition of who and what a reader is. Moreover, the goals the students set demonstrated that this teaching practice served to strengthen the students' reading identities, their agency and self-efficacy, and our reading community. They were honest and reflective about whether they felt that they were building their reading stamina, and if they needed and wanted to read more for joy and entertainment. In terms of assessment, providing the students with the positive and repeated opportunities to self-assess their reading and set goals is embedded in the English Language Arts curriculum framework (Province of Manitoba, 2019). Assessment as learning provides the students to develop an awareness of how they learn and use that awareness to adjust their learning. They increase their reading agency by take an increased responsibility for their reading. It also served to help solidify our reading community by making them equal partners in the flow and direction of their ELA programming.

One of the biggest aha moments in my inquiry came when I began in the process of examining contradictions in my practice related to reading (see Appendix D). This was the first time I conducted conferences with my students, and it was a turning point for me. I learned more about their reading habits, reading history, interests outside of school, family dynamics, and their thoughts about what they were reading in a 5-minute conversation than I have after weeks of formal assessment. The conferences encouraged reading in some students as they knew they

were accountable to talk about their book and make goals. These one-on-one conversations provided an opportunity for students who did not respond, in writing, to reading talk about their reading, and I was also able to discover "fake" readers and those students not reading right away. Moving forward, I think this is the answer to my assessment problem. I utilized on-going reading responses and reading logs during my two-year study, even though I knew they were not working. At the time, I did not know what other practice and assessment I could implement to know that the students were reading at home, and to "justify" the amount of time I was spending on independent reading during class time. Re-examining the stages of inquiry set forth by Buckelew and Ewing (2019), I reflected upon stage one, which is identifying and acknowledging my own expectations. I thought about what I expected to happen by implementing this practice. In hindsight, I expected the reading responses would help the students read and reflect on a deeper level, they would provide me with summative marks I could use for report cards, and although I am loath to admit it, I expected the responses to instil pressure in the students to read at school and at home, knowing they had to complete these as an assignment. This observation introduced a serious contradiction of action and thought. My desire is to implement practices that develop joyful reading. If my practice can develop joyful reading, the students are more likely to become life-long readers. Upon further reflection of the inquiry process, my intentions and teaching practice, and the data, however, I understand now that written responses do not work to inspire joy in reading. Implementing spontaneous, organic conferences and conversations, however, can provide the same information as the reading responses.

Conducting conferences during hybrid learning was not possible. I had planned to conduct informal conversations regularly with students but abandoned this plan. Going into September 2020, I was not aware how much administrative work I would have. The 20-minutes

of conference time I had with students in year one, became time to attend to student remote learning from home. As I was teaching different groups of students everyday, I did not have an opportunity to schedule online meeting time to talk to the students about their reading. In retrospect, I understand now that there were other ways I could have had students "talk" about their readings by using an online platform for them to record their thoughts and submit them. I must admit, however, that for much of the year, I was in teacher survival mode; pandemic learning had taken its toll on my mental health, motivation, and engagement, and I was tired. Sticking to the tried-and-true was much easier during this time. A major finding in this study, however, is that the conferencing time was key to me better understanding my students as readers and to being able to guide and support them in practices and choices that might grow their love for reading. Some of the accountability was gone and I did not learn as much about students' reading identities.

At the beginning of the year, while I was getting to know students' reading identities, I provided the grades 9 and 11 students the same article, "10 Benefits of Reading: Why You Should Read Every Day" (Appendix G*).* After reading the article, the students were asked to reflect upon, then write about one of the following prompts:

- Reflect on your reading habits. Are you reading enough? Explain.
- Which of these reading benefits do you think is the most important? Explain.
- Pick a passage from the article and respond to it.

Based on students' responses I understood that many of them identified as engaged readers in lower grades, but now, in high school, they read only textbooks and writing assignments that require editing and revising. Interestingly, some students reported that when they read, their brains were calmer, they functioned better, and their vocabulary improved. Most said they just

didn't have the time to read, that they're on their phones or playing video games. Their responses paralleled what I reported reading in my review of the research literature. Many scholars have established that high school students reported to be "too busy" to read for pleasure. Adolescent students determine how to spend their time. Finding time for personal reading was not a priority for non-readers. They read for purpose rather than pleasure and found more pleasure in socializing and gaming on their digital devices.

It was interesting to note that many of the responses I read emphasized the important roles parents and guardians play in reading. Several of my students stated that their parents or guardians did not encourage reading at home. Remarkably, the students believed that parents/guardians should limit their time on the internet. They expressed doubt that anyone could increase reading for joy, so long as reading competes with social media and other forms of online entertainment. Moreover, they believed that parents/guardians should talk to them about why they should read and buy books for them. Some students started reading again because of a family visit to a bookstore. With the new books, they made a point of building in time to read. These comments compare to the research published by Scholastics (2019) which shows that reading interest shows a decline between the ages of eight and nine.

What happens to students' identity and agency as readers when there is a collective and sustained effort, by me, to engage students meaningfully in reading? What I learned about building student agency and self-efficacy is that I must implement teaching practices that allow the students to have positive reading experiences. There were several practices that I found were successful with building positive student agency and self-efficacy. The first of these practices provided students the opportunity for choice of reading material, offered the students a voice of what reading materials were purchased for classroom use, and provided reading material that was

relevant. Perhaps the most important practice was simply carving out a significant amount of time to read during class. To encourage students to choose books they would enjoy reading, book shares, sharing my own reading choices, and teacher oral read aloud worked for most students. To build agency, practices that built students' confidence and provided ample feedback were essential. Providing students with several opportunities to reflect on their reading identities and journeys, as well as to set goals for their reading also proved successful for most students. Finally, regular, organic conferences provided time for both the students and me to pause, reflect, and talk through reading issues and confusions, as well as build positive, trusting relationships to build a reading community.

Student Stamina in Reading Time

For many of my students, even 10 minutes of sustained reading proved to be a challenge. At the start of the year, I observed some students who read for 30-60 seconds, then stopped to look around for a couple of minutes. For these students, I found success re-introducing them to once-loved books they read in elementary—the *Bone* series (Jeff Smith, 1991-2004), *Amulet* series (Kazu Kibuishi, 2008-2018), *Holes (*Louis Sachar, 1998*)*, and so on. This practice connected well with the emotional and memory components of reading, which is so important in building agency. These books presented an opportunity to building positive emotions in reading, which is essential to build agency as a reader. I also introduced these students to current graphic novel series, such as *The Walking Dead* (Kirkman, 2003-2021). Many students were interested in this series as it coincided with the television version of the same series. They had the background knowledge and relevance to life that is so important in finding success with a new book. I also found success introducing some of these students to current books about sports, memoirs of athletes, both fiction and nonfiction, and popular reference books such as *The Guinness Book of*

World Records. At the start of our independent reading time, the multiple copies I had of the picture book version of Guinness World Records proved valuable to hook some developing readers. They found comfort in the large graphics and low level of print in the books, as well as finding interest in the zany and unbelievable. Many of these students relied on this book for a couple of weeks, and then eventually moved on to other books. Several of these students moved onto more complicated graphic novels, sports reference books, and chapter books. Providing books that had an easy entry point proved to be great "gateway" reads for some of the students.

