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Teacher Beliefs and the Instructional Practices  
of National Board Certified High School English Teachers

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

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by

Rebecca Lee Drinnon

December 2008

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Dr. Terrence Tollefson, Chair

Dr. James Lampley

Dr. Louise MacKay

Dr. Elizabeth Ralston

Keywords: National Board Certification, Language Arts Instruction, Teacher Beliefs

## ABSTRACT

### Teacher Beliefs and the Instructional Practices of National Board Certified High School English Teachers

by

Rebecca Lee Drinnon

This mixed-methods study explored the instructional methods that accomplished high school English teachers use in their classrooms to improve understanding of how those methods are influenced by the teachers' beliefs. A survey regarding classroom practices and beliefs was sent to 313 National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) in English Language Arts—Adolescence and Young Adulthood across the United States with a response rate of 50.8%. From these data, I analyzed the variety and frequency of practices experienced teachers use and the beliefs that influence teachers' instructional decisions. I then conducted follow-up interviews and classroom observations with selected survey participants from North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio and explored further the beliefs and motivations of those teachers who were both typical and outlying according to their survey responses.

The study found that factors such as school setting, educational level, and gender had little impact on teachers' instructional strategies, although a relationship was found between gender and approach to teaching literature. The study also found that reading instruction dominated the classroom instruction of those teachers, with writing instruction a distant second. In addition, those NBCTs were found to be teachers who developed positive relationships with students, created student-centered classrooms, challenged students academically, and were dedicated to

being lifelong learners. In the end, 3 distinct teacher types were identified: teachers who focus on English as a discipline, teachers who focus on more generalized educational goals, and teachers who focus on their students' emotional well-being. However, the study suggests that all the teachers who participated in the study formed a fairly homogenous group regardless of their differences and that teachers' own educational experiences in school played a more significant role in determining their classroom behaviors than did their educational beliefs.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my husband, Matthew, whose support, encouragement, and guidance made it possible and whose love and companionship made it worthwhile.

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## CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	2
DEDICATION.....	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	5
LIST OF TABLES.....	12
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	13
Statement of the Problem.....	14
Research Questions.....	16
Significance of the Study.....	17
Definitions of Terms.....	19
Delimitations and Limitations.....	21
Overview of the Study.....	23
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	24
National Board Certified Teachers.....	24
Secondary Language Arts Education.....	30
The History of Secondary Language Arts Education.....	30
Teaching Reading and Literature.....	32
Major Philosophies.....	32
Methodological Approaches.....	35
Teaching Composition and Grammar.....	40
Technology in Language Arts Instruction.....	45

Teacher Beliefs.....	47
Sources and Influences.....	47
Relationship to Instruction.....	49
Grounded Theory.....	52
Summary.....	54
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	56
Introduction.....	56
Research Design.....	56
Quantitative Study.....	58
Population and Sample.....	59
Instrumentation.....	60
Measurement of Variables.....	62
Data Analysis.....	65
Research Questions, Hypotheses, and Methods.....	65
Qualitative Study.....	69
Population and Sample.....	71
Recruiting Protocol.....	72
Ethical Protocol.....	72
Data Collection.....	73
Interviews.....	73
Classroom Observations.....	74
Documents.....	75
Data Analysis.....	75

Interviews.....	75
Observations.....	77
Documents.....	77
Overall Comparison.....	78
4. DATA ANALYSIS.....	79
Introduction.....	79
Quantitative Study.....	79
Analysis of Research Questions.....	80
Research Question #1.....	80
Research Question #2.....	84
Research Question #3.....	89
Research Question #4.....	91
Research Question #5.....	95
Research Question #6.....	100
Research Question #7.....	102
Qualitative Study.....	105
Selection of Participants.....	105
Conducting the Research.....	106
Analysis of the Data and the Emergence of Themes.....	107
An Emphasis on Reading.....	108
A Secondary Emphasis on Writing.....	116
Developing Personal Relationships with Students.....	122
Student-Centered Classrooms.....	129

Academically Challenging Classes That Expand Students’ Understanding of the World.....	137
Teachers as Lifelong Learners.....	144
Toward a Theory of Teacher Types.....	149
English-Driven Teachers.....	150
Citizenship-Driven Teachers.....	152
Relationship-Driven Teachers.....	154
Cross-Analysis of the Quantitative and Qualitative Studies.....	156
5. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....	157
Introduction.....	157
Conclusions from the Study.....	158
A Portrait of NBCTs in English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood.....	159
Findings.....	159
Recommendations.....	160
The Instructional Strategies of NBCTs in English Language Arts/ Adolescence and Young Adulthood.....	161
Findings.....	161
Recommendations.....	162
The Interrelationship of Teaching Experience, Traditional Teaching Methods, and Traditional Beliefs.....	163
Findings.....	163
Recommendations.....	163
The Interrelationship of School Setting, the Use of Technology, and Beliefs about Technology.....	164

Findings.....	164
Recommendations.....	164
The Interrelationship of Education Level, the Use of Contemporary Instructional Strategies, and a Variety of Teacher Beliefs.....	165
Findings.....	165
Recommendations.....	166
The Interrelationship of Gender, Use of Class Time, and Beliefs about Progressive Instructional Methods.....	167
Findings.....	167
Recommendations.....	167
The Interrelationship of Gender, Approach to Teaching Literature, and Beliefs about Cooperative Learning.....	168
Findings.....	168
Recommendations.....	168
The Impact of Education on Teaching Methods.....	169
Findings.....	169
Recommendations.....	169
The Impact of Beliefs about Education on Teaching Strategies.....	170
Findings.....	170
Recommendations.....	171
Conclusion.....	171
REFERENCES.....	173
APPENDICES.....	180
APPENDIX A: NBCT Language Arts Instruction and Opinion Questionnaire.....	180

APPENDIX B: Informed Consent Document.....	184
APPENDIX C: Participant Letter.....	187
APPENDIX D: Survey Frequency Charts.....	188
APPENDIX E: Interview Guide.....	197
APPENDIX F: Observation Guide.....	198
APPENDIX G: Document Review Guide.....	200
VITA.....	201

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Researcher-Constructed Variables.....	64
2. Demographic Frequency Data.....	81
3. Instructional Activity Frequency Data.....	86
4. Mean Ranks and Median Responses of Traditional Methods Frequency.....	91
5. Means and Standard Deviations for Traditional Beliefs.....	92
6. Mean Ranks and Median Responses of Technology Methods Frequency.....	93
7. Means and Standard Deviations for Technology Beliefs.....	94
8. Results of Tukey HSD Analysis for School Setting and Technology Beliefs.....	95
9. Results of Tukey HSD Analysis for Technology Methods and Technology Beliefs.....	95
10. Mean Ranks and Median Responses of Contemporary Methods Frequency.....	97
11. Means and Standard Deviations for Purpose Beliefs.....	98
12. Means and Standard Deviations for Motivation Beliefs.....	99
13. Means and Standard Deviations for Traditional Beliefs Based on Education Level and Use of Contemporary Methods.....	100
14. Results of Tukey HSD Analysis for Contemporary Methods and Traditional Beliefs.....	101
15. Means and Standard Deviations for Progressive Beliefs.....	103
16. Approach to Teaching Literature by Gender.....	104
17. Means and Standard Deviations for Cooperative Beliefs.....	105

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Nine years ago, as a new English teacher, I found myself overwhelmed by the complexity of teaching the various strands of the language arts to teenagers who had perhaps little interest in studying English for its own sake. Reading the literature my students were studying, planning lessons that would motivate and educate, assessing and evaluating student work, and keeping up with vast amounts of institutional paperwork left little time to reflect upon the overall composition of my instructional “playbook.” I was so busy trying to stay on top of things in my own classroom that I had little or no time to consult with my colleagues or visit their classrooms. By the time my own duties became more manageable through practice and experience, the isolation from working things out on my own had become a habit. Although I often exchanged war stories (and sometimes success stories) with my colleagues, I really didn’t have a great idea of what a typical day in any of their classrooms was like.

Later, when I heard about National Board Certification, I wondered whether I was good enough to achieve certification. Even though I read the standards and felt generally confident about the quality of my English classes, I was undermined by doubt. I did not know any NBCTs teaching secondary English classes, and I certainly had not seen any of them teach. Even after spending nearly a year going through the National Board process, I was a nervous wreck about my performance. The process had certainly made me a much more reflective teacher. I thought continually about the successes and failures in my classroom and how I could make things better. But I kept wondering how my practices compared to those of truly accomplished teachers. Just what were other teachers doing in their classrooms?

As I returned to school to pursue a doctorate in education, this question weighed on my mind. My bookshelves were filled with books from experienced English teachers with their own tips for teaching and managing a language arts classroom, and I regularly read *English Journal* and attended a wide range of professional development programs; still, I did not have a firm grasp on what most high school English teachers did in their classrooms to address the various language arts strands. But I had taught at one school long enough to detect some differences between what I was doing and what some of my colleagues were doing and between what I believed about education and teaching English and what they believed. And this realization spawned a second question: how are teachers' beliefs related to the way they teach their classes?

This study is my attempt to answer these questions and shed light on what is going on in the classrooms of accomplished high school English teachers and how those instructional practices are related to teacher beliefs.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Research has shown that high school teachers have had much less contact with their colleagues in contrast with elementary school teachers (Marston, Brunetti, & Courtney, 2005). Because of this greater isolation, high school English teachers often have been left wondering how their instructional strategies compare to those used in other high school English classes. Research has also indicated that many high school English teachers have not stayed abreast of research findings regarding best practices in language arts instruction. As a result, many high school English teachers teach in a vacuum with little or no information about instructional

alternatives beyond those they experienced as students and those presented in teacher education programs.

Although a great deal of research has been dedicated to understanding specific teaching practices in secondary language arts classrooms, much of this research has focused on only one language arts strand—for example, writing, reading, or speech instruction. In order to understand the complex balance of these different areas of instruction, more research needs to be conducted regarding teachers' perceptions of how they incorporate the teaching of all language arts dimensions in their classrooms.

While teachers' perceptions of their classroom instructional methods have been the focus of several studies, less attention has been paid to the beliefs that influence these instructional choices. Richardson (1996) made a compelling case for the need for more studies to explore the connection between teacher beliefs and teacher action, such as the current study proposes. As educational entities attempt to identify and sometimes mandate those practices that are considered the most effective, it is important to understand why teachers choose specific instructional strategies. Trying to change or alter teachers' teaching practices without understanding how beliefs influence those choices may prove to be futile. Only by recognizing and working within teachers' belief systems can real change be instituted.

National Board Certification is an important influence on American education today, but little research has been done to explore its impact on secondary education. The standards established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) for English Language Arts—Adolescence through Young Adulthood were intended to reflect the behaviors of accomplished teachers in this certification area. However, a multitude of classroom activities could meet these standards as National Board candidates complete the certification process.

Little information has been disseminated about the actual activities these accomplished teachers are using in their classrooms.

The intent of this study is to explore the instructional methods that accomplished high school English teachers use in their classrooms and to improve understanding of how those methods are influenced by the teachers' beliefs. Through a survey of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) and follow-up interviews and classroom observations with selected survey participants, I have shed light on the variety and frequency of practices experienced teachers used and the beliefs that influenced teachers' instructional decisions. The interview and observation portion of the study examined further the beliefs and motivations of those teachers who were both typical and outlying according to their survey responses.

### *Research Questions*

The following research questions were used to guide the study of high school English teachers' instructional practices.

#### *Overarching Question:*

What instructional activities do accomplished high school English teachers employ in their classrooms and how are these strategies informed by the teachers' beliefs?

#### *Quantitative Research Questions:*

1. What is the demographic nature of the respondents of this study?
2. What instructional activities are most frequently used by the respondents?
3. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among years of teaching experience, the frequency of traditional instructional activities, and teacher beliefs regarding student learning?

4. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among school setting, the use of technology, and beliefs about technology?
5. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among teachers' education level, the use of contemporary instructional activities, and various teacher beliefs?
6. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among teachers' gender, use of class time, and beliefs about progressive instructional activities?
7. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among gender, approach to teaching literature, and beliefs about cooperative learning?

*Qualitative Research Questions:*

1. What methods or strategies do high school English teachers use to teach reading, literature, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, representing, and technology skills?
2. How are various demographic factors (e.g., gender, experience, education) related to high school English teachers' instructional methods?
3. How do high school English teachers balance or integrate the teaching of the various language arts strands?
4. How do high school English teachers' beliefs affect their teaching strategies?

*Significance of the Study*

This study could benefit all secondary English teachers by enabling them to compare their own instructional practices to those of accomplished English teachers at that level. Teachers who read this study may become aware of instructional strategies with which they previously had no experiences. They may also discover other ways of balancing various aspects of the language arts curriculum. By reflecting upon the findings regarding the allocation of class

time to various language arts strands, these teachers may reconsider their own practices and recognize that they could benefit from adjusting the amount of time spent on specific instructional practices.

This study should also contribute to the body of knowledge about NBCTs and their classroom practices. As more money has been allocated to National Board Certification from local, state, and federal governments, calls for accountability have increased. Readers of this study will have information about what NBCTs in this certification field do in their classrooms and will be able to weigh this information against research into best practices in language arts instruction as one form of evaluation of the National Board program.

In addition, candidates for National Board Certification in English Language Arts/Adolescence through Young Adulthood may benefit from the information this study will provide about the practices of NBCTs in that certification area. It may provide teachers considering NBC with a point of comparison for measuring the quality of their teaching in comparison to those who have already achieved certification. And the description of teaching methods may make them more aware of possible teaching strategies for use in the certification process.

Teacher education programs and other educational organizations interested in may also benefit from the study's focus on teacher beliefs. Understanding the connection between beliefs and teaching practices is critical in initiating change in teaching practice, something extremely important to teaching education and professional development programs. No amount of instruction or professional development will be effective if the participant does not implement the new information in his or her classroom. Once leaders in teacher education and professional development programs understand how beliefs impact instruction, these programs will have a

better chance of approaching teacher development in a way that is more likely to effect real change in the classroom.

Ultimately, this study could benefit many students who take high school English classes. As information is disseminated about the classroom practices of accomplished English teachers, more classroom teachers may adopt these practices, improving the quality of instruction in their classrooms. Also, if teacher education programs develop more effective ways of influencing developing teachers' methods to include more research-based practices, students may benefit from having better prepared and equipped teachers.

### *Definitions of Terms*

This section provides definitions of terms that are used in this study, in alphabetical order.

1. ***traditional methods***: those teaching methods and activities identified through a review of the pertinent literature that were prevalent in high school English classrooms more than 20 years ago but that are not fully supported by current research such as isolated grammar instruction and vocabulary instruction not tied to reading texts
2. ***traditional beliefs***: beliefs that support a teacher-centered classroom environment and limited student choice
3. ***technology methods***: those teaching methods and activities that integrate elements of technology such as electronic video and audio equipment and computers
4. ***technology beliefs***: beliefs regarding the effectiveness and necessity of the integration of technology in classroom instruction

5. ***contemporary methods***: those teaching methods and activities identified through a review of the literature as having been introduced or popularized during the last 20 years and supported by most contemporary research in language arts instruction
6. ***purpose beliefs***: beliefs regarding the purpose of or reasons for education and schooling
7. ***motivation beliefs***: beliefs regarding those factors that motivate students to seek achievement in school
8. ***teacher emphasis***: the language arts strand on which a given teacher spends the most class time in comparison to the teacher averages for each language arts strand
9. ***progressive beliefs***: beliefs that support a student-centered classroom and substantial student choice
10. ***cooperative beliefs***: beliefs regarding the effectiveness and necessity of cooperative learning activities and student-student interaction
11. ***accomplished teachers***: the term *accomplished* is used by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to describe those teachers who have demonstrated excellence in teaching by successfully completing the requirements for National Board Certification.
12. ***graphic organizers***: any visual representation used to organize students' thoughts or develop concepts related to reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, or representing
13. ***Literature Circles***: reading activities in which students are broken up into groups based on interest, reading ability, or other criteria for the study of literature

14. *text annotations*: techniques related to writing on, marking, or highlighting texts used to develop students' critical reading skills
15. *Writer's Workshop*: the use of peer review or revision groups for developing writing through the writing process

#### *Delimitations and Limitations*

One delimitation of this study is that it focuses only on National Board Certified Teachers. While this criterion ensures that the study's participants are certified in the field and have at least 3 years' experience, this may limit the study's applicability to high school English teachers in general. Those teachers who are interested in National Board certification may, in general, hold similar beliefs about education and instructional methods. Certainly, those teachers who have successfully earned Board certification may be particularly similar in that they were able to provide evidence of teaching to the Board's specified standards. This study may be limited by the fact that teachers whose beliefs and instructional strategies vary significantly from those suggested by the NBPTS standards may be less likely to earn Board certification.

The failure to include a male NBCT in the population for the qualitative portion of the study is an additional delimitation. Only 14.5% of the original population for the study was composed of males, based upon an analysis of the first names of the selected teachers, and only 9.4% of the respondents were male. This discrepancy in response rates suggests that the survey results may be skewed in favor of female responses. Because only six men were willing to be interviewed or observed and due to geographic and scheduling factors related to those six men, I was unable to include a male participant in the qualitative study. Therefore, the findings of the qualitative portion of the study cannot be generalized to the general population.

Another delimitation is that this study focuses primarily on teachers' perceptions of their teaching strategies. Although classroom observations compose part of the qualitative portion of the study, both the survey and interviews rely on what teachers believe or attest they are doing in their classrooms, which may or may not be an accurate reflection of their teaching practices. Teacher openness may also affect the study in regard to the reporting of teacher beliefs. Because of my limited relationships with the participants they may be unwilling to share some of their true opinions and try to express what they think they should say.

Another delimitation that may limit the generalizability of the study is that, although the survey participants were selected randomly from an official database of National Board Certified Teachers, certain geographic areas are likely to be more heavily represented than others because of the uneven distribution of NBCTs nationwide. As a result, states with high numbers of NBCTs such as North Carolina and Florida may be overrepresented, and curricular and training programs in those states that are overrepresented may skew the overall results because of the instructional strategies and beliefs of teachers from those areas.

In terms of data collection, several limitations exist. First, data were only collected from participants who chose to complete and return the survey. This could skew the data because those who do complete the survey could hold similar beliefs and similar teaching methodologies. Second, the participants for qualitative portion of the study were limited to those teachers who felt strongly enough about their own teaching to have me observe their classrooms and ask more in-depth questions about their practices and beliefs. Third, the classroom observations were limited to a single day for each participant, which may not, given the particular day, provide an accurate reflection of each teacher's usual practices.

### *Overview of the Study*

Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the study, a statement of the problem, the research questions that guided the study, an explanation of the study's significance, definitions of important terms, and delimitations and limitations. Chapter 2 is a review of research dealing with National Board Certification, teacher beliefs, and language arts instructional methods. The research methodology and design is covered in Chapter 3 with an explanation of the sampling methods, recruiting protocols, data collection methods, and data analysis methods for both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study. Chapter 4 describes the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 includes a summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Secondary language arts teachers are responsible for teaching a wide range of skills and knowledge, and they are generally given a substantial amount of freedom to determine how to allocate their instructional time and design lessons and activities to meet course objectives. Understanding how teachers make these instructional decisions, what beliefs influence these decisions, and which practices are used by the most accomplished teachers is a necessary step in improving teacher quality and, ultimately, student learning.

This review of literature was designed to accomplish the following objectives: (a) examine the effectiveness of National Board Certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; (b) trace the major movements and events in the history of secondary language arts instruction in the United States; (c) explore the major trends and research findings regarding the teaching of reading, literature, composition, and grammar at the secondary level; (d) examine current issues related to the integration of technology in the secondary language arts classroom; (e) study the nature of and influences on teacher beliefs and their relationship to classroom practice; and (f) explore the tradition and history of grounded theory qualitative research.

#### *National Board Certified Teachers*

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has reignited the debate over what constitutes a highly qualified teacher. NCLB emphasizes subject matter knowledge and provides alternative methods of certification that allow people with little or no pedagogical training to become teachers; however, many educational leaders contend that few people can become effective

teachers without training in classroom methodology. In fact, some educators have said that NCLB had actually lowered teacher standards by emphasizing content knowledge and offering too many loopholes to highly qualified status. Lewis (2005), a government policy analyst, argued that NCLB prompted much confusion about teacher competence:

The ability to define that competence had been gradually emerging from research and policy making before NCLB, but the law, unfortunately, is loosening our grasp on a consensus about what it means to be highly qualified. This is one of those ideas . . . that is being left behind. (p. 563)

Because of this debate, groups challenging the one-sided view of highly qualified teaching presented by NCLB garnered much attention. Among these groups, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards positioned itself as the foremost organization for the promotion of rigorous teaching standards. Founded in 1987 in response to the findings in *A Nation at Risk* concerning the poor state of America's educational system, the mission of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is

to advance the quality of teaching and learning by maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do; providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards; and advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2006, "Backgrounder," p. 1)

An examination of the standards in each subject area of certification revealed that the board's concept of "what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do" included an advanced degree of both subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. And the standards and the portfolio requirements candidates must complete demonstrated the emphasis on teacher leadership suggested by the final component of the organization's mission statement. But the debate continued as to whether National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) are better teachers and better leaders.

The first group of NBCTs, totaling less than 100, received certification in 1995, and through the 2005 certification cycle, more than 47,500 teachers had achieved National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2006, “Backgrounder,” p. 2). One factor in this dramatic increase was the institution of pay supplements for NBCTs in several states where improving teacher quality was seen as the key to educational success. But as the amount of public money being poured into National Board Certification (NBC) at both the state and national levels rose, the call for accountability also increased. Citizens concerned with government expenditures wanted proof that the NBC process identified accomplished teachers and that accomplished teachers produced more accomplished students. Less attention has been paid to the leadership components of NBC, but as the number of NBCTs grow, their influence as educational leaders may increase and the program’s ability to develop leaders—or lack thereof—may become more relevant to public discourse on education and educational research.

Research into the classroom effectiveness of NBCTs is still in its infancy, but a growing number of researchers are now examining whether NBCTs are better teachers than their noncertified peers. The earliest studies generally focused on NBCTs’ own perceptions of their teaching after completion of the NBC process. For example, the 2001 Current Candidate Survey conducted by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards asked candidates to identify how the process impacted their teaching in several areas. The results showed that the following percentage of teachers agreed or agreed strongly that NBC had helped them develop stronger skills in each designated area: curriculum development—88.6%, evaluation of student learning—89.2%, standards integration—80.4%, student interactions—82.1%, collaboration with colleagues—79.6%, and parental involvement—81.6% (p. 2). The survey also asked candidates

to respond to the following statement: “As a result of participating in the National Board Certification process, I believe I am a better teacher.” 61.1% agreed strongly with this statement, and another 30.5% agreed (p. 2).

A 2005 study conducted by researchers outside the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards substantiated these findings with a majority of participants commenting that the NBC process had helped them improve their teaching by creating positive learning environments, planning, reflecting on classroom practices, demonstrating subject knowledge, and assessing student learning (Tracz, Daughtry, Henderson-Sparks, Newman, & Sienty, p. 38-44). The results of this study were more impressive than those of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards study because the questions were open-ended and relied on participants to identify positive changes. So it seemed that NBCTs, at least, believed the process was a powerful professional development tool. But were these teachers capable of making an objective assessment of NBC’s impact in their classrooms? The possibility exists that these teachers were biased in favor of the NBC program because of the time they invested and the financial incentive that might ultimately be eliminated if response to the program is not positive.

These positive responses were, however, also substantiated by the majority of other studies conducted into the quality of NBC. Much of the research specifically focused on the board’s ability to distinguish accomplished teachers from those who were not. One important qualitative study examined 65 NBC candidates, of whom 31 achieved certification. The study found that NBCTs outperformed non-NBCTs with statistical significance on 11 of 13 key dimensions of quality teaching practice (Bond, Smith, Baker, & Hattie, 2001). Although this study did not compare NBCTs with teachers who had never applied for NBC, it indicated that

the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards correctly differentiated stronger applicants from weaker ones.

More recent research attempted to use student testing data as an indicator of teacher quality. Five major studies produced mixed results about NBC. The two earliest studies produced the most impressive results in favor of NBC. In 2004, a study of Florida high school math students showed that students of NBCTs significantly outperformed those of non-NBCTs on 7 of 9 statistical categories (Cavaluzzo, 2004). In this study, special needs students and African-American and Hispanic students showed even more improvement with an NBCT. Another study conducted in 2004 by Arizona State University compared data from four grades over 4 years and three academic indicators and revealed that students of NBCTs performed better than other students on over 75% of the 48 comparisons (Vandervoort, Amrein-Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004). In this study, the researchers used the effect sizes to estimate that students of NBCTs received the equivalent of an extra month's education over the course of a school year.

The third major study also showed increased academic performance by students of NBCTs; however, the study had some conflicting results as well. The 2005 study, conducted by Goldhaber and Anthony, found that students of NBCTs outperformed students of non-NBCTs, but not by much. In addition, the study found that the students of candidates during the year of candidacy did not outperform other students and that student gains were lower after NBCTs received certification than before. These findings suggested that NBC did not produce better teachers, but worse teachers, and that the year of candidacy is particularly bad for student achievement. The researchers admitted that their results might have been impacted by the low number of "before-and-after" teachers in the data pool and suggested that lower performance after NBC might have been a result of additional leadership activities that took the NBCTs'

attention away from their classrooms. However, the authors pointed out that the gains achieved by NBCTs were similar to those of teachers who excelled on typical state licensure exams and that using those licensure exams might be a much cheaper way of identifying accomplished teachers because the NBC process itself did not seem to make teachers better.

Perhaps the most highly regarded study of NBC was conducted by the Committee on Evaluation of Teacher Certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards of the National Research Council and published in 2008. *Assessing Accomplished Teaching: Advanced-Level Certification Programs* concluded that NBCTs were more effective in terms of their impact on student achievement, and the study pushed for more support for NBCTs (Hakel, Koenig, & Elliott). The authors called into question some school districts' failure to make the most of their NBCTs by not putting them in struggling schools and not using them to mentor other teachers.

A much more critical report on NBC came from Sanders, Ashton, and Wright (2005). In a study conducted in two NBCT-dense counties of North Carolina, the researchers found no statistically significant achievement-test differences between students of NBCTs and students of non-NBCTs. While there were a few indicators of better achievement by NBCTs (though not statistically significant), in some instances non-NBCTs outperformed NBCTs. According to the report, the findings “do not support the conclusion that, in general, students of NBCTs receive better quality teaching than students of other teachers” (p. 2) and suggested that “the current NBPTS certification process does a relatively poor job of distinguishing effective from ineffective teachers” (p. 9). However, the researchers did not account for the fact that, in such NBCT-dense schools, students of non-NBCTs might have benefited from having NBCTs in

previous years, and they assumed that effective teachers could be identified solely through student test scores as if all important learning were tested on achievement tests.

While there are questions about the validity of some of these quantitative studies, they have placed a great deal of pressure on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. State officials are likely wondering whether millions of tax-payer dollars are going to waste each year on a program that is not living up to its intended mission. But the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and NBCTs across the nation appear to be confident that the program is not only identifying better teachers, but also making better teachers.

### *Secondary Language Arts Education*

#### *The History of Secondary Language Arts Education*

Although “English” has been taught in American schools from the inception of public education, the teaching of English language arts has undergone dramatic changes over the last 200 years. While initially emphasis was placed upon the instruction of basic reading and writing, the development and expansion of secondary education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought with it an emphasis on the study of major literary works. Rosewall (1965) pointed out that the focus of high school English classes at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the study of major literary texts that were often identified as required study for college preparation. The emphasis on literary study ultimately led to the most common type of high school English course in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: a course focused on literary study of major works supplemented by meager, and often disconnected, study of composition, rhetoric, grammar, and speech (Applebee, 1974). The development of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1911 was, in part, an attempt to help secondary English teachers move away from this emphasis on college

preparation (Hook, 1979). Ultimately, NCTE played a major role in the shift away from traditional literary study that dominated secondary English instruction in the last 80 years (Applebee, 1974).

The debate that dominated the secondary English curriculum for nearly a century was that of experiential education versus skills instruction. Hook (1979) connected the advocates of experiential learning with Witty's efforts for "the whole child" and the advocates of a skills-based approach with Center's "the hole in the child." NCTE was long affiliated with the experiential approach, stressing the importance of students' experiences with language in a variety of forms and methods. However, research into work-force-related English skills and their importance to America's economy like that reported in *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence, 1983) helped ensure that skills-based curricula continued to be a part of public policy. More recent policies, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), continued to mandate skills-based instruction in the language arts.

The development of grade-level textbook series that progressively tried to offer everything a teacher could need was also an important development in secondary English instruction over the last century. While these products traditionally lent themselves more to skills-based instruction, more recently, they have become more geared toward an integrated, experiential approach to literacy.

Another important change in secondary English classrooms was the preparedness of classroom teachers. While many high school English teachers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century only held 2-year degrees from normal schools, this situation changed dramatically around mid-century when advocacy groups such as NCTE and the International Reading Association began to urge states to increase the qualifications for language arts teaching licensure (Applebee, 1974). In

response to the findings included in *A Nation at Risk*, the Carnegie Commission on Teacher Education (1986) called for better teacher preparation in *A Nation Prepared*. Perhaps influenced by *A Nation Prepared* and other like-minded advocates, a key component of NCLB was the requirement of “highly qualified” teachers in every language arts classroom. Although many saw this stipulation as an important step in improving the quality of English instruction in America, the alternative certification methods provided for in the act opened the door for English teachers with little or no pedagogical training in the teaching of reading, composition, and the other language arts. Subsequent research identified significant differences between traditionally prepared English teachers and those without formal education training. Grossman (1990) studied six secondary English teachers, three with formal pedagogical training and three without, and found that teachers without education training tended to be more subject-focused while those with pedagogical training tended to use more innovative methods and were more student-focused. As more teachers enter the profession through alternative-certification methods, these differences could impact the face of secondary English instruction in America.

### *Teaching Reading and Literature*

#### *Major Philosophies*

Three major trends have dominated reading and literature instruction in secondary English classrooms since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As explained above, the most dominant influence on the secondary English curriculum in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the study of major works of literature to meet college entrance requirements (Rosewall, 1965). Teachers often approached these texts from a historical or biographical approach in which the teacher helped students understand the texts as products of their society or of the author’s life.

Although this approach does not dominate literature instruction as it once did, advocates for the preservation of culture have continued to espouse this type of instruction (see Adler, 1982; Bennett, 1983; Hirsch, 1987).

The second major influence was the “New Criticism.” Although Applebee (1993) aligned New Critical approaches with cultural literacy approaches, for the purposes of this study they were considered distinct from one another. The New Critics developed a theory of literary analysis based on the idea that a text has a meaning in and of itself, not inherently tied to the author, the cultural context, or the reader. According to this approach, a reader can unlock *the* meaning of a text (Brooks & Warren, 1938). One major proponent of this approach was Frye. In *On Teaching Literature* (1972) he suggested that literature should not be taught like a music appreciation class in which students memorize facts about each piece of literature. Instead, he asserted that teachers needed to teach common literary characteristics and techniques (almost as skills or a set of schemata) that students can apply to all literature to enable them to apply their reading skills to all literature. For example, he advocated the use of archetypes, mythology, and common symbology as techniques students could learn to apply to any literary text. Even though Frye’s approach decreased in overall popularity as several schools of literary theory challenged its central premises, it is still a common approach in American high schools, as evidenced by the College Board’s Advanced Placement program that requires student to analyze texts outside their literary and biographical contexts.

Perhaps the most revolutionary work in literature instruction was that of Rosenblatt. Her “transactional” theory of reading was the basis of the reader-response instructional methods that dominated scholarship in secondary reading instruction for many years. In *Literature as Exploration* (1938), Rosenblatt reasoned that the unique experiences, beliefs, values, and

purposes of a reader influenced that reader's interpretation of a text so that there was no single valid interpretation of a text. Therefore, the meaning of any text was the result of a transaction between the individual reader and the text. The writings of Probst drew heavily from the writings of Rosenblatt. In *Response and Analysis: Teaching Literature in Junior and Senior High School* (1988), Probst explained the problems with the other two major approaches to literature instruction:

Critical and historical approaches to literature, neither of which have paid close attention to the problems and pleasure of the lonely reader, have dominated instruction not only in colleges but also in secondary schools. Yet it is in the secondary schools, where the whole population is represented—not just the serious student of literature—that attention to the individual reader is most important. Here the student can be led to organized and intelligent reflection on the great issues of literature, which are also likely to be the great issues of life. Literature might serve them both to give pleasure and to sharpen understanding. (Preface ii)

Many of those methods considered today to be best practices in literature and reading instruction draw heavily from this transactional, or reader-response, perspective. In *Envisioning Literature: Literary Understanding and Literature Instruction*, Langer (1995) proposed that reading literature helped students build envisionments. She identified five stances, or recursive processes, that students went through as they developed these envisionments, a theory that stemmed from Rosenblatt's transactional theory. Langer emphasized the critical role of student experience and interaction with the text as part of reading instruction.

A multitude of instructional approaches influenced by reader-response theories have come to dominate the literature on reading instruction, but Beach (1993) argued against a narrow interpretation of reader-response instruction. Beach identified five theoretical perspectives within the reader-response domain: knowledge-to-text convention (textual theories), modes of experience (experiential theories), psychological perspective (psychological theories), social

context (social theories), and cultural identities (cultural theories). All of those perspectives had significant influence on various methodological approaches to secondary English instruction.

### *Methodological Approaches*

Not everyone has agreed with the aforementioned classification of the dominant approaches to literature and reading instruction. In an overview of the most prevalent methods for teaching secondary English, Brown, Gallagher, and Turner (1975) identified three basic approaches: the revised traditional approach, the new English approach, and the experience approach. They defined the revised traditional approach as a more unified approach than a stricter traditional approach in which the teacher did more to integrate writing with the literature curriculum. The new approach, according to the authors, was one that was significantly more unified and structured across grades to provide a comprehensive language arts curriculum that was sequential and cumulative, often packaged as a prescribed curriculum. The experience approach was one in which student needs and interests were paramount in the teacher's curricular decisions. Brown, Gallagher, and Turner also distinguished these three approaches in terms of the focus on subject matter and student focus. They asserted that the new English approach was the most subject-centered while the experience approach was the most student-centered. They further claimed that the revised traditional approach was balanced between these two extremes.

An examination of recent publications in English instruction revealed the predominance of student-centered instructional approaches to reading, particularly through discussion and the integration of reading and writing instruction. These approaches that seek deeper levels of personal connection and understanding of texts may suffer in popularity, however, if the current

emphasis on standardized testing continues. In “Testing Literature,” Purves (1992) noted that most tests given as state assessments or generated by commercial testing companies “concentrate on the content of a literary work and on relatively low-level comprehension” (p. 19). He further asserted that the “tests concentrate on prose fiction and exclude poetry and drama; they tend to ignore cultural literacy and various critical methodologies. All of these tendencies add up to a monotonous view of learning in literature” (p. 19). While the research suggested that most language arts experts agreed with Purves’s emphasis on a student-centered approach that focused on the “development of what one might call preferences or habits of mind in reading and writing” (p. 24), testing programs appeared to remain largely unchanged.

The development of student questions for literature response and discussion is a major trend in reading instruction. In “Dialogue with a Text” (1990) Probst described the problems with teachers who squashed student interest in the subject of literature in order to focus on “skills and terms and techniques” (p. 166). Probst argued that teachers must allow students to play a role in directing classroom discourse in order to make connections with text and become motivated readers. He went on to suggest that teachers step back and take a less active role in leading discussion and provided general questions that teachers could use to prompt student interaction with the text without limiting the context of the discussion too severely. Gellis (2002) also suggested using master sets of general questions to help students become active explorers of texts. He advocated using exploratory heuristics to engage students in thinking about texts so that students who were not planning to major in English would still be able to think critically about the texts they were reading.

Langer (1992) argued that readers had different approaches toward reading a text depending upon whether they were reading in order to engage in a literary experience or reading

to gain information. In a literary experience, the reader was “reaching toward a horizon of possibility” as opposed to when reading for information where the reader was “maintaining a point of reference” (p. 37). To maximize these literary experiences, students should be treated as independent thinkers, encouraged to generate questions, and connected to prior knowledge. In addition, she explained that instruction should provide scaffolding for student learning and that control should move from teacher to student.

In “Whose Inquiry Is It Anyway? Using Students’ Questions in the Teaching of Literature,” Meyers (2002) also emphasized the importance of involving students in leading discussion through asking questions, helping students become active meaning-makers in the learning process. He particularly emphasized the use of question-generating after students finished reading the text to further classroom discussion. Similarly, Ensrud (2002) described using student-generated questions to have seminars over literary texts in “Getting at What They Want to Know: Using Students’ Questions to Direct Class Discussion.” He emphasized increased student involvement as a major advantage of this method, and he advised teachers to help students prepare questions according to four major categories: opening, closed-ended, open-ended, and core. This use of discussion seminars was also the subject of Israel’s (2002) research. Israel pointed out that using Socratic seminars as literature discussions helped students realize the many perspectives that could be held about a single topic. According to Israel, these seminars helped students open their minds and understand the complex and sometimes contradictory beliefs people can hold simultaneously.

A key component of the recent emphasis on class discussion is literature circles. The basic concept behind this activity is that students will connect and interact more with literature they are allowed to choose. In literature circles, students work in small groups with other

students who have chosen the same text to discuss the work and build understanding through a variety of student-led activities. In *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom*, Daniels (1994) asserted that allowing students to make choices about what they read involved them more in the reading process. Literature circles, according to Daniels, enabled students to function like “real” readers by reading what they want and interacting with others and actively participating in and leading discussion about the reading. DaLie (2001) discussed the importance of using literature circles to improve students’ interactions and experiences with literature. DaLie wrote that literature circles allowed students to experience the true power of collaboration: “They inevitably provide our students with proof that they will benefit from the respectful sharing and receiving of each person’s unique talents and insights” (p. 99).

The integration of reading and writing instruction, particularly from a reader-response perspective, has also been a major trend in recent language arts instruction. Gaughan (2001) argued that teachers must help students integrate reading and writing with their selves in English classes. He explained how he used the theme “Who are you?” to connect all the literature and writing the students did in class. They examined the literature from the perspective of how it helped each student understand himself or herself and his or her environment. In “What Is the Value of Connecting Reading and Writing?” Tierney and Leys (1986) suggested that reading and writing were more integrated activities than linear ones that followed one another. They contended that readers who wrote brought ideas from texts to the writing experience and that writers who read looked at the text from a writer’s perspective and took away forms, structures, and other aspects of the texts to use in their own writing and examined how the author constructed the reading text. In this way, the two activities enhanced one another tremendously.

Britton (1989) also advocated the integration of reading and writing in “Writing and-Reading in the Classroom.” He suggested that reading and writing must be integrated to maximize the effectiveness of instruction: “When talking, reading, and writing are orchestrated in the classroom in such a way that each can make its unique contribution to a single end, we have surely harnessed language to learning as powerfully as possible” (p. 223). He particularly stressed the value of journals for setting an interactive tone between student and teacher and between reader and text.

Long a mainstay of reading and literature instruction, traditional methods of vocabulary development have come under attack in recent years as more and more research has questioned the efficacy of such methods. Allen (2001) discussed the failure of traditional vocabulary programs in which students looked up definitions and wrote sentences using the words in “Word Matters: Teaching and Learning Vocabulary in Meaningful Ways.” Instead, she emphasized the importance of reading to vocabulary development and advocated building background knowledge so that students had more clues to bring to the reading process. In addition, she suggested mediated scaffolding in which the teacher modeled the process for using context and clues to decipher a word’s meaning, graphic organizers to get students to think in a consistent way about figuring out words’ meanings, and integrating the word into other contexts in which they have heard related words.

The expansion of the canon to include literature from a wide range of cultures has been one of the most important trends in literature instruction in the last 20 years. Editors Cook and Lodge (1996) compiled 19 articles devoted to the importance of honoring diversity in the literature classroom for the 28<sup>th</sup> volume in the *Classroom Practices in Teaching English* series. In their introduction, Cook and Lodge stressed the need to include literature that reflected the

growing diversity among student populations and that broadened the reader's perspective on the various ways the English language was used across cultures. They also claimed that including literature from diverse cultures could ultimately improve students' reading ability by engaging them in literary study.

### *Teaching Composition and Grammar*

Modern composition instruction seems to have been spearheaded by the publication in Janet Emig's *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders* in 1971. In these case studies, Emig found that "school-sponsored writing experienced by older secondary students is a limited, and limiting experience" (p. 97). Emig discovered that most composition instruction had a narrow focus, emphasizing the transmission of knowledge from writer to reader. She also demonstrated that students were discouraged from taking risks and expressing personal feelings in their writing. The response to Emig's work was powerful. The focus of composition instruction shifted from literature analysis and persuasion to the writing process and personal expression (Newkirk, 2003).

One major trend in composition instruction in recent years has been an emphasis on teaching students to compose using the methods professional writers use. An influential text that has been used in many teacher education programs is *To Compose: Teaching Writing in High School and College*, edited by Thomas Newkirk (1990). In his introductory essay to the volume, Newkirk attacked traditional composition methods focused on formulaic techniques like teaching what he termed the "Five Star Theme." He asserted that the writing process approach was far more effective but could be taken to extremes, with students given little or no guidance. Newkirk went on to describe some specific failings he found in some teachers' use of the writing

process method, including unlimited topic choice and the failure to emphasize the study of finished writing products. In conclusion, he advocated a more balanced approach to writing process instruction that looked at the specific needs of a student at one particular moment in the writing process.

Dean (2006) also explained the need for teachers to go beyond the writing process in *Strategic Writing: The Writing Process and Beyond in the Secondary English Classroom*. Dean classified the types of strategies students should be taught into three categories: strategies for inquiry, strategies for drafting, and strategies for product. She explained that it was not enough to teach what the stages of the writing process were and require students to complete each stage; instead, teachers must give students strategies to deal with various issues that arose at each stage.

Student-centered writing instruction methods have also dominated the work of Tom Romano as well. In *Clearing the Way: Working with Teenage Writers* (1987). Romano proposed that teachers give students the freedom to “cut loose” in their writing and use their own language. He emphasized the important role writing played in thinking and learning, not just communicating. And he claimed that teachers needed to be practitioners of writing so that they could model the process for their students and better understand the issues and problems inherent in writing.

In one of the essays in Newkirk’s *To Compose* (1990), Donald Murray took a closer look at the use of professional writers’ compositional models as models in the secondary classroom. Murray used direct quotations from successful writers to emphasize many of the problems with the on-demand, timed writings that seemed to dominate composition instruction in high schools. Murray argued that studying these professional writers provided keen insight into the writing process, something—according to Murray—little understood. He urged teachers to study the

successful writers in their classrooms regarding the early stages of their writing to find clues that might help struggling writers.