In terms of building stamina and grit in reading, hybrid learning was difficult on the students. The energy level of the students was low within most of the groups I had. As noted in my journal on September 18, 2020:

> *Out of about a dozen groups of students, I have only a few who express some energy—they respond to questions, they take their masks off at their desk so I can see the expressions on their faces, they talk to each other, laugh at my jokes (even when they're not funny), and they are talking about their books and their reading notebooks. Several students have already shown me their completed title pages. The mood and energy of the students affects my energy as well. I feel myself either getting lower, or more energetic, depending on the students. Those with low energy have their masks on and hood up. They seem isolated; they don't talk to each other, and it's difficult to get them to respond to questions and prompts. It's hard to connect with them.*

In relation to the theme of grit and stamina, initially, it was the groups with lower energy that had the most difficult time developing the mental endurance to read for 15-20 minutes at a time. It appeared at the start of the school year that their reading stamina mirrored their motivation and engagement in school. Many of these students were disengaged with school and had difficulty

focusing on lessons and reading. During independent reading time, some of these students went through the motions of choosing and opening a book, however, there were frequent breaks on cell phones, looking out the window, and so on. Fortunately, the reading stamina for many of these students did improve over the course of the semester or year. The students were able to assess and record their achievements through multiple reading self-assessments, tracking hourly reading rates—the number of pages read in an hour—and goal-setting, and many saw progress in these areas. I tried to use reading at the start of class as a form of mental wellness for both the students and me. Before the students arrived, I diffused calming essential oils, so the room would feel warm and inviting. During reading, I displayed nature videos on the Smartboard, with either soft, calming, ambient music, or nature sounds in the background. The students seemed to respond positively to beginning the class in this manner. Notations in my field notes mention that most students started reading as soon as they sat down before class even began. Moreover, I was able to gradually increase the amount of time the grade nine students were reading, from ten minutes to twenty minutes by December.

What does it take to build a community of engaged readers in my classroom? My key finding regarding building student grit and stamina with reading is that some readers need time, patience, and additional teacher support to develop reading endurance. The most obvious practice to build reading endurance was to provide time to read. In addition, teaching practices that included gathering information about incoming student reading identities, such as reading inventories and surveys, mental health check-ins, and teacher-student conferences worked well for most students. For me to effectively provide support to those low-stamina students to choose gateway books required an understanding of their out-of-school interests, their past experiences with reading, as well as their most current reading experiences, identities, and agency. Moreover,

it required that I greatly increase the amount of reading I was doing with young adult literature so I could effectively recommend books to read. Providing voice to students when purchasing reading material for the classroom was also successful. By building reading relationships with the students, purchasing books they were interested in reading, and re-introducing them to books they loved in elementary and junior high, I was able to build their agency, which in turn increased their reading stamina. All of these practices served to build positive reading experiences to encourage the students to engage in reading.

Re-Discovering Lost Love of Reading

At the start of this inquiry into practice, I came to understand that students were on a spectrum of reading joy. Some of the students who entered my classroom already identified as readers. They were excited to read and loved talking about the books they were reading. In year two, these students would often email or message me on Google Classroom to share their reading and/or ask me to set aside books for them for their next class. Some students identified as non-readers for a multitude of reasons. Some were readers prior to the pandemic but felt their motivation and engagement in reading declined during the school shutdown. Some non-readers identified as readers when they were kids, but from late elementary grades stopped enjoying reading. These students lost their love of reading along the way. Interpretive memos I recorded in my teaching journal noted that these students had the heart of a readers deep inside. It is a spark they want to reignite because they expressed a desire to wanting to love reading again. They used to read, and they do not know why they stopped, but they want, no WISH, to love reading again. Some students expressed a desire to find joy and passion in books they read for school, so it can feel less like work, and more like *reading*.

Some of the students expressed that they read at school, but not at home. Students indicated they had no time to read, were not interested in reading, or didn't know what to read. They also expressed pride that they started a book, stuck with it, and finished it. For some, it had been three, or more years, since they read a book. They were struggling to make reading a priority and finding the motivation to read at home. It was these seeds, these comments that kept me motivated during my inquiry to keep trying different ways to reach the students. Students need to see themselves as readers to increase their engagement with reading, and their motivation to read. Once I understood one of the initial findings of this study, that the students were on a spectrum of reading joy, I understood that students were entering into the teaching practices I implemented at different stages and required varying levels of support.

What happens to students' identity and agency as readers when there is a collective and sustained effort, by me, to engage students meaningfully in reading? In the self-study of my inquiry into practice, one of the main principles I uncovered was re-discovering a lost love of reading. Through my inquiry into practice, I found that that most students in my class, regardless of current engagement in reading, once loved to read. They identified that there were books they got lost in, that they could not put down. They articulated the feelings I had while reflecting on my own love of reading. Many wished they could re-discover that lost love; they saw value in reading for joy and loved the feeling it gave them. They also reiterated what current literacy researchers reported—that school killed their love of reading (Gallagher, 2009). Once there were inane tasks that went with reading, they lost interest. Practices to counteract these negative experiences and feelings included those that focused on building agency and self-efficacy. To love reading again, the students needed to see themselves as readers. This took a lot more time than I initially thought it would. I believed that if I provided the students with interesting books

and time to read, they would re-connect with reading for joy. While most ultimately did this, practices were ongoing all year. For some students, it was a year-long endeavor to promote reading and introduce books to pique their interest.

Contradictions in Personal Teaching Beliefs and Teaching Practice

As reported in my literature review, as educators within the school system, we have failed to engage and intrinsically motivate many students to read, by making reading a painful academic exercise. I have required my students to attach "jobs" to reading, I would never do myself. I have been a factor in "readicide" (Gallagher, 2009). Schools are highly traditional, institutionalized organizations, and teachers have been caught up in this process. We are typically creatures of habit, falling back on practices that are comfortable and familiar. As a teacher with micro-managing tendencies, I have been guilty of developing an ELA program that is too reliant on teacher-talk and direction. Hybrid learning seemed to exacerbate the teacher-dominated classroom. Seeing my students only once every third day, I felt that there was so much information I had to cram into them, that I spent an abundant amount of class time doing all the talking. There were classes where the students did not talk at all. This seemed to suit the lethargy and lack of motivation that set in as the year progressed. The less the students wanted to talk, the more I filled in the silence. The reality was that my hybrid-learning classroom became filled with 'teacher-talk' and very little student talk about learning. I filled in the gaps in an effort to protect my students' emotional health. My students also did very little talking with their peers, both in the classroom and during remote learning.

How has my teaching practice changed over the past two years as I have thought critically about adolescent reading motivation and engagement? My teaching practice has changed primarily due to noticing and understanding the contradictions and inconsistencies in

my core beliefs about teaching and the practices and strategies I was putting in place in the classroom. The biggest contradiction in teaching practice that I faced everyday was combatting both my nature and the teaching habits I have developed over the years. It was a constant dialogue to remind myself to trust my students and release some of the control I maintained in my classroom. My core teaching belief is to develop learners that can think critically, problem solve, use innovation and creativity, and, most importantly, realize all that reading can be. My core belief, and my practice were often at odds. These tendencies I had to assume control were contradictory to my goals of developing agency and self-efficacy in my students. Research in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) affirms that excessive control and lack of connectedness impedes a student's natural propensity for intrinsic motivation. This contradiction in practice is still a personal work-in-progress. I am still developing teaching practices I can use to release control and encourage the students to take an active role in their reading agency.