Writing conferences have been a growing subject of interest along with the growth of process writing because they are seen as a way of ensuring that students revise and edit their work. However, as composition specialists found that much teacher-student conferencing focused on grammatical, technical errors in student writing, several writers urged teachers to do more with writing conferences. Tobin (1990) suggested that writing conferences were as much a process as writing itself was. He identified three key tensions that the writing teacher must be aware of: the writer's relationship to the text, the teacher's relationship to the text, and the relationship between the teacher and student. Tobin pointed out that the possible varieties of these tensions dictated that every writing conference be handled in its own way.

Another major trend in composition instruction has been the shift of response away from the teacher and toward the writer and other students. Murray (1990a) urged teachers to help students develop an "other self" that would monitor their writing, examining throughout the writing process and enabling these young writers to become their own editors and critics. Murray argued that the development of this other self was ultimately necessary for successful conferences with the writing teacher as well because only if the writer were interacting with this other self about the difficulties of the writing process and the teacher were actively listening to what this other self had to say could the conference be effective. Beach and Liebman-Kleine (1986) also asserted that teachers must help students become their own best reader by stepping out of the role of writer to the role of reader. In addition, Beach and Liebman-Kleine suggested that teaching strategies that will help the writer better understand his or her audience helped enable the writer to step outside himself or herself.

Grammar has long been a significant component of secondary language arts instruction and remains so today. The most common justification for the instruction of grammar is for the improvement of student writing, and the most common form of grammar instruction in America's schools is what is commonly called Traditional School Grammar (TSG) which emphasizes the identification of various parts of language and the study of rules regarding usage and mechanics. TSG seemed to have developed from the study of Classical languages after teachers began to apply the same prescriptive rules to the study of English (Applebee, 1974). However, several alternative approaches to grammar had an impact on language arts instruction. Structural grammar is focused on describing the structure of a language as it is actually used by speakers of the language, not as a set of prescriptive rules to be transferred. A third type of grammar, generative, developed in part from the work of Chomsky (1957) who theorized that spoken language originated from deep structures that are then turned into clear semantic statements through the rules of grammar intuited by the speaker. Although both structural and generative grammar have been used as the basis for some alternative grammar instruction models, neither has been able to surpass TSG in terms of use in American schools.

A great deal of controversy exists, however, as to whether any type of grammar instruction is effective in improving student writing. Numerous studies indicated that young children already possessed a great understanding of grammar (see Hunt, 1965; O'Donnell, Griffin, & Norris, 1967; Strickland, 1962). And while research suggested that students' writing does mature and become more sophisticated as they progress in school, several studies indicated that this maturation may not be related to grammar instruction. As early as 1913, research by Briggs demonstrated that students whose teachers had devoted extensive time to TSG actually performed worse on a test of traditional grammar than did students with no such instruction.

And Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer (1963) wrote in a review of research, “The teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing” (pp. 37-38). Perhaps the most impressive study regarding the impact of grammar instruction on student writing was a longitudinal study conducted by Elley, Braham, Lamb, and Wyllie (1976). After analyzing 3 years’ worth of data comparing students who studied TSG, generative grammar, or no grammar, the researchers found no significant differences in the quality of the students’ writing samples. In a meta-analysis of studies on the impact of grammar instruction, Hillocks (1986) found that any other language arts instruction is more effective than grammar instruction in improving students’ actual writing. Hillocks concluded:

School boards, administrators, and teachers who impose the systematic study of traditional school grammar on their students over lengthy periods of time in the name of teaching writing do them a gross disservice which should not be tolerated by anyone concerned with the effective teaching of good writing. (p. 248)

Despite these findings, however, grammar instruction remains a core element of many secondary English classrooms.

In recent years, several alternatives to or new approaches in TSG have been suggested in response to the growing body of research showing the failure of TSG to improve writing.

Renewed interest in rhetoric is perhaps attributable to the backlash against grammar instruction.

In *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* (1987), Lindemann blended research-based information on cognition and the writing process with an overview of the new rhetoric to provide teachers with ways to improve student writing with rhetoric. The growing interest in the College Board’s AP English Language and Composition Course, rather than the English Literature and Composition Course, also demonstrates the renewed interest in the study of rhetoric.

Others, however, are merely trying to tweak the instruction of grammar. While Noguchi (1991) conceded that grammar instruction was largely ineffective, he advocated that teachers continue to instruct students on grammar in areas that overlap writing and work on those aspects of grammar usage that are most likely benefit from grammar instruction. Noguchi went on to claim that by limiting the amount of class time spent on grammar instruction but connecting that grammar instruction to composition instruction on style, content, and organization teachers could improve student writing. Similarly, Haussamen (2003) asserted that grammar still needed to be taught, not ignored. He suggested that teachers not teach grammar in isolation but do so authentically with natural examples from student conversation and literary texts being studied in class.

### *Technology in Language Arts Instruction*

Computers and other technological advances have impacted many aspects of language arts instruction—perhaps not in every classroom, but in many classrooms. Bruce and Levin (2003) wrote that

New technologies . . . now find their way into instruction in composition, literature, decoding, reading comprehension, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, usage, punctuation, capitalization, brainstorming, planning, reasoning, outlining, reference use, study skills, rhetoric, handwriting, drama—in short, they are evident in every area of language arts. (p. 650)

An examination of how technology has impacted instruction in the primary language arts strands reveals how much change has already taken place and suggests that many more changes are on the horizon.

In regard to reading and reading instruction, technology has provided both new types of texts and new tools to help students read. Ironically, technology has made reading both more

and less visually oriented. Texts students encounter on the Internet are often more image-rich than traditional print-based texts, but the boom in sound-recorded texts has taken students even further from traditional print reading. This latter trend caused Cunningham (2000) to argue for a reevaluation of what constituted literacy. Language arts teachers who hope to prepare students for the literacy tasks of the coming years need to teach students to read image-dense documents in which print text plays a secondary, rather than primary, role. But computer-based technology does have several advantages for students. The Internet—for those students who have access—provides easy access to an immediate pool of background information that can help students understand and connect to the texts they read, and it provides teachers with thousands of free texts for students to read. Another major improvement in reading instruction is offered by the interactive texts offered with new textbook programs. At the click of a mouse, students can listen to the text being read, access the definition of a difficult word, or read an annotation placed in the text by his or her teacher.

Because many electronic-based texts offered readers a multitude of options, many researchers started to examine the constructivist nature of reading, the way the human brain constructs meaning from the conglomeration of stored information, in the technological realm. Many hypertexts give readers the chance to mold the text according to their own interests by selecting which links to view and by interpreting the images as they see fit. As Kinzer and Leander (2003) contended, this situation sometimes resulted in a coauthorship between reader and writer. Because coauthorship inherently suggested co-ownership, hypertexts may promote increased interest and connection on the part of readers, but more research needs to be done to explore this area.

Certainly, the information available on the Internet has greatly impacted the way students conduct research and gather ideas for writing, but the word-processing programs now widely available in classroom offer many new options for teachers of writing in handling the writing process. In *Computers in the Writing Classroom*, Moeller (2002) lauded computer-aided writing instruction for its “marriage” with constructivism: “Put simply, the focus of the classroom is no longer the *instruction* delivered by the teacher to the students, but the *construction* of knowledge manufactured by the cooperative effort of the class—students and teacher together” (4). Computers helped create a student-centered classroom that Moeller claimed was more democratic. Bruce and Levin (2003) also praised the opportunities provided by technology for encouraging students’ natural desire to learn.

Computers are also conducive to writing-process instruction because students can prepare multiple drafts and revise texts so easily. In addition, computer-based technologies have greatly expanded the genres available for student writing. Not only are there electronic presentation software programs like PowerPoint and Moviemaker, but also there are opportunities for students to create web sites and blogs. Although there is little or no completed research detailing the effects of these new technologies on student composition practices, there seems to be great potential for expanding student literacy and increasing students’ enthusiasm for literacy tasks.

### *Teacher Beliefs*

#### *Sources and Influences*

The term “belief” is one that researchers have struggled to define. While some have called for clear distinctions between such psychological aspects as “knowledge” and “belief” (see Feiman-Nemser & Floden; 1986), in this study I accepted the position forwarded by Green

(1971) that “belief” refers to any concept the holder believes or feels to be true. In this sense, teacher belief and teacher knowledge are interchangeable concepts insofar as they are both composed of concepts the teacher accepts to be true.

To understand how beliefs influence teachers and classroom instruction, it is important to understand the sources of beliefs. In *Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values: A Theory of Organization and Change*, Rokeach (1968) classified beliefs into five categories: primitive beliefs with 100% consensus, primitive beliefs with 0% consensus, authority beliefs, derived beliefs, and inconsequential beliefs. Primitive beliefs with 100% consensus were beliefs individuals held that were also held by those people close to the individual. According to Rokeach, those beliefs were rarely even addressed by the group and remained held by the individual unless circumstances forced the individual to confront such beliefs. Primitive beliefs with 0% consensus were beliefs an individual developed because of personal experiences and did not rely on the beliefs of those around the individual. Authority and derived beliefs were beliefs that individuals developed from what authority figures and influential societal groups believed. Rokeach argued that primitive beliefs were most often immutable but that authority and derived beliefs could be altered if their sources were discredited. This research into beliefs was important because it suggested that primitive beliefs, which were well established by the time a teacher entered the classroom or even a teacher education program, were nearly impossible to change. It also suggested that many of the beliefs that influenced a teacher’s approach to instruction came from the beliefs the teacher was exposed to as a child by his or her family members (primitive beliefs with 100% consensus) and from the experiences the teacher had as a student (primitive beliefs with 0% consensus).

Pajares's (1992) review of research on teacher beliefs supported this conclusion as well. He found that the beliefs of college students were firmly set by the time the students entered college and that the younger an individual was when a belief became part of his or her belief structure, the more rigidly the belief was held by the individual. Perhaps the most troubling part of Pajares's findings was that changes in beliefs were extremely rare in adulthood (p. 326). This position was supported by a variety of studies that demonstrated the failure of teacher education programs to impact teaching methods (see Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Densmore, 1987; Tillema & Knol, 1997; Weber & Mitchell, 1996). While those findings called into question the potential for teacher education programs or other change programs to impact a teacher's instructional methods, which are closely tied to his or her fundamental beliefs about education, it also emphasized the need to better understand how teacher beliefs manifested themselves in the classroom.

### *Relationship to Instruction*

Because an individual's beliefs are a unique by-product of his or her experiences, educational researchers have found it difficult to identify how beliefs—in general or in particular—have impacted instruction. Richardson (1996) pointed out that the relationship between beliefs and actions was extremely complex: “In most current conceptions, the perceived relationship between beliefs and actions is interactive. Beliefs are thought to drive actions; however, experiences and reflection on action may lead to changes in and/or additions to beliefs” (p. 104). Although much research was devoted to this subject in the last 20 years, the complexity and individual nature of the relationship prevented researchers from isolating widespread correlations. For example, Butt, Raymond, McCue, and Yamagishi (1992) studied the impact of biography on teachers' practical knowledge and found that personal experiences, cultural

experiences, and professional experiences all played a role in determining a teacher's classroom knowledge and practice. Although the researchers did find evidence that all three types of experiences influenced teacher beliefs, the intensity and direction of that impact was determined on an individualized basis and, hence, could not be generalized.

More evidence exists to connect a teacher's personal experiences with family and school to beliefs and actions in the classroom than anything else. Both Lortie (1975) and Knowles (1992) showed that teachers had a well-defined concept of the role of teachers before teacher education began. These findings, combined with the findings on the permanence of belief structures, suggested that teaching style and, ultimately, teacher quality relied heavily on factors determined early in a teacher's life.

Several studies clearly recognized the importance of classroom experience in impacting practical knowledge and teacher beliefs. Russell, Munby, Spafford, and Johnston (1988) concluded that beginning teachers relied on theory from teacher education programs as a rote plan of action, while experienced teachers developed individualized theories based on their own classroom experience and understood how those theories developed over time. Those findings at least suggested that teacher beliefs could possibly shift across time in response to experiences.

Many studies have, however, emphasized the static nature of teachers' classroom practices. Louden (1991) found not so much change as continuity in certain traditions that teachers held to over time. Regarding those traditions, he wrote, "These sedimented meaning structures exert a powerful influence on the limits of teachers' possible actions" (p. 189). In Zahorik's (1990) case studies, teachers exhibited a dominant teaching style influenced by a guiding ideology, but those teachers exhibited some flexibility within that dominant teaching style. Perhaps it is the static nature of belief structures that causes teacher practices to be static

also. In a study of 16 high schools, Rowan (1995) found that 47% of teachers responded that teaching was a “routine” task, made up of low variety and low uncertainty. If this view of teaching was a primitive belief a teacher developed through his or her own educational experiences, it would probably be very difficult to change. Marks and Gersten (1998) also found negative outcomes when a teacher’s beliefs conflicted with a proposed educational change. They found that teachers who were encouraged to adopt a new educational program that went against their own educational beliefs were likely to exhibit low engagement and low impact, in contrast to teachers whose educational philosophies were more in line with the proposed program.

If teachers’ practical knowledge changes because of experiences in the classroom, why does actual classroom practice change very little? Some might suggest that deeply held belief structures influence a teacher’s perspective on how to implement that practical knowledge in a way that coincides with such long-held beliefs. In other words, it might be that it is still the hidden teacher beliefs that are controlling most aspects of classroom instruction. These belief structures are in most ways hidden during classroom instruction, and study is needed to explore further how such belief structures function in the classroom.

One key aspect of teacher beliefs related to classroom practice is the teacher’s attitude about the relationship between teacher and learner in the learning process. Both Black and Ammon (1992) and McDiarmid (1990) found that students entering teacher education programs felt that teachers were responsible for dispensing knowledge to students, who were responsible for taking in and remembering the information. In addition, Erickson and MacKinnon (1991) found that practicing secondary science teachers held very positivist attitudes toward learning that teaching involved the transmission of facts from teacher to student. Those studies questioned the extent to which constructivism exists in actual classrooms. This study sought to

examine whether accomplished secondary language arts teachers held similar positivist views or tended to exhibit more constructivist tendencies in their classroom beliefs and practices.

### *Grounded Theory*

The origin of “grounded theory” as an approach to qualitative research is often identified as the publication of Glaser and Strauss’s *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* in 1967. In this work, Glaser and Strauss provided a systematic method for analyzing qualitative data in order to generate theory, a process they argued could improve the validity of qualitative research. Subsequently, Glaser and Strauss discontinued their work together amid disagreements about the appropriate uses and methods of grounded theory. In his later writings, Glaser insisted upon the use of grounded theory for theory generation, but Strauss, particularly in his work with Corbin, argued that the process of grounded theory could be used for theory verification (see Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Another difference was Glaser’s emphasis on an objectivist stance, while Strauss and Corbin adopted a more constructivist approach. Regardless of the differences that have somewhat divided grounded theorists, several aspects of the approach are widely agreed upon: a reliance on interviews as the primary data collection method, the coding of collected data, the constant comparison of data, theoretical sampling, and—in recent years—computer-aided data analysis (Charmaz, 2000).

While the systematic process advocated by Glaser and Strauss provided a needed methodology for studying and analyzing qualitative data, their approach came under fire in recent years for several reasons. Some qualitative researchers questioned whether the emphasis on theory generation was necessary, and Woods argued that this emphasis prompted some researchers to discredit other forms of qualitative research that were seen as “merely descriptive”

(1992, p. 382). Bulmer criticized Glaser and Strauss's contention that the researcher should avoid extensive immersion in preexisting research in the subject area until theory was developed (1979). Another major criticism of grounded theory, as conceptualized by Glaser and Strauss and Corbin, was its positivist bent in data analysis. Postmodern qualitative researchers questioned whether the systematic process and methodological standards of grounded theory were too limiting and inhibited the study of important areas of inquiry. Charmaz argued for a constructivist approach to grounded theory:

The power of grounded theory lies in its tools for understanding empirical worlds. We can reclaim these tools from their positivist underpinnings to form a revised, more open-ended practice of grounded theory that stresses its emergent, constructivist elements. We can use grounded theory methods as flexible, heuristic strategies rather than as formulaic procedures. (2000, p. 510)

Grounded theory has several important strengths that justify its use in social science research. For one thing, grounded theory as defined by Glaser, Strauss, and Corbin is a scientific approach to qualitative research in which theory is "derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). This systematic research process associated with grounded theory makes it more compatible with the positivist methods of quantitative research than with other forms of qualitative research. The systematic process, especially the constant comparison method of data analysis, helps improve the validity of data as well. In addition to the systematic processes of grounded theory, the opportunity for multiple data collection methods and, hence, triangulation of the data, increases the validity of this type of research. For these reasons, grounded theory has become one of the most widely accepted and respected approaches to qualitative research.

### *Summary*

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was founded to recognize quality teachers and improve the quality and status of teachers in the United States. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards claims to identify those teachers who are accomplished in the classroom; although the majority of studies and NBCTs' own responses support the National Board process as a valuable form of professional development, a few studies have questioned the success of the program.

A key component of the National Board program is the establishment of rigorous standards for each certification area. The standards for certification in English Language Arts/Adolescence through Young Adulthood are quite extensive, a reflection of dramatic changes that have taken place in secondary English instruction. The discipline of language arts has expanded tremendously since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when most high school English classes focused on the study of literary classics in order to prepare students for college entrance exams. Today, secondary language arts classes are responsible for teaching students a multitude of literacy skills—reading, literary analysis, creative expression, grammar, usage, mechanics, speaking skills, rhetoric, listening skills, and a host of new technology-related skills. How can a teacher facilitate student learning in all these areas? Current trends in reading and composition instruction suggest that the language arts classroom should be one in which students take an active role in shaping learning and constructing meaning through activities such as personal responses to texts, questioning of texts, participation in student-led discussions, self- and peer-review of writing tasks, and activities that require the integration of reading and writing. While many language arts researchers advocate these methods, limited research exists to understand how prevalent these practices are. This study is an attempt to examine whether

and to what extent those teachers who have earned the highest recognition in the teaching profession make use of these practices in their classrooms.

By using interviews and classroom observations, this study also examines the teacher beliefs that influence these teachers' decisions about instructional practices. Most research into teacher beliefs suggest that belief structures are relatively static and fairly solidified by the time people reach adulthood. For this reason, teacher education programs and professional development may have limited impact on teaching style and decision-making. But what are the experiences that have molded accomplished teachers' classroom practices?

This study is an attempt to answer that question by using the techniques at the heart of grounded theory qualitative research. Although some divisions exist among proponents of grounded theory, the data collection and analysis methods (namely, interviews, observations, coding, and categorization) of the approach enable this researcher to examine the classroom practices and beliefs of NBCTs in a constructivist, yet systematic fashion.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes an explanation of the research design, rationale, population, and data collection and analysis procedures for both the quantitative and qualitative sections of the study.

#### *Introduction*

The intent of this study was to explore the instructional methods accomplished high school English teachers use in their classrooms and to improve understanding of how those methods are influenced by the teachers' beliefs and demographic characteristics. This study used a mixed-methods approach, guided by the following overarching questions: what instructional activities do accomplished high school English teachers employ in their classrooms and how are these activities related to the teachers' beliefs and key demographic characteristics? The purpose of this study was to add to the body of knowledge about effective teaching methods so that practicing teachers, educational administrators, and teacher educators can improve their practice for the benefit of students.

#### *Research Design*

This study began with a researcher-designed survey (see Appendix A) of teachers who hold National Board Certification in English Language Arts/Adolescence through Young Adulthood. The survey examined various demographic factors, teaching methods, and teacher beliefs. Based upon responses to the survey and willingness to be interviewed and observed, I selected participants for further study. I then conducted interviews and observations to study the

teachers’ instructional practices in action and to explore further the connection between their beliefs and instructional strategies.

This study involved a mixed-methods research design, meaning that both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used. I developed it out of a “mixed method way of thinking” that Greene (2005) defined as “an approach to applied social inquiry, including educational research and evaluation, that actively includes, even welcomes, multiple methodological traditions, multiple ways of knowing and multiple value stances” (p. 208). In this study, the quantitative and qualitative portions were implemented sequentially, with the quantitative study conducted first and having priority over the qualitative study. Using Creswell’s (2003) method for visual models developed from Morse (1991) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), the study was structured as follows:



Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Jiao (2006) found a sequential, multilevel (meaning different numbers of participants in each portion of the study) design, like this one, to be the most common mixed-methods structure in their meta-analysis of mixed-methods studies in four leading educational psychology journals.

In this study, I intended the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide an expansion and deeper understanding of information that is, to some degree, quantifiable. Also, collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data provided a degree of triangulation to support the validity of both data sources. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) argued, researchers should be open to using any type of data that can shed light on the research problem. By combining both fieldwork and survey research this study made use of

what Brewer and Hunter argued was the “fundamental strategy” of multimethod research: “to attack a research problem with an arsenal of methods that have nonoverlapping weaknesses in addition to their complementary strengths” (1989, p. 17).

Interest in and use of mixed methods approaches has increased dramatically in recent years and has been expanded to many more disciplines. However, as Creswell (2003) pointed out, the mixed methods approach can be difficult. Not only does it require the researcher to be familiar with both methods of research design and analysis, but it also can involve tremendous amounts of data collection and analysis that can be very time consuming.