I noticed that my reflections often seemed to mirror where the students were in terms of motivation and engagement. For example, on September 25, 2020, I reflected on my motivation and time management issues completing my university work and how I was feeling about hybrid teaching:

> *The workload is fast becoming over-whelming. It's exhausting me and affecting my own motivation to work at home in the evening and on the weekend. There's not enough time in the day to do marking, prepping, and planning, let alone work on my thesis. My colleagues and I meet at lunch time for planning, and I do marking and prepping at home. During my actual prep time—which was cut by one hour/cycle, so I could teach a Middle Years Enrichment class—I am on Google Classroom, posting assignments, prepping things to go online, and dealing with submitted assignments and questions from*

students working at home. How am I going to juggle working two full-time jobs: teaching in-class and online simultaneously?

Another contradiction in teaching practice I experienced was how time consuming my role in engaging and motivating students to read for joy would be. Although my inquiry was an examination of my teaching practice, my role became much bigger than I first thought it would be. I think, in part, this dilemma occurred because I had to spend a lot of time developing positive reading identities in the students; learning how to build and develop their reading confidence. I also underestimated the importance of building close relationships with the students. Research related to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) revealed that students who did not feel they had a relationship with their teacher had lower intrinsic motivation. This finding implies that a secure relationship is important for self-motivation to be evident. I entered this inquiry with the idea that if I just gave the students the time to read and access to good books, they would read. This did not happen. My role in promoting books and reading had to be constant. It was a daily practice to encourage the students to read and talk about reading. I introduced new books every day for the first term of school, in both years. I implemented a read aloud in year one, with *Long Way Down*, and later read first chapters during book sharing times. I had to carve out time to read dozens and dozens of middle years and young adult novels during these two years. I did this at the same time I was trying to maintain my own personal reading and reading research for my study. To continue to promote books the students would love, I also had to access funds to purchase books on an ongoing basis. Having a healthy school budget is imperative to building relevant, high-interest classroom libraries. Books are too expensive for teachers to absorb using personal funds. We purchased books all year. Even during the school shutdown, when businesses were not selling essential goods, I purchased books

through Amazon. When I stopped doing these things, however, the reading would lesson among some students.

My engagement and motivation to read became an issue during my two-year inquiry. The findings of researchers noted in my literature review states that regardless of age, most people spend at least eight and a half hours a day looking at the television, a computer monitor, or the screen of their phone or tablet (Oliveira, 2018). The form of reading we do on our devices is rarely continuous, sustained, or concentrated—characteristics needed for deep-level reading. Skimming becomes the new normal for the reading brain. If most of the hours we read is done online, where deep reading is less important and rarely used, we begin to read that way even when we turn off the screen and pick up a book. Like the students, as the pandemic continued, my engagement in reading declined. I found myself spending more and more of my "free" time at home mindlessly scrolling through social media outlets and watching quick videos. I just couldn't find the energy to pick up a book and read for joy. I felt guilty because I was asking my students to utilize strategies at home, I was unable to use myself. How could I complete a study on reading motivation and engagement, when I could not get myself to read a book? This contradiction was ultimately timely in terms of research for my study because I began to use the same strategies for myself at home that I was asking the students to use. When the students were reporting that they could not motivate themselves to read at home, I was able to share what worked for me. Like many students, I had to turn to easy-to-read, high interest books. Books that were readable, and had simple, entertaining plot lines. I also made a point of leaving my devices in another room, so they would not be handy for me to grab and replace them with a book to reach for instead. For months, I read enjoyable, simple thrillers, but they proved to be a gateway back into more sophisticated literature as I got back into a reading routine.

My key finding regarding contradictions in personal teaching beliefs and practices is that I am a person who does not change my established routines. Throughout the two years of this study, I repeatedly fell back on the comfortable and familiar teaching practices I had used before. Even though I knew those practices were not working, I continued to implement them. This contradiction highlighted the importance of continuous, ongoing inquiry into practice. For me to keep moving forward in this study, I had to constantly go back to the spiral of inquiry, and often repeat, or redo one of the stages when I got off track. I had to reflect on my personal nature, a need to control, and tendencies to micro-managing. After almost two decades of teaching, I had become used to directing and controlling my environment. During pandemic learning, when the students did not talk, my hybrid-learning class were often filled with teacher-talk. I had to reflect and remind myself of this contradiction in practice to release control and allow the students to assume some power to lead our ELA program. While I have developed an understanding of my teaching contradictions, working to align my practices with my values is still a work in progress. Many years of learning to teach must be unlearned, and habits need to be broken. That takes some time, and that is okay. It is important for teachers to approach profound changes in teaching practice with self-compassion and kindness. Often our need for control may be exactly what many of our students need. In a world where they may not have been experiencing any predictability, my classroom had clear expectations, teacher-led discussions, routines, and structures, which may have provided them with a haven of controllability for themselves. My nature also brought many gifts, such as being able to talk about when I was experiencing tensions with my students, and these moments brought about some amazing aha moments—for instance, like when my students helped me make decisions about reading responses and assisted in developing the criteria. It takes time to shift practice. Some habits may not need to be broken

but might benefit from more bend. I am approaching this with a gentleness of spirit, patience, and lack of self-reproach and guilt.

Conclusions

What I Have Learned

Referring to my primary research question--How can I motivate and engage my adolescent reader to read for joy? – to motivate and engage students to read for joy, I need to:

- Provide choice, relevance, and ample reading material
- Build positive agency and self-efficacy by providing opportunities to build positive experiences and memories with reading
- Develop students' identities as readers
- Connect students' out-of-school interests with what they read in school
- Provide immediate, day one access to books
- Provide opportunities for student input when purchasing reading material, and continuously add to the classroom library
- Encourage the students to take risks with their reading
- Increase reading stamina to counter the type of reading that is used when students are interacting with digital media. Essentially to slow their Internet-reading brain down and engage their text-reading brain
- Provide class time for students to read
- Teach the students how the brain functions and the effects of technology on the reading brain
- Share control and allow the students to be partners in their learning
- Build positive relationships with the students

Figure 8

How can I motivate and engage my students to read for joy? In figure 8 I chart some of my insights related to the practices I tried, prompted by my reading of the research and professional literature. My study into my growth as a teacher, points to these practices as those to study further, with those in the right column as potentially contributing to reading for joy for most students, while those in the middle and left perhaps having potential for some students, or in some instances.

Insights related to practices

Insights Related to Practices
Practices that worked—pandemic, or no pandemic

Some Students About 10-39%	Many Students About 40-59%	Most Students About 60-90%
FOR ALL: • Increasing the amount of time I spent reading young adult literature • These were ongoing practices for the entire semester, or year.		
⇒ Introducing once-loved books ⇒ Individual book recommendations ⇒ Defining who a reader is	⇒ Whole-class book shares ⇒ Assessment as learning ⇒ Ongoing reflections and goal-setting ⇒ Wellness checks ⇒ Sharing my own reading	⇒ Book-speed dating ⇒ Student input on purchased books ⇒ Time to read during class ⇒ Teacher-student reading conferences ⇒ Building relationships and reading community ⇒ Reading inventories and surveys ⇒ Article response: *10 Benefits of Reading* ⇒ Prompt: *Who am I as a reader?*

Practices that did not work, pandemic, or no

Attempting to attach "marks" to reading:
⇒ Reading responses
⇒ Reading logs

I had to admit to myself that as much as I wanted to aim for 100 percent participation and engagement from students at the start of shifting my practice to prioritize reading for joy, I knew that I would not achieve that. I aimed for my teaching practices to affect change for most of the students. I never gave up on those students who did not engage in reading, and because of that, there were small moments during this study that I was able to engage those fully non-readers.

To build student agency and self-efficacy, I had to implement teaching practices that developed positive reading experiences. This work included practices that promoted relevance and choice. These practices served to engage the students in their learning, not just in their reading.

In year one, when I was so excited to begin this study, it was devastating when the pandemic hit, and we had to move to remote learning. The start of pandemic teaching in year one was crushing to my own motivation and engagement in reading, and in continuing with this self-study. However, as my engagement and the engagement of my students declined, this also proved to be my biggest ah-ha moment—when I realized how important my study was and it reinvigorated my eagerness to start anew in year two. A study of practice in both normal and pandemic learning increased my understanding of how important the role of the teacher is in motivation and engagement. My teaching practices can either foster a love of learning, or it can kill a love of learning.

The best moment of my study, when I realized that my practices were making a difference in some of the students, was when I received emails from students, during the summer, about where and how to access books. Knowing that they were trying to access books during the summer, when we were not in class, and I was not watching them, was inspiring and

confirmed that I was on the right track. This is a long journey, one that I am not sure I will ever complete—and that is okay because that is what teaching and inquiry is.

Why this study matters

The literature review completed for this study demonstrated that literacy researchers have addressed motivation and engagement in groups of adolescent students who are aliterate. I discovered a gap in the literature: a lack of Canadian research, specifically practices relevant to an urban, western Canadian context that my research design can fulfill. Moreover, while the literature I read outlined general classroom instructional factors that were effective in engaging and motivating adolescent students—agency, self-efficacy, relevance, etc.—there was little description of exactly how these factors were translated into practice, which teaching practices were implemented and how, and the degree to which students were engaged. I believe my self-study into my inquiry into teaching can inspire dialogue and ideas about designing rich learning experiences to build agency and self-efficacy in adolescent readers.

This self-study of my two-year inquiry into practice has been a long, winding, exhausting, labor of love. I am not just a different teacher, but a different person because of it. This journey has truly become a study of self, as it forced me to examine the nature of my teaching practices, the way I think about assessing students, and my role in the classroom. During this study into self, I not only reflected on how my practice could encourage my students to read for joy, but it challenged me to acknowledge and overcome character traits that were standing in the way of me becoming the reading teacher I always imagined myself to be. Although it was often extremely difficult to investigate self, it has been a cathartic experience to reflect on my personality traits, where they came from, and the classroom behaviours that stem from those traits. This experience was transformative and revelatory as I examined my identity

as a reader, and how my teaching practice changed and evolved from pre-pandemic to pandemic instruction. This study mattered not only to my personal and professional development, but also to build positive relationships with the students, and develop their agency and self-efficacy. This study mattered because daily reading teaching practices can either foster a life-long love of reading and open doors and windows into other worlds, or they can kill the love of reading.

The findings of this inquiry have implications for my practice, for my students, and for the field of education. These implications are discussed in the next chapter of my study: implications, limitations, and conclusions. The chapter begins with considering implications of my study on agency, on my teaching practice, and on the field of education. An outline of study limitations and final thoughts serve to close the chapter.

Chapter Five: Implications, Limitations, and Conclusion

Implications

My self-study was to learn about my practice in the hopes of designing, developing, and sustaining practices that prioritized reading for joy. How can I foster a love of reading with my adolescent students? What impact did instructional practices that emphasize agency, self-efficacy, choice, and relevance have on the reading motivation and engagement in my adolescent students? My goal for this inquiry was to document and study my practices and growth as I engaged in new practices hoping to develop opportunities for students' success as readers, build students' agency and self-confidence, develop their resilience as readers, and engage them in reading for joy. My motivation to shift my practice, and to make reading for joy my first priority, was about discovering what mattered to my students and adjusting my teaching practices accordingly. It was about learning how to appeal to their interest to get their attention and helping them to see the relevance in reading so they would keep it going.

Agency and self-efficacy beliefs are linked with perceptions of control. The importance of control in shaping perceptions of agency reminded me that motivation is not only about what happened at the end of the process, but also the process itself—how motivation takes place, who controls it, and why. The idea that motivation is about the process itself is reflected in my own pursuit of knowledge in this self-study. This quest began on an emotional level. The understanding that the teaching practices I was utilizing were not working and were not engaging the students in reading led to an emotional desire to provide my students with the same joys of reading I have enjoyed. In this chapter, I also explore the implications of my self-study on agency, on my practice, and on the field of education.

Impact on Agency

Both self-efficacy and agency are important, but these seem to have been significantly compromised for students, because of the pandemic, school closures, and online remote learning. The agency of many students may have declined during remote learning. Decreased social opportunities with peers may have emotional impacts on some students. This will most likely have an impact on students during the 2021-2022 school year, when we are all back in the classroom together. Declining agency and decreased social opportunities carry implications for the kinds of support available to them when pandemic learning is over. If it is one thing that this study has demonstrated is that I cannot assume that the students will remember how to build community with their peers, and that they will be willing to engage in social activities just because we are all back together. The practices I found success in during the past two years are being implemented again this year. Moreover, knowing many students did not enjoy success on an academic level, the questions I have surrounding assessment need to be a focus of my ongoing professional inquiry.

I relationship to my self-study, I understand that the practices I implemented did not work for everyone. If I had to estimate student numbers on a spectrum of readers, I would identify about 25% of my students as students who read for joy. Most of these students entered my room already loving to read. Approximately, 5% of my students continued to be non-readers and the strategies I implemented did not work on a consistent basis. I had moments when I was able to get all of them to read, but they did not read consistently. The majority of other 70% can be placed on that spectrum between readers and non-readers. Of these students, many of them shared that they used to love reading but lost that in late elementary school. They loved reading, they still see value in it, but they just don't know how to get back into reading. The greatest implications of the findings of this study point to this as the group such strategies might impact

the most. To support students in rediscovering a love of reading, teachers need to work towards developing positive reading agency and self-efficacy. These goals can be accomplished by providing reading material that is relevant to their lives, and by providing them with the choice and validation of what they want to read.

Impact on My Teaching Practice

This self-study has facilitated mindful time reflecting on myself as a learner and teacher of reading. There is risk and vulnerability that goes along with this study. Although meaningful, it does not necessarily make the journey easy or comfortable. Knowing what I know now, it is with some discomfort that I recall and retell my experiences and make them public. But this process has also taught me that taking an inquiry stance and reflecting on new actions in the classroom is essential to advancing teacher practice. My examination into practice is not over. The past two years have been unpredictable, erratic, and rife with uncertainty. This time has provided powerful opportunity for change that still requires some exploration. We are still in the midst of a pandemic. My inquiry into adolescent reading engagement is relevant and ongoing. After two years of chaotic upheaval and disruption in the education system, we returned in September 2021 for a "full start." The pendulum has swung from "normal" classes in September 2019, to full remote learning in March 2020, to hybrid learning from September 2020 until June 2021, back to "normal" in September 2021. The implications of this study are important, current, and have consequences for my students and teaching practices in this current school year.