### *Quantitative Study*

The purpose of the quantitative portion of this study was two-fold: to study the instructional practices, beliefs, and demographic characteristics of accomplished English teachers and to identify teachers with whom interviews and observations could expand understanding of the diversity of instructional activities and the connection between classroom practice and beliefs. Quantitative study was appropriate for this research because it allowed me to study a wider segment of the chosen population than I could have done through qualitative methods. It also provided easy-to-understand numeric information about accomplished teachers’ instructional practices. I chose a survey for data collection because it allowed for the quick collection of information that could be generalized to a broader population.

### *Population and Sample*

The population for this study was limited to teachers who received National Board Certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards within the last 5 years, totaling approximately 2,465 teachers. I took the single-stage sample for the quantitative portion of the study from the official database of National Board Certified Teachers published by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards on its website, [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org). On March 25, 2008, I searched the database for all current certification holders in English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood and printed out the result list. From this list, I selected every sixth NBCT who received certification in the last 5 years for a total of approximately 405 teachers. I limited selection to those from the last 5 years to improve the likelihood of finding usable contact information and surveying teachers who were still actively teaching. Once I identified those teachers, I developed a contact database using the available information listed on the result page. I first tried to identify the school address of each teacher using the internet and called each school to verify that the teacher was a current employee. If the teacher was not currently working at that school, I asked for a current known workplace to send the survey.

The primary criterion for participation in this study was holding National Board Certification in English Language Arts/Adolescence through Young Adulthood. Two important criteria were, however, embedded within this criterion. First, a teacher who achieved NBC must have taught for a minimum of 3 years. Second, NBCTs must hold an official state teaching license in the certification field. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards requires official documentation from each candidate to substantiate that those requirements have been met. As a result, this sample of NBCTs helped ensure that the teachers surveyed had at least 3 years' teaching experience and held an official teaching license in language arts.

### *Instrumentation*

Data collection for the quantitative portion of the study was comprised entirely of respondents' answers to the NBCT Language Arts Instruction and Belief Questionnaire (see Appendix A) that I designed due to the lack of a relevant instrument for measuring both perceived teaching strategies and teacher beliefs. This survey included three sections. The first contained six demographic questions about the respondents and their teaching experience, asking them to identify information such as their gender and school setting. The second section included seven questions regarding the respondents' instructional methods. The first five of these questions listed a variety of activities related to one aspect of language arts instruction (i.e., reading, writing, etc.) and asked the respondents to identify the frequency with which they used these activities in a "typical" class. Participants rated each strategy on a five-part scale: Rarely (0-3 times per semester), Sometimes (1-3 times per month), Consistently (1 time per week), Often (2-3 times per week), and Frequently (4-5 times per week). I then converted these responses to numbers 1-5 for subsequent statistical analyses. Questions 12 and 13 were different from the other questions in the second section. Question 12 asked respondents to select a term that best describes their literature instruction, and Question 13 required respondents to provide the percent of class time spent on instruction of various language arts strands.

The third section contained several belief statements related to student learning and educational practices and required participants to respond to the statements in a Likert-scale format, from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, which I also converted to numbers 1-5 for statistical analyses. These beliefs statements were written and selected to be grouped in various ways to form the following subscales to assist in testing hypotheses: Traditional Beliefs (items 15, 19, 23, 27), Technology Beliefs (items 16, 17, 24, 25), Purpose Beliefs (items 20, 28),

Motivation Beliefs (items 14, 18, 22, 26), Progressive Beliefs (15, 16, 23, 24), and Cooperative Beliefs (items 21, 29). The survey also included a section requesting participants to provide contact information if they were willing to be interviewed or observed for the qualitative portion of the study.

I took several steps to improve the validity and reliability of the instrument. A focus group of high school English teachers provided feedback about the variety of instructional strategies that should be included in the second section of the instrument. To test the validity and reliability, a pilot test was conducted with NBCTs holding the appropriate certification from two school districts in North Carolina. The statistical tests listed for each hypothesis were run on the pilot test data, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated for pilot test data to check for the reliability of the belief subscales. The Cronbach's alpha for the eight subscales on the pilot test was as follows:

1. Traditional Beliefs: .567,
2. Technology Beliefs: .808,
3. Purpose Beliefs: .393,
4. Motivation Beliefs: .582,
5. Progressive Beliefs: .742, and
6. Cooperative Beliefs: .369.

After the pilot test, I made several changes to the original forms of the survey questions after targeting the problem subscales and consulting with more experienced instrument designers.

Once I constructed the contact database, I sent copies of the survey and informed consent cover letter to the identified teachers. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes for return of the completed survey were included with the mailing. If any of the surveys were returned as

undeliverable, I tried to find the accurate address of the teacher and re-send the survey. Because the response on the first mailing was over 50%, I did not make a second mailing.

In order to ensure the ethical quality of the study, I applied for and received approval from the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board before contacting any participants. As mentioned above, I sent an informed consent document explaining the purpose, benefits, and risks of the study as well as a cover letter with each survey (see Appendices B and C). Completion and return of the survey served as the respondent's consent to participate in the study. I have maintained the confidentiality of each respondent who revealed his or her identity and protected the confidentiality of her records during the process of the research and will continue to do so in storing these records at the completion of the study.

### *Measurement of Variables*

Many of the variables used in the analyses came directly from the raw data of the completed surveys (e.g., gender, percent of class time allocated to specific types of instruction). However, I constructed some of the variables by compiling information from more than one survey question or by grouping responses into specific categories for statistical testing purposes. Table 1 identifies these researcher-constructed variables, the research question(s) they were used to answer, and the items on the survey from which they were generated. The third column also briefly explains the method used to convert the raw data into the form used for analysis.

Table 1

*Researcher-Constructed Variables*

Variable Name	Research Question	Item on Survey
Teacher Experience	Question #3: Is there a relationship among years of teaching experience, the frequency of traditional instructional activities, and teacher beliefs regarding student learning?	3; teachers will be grouped according to their years of teacher experience: low (3-12 years), medium (13-22 years), and high (23+ years)
Traditional Methods	Question #3: Is there a relationship among years of teaching experience, the frequency of traditional instructional activities, and teacher beliefs regarding student learning?	7a, 7e, 7i, 8g, 8l, 11e, 11f; variable is average of scaled score when frequency response is converted to scale from 1 through 5
Traditional Beliefs	Question #3: Is there a relationship among years of teaching experience, the frequency of traditional instructional activities, and teacher beliefs regarding student learning? and  Question #5: Is there a relationship among teachers' education level, the use of contemporary instructional activities, and various teacher beliefs?	15, 19, 23, 27; variable is average of numerical responses
Technology Methods	Question #4: Is there a relationship among school setting, the use of technology, and beliefs about technology?	First six activities listed on question 10; variable is average of scaled score when frequency response is converted to scale from 1 through 5

Table 1 (continued)

Variable Name	Research Question	Item on Survey
Technology Beliefs	Question #4: Is there a relationship among school setting, the use of technology, and beliefs about technology?	16, 17, 24, 25; variable is average of numerical responses
Contemporary Methods	Question #5: Is there a relationship among teachers' education level, the use of contemporary instructional activities, and various teacher beliefs?	7f, 7k, 7m, 7n, 8a, 8b, 8c, 10b, 10e, 10f; variable is average of scaled score when frequency response is converted to scale from 1 through 5
Purpose Beliefs	Question #5: Is there a relationship among teachers' education level, the use of contemporary instructional activities, and various teacher beliefs?	20, 28; variable is average of numerical responses
Motivation Beliefs	Question #5: Is there a relationship among teachers' education level, the use of contemporary instructional activities, and various teacher beliefs?	14, 18, 22, 26; variable is average of numerical responses
Teacher Emphasis	Question #6: Is there a relationship among teachers' gender, use of class time, and beliefs about progressive instructional activities?	13; variable is created by identifying the listed method on which the teacher is furthest above the mean of all respondents; if amount above the mean is equal on two or more methods, the respondent will be excluded from the analysis

Table 1 (continued)

Variable Name	Research Question	Item on Survey
Progressive Beliefs	Question #6: Is there a relationship among teachers' gender, use of class time, and beliefs about progressive instruction?	15, 16, 23, 24; variable is average of numerical responses
Cooperative Beliefs	Question #7: Is there a relationship among gender, approach to teaching literature, and beliefs about cooperative learning?	21,29; variable is average of numerical responses

### *Data Analysis*

Data about the number of respondents versus nonrespondents were calculated and reported. I entered survey response data into SPSS software and then created the aforementioned researcher-constructed variables using the SPSS software. Then I ran the tests listed for the following hypotheses; the results are included in Chapter 4.

### *Research Questions, Hypotheses, and Methods*

Research Question #1: What is the demographic nature of the respondents of this study?

The frequency of all responses for Questions 1-6 was tabulated to provide a picture of the study's respondents. For Question 3 (total years of teaching experience), the only interval data in Section 1, the researcher calculated the mean, standard deviation, and range. Appendix D provides a listing of individual item results for the entire survey.

Research Question #2: What instructional activities are most frequently used by the respondents?

I calculated a mean response for each instructional activity listed in Questions 7-11 after converting the frequency identifier to a number from 1-5. I then ranked these from first to last and reported them in table format.

Research Question #3: To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among years of teaching experience, the frequency of traditional instructional activities, and teacher beliefs regarding student learning?

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between years of teaching experience and the frequency of the use of traditional instructional activities.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' experience and use of traditional teaching strategies and their beliefs regarding traditional teaching methods.

I tested hypothesis Ho<sub>1</sub> above using a Kruskal-Wallis test to analyze whether the population medians on the Traditional Methods variable are the same among teachers with low (3-12 years), medium (13-22 years), and high (23+ years) levels of experience (Teacher Experience).

Hypothesis Ho<sub>2</sub> was tested using a two-way ANOVA to analyze the main effects of Teacher Experience and three frequency groups from the Traditional Methods variable based on their distribution (low use = 1-1.76, medium use = 1.77-3.01, high use = 3.02-5) on belief factors in the Traditional Beliefs subscale of the belief profile.

Research Question #4: To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among school setting, the use of technology, and beliefs about technology?

Ho<sub>2</sub><sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between school setting and the frequency of the use of technology in instructional activities.

Ho<sub>2</sub><sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' school settings and use of technology in instruction and their beliefs regarding technology.

Hypothesis Ho2<sub>1</sub> was tested using a Kruskal-Wallis test to analyze whether the population medians on the Technology Methods variable are the same among teachers in urban, suburban, and rural schools. I tested hypothesis Ho2<sub>2</sub> using a two-way ANOVA to analyze the main effects of school setting and three groups from the Technology Methods variable based on their distribution (low use = 1-1.75, medium use = 1.76-3.15, high use = 3.16-5) on belief factors in the Technology Beliefs subscale of the belief profile.

Research Question #5: To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among teachers' education level, the use of contemporary instructional activities, and various teacher beliefs?

Ho3<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' education level and the frequency of their use of contemporary instructional activities.

Ho3<sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' education level and use of contemporary instructional activities and their beliefs about the purpose of school.

Ho3<sub>3</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' education level and use of contemporary instructional activities and their beliefs about student motivation.

Ho3<sub>4</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' education level and use of contemporary instructional activities and their beliefs about traditional teaching methods.

I tested hypothesis Ho3<sub>1</sub> using a Kruskal-Wallis test to analyze whether the population medians on the Contemporary Methods variable were the same among teachers with different levels of education as determined by their highest degree obtained. Hypothesis Ho3<sub>2</sub> was tested by using a two-way ANOVA to analyze the main effects of education level and the use of Contemporary Methods (low use = 1-1.7, medium use = 1.71-3.65, high use = 3.66-5) on Purpose Beliefs. I tested hypothesis Ho3<sub>3</sub> using a two-way ANOVA to analyze the main effects of education level

and the use of Contemporary Methods (low use = 1-1.7, medium use = 1.71-3.65, high use = 3.66-5) on Motivation Beliefs. Hypothesis Ho3<sub>4</sub> was tested by using a two-way ANOVA to analyze the main effects of education level and the use of Contemporary Methods (low use = 1-1.7, medium use = 1.71-3.65, high use = 3.66-5) on Traditional Beliefs.

Research Question #6: To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among teachers' gender, use of class time, and beliefs about progressive instructional activities?

Ho4<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and the percent of class time they spend on reading instruction.

Ho4<sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and the percent of class time they spend on writing instruction (excluding grammar instruction).

Ho4<sub>3</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and the percent of class time they spend on grammar instruction.

Ho4<sub>4</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and the percent of class time they spend on speaking instruction.

Ho4<sub>5</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and the percent of class time they spend on listening or viewing instruction.

Ho4<sub>6</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and use of class time and their beliefs about progressive instructional activities.

I tested Ho4<sub>1</sub>, Ho4<sub>2</sub>, Ho4<sub>3</sub>, Ho4<sub>4</sub>, and Ho4<sub>5</sub> by running independent-samples *t* tests to show the relationship between gender and the percent of time the teacher spends on each type of activity. Hypothesis Ho4<sub>6</sub> was tested using a two-way ANOVA to analyze the main effects of gender and Teacher Emphasis on Progressive Beliefs.

Research Question #7: To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among gender, approach to teaching literature, and beliefs about cooperative learning?

Ho5<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between gender and teachers' approach to teaching literature.

Ho5<sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and approach to teaching literature and their beliefs about cooperative learning.

I tested hypothesis Ho5<sub>1</sub> using descriptive statistics to examine the relationship between gender and approach to teaching literature. Hypothesis Ho5<sub>2</sub> was tested using a two-way ANOVA to determine the main effects of gender and approach to teaching literature on Cooperative Beliefs.

### *Qualitative Study*

The purpose of the qualitative portion of the study was to extend the understanding of the types and frequency of instructional strategies accomplished high school English teachers use as well as the connection between those strategies and the teachers' beliefs begun with the quantitative portion of the study. The following research questions guided this portion of the overall study:

1. What methods or strategies do high school English teachers use to teach reading/literature, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, representing, and technology skills?
2. How are various background factors (e.g., education, teacher preparation) related to high school English teachers' instructional methods?
3. How do high school English teachers balance or integrate the teaching of the various language arts strands?

#### 4. How do high school English teachers' beliefs affect their teaching strategies?

Qualitative research was appropriate for this portion of the study because it enabled my perception and interpretation of teacher statements and actions to complement the teachers' perceptions reported in the quantitative study, providing some triangulation of the data. Also helping to triangulate the data were the multiple data collection methods embedded in most qualitative studies and included here. Perhaps more importantly, qualitative methods allowed the research to be conducted in the natural setting, allowing readers to “witness” the strategies and beliefs in action through my eyes. Also, because qualitative research is emergent, I was able to refine the focus and research questions as the study progressed (Marshall & Rossman 2006).

I designed the qualitative portion of this study from the tradition of grounded theory. Although this study did not purport to develop a general theory or theoretical framework regarding teachers' strategies and beliefs, it did make use of many of the methods associated with grounded theory. Primarily, I followed the more systematic approach to grounded theory espoused by Strauss and Corbin (1998). First, I relied heavily upon interviews for data collection, but supplemented the interviews with other forms of data collection including observation and document review. Second, I used theoretical sampling to identify the interview and observation participants so that they would best reveal the necessary information. Third, I employed the constant comparative method of data analysis in which collected data are continually compared against the full body of collected data. Fourth, from this constant comparison the study emerged and changed as data collection and analysis progressed. Fifth, I used the coding processes advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1998) to analyze the incoming data.

### *Population and Sample*

The sample for the qualitative portion of the study came from respondents to the survey who voluntarily expressed a willingness to be interviewed or observed as a further component of the study. From the pool of volunteers, I used theoretical, purposeful sampling to select candidates whose responses were typical or outlying when compared to the overall findings of the quantitative study. Candidates were identified as typical or outliers based upon various criteria: the frequency with which they used particular teaching strategies, the direction and strength of their responses to the belief statements, or the relationship between their teaching practices and beliefs.

The number of participants for the qualitative portion of the study depended upon the findings of the quantitative study. After the quantitative analysis took place, categories of respondents were determined based on the types of responses received in regard to teaching strategies, beliefs, and the relationship between the two. Next, I sorted the responses of those teachers who agreed to be interviewed into the appropriate category for use when recruiting participants.

I used several methods for improving the validity of the study, as recommended by Creswell (2003). First, the data were triangulated through the collection of various types of data, including interviews, observations, field notes, and document review. Second, participants were offered the opportunity to review the interview transcripts and the final report for accuracy. Third, I included “rich, thick” description to provide the reader with a better sense of the setting and actions reported. Fourth, peers reviewed the report in order to identify questions that needed to be addressed to provide a complete account.

### *Recruiting Protocol*

I identified two or three participants from the respondents in each category developed from the analysis of the quantitative data to contact about conducting an interview or observation using their provided contact information. If scheduling or travel problems forced me to eliminate multiple candidates from any category, I returned to the original pool for that category to select new participants to contact. I interviewed at least two participants from each category to improve the validity of the qualitative portion of the study. In addition, I took into consideration the school setting and years' experience in determining which candidates to interview so that the group of participants represented a reasonable amount of diversity.

### *Ethical Protocol*

I took several steps to ensure the ethical merit of the research. As stated above, I received approval from East Tennessee State University's Institutional Review Board before contacting any participants. Once the participants for the interviews and observations were identified and scheduled, I provided a second informed consent document to make the participant aware of the specific purposes of this phase of the study as well as to reiterate my plans to protect their confidentiality through the use of fictional names and protection of the documents and tapes. When meeting face-to-face, I went over the basic purpose of the study orally with the participants, and occasionally during the interviews I asked participants to reaffirm their consent to continue with the interview. I also explained the use of various data collection devices, including interview transcripts, observation guides, field notes, and document review guides. In addition, I offered to allow each participant to review her personal interview transcripts and to provide a copy of the final study. I informed the participants that their words might be quoted

directly in the final report and sought their consent for such use, informing the participants that the direct quotations might potentially reveal the participant's identity. I protected the participants' identities through the use of fictitious names and the removal of identifying labels in the quotations. Always, the rights and wishes of the participants took priority as I made decisions about the inclusion and presentation of information obtained from the participants.

### *Data Collection*

*Interviews.* The primary data collection method for the qualitative portion of the study was interviews with high school English teachers who responded to the quantitative study and whose responses merited their classification as "typical" or as an outlier worthy of further study. I determined specific criteria for the theoretical sampling of interviewees based upon the quantitative survey findings. I conducted these interviews at the teacher's school, preferably in her classroom. When possible, I interviewed the participant briefly before the classroom observations to understand the participant's anticipated goals and activities for the class.

I planned to conduct the primary interview after the observation of the teacher's class or classes so that I could draw upon her direct knowledge of the teacher's instructional practices during the interview. The primary, unstructured interviews lasted approximately 1 hour and were tape-recorded for thoroughness and accuracy. An interview guide (see Appendix E) with approximately six main questions was used as a starting point for the interview. I developed the interview guide to expand upon information obtained from the quantitative survey that participants had already completed in order to understand better the influences upon teachers' beliefs and instructional practices. However, I used probing questions during the course of each interview and from one interview to another to follow the direction of the study as needed and to

lead to an in-depth exploration of participants' thoughts and feelings. The questions on the interview guide were divided into four sections: Background, Influences on Teaching Style and Beliefs, Instructional Activities and Methods, and Educational Beliefs. Probing questions asked during the interviews fell into one of these categories of information. Following each interview, I transcribed the interview tape verbatim and reviewed the transcript for accuracy.

*Classroom Observations.* I also conducted classroom observations with each interviewee, usually for 1 full day of classes. The purpose of the observations was to gain a better insight into each participant's teaching style and methodology. Also, the observations helped triangulate interview and survey data by providing an observer's view of the teacher's classroom practices, not just her perceived classroom practices. Because instructional activities were the focus of the observations, I only observed participants while they were teaching high school English classes; no planning time, hall duty, teaching in other subjects, etc., was officially observed as part of the study. No other teachers at the participant's school were observed for data collection purposes. Some observations were more limited due to scheduling or travel concerns. I used an observation guide to increase the chances that the data collected would enhance the overall analysis (Strauss & Corbin 1998). The observation guide provided space for recording the classroom layout and tracking the teacher's use of various instructional strategies (see Appendix F). I developed the guide primarily using instructional categories from the quantitative survey instrument.

In addition to completing an observation guide at each setting, I took extensive field notes before, during, and after each interview and observation to record additional teacher behaviors and class activities as well as to record my impressions of the classroom environment,

teacher personality, and relationship to the emerging research. I transcribed these notes into a computer file for easier access during the analysis phase of the study.

*Documents.* I also collected copies of any instructional materials the teachers handed out to students during the observations to shed further light on the teachers' instructional practices. In addition, I collected other documents related to each teacher's instructional practices or philosophy that were offered during the course of the interviews. The purpose of collecting documents was to provide further data triangulation about the instructional activities each teacher used and about the teacher's beliefs and classroom methodology. I numbered and filed these documents with materials from each teacher's interview/observation. I also completed a document review guide for each document collected in order to identify content related to specific teaching strategies or teacher beliefs (see Appendix G). The document review guide, developed using the activity categories from the quantitative survey instrument, focused me on identifying instructional activities from the quantitative portion of the study. Also, two open-ended prompts on the review guide, "Describe the relationship between teacher and student suggested by this document" and "Describe student learning related to this document," were included to help the reader draw conclusions about the teacher's beliefs and teaching style from the documents.

### *Data Analysis*

*Interviews.* I analyzed all data collected from the time they were collected using the constant comparison analysis method of Strauss and Corbin (1998). Once I completed the first interview transcript and reviewed it for accuracy, I read the transcript to get an overall "feel" for the data. During a second reading of the text, I began microscopic analysis of the text,

examining the participant's words and phrases for emerging concepts related to teacher beliefs and instructional practices. As part of this open coding process, I developed a master code list to group and label similar ideas and concepts in the transcripts. I also created memos throughout each coding stage to track my process of data interpretation and analysis. From the first interviews, I compared from incident to incident to identify emerging categories of information and to provide direction for future data collection. Once I developed codes to label concepts that emerged, I examined subsequent data for similar ideas or concepts and labeled them with the same code name. However, new codes continued to be identified and added to the Master Code List throughout the interview process as new ideas and concepts emerged. Upon completion of coding, a code book listing the master codes and their definitions was compiled. Eventually, I grouped related concepts to form categories.

Next, I analyzed the data using axial coding. During this process, I began to look for themes in the data by examining the properties and dimensions of categories developed during open coding. Next, I attempted to understand the relationships between subcategories and major categories. As these relationships became clear, I developed statements that explained these relationships. In addition, I began to look for connections and relationships among major categories.

During selective coding, I looked for emerging patterns that helped explain the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices and developed a set of relational statements related to any patterns that emerged during the selective coding process. However, because the qualitative portion of this study explored and expanded upon only a few "typical" cases and some outliers from the quantitative study, I never intended to develop a full theory or theoretical framework for explaining the phenomenon of the connection between teacher beliefs and

teaching practices. Instead, I organized findings around the themes that developed during axial coding, using the patterns that emerged from these themes during selective coding to shed light on the relationship between teacher beliefs and instructional practices.

*Observations.* I analyzed the completed observation guides and field notes for each observation in order to integrate categories and identify patterns in the data. To do this, I examined each set (meaning those pertaining to a single participant) of observation guides and field notes after the interview data for that participant was analyzed initially. I looked for connections between teacher beliefs as indicated through the interview data and behaviors and activities carried on during the observed class sessions. I made extensive memos to explain how I was relating information from the observations to information from the interviews. I attempted to compare patterns that developed in the observations with patterns that developed from the interviews to aid in the creation of relational statements about the connection between teachers' beliefs and practices. In this way, analysis of the observation data played a critical role in understanding the study's focal phenomena.

*Documents.* I analyzed any documents that were collected during the classroom observations or interviews in much the same way as the interview transcripts after the interview transcripts, observation guides, and field notes for a given participant were analyzed. The text of the documents was read once for an overall impression, and then microscopic textual analysis took place to begin coding the text. I used codes from the Master Code List, but new codes were added as needed to classify information in the documents. I then sorted this coded data into the categories that were already emerging in the data. As with the interviews and observations, memos were made throughout the analysis process to explain my interpretations and classifications of data. During axial coding, I referred to the completed document review guide

for each document to help identify themes in the document. Finally, the documents were analyzed for evidence of existing patterns that would further explain the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices.

*Overall Comparison.* Once I identified coding categories, themes, and patterns in all collected data, I examined the information for distinctions between the “typical” participants and the “outliers.” Specifically, I examined whether the relational statements that developed were specific to particular groups of teachers or were more generalized across all teacher response groups. Although I did not anticipate generating a theory regarding teacher beliefs and practices because of the limited number of participants in the qualitative portion of the study, a general theory seemed to emerge from the data, which I briefly explored after the coding and analysis of the qualitative data.

As a final analytical step, I compared the findings of the qualitative study to those of the quantitative study to check for correspondences and conflicts. After this quantitative-qualitative comparison, I developed overall findings of the study regarding the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### *Introduction*

What do accomplished high school English teachers do in their classrooms and how are those practices related to those teachers' beliefs and demographic characteristics? These were the primary questions the analysis of the survey, interview, and observation data were intended to answer. As described in Chapter 3, the research design implemented both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The first section of this chapter deals with the quantitative analysis of the survey data collected, while the second half includes a qualitative analysis of the classroom observations and interviews with selected participants.

#### *Quantitative Study*

Of the original 403 NBCTs identified in the random sampling of teachers who received certification in English Language Arts/Adolescence through Young Adulthood from 2003-2007, I could only obtain school assignments and addresses for 318 teachers through Internet searches and investigative phone calls. Five of those mailings were returned because the teachers no longer taught at the same schools, and none of those five returned mailings included information about the teacher's current school. As a result, 313 teachers were included in the survey mailing. 159 surveys were returned within 8 weeks of the mailing for a response rate of 50.8%. Another teacher responded with a lengthy letter explaining that he did not have time to complete the survey. After the statistical analyses were completed, two additional surveys were received but were not included in the study. These would have brought the response rate to 51.4%.

Regardless, a response rate of more than 50% on a first mailing was deemed acceptable, and I sent no subsequent mailings to non-respondents.

### *Analysis of Research Questions*

#### Research Question #1

What is the demographic nature of the respondents of this study?

Once I entered all the survey data into the SPSS 16.0 GP data file and created the researcher-constructed variables (Table 1), I ran a frequencies analysis for all survey items.

Table 2 illustrates the frequencies of responses for the basic demographic information obtained from the first six questions on the survey instrument.

Table 2

#### *Demographic Frequency Data*

Gender	<i>N</i>	%
Male	16	10.1
Female	142	89.3
No Response	1	.6
Total	159	100
Full or Part Time	<i>N</i>	%
Full Time	148	93.1
Part Time	11	6.9
Total	159	100

Table 2 (continued)

Current Position	<i>N</i>	%
Teacher	145	91.2
Literacy Coach	2	1.2
Other*	12	7.5
Total	159	100
% of Time Teaching English	<i>N</i>	%
0-33%	13	8.2
34-67%	16	10.1
68-100%	126	79.2
No Response	4	2.5
Total	159	100
Years of Teaching Experience	<i>N</i>	%
5-9	39	24.5
10-14	58	36.5
15-19	15	9.5
20-24	14	8.8
25-29	14	8.8
30-34	14	8.8
35-39	3	1.9
40+	1	.6
No Response	1	.6
Total	159	100

Table 2 (continued)

Education Level	<i>N</i>	%
Bachelor's	23	14.5
Bachelor's + 15-30 Hours	8	5
Bachelor's + over 30 Hours	4	2.5
Master's	69	43.4
Master's + 15-30 Hours	22	13.8
Master's + over 30 Hours	26	16.4
Ed.S., Ed.D., or Ph.D.	6	3.8
No Response	1	.6
Total	159	100
Class Schedule	<i>N</i>	%
Traditional	64	40.3
Block	73	45.9
Other	19	11.9
No Response	3	1.9
Total	159	100
School Setting	<i>N</i>	%
Urban	41	25.8
Suburban	77	48.4
Rural	39	24.5
No Response	2	1.3
Total	159	100

\* This was an open-ended question; no other response was provided more than once.

As Table 2 indicates, women comprised 89.3% of the respondent pool while men made up only 10.1% (with one non-respondent). The original mailing pool of 318 teachers was similarly lop-sided with 85.5% women and 14.5% men. Because the participants were selected randomly from the general population of NBCTs in English Language Arts—Adolescence and Young Adulthood, the proportion of females to males in this study probably reflects the proportion in the broader population. Although these percentages seem relatively close, an analysis of response rate showed that 52.2% of women responded to the survey, whereas only 34.8% of men did. I attempted to compare proportion of women to men in this study with nationwide averages for all high school English teachers but was unable to locate comparable data.

In addition, the population of the study was, by and large, made up of full-time workers (93.1%) with only 6.9% of respondents working parttime. In terms of the time the participants spent teaching English classes as opposed to teaching in other subject areas or handling other duties, nearly 80% spent 68%-100% of their time in English classrooms. Only 10.1% and 8.2% spent 34%-67% or 0%-33%, respectively, in English classrooms.

Participants were also asked in open-response format to identify their job titles. 142, or 91.2%, responded with “teacher” or “instructor.” Only one other title was used by more than one respondents; “literacy coach” was given twice. The other 12 responses included a variety of professional positions from “high school assistant principal” to “talented and gifted specialist.”

The population for the study comprised a wide range of years of experience, from 5 years to 40 years. As described in Chapter 3, teachers must have completed 3 years of teaching experience to apply for board certification. And because of the delay in notification of achieving

certification, 5 years would be the fewest number of years' experience participants in this study could have. A majority of the respondents were still in the first half of a (hypothetically) 30-year career, with 24.5% having 5-9 years of experience and 36.5% having 10-14 years. Interestingly, there were nearly equal numbers of respondents from the next four age brackets: 15-19 years—15 respondents, 20-24 years—14 respondents, 25-29 years—14 respondents, and 30-34 years—14 respondents.

In terms of education level, only 22% of respondents did not have at least master's degrees. Although 43.4% of respondents had a master's degree and 30.2% had at least 15 hours in addition to master's degrees, only 6 respondents (3.8%) had earned a degree beyond master's degrees.

The respondents were fairly evenly divided between traditional schedules with shorter, year-long classes and block schedules, with lengthier, semester-long classes. In fact, 40.3% reported teaching traditional classes, and 45.9% reported block classes. However, 11.9% indicated "other"; several of these had written-in responses that indicated their schedules were a blend of both traditional and block schedules. The respondents also taught in a variety of school settings. 25.8% taught in schools in urban settings; 48.4% taught in schools in suburban settings; 24.5% taught in schools in rural settings.

### Research Question #2

What instructional activities are most frequently used by the respondents?

As described in Chapter 3, respondents were asked to identify how often they used a variety of classroom activities, using the following scale: Frequently—4-5 times per week, Often—2-3 times per week, Consistently—1 time per week, Sometimes—1-3 times per month,

or Rarely—0-3 times per semester. These were then converted to a five-point scale with Frequently being 5 and Rarely being 1. Means of all responses for each activity were then tabulated and are ranked from most to least frequent in Table 3.

Table 3

*Instructional Activity Frequency Data*

Activity	Frequency Mean	Rank
Whole-class discussion of reading texts for teaching reading	4.4557	1
Oral questioning of reading texts for teaching reading	4.4367	2
Class discussion for teaching speaking and listening skills	4.4088	3
At-home, assigned student reading for teaching reading	3.7516	4
Text annotations or highlighting or marking for teaching reading	3.4494	5
Writing process instruction for teaching writing	3.3962	6
Written answers to text-based questions for teaching reading	3.3354	7
Teacher modeling for teaching writing	3.3354	8
In-class, teacher oral reading for teaching reading	3.3312	9
Small-group discussion of reading texts for teaching reading	3.3185	10
Prewriting instruction for teaching writing	3.3165	11
Literature-based vocabulary instruction for teaching reading	3.2532	12
Required multiple drafts of writing for teaching writing	3.2327	13
Essays of three or more paragraphs for assessment	3.2025	14
In-class, student oral reading	3.1887	15
Student journals over reading texts for teaching reading	3.1519	16
Graphic organizers for teaching writing	3.1069	17

Table 3 (continued)

Activity	Frequency Mean	Rank
Student use of word-processing software	3.0705	18
Graphic organizers about texts for teaching reading	3.0440	19
Reading quizzes for assessment	3.0440	20
Student use of the internet	3.0189	21
In-class, silent, sustained reading for teaching reading	2.9937	22
Journals for assessment	2.8608	23
Peer revision for teaching writing	2.7736	24
Projects in general for assessment	2.7025	25
Vocabulary instruction, not tied to texts for teaching reading	2.6456	26
Group presentations for teaching speaking and listening skills	2.5535	27
Vocabulary quizzes/tests for assessment	2.5443	728
Freewriting for teaching writing	2.5350	29
Transparencies on an overhead projector	2.5287	30
Note-taking instruction for teaching speaking and listening skills	2.5031	31
Literature-based unit tests for assessment	2.4843	32
Writer's workshop for teaching writing	2.4516	33
Individual presentations for teaching speaking and listening skills	2.4340	34
Traditional grammar instruction for teaching writing	2.4013	35
Practice for standardized/mandated tests for assessment	2.3462	36
Grammar exercises for assessment	2.3165	37
Teacher-prepared PowerPoint or other "slide show" media	2.3121	38
Creative writing for assessment	2.1709	39
Literature-based films on VHS or DVD	2.1132	40

Table 3 (continued)

Activity	Frequency Mean	Rank
Student-created posters for assessment	2.1076	41
Literature circles for teaching reading	2.0064	42
Student-prepared PowerPoint or other “slide show” media	1.9748	43
Role-playing activities for teaching speaking and listening skills	1.9241	44
Watching video data for teaching speaking and listening skills	1.9114	45
Documentaries on literary or historical topics on VHS or DVD	1.8924	46
Student skits for assessment	1.7261	47
Writing poems for teaching writing	1.6835	48
Prepared student speeches for teaching speaking and listening skills	1.6346	49
Writing fiction for teaching writing	1.6306	50
Grammar tests for assessment	1.5385	51
Extemporaneous speeches for teaching speaking and listening skills	1.4268	52
Organized debates for teaching speaking and listening skills	1.3694	53
Sentence diagramming for teaching writing	1.2308	54

Not surprisingly, many activities related to reading instruction were the most frequently used by the respondents. In fact, 7 out of the top 10 most frequently used activities were tied to reading instruction. As for actual reading practice, the participants seemed to prefer to have students practice reading at home, making it the fourth most frequent activity. The two activities involving in-class student reading were both out of the top 10, ranked at 15 and 22, but teacher oral reading in class was more common than any type of student in-class reading. In regard to vocabulary development, the participants were more inclined to use literature-based vocabulary strategies than isolated vocabulary activities.

The emphasis on reading corroborated participants' responses to question 13 regarding the percent of class time devoted to particular strands of language arts as shown in Figure 1.

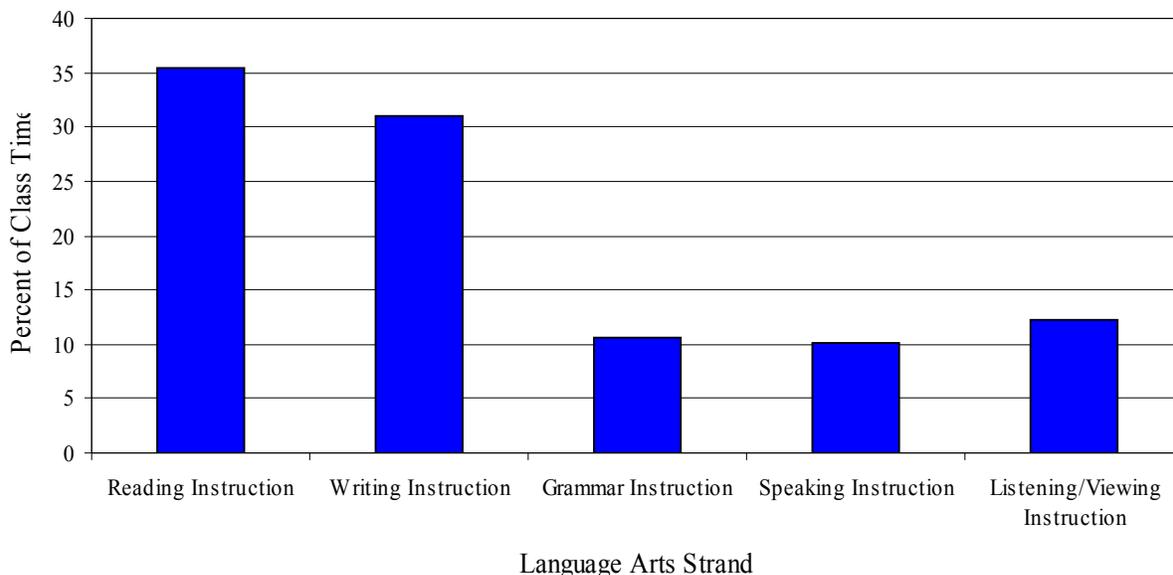


Figure 1. Percent of Class Time Devoted to Language Arts Strands

Overall, there was not a dramatic difference in the percentage of class time spent on reading and writing instruction, 35.5% and 31%, respectively, yet only 2 writing activities were among the top 10 most frequently used activities. According to the responses ranked in Table 3, much more class time seems to have been devoted to speaking than to writing because the top three activities all involved class discussion or oral questioning. The reason for this apparent discrepancy might be that some teachers were counting literary discussion and questioning solely as reading instruction, not speaking instruction. Also, writing activities might not be happening as frequently as speaking activities, but might be of longer duration per activity.

Perhaps most interesting were the activities used least frequently. Sentence diagramming was at the bottom of the ranking and actually received several write-in “Nevers!” on the

completed surveys. The rest of the bottom was dominated by speaking activities such as skits, debates, and speeches and by creative writing.

As for technology, the participants had their students use computers more frequently for word-processing than for Internet research. And teachers were more likely to incorporate their own PowerPoint or other multimedia presentations than to assign those activities to students.

### Research Question #3

To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among years of teaching experience, the frequency of traditional instructional activities, and teacher beliefs regarding student learning?

The following hypotheses were developed from this research question:

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between years of teaching experience and the frequency of the use of traditional instructional activities.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' experience and use of traditional teaching strategies and their beliefs regarding traditional teaching methods.

To test these hypotheses, two variables were constructed: Traditional Methods, a mean of each teacher's responses to how frequently he or she used more traditional teaching methods, and Traditional Beliefs, a mean of each teacher's responses to four belief statements in the final section of the questionnaire. Then the means from the Traditional Methods variable were used to group teachers into high, middle, and low frequency groups. This new grouping variable was identified as Traditional Methods Groups. Each teacher over one standard deviation above the mean was grouped as "high," each teacher over one standard deviation below the mean was grouped as "low," and those within one standard deviation of the mean were grouped as "middle." Teachers were also grouped by years of experience: 3-12 years—low, 13-22 years—

medium, 23+ years—high. Although 158 teachers provided their years of experience, five of those teachers did not answer one of the items contained in the Traditional Methods subscale and were exempted from tests related to the use of Traditional Methods.

Ho<sub>1</sub> was evaluated using a Kruskal-Wallis test to analyze whether the population medians on the Traditional Methods variable were the same among teachers with low, medium, and high levels of experience. The test showed no significant difference in the medians,  $\chi^2(2, N = 153) = 1.69, p = .43$ . As a result, the null hypothesis was retained. Table 4 shows the mean rank and median survey responses for traditional teaching methods by teacher experience groups.

Table 4

*Mean Ranks and Median Responses of Traditional Methods Frequency*

Teacher Experience	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank	Median Response
Low	74	74.8	2.21
Medium	41	84.6	2.43
High	38	73.1	2.29

A 3 x 3 ANOVA was conducted to evaluate Ho<sub>1</sub><sub>2</sub> regarding the relationships among years of teaching experience, the frequency of use of traditional teaching methods, and teacher beliefs. The means and standard deviations for Traditional Beliefs are presented in Table 5. The ANOVA showed no main effects for years of experience,  $F(2, 142) = .42, p = .67, \eta^2 = .01$ , or Traditional Methods,  $F(2, 142) = .8, p = .45, \eta^2 = .01$ . The ANOVA also indicated no significant interaction between teacher experience and the use of traditional methods,  $F(4, 142) = .72, p = .58, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$ . Consequently, the null hypothesis was retained.

Table 5

*Means and Standard Deviations for Traditional Beliefs*

Years of Experience	Traditional Methods Group	Mean	SD
Low	Low	2.11	.49
	Middle	2.04	.53
	High	2.30	.66
Medium	Low	2.06	.75
	Middle	2.13	.49
	High	2.07	.62
High	Low	1.69	.52
	Middle	2.05	.46
	High	2.25	1.06

Research Question #4

To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among school setting, the use of technology, and beliefs about technology?

This research question generated the following hypotheses:

Ho2<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between school setting and the frequency of the use of technology in instructional activities.

Ho2<sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' school settings and use of technology in instruction and their beliefs regarding technology.

To test these hypotheses, two variables were constructed: Technology Methods, a mean of teachers' responses regarding their use of technology-based activities, and Technology Beliefs, a mean of teachers' responses regarding their agreement or disagreement with four technology-

related statements. Teachers were then grouped into frequency groups based on their scores in the Technology Methods variable. Teachers more than one standard deviation above the mean were classified as “high” users, teachers more than one standard deviation below the mean were classified as “low” users, and teachers within one standard deviation of the mean were classified as “medium” users of technology methods.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to test whether the population medians on the Technology Methods variable were the same among teachers who teach in rural, suburban, and urban schools. The test showed no significant difference in the medians,  $\chi^2(2, N = 153) = .74, p = .69$ . Thus, the null hypothesis was retained. Table 6 shows the mean rank and median of survey responses for technology teaching methods by school setting groups.

Table 6

*Mean Ranks and Median Responses of Technology Methods Frequency*

School Setting	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank	Median Response
Rural	36	71.8	2.17
Suburban	77	79.4	2.33
Urban	40	77.1	2.33

The second hypothesis was tested by running a 3 x 3 ANOVA to evaluate the relationships among school setting, the frequency of use of technology teaching methods, and teacher beliefs regarding technology. The means and standard deviations for Technology Beliefs are presented in Table 7. The ANOVA showed significant main effects for school setting,  $F(2, 142) = 3.28, p = .04, \eta^2 = .04$ , and Technology Methods,  $F(2, 142) = 7.58, p = .001, \eta^2 = .1$ .