According to Fisher et al. (2021), as educators, we need to "consider what worked well, what did not, what we need to preserve from the pre-quarantine, and what we need to cherish during quarantine teaching" (p. 1). Pandemic teaching forced me to re-examine my teaching practices, several times, overnight. The year 2020 was a formidable period of growth and

transformation; however, the steep learning curve was anxiety-ridden and disorientating. Like many teachers, I was overwhelmed, and I spent most of the year feeling like I was hanging on by my fingertips. Amid all that, however, there were new practices that I gained from pandemic teaching that I want to maintain. During this time, I learned to let go of some of the perfectionist tendencies I have. There simply was not enough time in the day to live up to the high expectations I had set for myself. I learned to stop doing everything by myself and accept help. I stopped working during every lunch hour and spent this time decompressing with teacher-friends. We also spent quality time during lunch and prep time reflecting and planning together and talking. This collaboration created consistency in the ELA classes and lightened our workload considerably, and it helped me micro-manage both students and colleagues a little less. We learned to rely on each other for professional and emotional support. I also learned to prioritize my personal wellness, which was tied in with my professional wellbeing. In my private time, I started walking more, doing yoga, and meditating. Even though I lost my love of reading for a while, I dedicated myself to getting it back.

What changed during my inquiry into practice was my decision about what to teach, how to teach it, and how to know what students have learned. I also changed the way I thought about curriculum, new ways for engaging students in reading, and how to best know if my students' agency has improved. Conducting this self-study also changed the way I think about assessment in the ELA classroom. How do I balance encouraging a love of reading with the need for summative assessment marks in high school? This is an important next step, or next inquiry in my ongoing study into practice. With questions about assessment emerging from this study, I am returning to the *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* (2020), which supports the use of a wide collection of bodies of evidence, including conferencing with students, to make

decisions about learning. I used to think I needed a large collection of marked "work" to form the students' summative mark for their report card. This is not the case. According to our new curriculum, over the course of the grade, teachers observe learners "showing evidence of practices, elements, and their sets of descriptors as they engage in rich learning experiences over time." (Department of Education, 2020, p. 59). When it comes time to report on student learning, teachers can use their reflections, documentation, student work, and notes to see patterns and draw conclusions. Overall, this wide body of evidence, including conversations, observations, and products serves as the basis for teacher to practice triangulation to make logical, reliable judgements about learning. One of the major implications of my self-study is that taking an inquiry stance and reflecting on new actions in the classroom is essential to advancing teacher practice.

Impact on the Field of Education

Throughout the course of this study, I have tried to keep the readers of my thesis in mind—those Middle and Senior Years teachers who are grappling with the same questions and issues surrounding motivating and engaging adolescent students to read for joy as I have. Teachers everywhere have had to rethink their teaching practices in the face of pandemic learning. In addition to that, Manitoba teachers have also had to think about how their practice changes and pivots with the implementation of a new ELA curriculum and ongoing speculation of educational reform as an outcome of the Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Report (2020), and the government's Better Education Starts Today Report (2021). With each of these pivots we have had to expand ideas around creating community, literacy, reading, learning, and other potential changes in education that will impact our classrooms.

Experiencing the process of this inquiry has revealed that educators must be intentional in their practice. Teachers need to inquire into their practice, to pose questions about the contradictions and tensions they experience in their teaching practice. Teachers need to document their pedagogical practice, examine student learning, and maintain teaching journals. Being reflective with my practice allowed me to journey through the inquiry process and affect real change in my personal and professional life. It is important that we talk with colleagues and share what we are learning. Finally, teachers need to ground their practice in research. Reading current academic journals and reference books written by practitioner-experts and attending relevant professional development opportunities are key to grounding practice in research.

The findings in my inquiry have revealed implications for funding and school budgets, and the importance of prioritizing literacy and reading by building classroom libraries so teachers can put books into the hands of their students. It takes money to foster a love of reading. Books are not cheap. I was extremely fortunate to have had an administrator who placed value in reading for joy. In addition to implications for school budgets, the high cost of classroom libraries also creates implications and recommendations for public libraries, particularly creating partnerships with public libraries so that students learn they have access to books in community spaces outside of school.

The findings of my inquiry into practice indicates that parents/guardians play a role in developing student reading agency and self-efficacy as well. It was the students who underscored the importance parents and guardians play in developing reading identities. Several students believed that their parents/guardians did not do enough to encourage reading at home. Curiously, they also stated that parents/guardians should be involved in limiting their time online and talking about the importance of reading and providing access to books. These student assertions

highlight the importance for encouraging parents/guardians of high school students that they still have an important role to play in developing the reading agency and self-efficacy of the young people they care for.

Finally, the findings of my inquiry have revealed ongoing questions and incongruities with assessment in high schools. There is a common perception typical among high school teachers that it is necessary to "mark" everything students do. This could be due to the extrinsic motivation for high marks that have been instilled by ongoing school practices, and therefore, many students will not do the work unless there is a grade attached to it. It is also related to reporting and the kind of evidence that has come to be valued and counted as providing proof of what students know and do not know. This results in a catch-22—if work is not graded, the students may not see the value in completing it; however, if everything is graded, extrinsic motivation to participate in classroom practices is perpetuated. If teachers want to foster a love of reading with their students, especially given this fast-paced, digital world our students live in, it takes time and ongoing effort in the classroom. In high school, time is the factor that interferes the most with learning and assessment. Practices promoting agency, self-efficacy, and relevance will help alleviate these incongruities. Professional development opportunities for high school teachers to truly understand the connotations of the new ELA curriculum framework on assessment for, as, and of learning can have a huge impact on the field of education. An important implication related to this self-study is that practices related to reading are much better suited to a focus on learning growth over time, rather than a "mark".

Limitations

The study aimed to focus on developing my understandings of my practice in relation to adolescent motivation and engagement in reading for joy. The theories of practice generated

through this self-study are specific to me and situated in the particular context in which I am teaching and the ways that has shaped my thinking. The purpose of this self-study research is not to provide general, definitive "answers" to questions—in this case about adolescent reading engagement. Rather, I have generated what Stinger (2008) calls "truth in context". I was engaged in a rigorous, systematic examination of literacy assumptions I was still holding onto, as well as the contradictions in my beliefs about reading for joy and the actual teaching practices I was implementing in my classroom. Further research into this topic would benefit from different methodologies, such as action research or mixed methodology studies. Moreover, a further exploration of how assessment of learning plays a part in reading in the high school classroom would be worthwhile.

Conclusions

The purpose of this master's thesis study has been to look at understandings of my teaching practice to learn from it. It is a self-study: I studied issues of adolescent students' motivation and engagement to read for joy. This thesis has taken me a long time to complete. I have had to be resilient and dedicated during the most difficult time of my life. This process has come with a cost; however, what it affords me outweighs what has been taken away. I have transformed my thinking and practice of my role in motivating and engaging my students to read for joy. Theory and practice go together. They are entwined in many ways. I have learned that teaching is both an art and a science which must be woven together to be most effective. I exit this study with a renewed understanding of how adolescent students build their reading identity, reading agency and self-efficacy. My goal is to continue this new way of thinking and practice and continue to grow as a reading teacher by continuing to explore the questions related to reading growth and assessment.

This inquiry has led to a transformative understanding that reading strategies will not work with students who will not read. Current research confirms that motivation and engagement are key elements in the academic achievement of adolescent students. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide a more holistic view of motivation and engagement in adolescent reading and in high school classrooms in order to inspire students to a life-long love of reading for joy and pleasure. Afterall, if I teach a student to read, but fail to develop in them a love of reading, I will not have achieved my goal for them: to be readers who find joy in reading for life.