However, the ANOVA showed no significant interaction between school setting and the use of technology methods,  $F(4, 142) = .59, p = .67, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$ .

Table 7

*Means and Standard Deviations for Technology Beliefs*

School Setting	Technology Methods Group	Mean	SD
Rural	Low	4.09	.55
	Medium	4.10	.35
	High	4.41	.48
Suburban	Low	3.65	.59
	Medium	3.95	.49
	High	4.19	.46
Urban	Low	3.71	.62
	Medium	4.15	.44
	High	4.38	.53

Because the main effects were significant while the interaction was not, follow-up analyses were conducted pairwise for all grouping factors. The results of all three tests, shown in Table 8, regarding the relationship with school setting were not significant.

Table 8

*Results of Tukey HSD Analysis for School Setting and Technology Beliefs*

School Setting Pairing	Number	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Urban	40	.18	.16
Suburban	75		
Urban	40	-.05	.90
Rural	36		
Suburban	75	-.22	.06
Rural	36		

However, the Tukey HSD tests for the three levels of teachers based on the frequency of their use of technology-based activities revealed a significant difference at the .017 (0.5/3) level between teachers in the low and high use groups. These results show that the teachers who feel the most positively about technology's use in the classroom tend to use activities that involve technology in their classrooms more so than teacher who feel the least positively about technology. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The results of those tests are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

*Results of Tukey HSD Analysis for Technology Methods and Technology Beliefs*

Technology Method Pairing	<i>N</i>	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Low	30	-.26	.04
Medium	88		

Table 9 (continued)

Technology Method Pairing	<i>N</i>	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Low	30	-.50	.000
High	33		
Medium	88	-.25	.04
High	33		

### Research Question #5

To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among teachers' education level, the use of contemporary instructional activities, and various teacher beliefs?

The following hypotheses were developed to answer this research question:

Ho3<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' education level and the frequency of their use of contemporary instructional activities.

Ho3<sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' education level and use of contemporary instructional activities and their beliefs about the purpose of school.

Ho3<sub>3</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' education level and use of contemporary instructional activities and their beliefs about student motivation.

Ho3<sub>4</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' education level and use of contemporary instructional activities and their beliefs about traditional teaching methods.

Several variables were constructed to test these hypotheses. First, teachers' responses to several questions regarding the frequency with which they use several contemporary methods were averaged to create the Contemporary Methods variable. Second, the scores on the Contemporary

Methods variable were then grouped into “low” (more than one standard deviation below the mean), “medium” (within one standard deviation of the mean), and “high” (more than one standard deviation above the mean) groups; this variable was then named Contemporary Methods Groups. Third, each teacher’s responses to questions about the purpose of school were averaged to create the Purpose Beliefs variable. Last, each teacher’s responses to questions about student motivation were averaged to create the Motivation Beliefs variable.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to test whether the population medians on the Contemporary Methods variable were the same among teachers of varying educational levels. The test showed no significant difference in the medians,  $\chi^2(2, N = 151) = .22, p = .89$ . As a result,  $H_{03_1}$  was retained. Table 10 shows the mean rank and median of survey responses for contemporary teaching methods by education-level groups.

Table 10

*Mean Ranks and Median Responses of Contemporary Methods Frequency*

Education Level	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank	Median Response
Bachelor’s Degree	33	78.30	2.90
Master’s Degree	112	75.05	2.85
Ed.S., Ed.D., or Ph.D.	6	81.00	2.80

$H_{03_2}$  was tested by conducting a 3 x 3 ANOVA to evaluate the relationships among education level, the frequency of use of contemporary teaching methods, and teacher beliefs regarding the purpose of school. The means and standard deviations for Purpose Beliefs are presented in Table 11. The ANOVA showed no significant main effects for education level,  $F(2,$

139) = 2.22,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ , but did show significant main effects for Contemporary Methods,  $F(2, 139) = 3.19$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ . The ANOVA also showed significant interaction between education level and the use of contemporary methods,  $F(3, 139) = 4.01$ ,  $p = .02$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .07$ . Follow-up tests were conducted on the interaction between education level and contemporary methods, but no significant differences were determined. Therefore,  $H_{o3_2}$  was retained.

Table 11

*Means and Standard Deviations for Purpose Beliefs*

Education Level	Contemporary Methods Group	Mean	SD
Bachelor's Degree	Low (N = 1)	4.00	---
	Medium (N = 25)	3.86	.74
	High (N = 6)	4.00	.55
Master's Degree	Low (N = 5)	3.80	.76
	Medium (N = 84)	3.99	.55
	High (N = 20)	3.90	.68
Ed.S., Ed.D., or Ph.D.	Low (N = 0)	---	---
	Medium (N = 5)	4.20	.45
	High (N = 1)	2.00	---

$H_{o3_3}$  was also tested by evaluating the relationships among education level, the frequency of use of contemporary teaching methods, and teacher beliefs regarding student motivation using a 3 x 3 ANOVA. The means and standard deviations for Motivation Beliefs are presented in Table 12. The ANOVA showed no significant main effects for education level,

$F(2, 138) = 1.41, p = .1, \eta^2 = .03$ , and Contemporary Methods,  $F(2, 138) = 1.35, p = .11, \eta^2 = .$

03. The ANOVA also showed no significant interaction between education level and the use of contemporary methods,  $F(3, 138) = 1.49, p = .18, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .04$ .  $H_{03}$  was retained.

Table 12

*Means and Standard Deviations for Motivation Beliefs*

Education Level	Contemporary Methods Group	Mean	SD
Bachelor's Degree	Low (N = 1)	2.50	---
	Medium (N = 25)	3.16	.53
	High (N = 6)	3.25	.76
Master's Degree	Low (N = 5)	3.20	.33
	Medium (N = 85)	3.20	.49
	High (N = 18)	3.08	.77
Ed.S., Ed.D., or Ph.D.	Low (N = 0)	---	---
	Medium (N = 5)	3.15	.45
	High (N = 1)	2.00	---

The final hypothesis for Research Question #5 was tested by conducting a 3 x 3 ANOVA to evaluate the relationships among education level, the frequency of use of contemporary teaching methods, and teacher beliefs regarding traditional teaching methods. The means and standard deviations for Traditional Beliefs are presented in Table 13. The ANOVA showed no significant main effects for education level,  $F(2, 142) = .51, p = .37, \eta^2 = .01$ . However, significant main effects for Contemporary Methods did exist,  $F(2, 142) = 2.73, p = .01, \eta^2 = .07$ .

The ANOVA also showed no significant interaction between education level and the use of contemporary methods,  $F(3, 142) = .66, p = .46, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$ .

Table 13

*Means and Standard Deviations for Traditional Beliefs Based on Education Level and Use of Contemporary Methods*

Education Level	Contemporary Methods Group	Mean	SD
Bachelor's Degree	Low (N = 1)	3.00	---
	Medium (N = 26)	2.03	.58
	High (N = 6)	2.00	.76
Master's Degree	Low (N = 5)	2.60	.42
	Medium (N = 86)	2.12	.46
	High (N = 20)	1.84	.46
Ed.S., Ed.D., or Ph.D.	Low (N = 0)	---	---
	Medium (N = 5)	2.05	..54
	High (N = 1)	1.25	---

Because the main effects were significant for Contemporary Methods while the interaction was not, follow-up analyses were conducted pairwise for the three Contemporary Methods groups. As shown in Table 14, the result of the test between teachers in the “low” range of the use of contemporary methods and teachers in the “high” range of the use of contemporary methods was significant at the .017 level ( $.05 / 3$ ), while the tests among all other groupings were not. This showed that teachers who use contemporary teaching methods less frequently are more likely to

hold traditional beliefs about teaching than those who use contemporary methods the most. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 14

*Results of Tukey HSD Analysis for Contemporary Methods and Traditional Beliefs*

Contemporary Methods Pairing	Mean Difference	Sig.
Low (N=6) and Medium (N= 117)	.57	.02
Low (N=6) and High (N=27)	.81	.001
Medium (N=117) and High (N=27)	.24	.06

#### Research Question #6

To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among teachers' gender, use of class time, and beliefs about progressive instructional activities?

The following hypotheses were developed to answer this research question:

Ho4<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and the percent of class time they spend on reading instruction.

Ho4<sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and the percent of class time they spend on writing instruction (excluding grammar instruction).

Ho4<sub>3</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and the percent of class time they spend on grammar instruction.

Ho4<sub>4</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and the percent of class time they spend on speaking instruction.

Ho4<sub>5</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and the percent of class time they spend on listening or viewing instruction.

Ho4<sub>6</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and use of class time and their beliefs about progressive instructional activities.

The first five hypotheses above were tested by conducting a series of independent-samples *t* tests between teacher gender and the percent of class time each teacher declared he or she spent on the various language arts strands. The test for reading instruction was not significant,  $t(155) = .93, p = .35$ . The test for writing instruction was not significant,  $t(155) = .27, p = .79$ . The test for grammar instruction was not significant,  $t(155) = 1.10, p = .27$ . The test for speaking instruction was not significant,  $t(155) = 1.14, p = .26$ . The test for listening/viewing instruction was not significant,  $t(155) = .522, p = .60$ . Therefore, hypotheses Ho4<sub>1</sub>, Ho4<sub>2</sub>, Ho4<sub>3</sub>, Ho4<sub>4</sub>, and Ho4<sub>5</sub> were retained.

A 5 x 2 ANOVA was conducted to test Ho4<sub>6</sub> involving the relationship between gender and Progressive Beliefs and the use of class time and Progressive Beliefs. A variable named Teacher Emphasis was created by identifying the language arts strand that each teacher was most above the mean on according to his or her response regarding the percent of class time devoted to each language arts strand. The means and standard deviations for Progressive Beliefs are presented in Table 15. The ANOVA showed no significant main effects for teacher gender,  $F(2, 145) = .61, p = .54, \eta^2 = .01$ , and Teacher Emphasis,  $F(4, 145) = .927, p = .45, \eta^2 = .03$ . The ANOVA also showed no significant interaction between teacher gender and Teacher Emphasis,  $F(4, 145) = .51, p = .73, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained.

Table 15

*Means and Standard Deviations for Progressive Beliefs*

Teacher Gender	Teacher Emphasis	Mean	SD
Male	Reading	3.92	.80
	Writing	3.88	.32
	Grammar	4.00	.43
	Speaking	4.38	.53
	Viewing/Listening	3.50	1.06
Female	Reading	4.03	.46
	Writing	4.05	.43
	Grammar	3.90	.65
	Speaking	4.16	.52
	Viewing/Listening	3.98	.65

Research Question #7

To what extent, if any, is there a relationship among gender, approach to teaching literature, and beliefs about cooperative learning?

Two hypotheses were developed to answer this research question:

Ho5<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between gender and teachers' approach to teaching literature.

Ho5<sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers' gender and approach to teaching literature and their beliefs about cooperative learning.

To analyze the relationship between gender and teachers' approaches to teaching literature, frequencies of responses were run for both genders. The results are presented in Table 16.

Table 16

*Approach to Teaching Literature by Gender*

	Male		Female	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Reader-Response	8	50	31	21.8
New Critical	2	12.5	31	21.8
Biographical/Historical	0	0	14	9.9
Social Interactional	3	18.8	21	14.8
None of the Above	0	0	1	.7
Combination	3	18.8	44	31
Total	16	100	142	100

Several interesting differences stand out from these data. First, men appear to be much more likely than women to use a reader-response approach to teaching literature, 50% to 21.8%. Second, women seem to be more likely than men to use a New Critical approach, 21.8% to 12.5%, or a biographical and historical approach, 9.9% to 0%. Third, women were far more likely to respond that they use a combination of approaches, 31% to 18.8%, making that, in fact, the most frequent response among women. Another interesting finding is that only one respondent out of 142 did not feel that any of these approaches identified her approach to teaching literature. Of course, the small sample size among male respondents may have accounted for some of the disparities in percentages.

Ho5<sub>2</sub> was tested using a two-way ANOVA to evaluate the effects of gender and approach to teaching literature on beliefs about cooperative learning. The means and standard deviations for Cooperative Beliefs are presented in Table 17. The 6 x 2 ANOVA showed no significant main effects for teacher gender,  $F(2, 147) = 2.41, p = .09, \eta^2 = .03$ , and approach to teaching literature,  $F(5, 147) = .374, p = .87, \eta^2 = .01$ . The ANOVA also showed no significant interaction between teacher gender and approach to teaching literature,  $F(3, 147) = .16, p = .93$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ . As a result, the null hypothesis was retained.

Table 17

*Means and Standard Deviations for Cooperative Beliefs*

Teacher Gender	Approach to Teaching Literature	Mean	SD
Male	Reader-Response	3.94	.62
	New Critical	4.25	.35
	Biographical/Historical	---	---
	Social Interactional	4.17	.29
	None of the Above	---	---
	Combination	4.17	.29
Female	Reader-Response	3.95	.49
	New Critical	4.00	.45
	Biographical/Historical	4.07	.58
	Social Interactional	4.08	.56
	None of the Above	4.00	---
	Combination	4.03	.42

## *Qualitative Study*

### *Selection of Participants*

Participants for the qualitative portion of the study were selected from the pool of survey participants who returned their surveys within 2 weeks of the mailing and who completed the portion of the survey stating that they were willing to be interviewed and observed in their classrooms. Because nearly half of survey respondents were willing to be both interviewed and observed, I had an ample number of participants from which to choose for the qualitative study. In the end, seven National Board Certified high school English teachers were selected, interviewed, and observed in their classrooms. The selection process involved studying each day's received surveys, sorting out those teachers who were not willing to be interviewed and observed, and then comparing responses to the averages that were developed as data were entered into the SPSS database. The interviewees were selected because their responses to the survey were in some sense typical or atypical of the overall pool of responses received. For example, one of the interviewees put down the exact allotment of class time (when rounded to the nearest whole number) as was the average of all respondents while another interviewee had numbers that differed significantly. A couple of the interviewees were selected because their responses to some of the belief statements were strikingly different from those of most respondents. I also gave attention to the geographic setting, class assignments, and—after making phone contact with a potential interviewee—the teacher's class assignments or school schedule.

The interviewees did have some similarities. The participants were all women, primarily because of the limited number of men in the initial survey pool, in the pool of respondents, and in the even smaller group of men who returned surveys and were willing to be interviewed and

observed, as described in Chapter 1. The participants also all held National Board Certification in English Language Arts—Adolescence through Young Adulthood and received the certification between 2003 and 2005.

Despite these similarities, the participants represented a fairly wide range of teaching settings, teaching assignments, and educational practices and beliefs. Two of the interviewees taught in urban schools, three in suburban schools, and two in rural schools. They taught in schools in North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio. In addition to traditional English classes, some of the participants taught classes ranging from journalism to study skills to Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses. The classes observed included all high school grades, 9-12, and all achievement levels from remedial to Advanced Placement. The diversity of these classrooms enabled me to study both similarities and differences in the way these teachers approached a variety of subjects and students.

### *Conducting the Research*

Once participants were selected as possible interview candidates, I made phone contact with the participants to discuss the teacher's schedule and possible dates that were good for both the teacher and me. Most of the interviews were conducted during the teacher's planning period, after I had the opportunity to observe at least one of the teacher's classes. In one case, however, the interview took place at the beginning of the school day before any observation had taken place. At most locations, I observed a full day's worth of classes; however, at two locations, scheduling issues limited me to observing only three class periods.

Six of the interviews took place in the teacher's classroom; the seventh was held in the school library because that teacher's room was used during her planning period by a roaming

teacher. Before each interview began, I reminded each participant that her participation was voluntary and that her identity would be protected through the use of a pseudonym and procedures to prevent the identification of her school or location. The interviews lasted until a point of redundancy had been reached or until I deemed that sufficient information had been obtained to address the study's research questions:

1. What methods or strategies do high school English teachers use to teach reading and literature, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, representing, and technology skills?
2. How are various background factors (e.g., education, teacher preparation) related to high school English teachers' instructional methods?
3. How do high school English teachers balance or integrate the teaching of the various language arts strands?
4. How do high school English teachers' beliefs affect their teaching strategies?

In addition to recording the interviews, I took notes during the interviews to capture actions or inflections that might be lost through transcription. Also, I completed an observation guide (Appendix F) and made extensive notes during the classroom observations. When offered printed materials that accompanied the lesson or that the interviewee wanted to provide during the interview, I completed a document review guide (Appendix G) to help ensure an accurate interpretation of the materials.

### *Analysis of the Data and the Emergence of Themes*

As each interview and observation was completed, I transcribed the interviews myself and began coding the texts. Because I served as transcriber and was present and took extensive notes during the interviews, there were few problems with inaudible elements on the tapes. The

initial coding resulted in 12 coded categories of information that were subsequently analyzed after all the interviews were completed. Through the processes of axial coding and pattern analysis, these initial categories were eventually integrated or distilled into six major themes:

1. an emphasis on reading as the foundation of the language arts classroom,
2. a secondary emphasis on writing,
3. the importance of developing personal relationships with students,
4. student-centered classrooms,
5. academically challenging classes that expand students' understanding of the world,
6. teachers as lifelong learners.

Although I explored a variety of other topics with the interviewees such as curriculum choices and job satisfaction, these themes recurred throughout the interviews as issues these teachers were most interested in discussing.

*An Emphasis on Reading.* One thing definitely became clear during the interviews and, especially, the observations: reading is the heart of these teachers' classrooms. During the interviews, the teachers were given the opportunity to discuss the classroom strategies they use to address various language arts strands, but an analysis of their responses indicated that they had much more to say about teaching reading than about teaching writing, speaking, listening, viewing, representing, or any other aspect of the language arts.

The emphasis on reading seems to emanate from an underlying belief in its inherent necessity for success in life. Several of the teachers indicated their belief that reading is truly essential. Blanche, a teacher for over 20 years in a suburban school, said:

Well, I think it's the one subject that we all use every day of our lives. If you aspire to anything above the most menial level of work, being able to express yourself, to

communicate with other people, is a central part of that whether it's oral communication, writing ability, reading ability. If you can't read, you are in danger, I think. I mean there are lots of problems that that brings to your life if you're not, and not just if you can read words. What I see in my students is that they can read words, but when they get to the end of that sentence, they don't know what they've read. They can pronounce the words; they claim to know what some of the words mean, but they don't get the sense of the sentence a lot of times. And that's a failing of our education system: that we don't work with them enough to comprehend what they read.

Her sentiments were echoed by Elizabeth, a 30-year veteran in an urban school who originally trained to teach math. When asked why it is important for students to study English, she replied:

Because it is everything. You can live without adding one and one. But you cannot live without reading. Those who read excel. Those who don't, work, and they work hard and they suffer for it. And I know people who are struggling with illiteracy, and they are embarrassed by it and they struggle with it. If you can read, you can follow directions. If you read, you can self-direct. You can do any job. It just . . . you might take a little longer to get there, but if you read, you can get there.

Clearly, for these teachers, students must be able to read to do well in the world beyond high school.

However, these teachers also demonstrated a personal love for reading in their own lives that may have also influenced them to emphasize reading in their classrooms. For Elizabeth, reading seems to have been inextricably tied to her teaching from an early age. She recalled, "I grew up with books everywhere. I read them and re-read them; I read them to the dog. You know, I mean really, I've always been a teacher." This personal passion for reading was also apparent when Jane, a former performance artist who has only been teaching for 10 years at a rural high school, discussed what she hoped to occur in her Advanced Placement classes: "Let's just all sit down here, and figure this poem out and just look at how beautiful it is and how amazing it is that that poet put this together in that way."

A love for reading seems to have been ignited for Jo by her own high school English teacher. Jo has taught for over 20 years and is currently working in a rural school, but she earlier

worked in the business realm and was involved in training adults for leadership. The teacher she felt had most influenced her shared a love of poetry:

Oh, I loved English class. I loved poetry. I had one teacher who sat and read us Rod McKuen poetry. I don't know if you know who he is from the 70s. And I thought his poetry was very touching, and now when I look at it I go, "Oh how sappy!" But at the time it really appealed to me. So I remember that and reading books, just lots and lots of reading. I remember in the ninth grade reading *A Tale of Two Cities* and just being awe-struck with that.

Even though her tastes might have changed, Jo's love for literature was evident in her classroom as she led students through a variety of activities that required them to think, write, and discuss.

Regardless of the source of their love for reading, these teachers made reading the most prominent task in nearly every class observed. The only real exceptions were the non-"English" classes such as journalism or study skills. Daisy, a teacher with 10 years' experience in a rural high school, lit up when asked about teaching writing and said, "Oh, I love to teach writing." Yet even her classes seemed to be centered on reading. For example, one class read aloud from a contemporary novel for most of class before spending the remainder of the class discussing the story itself and its connection to their everyday lives. In another one of her classes, an extended reading of *Beowulf* prompted a lively discussion about heroes.

This integration of reading with other language arts strands seemed to be a critical part of these classrooms. A teacher of 13 years, currently in a suburban school, Juliet used reading to bridge skills-building in writing, speaking, and listening. On the day she was observed, two of her classes began with a discussion of a guiding question drawn from a short story the class was about to read called "The Man Who Was Almost a Man." The students became very engaged in discussing "What is a man?" They began reading the story by listening to a professional recording but read the final pages silently. The teacher then followed up the reading by asking

the students to write a letter from the perspective of one of the characters. This type of reading-centered language arts integration occurred in several of the classrooms.

Jo used similar methods of integrating reading and the other language arts strands. After her students read the short story “Dead Man’s Path,” they create a theme and character chart over the story. Then, after the teacher modeled letter formatting using the projector screen, the students worked on laptop computers in pairs to write a letter from the perspective of one of the characters in the story. Throughout these activities, the students frequently asked questions that provided opportunities for class discussion and building speaking skills. Jo spoke about the necessity of integrating instruction when she described her experiences with a class of at-risk students whom she was preparing for the state writing assessment:

And what I went in with was knowing that I had to teach the reading if they were going to be able to write. And so I did those hand-in-hand and put them in circles. Read a page. Discuss each paragraph. Look at vocabulary. Build vocabulary. Reading and writing just are hand-in hand.

The integration of reading and writing is, necessarily, an important point of discussion in the study’s examination of writing instruction as well.

Because reading was a critical part of nearly every observed class, I had an opportunity to witness a variety of instructional activities related to reading. The analysis of the observations and interviews showed three related areas of reading instruction: prereading, reading, and response. Nearly all of these teachers emphasized the importance of introducing students to the reading material in order to engage them in the coming reading activity. Juliet not only used the guiding question at the beginning of class to trigger student thought about the story’s content, but she also provided a keyword related to the story that helped build student vocabulary before the reading. In her interview, she cited prereading as her most important reading strategy and stated:

I try to engage them with whatever literary device we're going to studying that day, talking about their personal stories, like activating their prior knowledge. I really focus on prereading; I've found that, no matter how long it takes, it's worth it—if it's, of course, directed, connected back to what we're going to read.

And this activity appeared to work for her. Many students responded to the opening question, and only one student in each class appeared to be disengaged from the following reading activity.

Blanche also emphasized the importance of prereading activities. Although students were in the middle of reading *Romeo and Juliet*, she provided copies of the prereading activities she had provided students with at the beginning of the unit. The packet included a unit overview sheet that clearly stated the unit's "objectives," "individual responsibility," and "major themes." In addition, she provided students with a note-taking outline over the introduction to the play in order to help students take in the most important background information for understanding the reading. During the interview, she emphasized the importance of these activities, stating, "I think anything you can do to facilitate that [developing the needed background information], help their reading skills, give them a reader's guide to work with pieces of literature that we use." Also, at the beginning of the freshman class I observed, she summarized the previous reading material to assist students who had been absent so that they would be more engaged with the current day's reading.

Hester, a teacher of 14 years at a Midwestern urban school, also promoted pre-reading activities: "I also like to provide a primer before reading to help students understand the historical and contextual influences on the text. I find that that really helps students make sense of the reading." She also cited essential questions as an important opening for discussion and engagement.

Regarding the actual reading of texts, the classroom observations indicated that much reading is taking place in the classroom—at least for standard and remedial students. Yet even

in the college-bound and Advanced Placement classrooms, a good amount of reading was still taking place in the classroom. Silent reading was used occasionally. Jo had her 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students in the habit of reading silently on self-chosen books for about 10 minutes at the beginning of class, and Juliet had her students finish reading a story silently on their own. Jane also discussed her use of silent, sustained reading with her freshman classes. But most reading was done orally, by the students, the teacher, or a recording. Elizabeth's freshmen read *Romeo and Juliet* aloud, while Blanche read and paraphrased some passages of it to her class. Regardless of who was reading aloud, the teachers made frequent stops to make sure students understood the reading.

When the teachers read aloud, modeling was a frequent instructional strategy used to improve comprehension, and several of the teachers discussed the importance of modeling in their interviews. When asked what she believed is the most effective strategy for teaching reading, Hester responded, "Modeling reading, I like to read *with* the students. Oral reading is important, stopping to say what is this word doing in this sentence?" Jo also touted the benefits of modeling reading:

I think when we read a short story, we stop and question and discuss what's happened and when I read a passage, I go back and say, "Now this is how I thought through this." I model my thinking. Reading comprehension is something that takes practice and when the kids discuss as you go and if I can keep all the kids focused and involved then I've seen tremendous improvement in reading.

Elizabeth also discussed the shared benefits of reading together. When she was asked about her most effective strategy for teaching reading, she replied:

I think reading along with them. And, generally, I like the students to read instead of me. Which, today, I read in my seniors just because I'm trying to push them through *Frankenstein*. But usually I make them read. I start them; I call on them and they take turns reading back and forth. I think it's effective because it helps them become better

readers and it keeps me from having to do everything. You know, I just get tired of hearing myself talk.

Although she did not use the word *modeling*, that is exactly what she did with her students. For example, with the class reading *Frankenstein*, she frequently stopped to tell her students what she was thinking as she read a particular sentence or what questions she had in a certain passage. She was clearly modeling the thought processes that successful readers experience. Jane also described this detailed series of thought processes that she leads her students through as they read:

We did predictions, making predictions, making connections to the text, asking questions of the text. Um, in AP I often have them going line by line by line. I mean, so now what information is being added to this? What do you know now that you didn't know before? Um, I was going to do something with them today with each person or each group doing two lines of a poem and just milking that line, looking up in the dictionary, finding ambiguity: what are the different possible definitions, how can you put this line together in different ways to create a variety of meanings?

Following the reading of texts, these teachers consistently provided response activities that further developed students' understanding of the texts. Often, these response activities included writing as in the aforementioned letters that both Jo and Juliet used during the observations. Elizabeth emphasized the use of reading journals in which students were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about a text or ask and answer questions they had about their reading. Elizabeth explained why the reading journals had become so important in her class:

We've read so many different kinds of novels, and the reading journals are one of my favorite things I do with them. And I didn't know it was going to be my favorite thing. Our teacher who just retired from AP English told me she did it with her kids, and what she did with them was she made them write once a week about what they were reading and it had to be an examination and a self-reflection, and I changed that to a half a page every night. So I've got the novels arranged from four weeks to one week. I've got a two-day novel. And whatever the kids pick, if they choose a four-week novel, they have to have thirty entries of half a page a day. And then they can't write, they can't say, like if the ones I just returned, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, they can't say, "Mary Russell and

Sherlock Holmes were working on a case.” No. They have to say, “I’m really annoyed at Mary Russell and how she behaves.” So they have to examine and think about what they think about it. So it takes them that extra step. I didn’t realize that it would. So that’s how jaded I was. I didn’t realize that it would make them think. I thought it was kind of a busy work thing. No, no, it’s been wonderful. And I try to read them before our discussions because I get great insight into the things that they see and I have one kid on the last on Fahrenheit had an insight I hadn’t even thought about. And I thought that’s so cool I’m going to have to talk to them about it.

While a couple of the other teachers mentioned using journals in class, they did not specifically refer to them as reading journals.

Certainly, class discussion was one of the primary forms of response these teachers encouraged in their classrooms. Daisy, in particular, whose class discussions tied to reading were discussed above, remarked:

I try to have at least a couple of weeks in which students are in a discussion-type setting where they can voice their opinions like about what we just did, like about death so that’s it not me just always telling them what to think, they’re always passive. To tell you the truth I have such strong personalities in this particular class that if you don’t give them that avenue at all they just totally shut down or they feel like they’re being completely stifled.

In addition to more informal class discussions, Jane mentioned the importance of more formal Book Talks:

I will . . . [have] them do Book Talks, required book talks so they are having to voice what the book is about and elements of the book so that they’re understanding it a little bit more and they’re also having to speak and recommend or bash the book.

The observations supported these teachers’ assertions about their frequent use of discussion following reading. In every class, the students appeared comfortable participating in such discussions as if they are a regular component of the response to reading.

These teachers did, however, have some differing views about some reading practices. For example, Elizabeth and Blanche both required their freshmen to complete study questions

over the reading of *Romeo and Juliet*. But Daisy was adamant that this traditional method of building and checking for comprehension is not effective:

I find myself having to do more of my own planning instead of there is just absolutely no answering questions at the end of the story in the textbook. They are not going to do it. They're already willing to make Fs.

Yet the overall impression from these interviews and observations was that, regardless of their backgrounds or philosophies, these teachers emphasize reading more than anything else in their classrooms. And their approaches to teaching literature were generally much more similar than different.

*A Secondary Emphasis on Writing.* Writing activities were mentioned more than activities from any other language arts strand except reading; one thing that seemed notable was just how much less these teachers talked about writing than about reading and how much more class time was spent on reading-focused activities rather than on writing. In fact, during the classroom observations, the only writing activities not associated with reading assignments were free-response journals Elizabeth required her freshmen to complete at the beginning of every class and newspaper assignments in some of the journalism classes. Even Elizabeth didn't seem to see the journals as important in building composition skills as much as for classroom management and engaging students at the start of class:

I started with journals originally just so I could take roll in peace and now I understand it's though processes because once they start the journal, the mouth closes, they get in the let's-to-work routine. And they do everyday. So all I have to say is, "You don't want your journal grade?" These honors kids want their grades. They go and they're right into it. So I love that. It sets them up into the frame of mind I want—which is we're going to work and we're going to work hard. And I hope we're going to have some fun but work is number one.

Although these teachers discussed writing assignments not tied to literature during the interviews, in their classrooms, writing was often a response to literature. Whether it was answering study questions over a text, filling out a literary analysis chart, writing a letter from the perspective of a character, or writing sentences in iambic pentameter, nearly all the writing assignments during the observations were responses to reading.

Another interesting issue with writing was the diversity of the approaches to writing expressed by the participants. While the approaches to teaching reading were extremely similar, with many of the same activities being witnessed from one classroom to the next, writing activities varied widely. Only four writing-related topics were brought up by multiple participants: the need for revision, the use of peer editing and revision, the importance of writing conferences, and modeling. Daisy, Hester, Jane, and Juliet all emphasized the need for students to revise their writing. Daisy explained that she required her students to keep a portfolio with all their writing assignments and allowed them to work on each paper and “keep revising until they are happy with it.” She also uses the portfolios to help students track their progress over time:

And then what I have them do is go back and look at their writing, pull their essays out and then make me a list of their writing strengths and weaknesses. I have one student, he was in fourth period and he sat in the middle of the row next to the door, King of Comma Splices, and I’ve been telling him you’re going to get nailed for those. He’s going to a four year liberal arts school and you’re going to get nailed for those. When are you going to stop it? I’m marking it, I’m marking it. Making them recognize their mistakes.

Not only did Hester emphasize the importance of revising as one of her most effective strategies for teaching writing, but she also added that portfolios that involved revising writing were one of the most effective methods of assessment in her classroom. Jane, too, expressed her enthusiasm for revision: “Sometimes we’ll revise 3, 4, 5, times, and I have found that that makes good writers when they have to look at the same piece and actually physically do it.” When asked what her most effective strategy for teaching writing is, Juliet responded:

Drafting. Where I came from, we had to do the state portfolios for Kentucky. Are the ones similar in Tennessee? And so those were do or die; that's what our scores were based on. And so I realized teaching there how important it was to make students do their papers over and over, even if it's six times, until they were good. And when I came here, we have nothing like that, so when I made kids do things again, they revolted. They were like, "No, I've already written it. I'm okay with a B; I don't need to do it again." I'm like, "No, you do; you get another grade." So I've instituted the drafting here, and so really we have two grades one very paper: we have their first-draft grade which is not a rough draft and I grade it and they have to revise it. And that's 50 points, and the final draft grade is 100 points. They finally realize after the second paper that if they do a good job on the first draft, then it's really going to boost their grade for the second draft. And I think they understand the importance of drafting and editing.

Interestingly, as much emphasis as has been put on portfolios in the professional literature of the last 30 years, only three of the seven participants even mentioned them.

Peer revision and editing, another popular topic in the teaching literature, was stressed by both Daisy and Juliet. Daisy seemed to realize some of the problems many teachers have complained about in regard to peer editing, but she developed a method for getting around them:

I do peer editing. In AP I just gave back a...they had a paper in codename which really works good for peer editing, especially with AP because they're always so insecure with the valedictorian reading my paper. And I have them go by a rubric, a set rubric and give peer editing and do several like "change papers, change papers, change papers," so you're not giving it to your best friend. You're not always receiving positive, you know, sugar blown at you.

Juliet even mentioned peer conferencing in her description of what students would be doing in her ideal classroom. Although they didn't mention peer revision specifically in their interviews, Jane, Jo, and Hester incorporated various forms of peer revision in their class activities. Jane's newspaper staff, for example, seemed to make collaborating with peers on their newspaper stories an ongoing activity. In fact, they more often approached peers for advice about a story than they did the teacher. Also, Jo's activity in which the students worked in pairs on lap-tops would inherently involve peer revision as the two students worked together to compose a letter.

Hester's journalism students did much of the same as they worked on final news stories for a web site that Hester was setting up over the summer.

Writing conferences were also mentioned by several of the teachers. Jane, with a relatively small group of journalism students, was able to rely on one-on-one conferences with students as her main way of providing feedback to students about their writing. She also saw it as a critical way to help students improve their writing over time:

And I sit down with them most of the time and I'll read sentence by sentence and they see that I am thinking is each sentence, does each sentence work, how is each sentence structured? And does each sentence move forward the story or the information that you're being given? And I think it just helps them understand what they need to do, so the next time they give me an article it'll be a little better to begin with and the next time it'll be a little better and I've had kids who practically cannot write at all who really are getting better at writing.

Elizabeth also felt that working with students and their writing one-on-one was necessary for student growth:

I leave my lunches open—thank god, I have fourth-period planning—so if they want help during lunch, I work all through lunch with them. So when they're writing papers, I'll sit down at the computer and say, "Okay, tell me." And they'll dictate it, and I'll help them: what they could add, where to change it. You know, one-on-one I get further with them that way than if I stood up there a hundred years and told them what needs to happen. Until they're actually writing it, nothing's working.

On the day of the observations, this exact scenario took place, with several students coming to Elizabeth's room during lunch seeking help with their most recent papers. Hester also stressed the importance of conferencing: "I try to have private conferences on each major paper; I have found that to be critical in improving student writing."

Two teachers, Daisy and Jane, discussed how they use modeling to help students recognize the characteristics of quality writing. Daisy explained how she uses her own writing, other students' writing, and published samples to guide her students to better compositions:

First of all, always modeling an essay. And I write an essay, and I usually have the students to write with codenames on their papers. If I can, umm, about half of the essays, all of them in AP and about half of them in my other classes, have to be typed with a codename. So the students really like knowing when I read a paper that my criticism, positive and negative, has nothing to do with their name or previous assignments. But I believe in modeling a good paper and then one with some weaknesses and having students go through those. Also, I believe in reading other pieces of writing that mimic the skills that I want them to have, so I have . . . oh, what's the name of it? Viewpoint and literary essays in textbooks, and I have classroom sets of the textbooks that model strong essays.

Jane, on the other hand, relies primarily on the papers of students in the class to model both good and bad writing techniques:

I will take sample papers with the names off and go over them on the overhead. Sometimes I'll do introductions and take them from several papers: what's good here, what needs to be changed, does it have all the elements it needs, what about the coherence, what about the thesis? I'll take essays either that need some help, most of them need, everything can be revised, so I'll take an essay that needs some help, and we'll go over it as a class. What's here? What can be improved? What needs to be in here that's not here? Um, or I'll take really good ones and point out, "Now, see how this has a topic sentence? Notice how this is the support to this statement." Um, and that kind of thing to see them get better.

Yet even though she didn't discuss it in her interview, Jo also used modeling when she demonstrated how to draft a letter on her projector screen before her students began using the lap-tops for composing. Elizabeth also made up samples of iambic pentameter for her students before she expected them to compose their own. And Juliet began reciting a sample letter for her students before they began composing. These embedded examples of modeling suggest that it may be a more important component of writing instruction than the interviews indicated.

However, many of the teachers' "most effective strategies for teaching writing" were only mentioned by one teacher. For example, Jane was the only teacher who mentioned using creative writing with her students. She stated, "I do get them doing personal writing, and they do poetry, and I used to have them do a scrapbook that had a combination of poetry and photographs taken for the scrapbook itself." But this was only with her freshman classes; she did

not indicate that she does any creative writing with her other English classes. Likewise, Jo was the only teacher who mentioned using the traditional structuralist approach to composition instruction:

Yeah, I'm really a structuralist, in that I like to go, "This is a topic sentence. This is a supporting sentence. This is a detail sentence. This is a concluding sentence. This is a thesis statement"—after they get past the paragraph. And you know I just work with all those different things. I just work with structure until the kids get it. And then they're free to go where they want. But at first they have to start with a real structure.

Although some of the other teachers may occasionally use this once-prevalent approach, it was never mentioned in another interview or witnessed in any of the classrooms. Prewriting has been another point of emphasis in much of the professional literature in recent years, yet only one teacher seemed to stress its significance in writing instruction. Hester, who may have been influenced by her former career in journalism, identified the knowledge developed in prewriting as her most effective strategy for teaching writing: "To know what you're writing about. How can you write about something if you don't know much about it? Also, students need to focus on the audience and purpose and not boring the reader." Blanche mentioned something else that no other participant brought up: letting the students write about something that interests them. She argued that this is particularly important at the beginning of a class:

The first writing assignment for them is an essay about their names, and I encourage them to go to the internet and do this research: what does your name really mean? I encourage them to interview their parents about why they chose the particular name they did, and I use it as a diagnostic tool. I don't give them a lot of preliminary instructions on how I expect them to write it, but I do give them a chance to revise it. And I give them more specifics as we are getting ready to work on the revision. So I think having something interesting is one thing to do. I also, in the first six weeks usually, have them give a speech about their favorite things. And I do give them some guidelines for that. They have to choose three favorite things and they have to tell me ahead of time of what they are. I have to approve of their three favorite things. They have to bring in a visual aid and they have to do a presentation. So I think, again, something they, something that interests them is a good way to get them started writing.

Overall, the teachers mentioned a wide range of activities for teaching writing, but few of them were presented in the classroom. And writing came across as an activity much less emphasized than reading. For example, even though Juliet argued that “the ultimate goal [of studying English] is to make them better writers,” the observations indicated that her class is primarily reading-focused. Perhaps this emphasis on reading instruction goes back to the teachers’ own love of reading as described in the previous section; not one teacher mentioned a personal love of writing or even doing much writing outside the classroom.

*Developing Personal Relationships with Students.* One thing that all the responding teachers demonstrated was the importance of knowing their students as individuals. Although some teachers seemed to stress this more than others and exhibit closer personal relationships in their interactions with students, they all demonstrated an emphasis on positive relationships with the individual students. As with their emphasis on reading instruction, several of these teachers seemed to be influenced by their own teachers’ classroom demeanor. Daisy recalled what she loved most about her high school English teacher:

For four years I had the same English teacher and, let me tell you, she was outside the box. And we had a lot of classroom discussion. She gave you a lot of freedom in the classroom to voice your opinion in a respectful way, but she was constantly asking us to ask questions. She pulled couches in her room lots of times, and we sat on beanbag chairs and couches which was pretty nontraditional in itself back then. And she pretty much encouraged everybody regardless of your walk of life. Education is your equal leveler, it gives you the opportunity that nothing else can. So yeah, my English teacher was definitely great.

This description very much echoed the type of interactions Daisy had with her own students during the observations. Although she didn’t have “beanbag chairs and couches,” her students were encouraged to ask questions and seemingly free to discuss any topic that happened to pop into their minds. During the observations, her classes discussed questions such as “What will

you miss most about high school?” and “How would you like to die?” even though they were not directly connected to the texts being studied. Daisy appeared intensely interested in her students’ thoughts and feelings and demonstrated a great deal of knowledge about their personal lives and experiences.

Hester also stressed the importance of allowing students to express freely their thoughts and opinions, and this trait also seemed to be tied back to her own experiences as a student. For her, though, the influence came about in a very different way:

One teacher I really remember was my journalism teacher, a man I abhorred because he was so conservative. He was completely unwilling to consider anything but the most conservative view of things. I mean, this man had pictures of J. Edgar Hoover on the walls of his classroom. So he influenced me because I knew I didn’t want to be anything like him.

Later in the interview she explained how she aspires to treat her students:

I try to be open-minded with the students and let them have their say even if it’s not how I see it. I explain that they have to be able to back up their opinions, but I am open to letting them pursue their own ideas.

This open-mindedness came through clearly in nearly every classroom observation. The teachers appeared to go out of their way to accommodate students’ opinions and validate the students as important voices in the classroom.

Jane’s favorite teacher also influenced her to develop close bonds with her own students.

When describing this teacher, Jane pointed out how she shared her personal life with her students:

And the very favorite teacher that I remember was Mrs. Spielberg, who was of Greek descent and, uh, what made her my favorite was prompting us to think and her life as a role model. I know she was very, she would come in and she would say, “Sorry I wasn’t here yesterday, but I had so much fun.” She had a real zest for living and a real zest for learning.

This sharing of stories carried on into Jane's own teaching. Later in the interview, she explained how she integrates her own experiences into her classroom:

I, uh, also have found through my personal experience that when you talk about personal experience kids will, no matter who they are or how inattentive they are, they listen because they want to know something from your experience. They don't want to read it from a book, even if it's the same thing as your personal experience. They want to hear you say it. So they pay attention when you do that.

For Jane, developing personal relationships with the students begins with opening up about herself.

For most of the participants, teachers are not merely teachers; they fulfill many other important roles in the lives of their students. As Jo stated, "I have to also be a coach, a mom, a psychologist, a therapist, a nurse." Tied to their class discussions, Jo discussed problems with her students such as having a relative in jail or dealing with a parental divorce, and her students seemed very comfortable discussing such matters with her. She also brought in her own personal experiences, sharing a recent difficult situation she faced at a faculty meeting. When asked about her teaching style, Jo responded, "I think I've always thought of myself as experimental, very student-oriented. I consider myself a student advocate ever since day one," and her classes demonstrated this student advocacy that incorporated both academic and personal expectations.