Appendix A

Reading Inventory

Year One: September 2019 and February 2020
Year Two: September 2020 and February 2021

Name: _____

I read novels at home.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/Regularly

I read comics or graphic novels at home.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

I read nonfiction texts at home (newspapers, magazines, reference books, recipes, etc.)
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

I read social media at home (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat, etc.).
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

I read online forums at home (reddit, fan fiction, ibooks, etc.)
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

I read information for gaming/video games at home (game instructions, game prologues/introductions, YouTube, etc).
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

I listen to audiobooks at home.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

Reading can make me feel emotional (sad, happy, scared, excited, angry, etc.).
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

I fake read in my classes.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/Regularly

It is difficult for me to focus when reading books, or I get distracted when I read books.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

What we learn in this class is important in my regular life outside of school.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/Regularly

I learn best during group reading activities.

Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

I like to talk to other people about the books I read.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

In this class, I can connect the reading to my own experiences.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

The reading in this class is related to my personal interests.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

My teacher allows me to choose books I want to read everyday.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

My teacher allows me to express how I feel about my readings in my own way.
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always/A Lot

The last time I enjoyed reading an entire book on my own, I was in grade: (circle one)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Adapted from: Guthrie, J. T. (Ed.). (2008). Engaging adolescents in reading. Corwin Press.

Appendix B
Reading Survey

Year One: September 2019

Reading Survey Name_____

	1 never	2	3	4	5	6 often	7	8	9	10 always
I read in my free time.										
I enjoy reading.										
I finish the books I start.										
I "fake read" in school.										
Reading is hard for me.										
When I read I sometimes forget where I am.										
I read regularly.										
I will choose to read a challenging book.										

Are you currently reading a book? _____ If so, title: _____.

How many books did you read this summer? (titles)_____.

How many books did you read last year? (estimate)_____.

Who are your favorite authors? _____.

How many books are in your house or apartment? (estimate) _____.

How would you describe yourself as a reader?
I am a reader who...

How have you grown as a reader over the last few years?

Adapted from: Gallagher, K. (2009). Readicide: How schools are killing reading and what you can do about it. Stenhouse Publishers.

Appendix C

Reading Log
Year One

Grade 11 Only – September 2019
Grade 12 Only – February 2020

Name: _____

MY READING LOG

Year-Long Goals

Term	Hourly Rate	Weekly Hours Pledged	Weekly Page Goal	Weeks	Term Page Goal	Term Page Result	# of Books Completed	Did you meet your goals?
1								
2								
3								
4								
Totals								

Term 1

Week	Book Title	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Total Pages
Books Completed:							

Adapted from: Gallagher, K., Kittle, P. (2018). 180 Days: Two teachers and the quest to engage and empower adolescents. Heinemann Publishers.

Appendix D

Burke Reading Interview Modified for Older Readers (BIMOR)

Name _____ Age _____ Date _____

Occupation _____ Education Level _____

Sex _____ Interview Setting _____

1. When you're reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do? Do you ever do anything else?
2. Who is a good reader that you know?
3. What make _____ a good reader?
4. Do you think _____ ever comes to something that gives him/her trouble when he/she is reading?
5. When _____ does come to something that gives him/her trouble, what do you think he/she does about it?
6. How would you help someone having difficulty reading?
7. What would a teacher do to help that person?
8. How did you learn to read?
9. Is there anything you would like to change about your reading?
10. Describe yourself as a reader: What kind of reader are you?
11. What do you read routinely, like every day or every week?
12. What do you like most of all to read?
13. Can you remember a special book or the most memorable thing you have every read?
14. What is the most difficult thing you have to read?

G*oodman, Y., D. Watson & C. Burke (2005). Reading miscue inventory: Alternative procedures. Rickard C. Owen Publishers.*

Appendix E

September 2019 Reading Reflection

In the last two weeks, how would you rate your independent reading habits? Use your reading log and the checklist below to help you answer the questions.

1. Which score best describes your reading habits? Explain.
2. What book(s) have you been reading?
3. What's on your Next List?
4. What aspect of your reading habits are you most proud of?
5. What are you struggling with right now?

Meets Expectations (3)	I read at least two hours per week and meet page number goals according to my reading rate. I know how to select books that are interesting to me and appropriate for my reading skills.
Developing (2)	I have been reading, but I have not met my page number goals or read two hours per week. I may need help finding a book I like or making time in my schedule to read outside of class.
Insufficient Evidence (1)	I have not been reading.

Adapted from: Gallagher, K., Kittle, P. (2018). 180 Days: Two teachers and the quest to engage and empower adolescents. Heinemann Publishers.

Appendix F

Term 1 (Oct. 2019) and Term 3 (March 2020)
Reading Reflection and Goal Setting

Name/Group: _____ **Date: _____**

In this term, how would you rate your independent reading habits?
Use your reading log and the checklist below to help you answer the questions.

Meets Expectations (3)	I read at least 4 hours per week and meet page number goals according to my reading rate. I know how to select books that are interesting to me and appropriate for my reading skills.
Developing (2)	I read at least 2 hours per week and meet page number goals according to my reading rate. I am starting to figure out how to select books that are interesting to me and appropriate for my reading skills.
Insufficient Evidence (1)	I have not been reading or are reading less than 2 hours per week.

1. Which score best describes your reading habits? Explain why.
2. What book(s) have you been reading, or have read? What's on your Next List?
3. What aspect of your reading habits are you most proud of?
4. What are you struggling with right now?
5. If you could change one aspect of our reading program in high school ELA, what would it be, and why?
6. Think about your reading habits from this term. Use this information, set a reasonable and attainable reading goal for the last term. Your goal needs to start with the words "I will…" Explain how you are going to achieve this goal.

Adapted from: Gallagher, K., Kittle, P. (2018). 180 Days: Two teachers and the quest to engage and empower adolescents. Heinemann Publishers.

Appendix G

10 Benefits of Reading: Why You Should Read Every Day

Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body

When was the last time you read a book, or a substantial magazine article? Do your daily reading habits center around tweets, Facebook updates, or the directions on your instant oatmeal packet? If you're one of countless people who don't make a habit of reading regularly, you might be missing out: reading has a significant number of benefits, and just a few benefits of reading are listed below.

1. **Mental Stimulation**
Studies have shown that staying mentally stimulated can slow the progress of (or possibly even prevent) Alzheimer's and dementia, since keeping your brain active and engaged prevents it from losing power. Just like any other muscle in the body, the brain requires exercise to keep it strong and healthy, so the phrase "use it or lose it" is particularly apt when it comes to your mind. Doing puzzles and playing games such as chess have also been found to be helpful with cognitive stimulation.

2. Stress Reduction
No matter how much stress you have at work, in your personal relationships, or countless other issues faced in daily life, it all just slips away when you lose yourself in a great story. A well-written novel can transport you to other realms, while an engaging article will distract you and keep you in the present moment, letting tensions drain away and allowing you to relax.

3. Knowledge
Everything you read fills your head with new bits of information, and you never know when it might come in handy. The more knowledge you have, the better-equipped you are to tackle any challenge you'll ever face. Additionally, here's a bit of food for thought: should you ever find yourself in dire circumstances, remember that although you might lose everything else—your job, your possessions, your money, even your health—knowledge can never be taken from you.

4. Vocabulary Expansion
This goes with the above topic: the more you read, the more words you gain exposure to, and they'll inevitably make their way into your everyday vocabulary. Being articulate and well-spoken is of great help in any profession, and knowing that you can speak to higher-ups with self-confidence can be an enormous boost to your self-esteem. It could even aid in your career, as those who are well- read, well-spoken, and knowledgeable on a variety of topics tend to get promotions more quickly (and more often) than those with smaller vocabularies and lack of awareness of literature, scientific breakthroughs, and global events.
Reading books is also vital for learning new languages, as non-native speakers gain exposure to words used in context, which will ameliorate their own speaking and writing fluency.

5. Memory Improvement
When you read a book, you have to remember an assortment of characters, their backgrounds, ambitions, history, and nuances, as well as the various arcs and sub-plots that weave their way

through every story. That's a fair bit to remember, but brains are marvelous things and can remember these things with relative ease. Amazingly enough, every new memory you create forges new synapses (brain pathways) and strengthens existing ones, which assists in short-term memory recall as well as stabilizing moods. How cool is that?

6. Stronger Analytical Thinking Skills

Have you ever read an amazing mystery novel, and solved the mystery yourself before finishing the book? If so, you were able to put critical and analytical thinking to work by taking note of all the details provided and sorting them out to determine "whodunit". That same ability to analyze details also comes in handy when it comes to critiquing the plot; determining whether it was a well-written piece, if the characters were properly developed, if the storyline ran smoothly, etc. should you ever have an opportunity to discuss the book with others, you'll be able to state your opinions clearly, as you've taken the time to really consider all the aspects involved.

7. Improved Focus and Concentration

In our internet-crazed world, attention is drawn in a million different directions at once as we multi-task through every day. In a single 5-minute span, the average person will divide their time between working on a task, checking email, chatting with a couple of people (via g-chat, Skype, etc.), keeping an eye on Twitter, monitoring their smartphone, and interacting with co-workers. This type of ADD-like behavior causes stress levels to rise, and lowers our productivity. When you read a book all of your attention is focused on the story—the rest of the world just falls away, and you can immerse yourself in every fine detail you're absorbing. Try reading for 15-20 minutes every day and you will be surprised at how much more focused you become.

8. Better Writing Skills

This goes hand-in-hand with the expansion of your vocabulary: exposure to published, well-written work has a noted effect on one's own writing, as observing the cadence, fluidity, and writing styles of other authors will invariably influence your own work. In the same way that musicians influence on another, and painters use techniques established by previous masters, so do writers learn how to craft prose by reading the works of others.

9. Tranquility

In addition to the relaxation that accompanies reading a good book, it's possible that the subject you read about can bring about immense inner peace and tranquility. Reading spiritual texts can lower blood pressure and bring about an immense sense of calm, while reading self –help books has been shown to help people suffering from certain mood disorders and mild mental illnesses.

10. Free Entertainment

Though many of us like to buy books so we can annotate them and dog-ear pages for future reference, they can be quite pricey. For low-budget entertainment, you can visit your local library and bask in the glory of the countless tomes available there for free. Libraries have books on every subject imaginable, and since they rotate their stock and constantly get new books, you'll never run out of reading materials. If you happen to live in an area that doesn't have a local library, or if you're mobility=impaired and can't get to one easily, most libraries have their books available in PDF or ePub format so you can read them on your e-reader, iPad, or your computer screen. There are also many sources online where you can download free e-books, so

go hunting for something new to read! There's a reading genre for every literate person on the planet, and whether your tastes lie in classical literature, poetry, fashion magazines biographies, religious texts, you adult books, self-help guides, street lit, or romance novels, there's something out there to capture your curiosity and imagination. Step always from your computer for a little while, crack open a book, and replenish your soul for a little while.

Possible questions to help with your response:

- Reflect on your reading habits. Are you reading enough? Explain.
- Which of these reading benefits do you think is the most important? Explain.
- Pick a passage from the article and respond to it.

Source: Lana Winter-Herbert, lifehack.org

Appendix H

Reading and Interest Survey
Year Two: September 2020 February 2021

Part 1: Getting to Know Each Other

1. What is your favorite subject in school?
2. What is your favorite pastime or hobby?
3. What obligations do you have besides school?

_ Work If so, how many hours per week? Where
_ Sports If so, what sports?
_ Music If so, what?
_ Family (taking care of siblings, chores, etc.) If so, what?
_ Community/School Activities If so, please list:

4. What are your talents? Sports? Music? Drawing? Interacting with others? Making friends? Studying? Reading? Other (describe)? Please list:
5. What is a possible career or occupation you are considering pursuing after completing your education?
6. What kind of writing do you do besides school writing? Letters? Poetry? Notes to people? Journal writing? Email? Other (describe)? What is your favorite kind of writing? Please list:
7. What is your favorite movie?
8. What type of music do you like best?
9. Name one of your favorite musicians/musical groups:
10. Do you have a favorite poet? _ Yes _ No

If yes, please tell me who:

Part 2: Getting to Know Each Other as Readers

11. How many books are there in your home?

_ 0–10 _ More than 10 _ More than 25 _ More than 50 _ More than 100

12. How many books do you own?

_ 0–10 _ More than 10 _ More than 25 _ More than 50 _ More than 100

13. Does your family get a newspaper regularly? If yes, what is the name of the newspaper?
14. Does your family get any magazines regularly? If yes, which magazines?
15. Is there a computer in your home? _ Yes _ No

If yes, who uses the computer most often? For what? (Check *all* the ones that are true)

_ Internet browsing _ email _ business _ school work _ games _ other (explain)

16. Does your family read in a language other than English? _ Yes _ No

If so, which language(s)?

17. Who reads a lot in your home? What do they read?
18. What are some different reasons people read?
19. What does someone have to do to be a good reader? (Circe only the three most important ones.)

- read aloud well
- understand what they read
- read a lot
- pronounce all the words correctly

- know when they are having trouble understanding
- read different kinds of books
- read fast
- enjoy reading
- read with expression
- concentrate on the reading
- read harder books
- know the meaning of most of the words
- use strategies to improve their understanding
- other

20. Do you think you are a good reader? _ Yes _ No _ It depends
    Explain why:
21. Do you think reading will be important to your future? _ Yes _ No
    Explain why:
22. From what you can remember, learning to read was
_ very easy for you _ easy for you _ hard for you _ very hard for you
23. Do you read in a language other than English? If yes, which language(s)? In which language do you read best?
24. What do you usually do when you read? (Circle *all* that describe what you do.)

- I read silently.
- I look over what I'm going to
- read first to get an idea of what it is about.
- I try to pronounce all the words correctly.
- I get distracted a lot while I'm reading.
- I ask myself questions about what I'm reading.
- I have trouble remembering what I read.
- I try to get the reading over with as fast as I can.
- I read a section again if I don't understand it at first.
- I try to concentrate on the reading.
- I try to figure out the meaning of words I don't know.
- I read aloud to myself in a quiet voice.
- I look up words I don't know in the dictionary.
- I picture what is happening in the reading.
- I try to read with expression.
- I put what I'm reading into my own words.
- I try to understand what I read.
- I try to read smoothly.
- I think about things I know that connect to the reading.

25. What is the best way for you to read?
_ read silently to myself _ read aloud by myself or with a partner _ listen to the teacher read in class _ listen to other students read in class
26. Do you ever read at home, *other* than for your school assignments? Yes _ No If yes, what kinds of things do you read? (Circle *all* the ones you like to read.)

- newspapers
- novels
- letters or email

- magazines
- information books
- poetry
- comic books
- song lyrics
- cookbooks
- website pages
- computer
- manuals
- how-to books
- video game
- strategy books
- magazines
- other

27. How often do you read, *other* than for your school assignments?
_ every day _ frequently _ once in a while _ not often _ never

28. How often do you read at home for school assignments?
_ every day _ frequently _ once in a while _ not often _ never

29. How long do you usually read at a time?
_ 1–10 minutes _ 11–30 minutes _ 31–60 minutes _ more than an hour

30. During the past 12 months, how many books have you read? How many of these were *not* for school?

31. What kinds of books do you like to read? (Circle *all* the ones you like to read.)

- science fiction
- adventure/action
- horror
- mysteries
- how-to books
- sports
- (auto)biography
- thrillers
- true-life drama
- poetry
- short stories
- history
- science/nature
- humor
- picture books
- comic books
- romance
- fantasy/myth
- information books
- teen problems
- none
- other (describe)

32. Which are your three *favorite* kinds of books? (Circle three of the ones you checked in question 31.)
33. Who are your favorite authors? (List as many as you'd like.)
34. How do you choose a book to read? (Circle *all* the ones that describe what you do.)

- look at the book cover
- ask a teacher or librarian
- pick a book that looks easy
- look at the pictures in the book
- ask a friend or classmate
- look for books on a particular subject
- read the book cover or jacket
- see how long the book is
- look for an interesting title
- ask a family member
- look for a particular author
- look to see if it has gotten an award
- look in special displays at the library or bookstore
- pick from a best-sellers list
- look for books that have been made into movies
- look for particular kinds of books (drama, horror, etc.)
- look for books I've heard about
- read a few pages
- look for books about my culture
- I have no method of choosing a book
- other (describe)

35. Do you ever talk with a friend or someone you live with about something you have read?
_ almost every day
_ once or twice a month
_ once or twice a week
_ never or hardly ever
36. Do you borrow books from friends, family members, or teachers?
_ almost every day
_ once or twice a month
_ once or twice a week
_ never or hardly ever
37. Do you borrow books from the school or public library?
_ almost every day
_ once or twice a month
_ once or twice a week
_ never or hardly ever
38. In general, how do you feel about reading?

Part 3: Final Reflections

39. Write any comments or concerns you have about this class.
40. What do you hope to achieve in this class?

Thank you for completing this survey. I will use your answers to help guide my teaching.

Source: Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms, pages 294-298. Copyright © 2012 WestEd.

Appendix I

Reflection Questions for End-of-Term 1
October, 2020

It has been an interesting term for you, trying to navigate high school, your classes, home learning and all the stress and emotion that may go along with all of it. I would like you to share how you're doing: with school, and at home, as well as coping generally.
Please answer the questions on the paper provided. Number each question and answer fully and in complete sentences. Remember to put your first and last name, the date, your class and group at the top of the page.

1. What is one success that you feel good about from term 1? Explain. This may be from English class but doesn't have to be.
2. What has been something that you have been struggling with in term 1? Explain. This may be related to English class but doesn't have to be.
3. When you think about your mental health (stress, anxiety) what concerns do you have, if any? If not, explain how you have been taking care of your mental health.
4. If there was one thing that you think you could work on in term 2 in order to improve your mental health, what would it be? Why did you choose this thing?
5. How would you describe your reading practice over term 1? How do you think you could increase your home-reading for term 2?
6. Discuss one line, idea, use of imagery that you used in your memoir that you feel good about? Explain your choice, how it may have changed during revision, and why you feel proud of this writing.

Reflection questions created by L. Dickson, 2020

Appendix J

Student Survey --- What I want to know about you to help guide me in planning for you in this kooky year.

Full Name: _____ Cell Phone # _____
(This is in the event that the school shuts down)

1. What was your attendance like during class suspension (for example, consistently engaged, somewhat engaged, rarely engaged, or not engaged at all? Did you start almost fully engaged in school and fizzle off, or were you disengaged at the beginning and then tried to pick it up towards the end?)? Explain.

2. What is your access to technology like outside of school? Do you have your own computer? Do you share? If so, with whom? Do you have WIFI? Please be specific.

3. What was you experience like working independently last year during school closure? Did you experience any personal or academic challenges?

4. Do you have any concerns with the current scheduling? (example: can't see friends, too much time alone at home, don't work well independently, I need lots of support with academics)

5. Who is at home to help support successful emotional, physical, and academic needs?

6. How many hours of sleep would you say you get on an average school night? Do feel like that is enough sleep?

7. How much screen time (phone, tablet, gaming, t.v., etc…) do you think you have on an average day?

8. What sorts of meals/snacks do you eat on a daily basis (This may seem like a weird question, however, diet says a lot about your brain health)?

9. Who do you live with? (pets, siblings, parent, grand-parent, guardians etc…)

10. How close to the school do you live? Do you walk? Bus? Get a drive?

11. Which adult (if any) in the school do you feel a connection with?

12. What friends/acquaintances (if any) do you have in the school?

13. What is something you would like me to know about you? It could be about school, how you are feeling in the pandemic, or just an uber-interesting fact.

Student Survey created by Angela Robbie and Leslie Dickson

Appendix K

Strategies & Practices

Year One 2019—2020

Whole class; 30-40 students in table groups of 3-5

Exploring

- Book Speed Dating
- Daily Independent Reading
  - Gr. 9—10 minutes (Sept-Jan) = 50 min./week
    15 minutes (Feb.-Mar) = 1.25 hours/week
  - Gr. 10-12—20 minutes = 2 hours/week
  - Reading Rate
  - Reading Goals
  - Reading Log
- Daily Book Talks/Share
- Whiteboard display (*"What I just finished reading", "What I'm reading now", "What I want to read next"*)
- Good Reads website introduction
- Teacher-Led Read Aloud—*Long Way Down*
- Anonymous Reading Inventory, Reading Survey, Journal Response (*Who am I as a reader?*)

Developing

- Reading Journal
- 2-week Reading Reflection (3 week Sept.)
- Daily Student/Teacher Reading Conferences
- Article of the Week—topics on reading
- Bulletin Board display to encourage student voice to purchase books
- Daily Reading Response

Professional Development

- 2019 ILA Conference, New Orleans, LA
- RCGW MTS PD Day

On-line (March—June)

- Penny Kittle/Kelly Gallagher live YouTube videos (April)
- Plethora of zoom and YouTube tutorials

Year Two 2020—2021

30-40 students/class, each split into 3 groups, individual seating 2m apart

Exploring (includes mental health & technology literacy)

- Book Speed Dating
- Daily Independent Reading
  - Gr. 9—15 minutes every fourth day = 15-30 min./week
  - Gr. 10-12—20 minutes every fourth day = 20-40 min./week
- Reading Log
- Daily Book Talks/Share
- Whiteboard display (*"What I just finished reading", "What I'm reading now", "What I want to read next"*)
- Anonymous Reading Inventory, Reading & Interest Survey, Personal Well-Being & Access to Technology Survey

Developing

- Reading Journal
- 8-week Reading Reflection (3 week Sept.)
- Bulletin Board display to encourage student voice to purchase books
- Daily Reading Response

Professional Development Opportunities

On-line

- Donalynn Miller—Making a Case for Reading Joy
- Fisher, Frey & Hattie—The Distance Learning Handbook
- 2020 ILA Online Conference
- ILA: How to Raise & Teach Anti-Racist Kids
- RCGW MTS PD Day
- Penny Kittle/Kelly Gallagher live YouTube videos (April)
- Fisher & Frey—How to Accelerate Literacy Learning

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