Perhaps Elizabeth demonstrated the strongest personal relationships with her students. The students flocked to her before class to discuss what was happening in their lives, and she made a conscientious effort to walk around and talk to as many students as possible during their journal time at the beginning of class. Her warm rapport with the students was also evident in the way she could joke around with them and use humor to discipline students who became disruptive or inattentive. For example, when a boy began talking to another student while the class was reading *Romeo and Juliet* aloud, she stopped and told him that he probably ought to

pay attention so that he could figure out how to woo a girl. In response, the class laughed heartily at the boy, but he clearly took it in stride and got back to work rather than becoming upset with the teacher. Elizabeth also built rapport by putting herself on an equal footing with her students. When reading *Frankenstein* aloud to her senior class, she was unable to pronounce *physiognomy*, but, instead of making something up and going on quickly, she explained to her students that she could not pronounce it and asked if any of the students could demonstrate. Also, she later responded to a student's question by saying that she didn't know the answer but that she would look it up. These actions probably helped make her more human and, ultimately, more likeable to her students.

For Elizabeth, the importance of getting to know every student seemed to develop from her own school experiences as well. She recalled how her senior English teacher was the first teacher who ever made her open up in school:

We had a small class, and we sat in a circle, and there was total interaction. In my other classes it was more teacher talking, student response like you saw today. There was not nearly as much interaction as you can have in a class where you can sit in a little circle and everyone must speak in every class. And I was very shy, so I never spoke in a class if I didn't have to. And I didn't have to 'til I was a senior.

When asked how this impacted her own teaching, she commented,

I try to make sure that the kids who normally don't talk get a chance to talk. I try to interact with every kid every day in some way to make sure I know what's happening and how they're doing and get a feel for it because the older I've gotten, the more I've understood that the feelings are more important than anything else that goes on. It's more important how I feel like the student feels. . . . You never know what kind of grief a kid's going through and what kind of need they have until you stop worrying about the subject matter and worry more about the student more than the subject. And I think that has to be our number-one goal.

Like Jo, she also felt that teachers sometimes needed to take on a parental-like relationship with students:

I think their parents are preoccupied, and I don't know that it's their fault. I just think it's due to the fact that so many two-parent homes work. So they're so tired, so busy that they forget their number-one job is their kid. And so they don't . . . I mean, we [my family] talked through dinner at night, we had a common dinner, my parents knew what we were thinking and what we were doing and who we were exposed to and all of that. And I don't think kids are getting that anymore. So I think school is doing the parenting. And so, since that's the case, I think we have to be better parents. That has to be our goal: to be their parent and guide them.

This nurturing side of Elizabeth was also evident in her interactions outside class. During her lunch period, several students sought refuge in her classroom. Elizabeth asked each of them what was going on, offered advice, and allowed them to stay in her room throughout lunch. Also, at the end of the interview, a former student from several years ago happened to stop by school to see her. The genuine pleasure they both had when they hugged hello and Elizabeth's intense interest and pride in what was happening in this student's life reveal the nurturing, motherly relationship she had developed with him.

Juliet also appeared to have extremely positive, close relationships with her students. One thing that made this possible was her use of a guiding question at the beginning of every class. While she emphasized that this practice was intended to engage each student in the day's activities, the observations demonstrated how these questions helped build personal relationships. For example, with one class that had the guiding question "What does it mean to be a man?" Juliet explained that, in the story they would be reading, it had to do with having a gun. She then allowed students to share experiences they had had with shooting guns. She listened to the students' responses, and they obviously felt comfortable telling her and other students in the class about some very personal and potentially embarrassing experiences. She also helped build stronger relationships with her students by having a board in the room where students could post compliments and thank-you notes to members of the class. Several of these

notes were to Juliet, and the writers' comments often emphasized what a "friend" she had been to her students.

For Blanche, building positive relationships was more pragmatic. In her interview, she emphasized the need for working with students as individuals: "I think we need to certainly focus on the individual student and what the abilities and skills that that student brings and what that student thinks he or she wants to do or is inclined to do." But, like Jo and Elizabeth, she also alluded to the need for teachers to take on a parental role with students:

I think some of education is intrinsic. I think you have to have a natural curiosity. I think we deaden that sometimes as children grow; we don't encourage them to be creative; we want to medicate them so they don't bother us; we want to sit them in front of a TV instead of stimulating them in other ways—whether it's physical exercise, giving them good food. I think parents frequently fail to meet what ought to be their obligations to their children to help them live the best possible life. I think education in the long run ought to be something that makes your life better whether it's—that's not always financially better—I think intellectually, I think intellectual growth. I think more guidance is an important part of education as well. You know, *why?* *Why* is it wrong to steal that person's money? Again, of course, so much of that is supposed to come from home, but I think so much of it doesn't. So how are we going to help these children grow up to be helpful and useful, happy people?

This call for more guidance in education was something Elizabeth also expressed in her interview. When asked what she thought the teacher's role in a high school English classroom should be, she explained:

Guide. I think we're guide first and foremost, in every part. I think it's life, education, and, you know, I hear about their problems at home and their problems with other kids and I don't think we can ignore that either. If that part of their life isn't working, this part of their life doesn't work either.

Although the term was not used often, both the interviews and the observations revealed that these teachers were very concerned about the types of role models they were with their students, and they all seemed to understand the need to have a personal, individual relationship with each student in order to be an effective role model.

But the personal side of teaching was not always serious for these teachers. Time and again they stressed the need to have fun with their classes. When asked about her philosophy of education, Elizabeth stated:

I would like for my students to leave my class remembering that they liked it and that English is interesting and fun and that reading opens doors for them. I don't care if they ever remember a single thing that we did if they're warmer about it when they leave than when they walk in. That makes me so happy.

Jane also talked about the need for fun in her philosophy of education; she said, "If it's not fun for me, it's probably not going to be fun for them." This comment underscores a major aspect of these teacher's classrooms: they are in it *with* their students—not only the leader of the class, but a member of the class.

This egalitarian attitude toward the teacher's role was also expressed by Daisy. She explained:

I try to treat them like an adult to a degree and listen to what they say and want to do and not just me be the dictator and say we're doing this. Like, for example, I could have crammed the novel down their throats and said we're doing it anyway. And third period likes it which you saw. Fourth period does not, which we're nixing it. Now that makes another planning and I've got a whole new set of lesson plans, but that's okay.

And, like the other participants, she emphasized the need to know her students and treat them all as important individuals when asked what the teacher's role should be:

Trying to meet the needs of individual students and, like I know which ones are going to college and which ones are going to get burnt on their grammar skills and which ones I would like for you just to change your articulation and self-confidence and be able to go into job interviews. And making each student feel like, regardless of whether they got into Chapel Hill, Carolina, or whether they go straight to the workforce, their talent or goal is just as important as whether they graduated in the top five of their class. I'm a firm believer in that.

Overall, there was much more discussion of the students and their needs than about English as a discipline. This tendency seems to fall in line with the first, and arguably most important, standard established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2003) for

teachers in this certificate area: “Accomplished Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts teachers acquire specific knowledge about students’ individual, intellectual, and social development and use that knowledge to advance students’ achievement as readers, writers, speakers, listeners, and viewers in English language arts.” All of these teachers seemed to have made the transition from teaching subject to teaching students. As Elizabeth so eloquently stated:

When I first started teaching, I just tried to make it through every day. And so it was a matter of I tried to keep ahead of the kids. And I didn’t worry about the kids; I was worried about the subject matter. But being the age I am now, I have got that subject down. So I can worry about the kids.

*Student-Centered Classrooms.* These teachers’ concerns for their students and their relationships with them may be one reason why their classrooms seem to be so student-centered. Time and again, issues such as student choice and tailoring the class to meet students’ needs came up in the interview and were witnessed in the classrooms. All of these teachers appeared to make a conscious effort to provide students with choices and some amount of control over their instruction. When asked about the debate between teaching the classics and teaching contemporary literature, Elizabeth explained that the decision about what to read is often primarily made by her students:

Mostly what I do is I have a book list that kids can choose from. I’ve written down every book in the freshman library, and then they’re certain ones I want them to read. I wanted them to read *Mockingbird*, and I want them to read *Saints of the River*. And then once we read those two, I said, “You vote.” ‘Cause I can’t have all classes read the same thing because we don’t have enough books. So we vote and majority rules. So I have a class that read *Pride and Prejudice*. I have two classes that read *Lord of the Flies*. They all read *Jurassic Park*. We added that last year, and I’m so glad. Boy, they loved it. So we read *Jurassic Park*, we read *Fahrenheit 451*. We’ve read so many different kinds of novels.

This democratic management was observed in her senior class when Elizabeth allowed the students to vote between *Twelfth Night* and *Nicholas Nickleby* after they finished viewing and discussing *Hamlet* on the day they were observed.

Several of the other teachers also gave their students choices about classroom activities. As explained earlier, Jo also gave her students the choice to self-select reading material for the silent, sustained reading she had students do at the beginning of class. This attitude is also reflected in her approach to teaching writing and the “then they’re free to go where they want” mind-set described previously. Likewise, Blanche, too, detailed choices that she gives her students about their writing tasks that help connect them to the writing tasks, especially early in the course. During the observation of Daisy’s classes, she gave her students numerous choices about the class. She gave them choices about whether or not they wanted to have run-throughs of their senior-project presentation; she let them choose which piece of literature to read next; she even let them choose, individually, how to spend their time at the end of class—working on their senior projects or socializing with their friends. When asked what she felt the teacher’s role should be in a high school English classroom, she said, “Giving students options for new ideas that maybe they had not thought of in terms of essay topics or prompts or senior graduation projects.” Overall, the teachers lead classrooms that put students first by allowing them to make significant choices about how and what they will learn.

Another component of these classrooms that made them student-centered was the willingness of the teachers to do whatever it takes to motivate the students to learn. When asked what one lesson from her teacher education program had had the most impact in her own classroom, Juliet replied, “engaging kids at the beginning of class—the importance of that. That

if you don't engage them, you're just wasting everybody's time." Elizabeth concurred.

Describing her teaching style, she remarked:

Wild. I think it's wild. I think my goal is to hook them in whatever way I can, and if it's through I have to tap-dance to do it, I'm going to tap-dance—whatever works. And that's what I really think it [her teaching style] is.

This effort to “hook” her students was observed in her classes. For example, she played music at the beginning of her freshman classes while they wrote in their journals. On the day of these observations, the music was the version of “Puttin’ on the Ritz” performed by Frankenstein and his monster in the film *Young Frankenstein*. It seemed to capture the students’ attention, and several through the course of the day wanted more information about the song. This type of engagement was extremely important to Elizabeth; she provided the following example:

They wanted to read Shakespeare; they didn't when we started, but we got into that and they want to. You can hook them; it's so hard, but it's satisfying. When they're hooked and you know you've done it: that's the best of the best, I think. That is the best teaching class to me. I don't care what else happens; if you know you did it, one moment of time that they got there, it's worth all the rest of the pain.

Daisy talked about taking even more unusual steps to lure in her students:

I try to be creative, I write spee...like I gave a speech on bio-diesel. I came in and dressed up as Trinity when I do The Matrix. I role-play a lot in class. I try to at least a couple of days a week to do something outside the box. I'll find a song that kind of goes along with the stereotypes [a recent unit] like “The Girls” by the Beastie Boys, and I played that the other day in class. “All we really want is girls, girls in the kitchen,” that sort of thing. I try not to be boring, creative, and on some days give the kids a voice. . . . last week I came in with a John Deere hat on, camo pants, and I played the stereotype of, I guess, redneck white trash, and why would a 44-year-old woman dress this way in a post office?

She also described her attempts to motivate students by bringing in texts that would interest them:

We read an essay by Snoop Dogg, and we analyzed Snoop Dogg's diction and syntax versus getting to the point and how most of the students believed Snoop Dogg, even though he had a drug record and a lot of them didn't like him personally. They felt like he was more real and authentic.

Simply put, these teachers recognized the importance of helping students want to learn.

Another factor that contributes to the student-centered nature of these classrooms is brought out in that last quotation from Daisy: making the instruction relevant to today's students. Jane, Jo, Hester, and Blanche all emphasized the need to connect the instruction to the students' own lives and interests. When asked about her philosophy of education, Jane described herself as a pragmatist:

My philosophy of education is the more real-world application it has, the better students seem to be at it. So, and the more, um, the more invested they'll become in it. Students in journalism become super invested in it; they learn so much. And I keep trying to find a way to make my other English classrooms have the same elements as journalism.

This pragmatic side also came out in her AP class when she emphasized the need to pass the upcoming AP exam in order to receive college credit. Hester pointed out the relevant nature of journalism for her students, too: "In journalism classes, the students are much more actively engaged in the learning because they are actually doing things for a real purpose, that they will be published." She pointed out, however, that teachers can help make instruction relevant for students in regular English classes:

This year, students had to read *All Quiet on the Western Front* for summer reading, which I wasn't so thrilled about. But I paired in with *The Quiet American* when school started and the students really got into it. We had some powerful discussions because the texts became relevant to the students.

Perhaps more than any of the teachers, Jo stressed relevance and tied her emphasis on it to her previous experience in training adults:

Before the move to make things relevant, the curriculum relevant, I was already doing that because adult learners have to have everything relevant or they have no interest in it. So I had already started that way into small groups and everything before the big push across the country started with all of that and that was because of my adult, my working with adults.

When asked about the debate between teaching the classics and teaching contemporary literature, she argued strongly for teacher more recent literature because of its relevance for students:

I'm just not wildly interested in the classics. And I will do what I have to do with the classics in order to meet the requirements of my curriculum, but as fast as I can, I get into modern and contemporary. I also like to use in that low-level class all young adult literature. Oh my gosh, all our extra reading books were young adult literature, because those are the things kids are interested in. And certainly your advanced kids can really get into the classics. But to insist that all kids read all the classics is tedious to me. I know *Beowulf* is important. We read parts of *Beowulf*. We read excerpts that are in our textbook from *Beowulf*; we jump very quickly over *The Canterbury Tales* simply because, to me, those are nice pieces of literature, but what's important is what's happening in the modern world.

Blanche also thought that today's teachers need to focus on the modern world:

We need to give the skills to function in today's world, and they are different in some respects that the skills that our grandparents or great-grandparents or founding fathers had. So I think media literacy, for example, is something we need to focus on more today than in 1908.

For these teachers using materials that interest the students and that prepare them for their futures is more important than imparting an established canon of information related to English as a discipline.

Another student-centered component of their teaching strategies was tailoring instruction to particular classes and particular students. Elizabeth, Daisy, Jo, and Hester addressed the importance of focusing on the needs and abilities of students above the prescribed curriculum.

When asked about her teaching style, Jo pointed to her ability to diagnose the learning needs of individual students; she said, "I also am really into learning theory. What makes these kids learn? So I'm also the observer, watching everything, trying to figure out what's the best way to reach everyone?" She also explained that she tries to make use of the special abilities and characteristics that each group of students possesses:

I think that students are very smart when they walk into my classroom. I think what I do is help steer them to expand their base of knowledge, and I respect the knowledge they

already have when they walk in ‘cause a lot of these kids you know have really, really fascinating knowledge bases. And I also think that I like to celebrate the differences in the kids and celebrate our diversity, and I try to make that just an everyday part of what we do.

This tailoring of instruction to the particular group of students was evident in Jo’s classroom.

The material, the level of discussion, and the teacher’s expectations seemed quite different from one group to the next. The growing pressure to teach all students the same material in the same way bothered Jo; she commented, “With all of the emphasis on standards teachers can’t just get in there and just work with kids that match the kids’ interest and lead them along as well as we used to be able to.”

Hester appeared especially interested in having the freedom to change the course of a specific class if needed and to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students. She gave much credit to her experience in attempting National Board Certification; when asked about the impact of National Board Certification on her teaching, she replied:

I pay more attention to gauging my students from the first of the years and changing mid-stream if I need to. Also, it has helped me differentiate learning for my students and try to reach every child where he or she needs it.

Elizabeth’s classes seemed to be especially individualized. Three freshman honors classes were observed, one after the other. Although they were all studying *Romeo and Juliet*, each class was at a different point in the play, and the activities in each class period were different. This goes along with Elizabeth’s remarks during her interview:

I don’t think there’s ever one set thing, and if you saw my classes, they’re totally different. It doesn’t matter if I start them the same day at the same place; within a day, they’re so far apart, it’s incredible. I might as well be teaching a different prep for every class ‘cause they’re so unusual and so unique, so I have to teach them differently—different styles, different addresses to them.

Daisy also commented on the importance of looking at student’s individual cases; when about the ideal high school English class, she said:

Each student would have their own individual lesson or growth plan, and my job would be to enable and instruct each individual student to be moving in the direction. I have honors students in the ninth grade who already know parallelism and misplaced modifiers. Why should they be doing my little grammar worksheets and listening to my little grammar exercises when they're ready to move on?

Her classes demonstrated her efforts to tailor instruction to individual classes. One struggling class was allowed to read a middle-school-level novel while another, more advanced class read *Beowulf*, even though the two classes were officially the exact same class. Based on both the interviews and the observations, these adjustments appeared to be more a norm than an exception in the participants' classrooms.

Perhaps the most obvious student-centered component of these classrooms was the emphasis on experiential, hands-on, active learning experiences. Daisy argued that authentic activities are the most significant for student. When discussing what types of activities she feels are effective, Daisy responded:

Authentic, authentic. Which the senior project does. Most of my seniors have chosen a topic that they like whether it's learning to play drums, doing a river clean-up, or building something. And their papers are a lot better than the ones who do a pro-and-con on euthanasia, of course. That's not rocket science in teaching.

Jo also cited the graduation projects as one of her more effective active learning experiences for students:

One thing I do with my seniors is we do the graduation project. And that has an entire component of going out in the community and working with a mentor and creating a product and learning a whole new set of skills or if they have some skills in an area to advance those skills. And then also I do group work. We use computers a lot. We have a lot of class discussion and group discussion and pair and share and all kinds of things that try to keep kids moving and interested.

She explained that her tendency toward these active learning strategies was developed in her teacher education program that provided her with "a lot of hands-on ways of working with

language skills, working with communication skills.” She also stressed active learning when asked what the teacher’s role in an English classroom should be:

We have to set up an environment in which the kids can thrive. And for kids today to thrive they have to move about, they have to be involved, and they have to read, talk, write, think, speak. They have to have all of these things going on and I have to be coaching and moving everything around.

Across the board, the journalism classes exhibited the strongest reliance on experiential activities. While Hester mentioned that she liked to have her English students make PowerPoint presentations to the class and “act out scenes from Shakespeare,” the most obvious experiential activities for her students during the observations were the articles her journalism students were working on for web publication. After the students spent the first part of class reviewing for the final exam by working in groups to create questions to exchange and quiz other groups, they became even more involved when given the opportunity to use the class computer lab to continue working on their articles. Both Blanche’s and Jane’s journalism and newspaper classes demonstrated an extremely high level of engagement while working on their products. Jane discussed her intense desire to add these types of experiences to her regular English classes. Even though she already tries to provide students with real-life experiences through presentation and project assignments, she hoped to expand the hands-on elements through service learning:

I would institute service learning. I would have some field trips, um, if I had the money to have them. Um, I wanted to do something with the river . . . and incorporate science and writing and reading about the river altogether, but I ran out of time. And, plus, every time you go down to the river, you need to take a school bus which costs money and requires time. So, I’m still hoping to do it next year and see what I can do with that. It would be some experiences and some cross-curricular stuff and some service learning and involved, motivated students.

As with so many of the other themes drawn from these participants, this emphasis on student-centered classrooms seems to be linked to the teachers’ own school experiences. Jane, when discussing the classes in her teacher education program, shared her enthusiasm for those

classes that gave *her* the opportunity to be actively engaged. Identifying those classes that were most helpful, she stated:

One that I really loved was using . . . it was with—at the time—the theater department . . . and it was on using drama and art in teaching. I thought that was a wonderful class, very hands-on, very interesting. . . . I had a methods class where we taught each other as well as that. We would observe in a high school class and do a little bit of teaching that was before student teaching.

Juliet also reminisced about a “wonderful” education professor that she would “never forget” who required her students to model 15 different types of lessons during the English methods class. But many of these teachers remembered experiential, active learning experiences in their own high school classes. Blanche’s favorite teacher was a home economics teacher who provided her with relevant, real-world skills and knowledge; she explained, “She taught me more stuff that I have used every day of my life than any other single person.” Daisy also described how her emphasis on engaging students actively in discussions about real-life issues came from that aforementioned “outside the box” teacher who encouraged her students to share their opinions.

Overall, both the interviews and observation gave the impression that these classrooms are not the traditional teacher-centered classrooms where students sit back and listen to the “sage on the stage.” Instead, these were classrooms where students were guided through activities geared toward their needs and abilities, given choices about what they wanted to learn, and involved in active learning experiences.

*Academically Challenging Classes That Expand Students’ Understanding of the World.*

Despite the fact that the participants generally had very student-centered, nurturing classrooms, they mentioned time and again the academic rigor of their classes, and, in nearly every case, the

observations backed up these assertions. Blanche seemed to synthesize the way many of these teachers felt when she remarked, “I have high expectations. I want it to be fun, but I also expect them to be focused on what they’re doing.” This dual focus was definitely present in Blanche’s classes. When the bell rang, her students knew to be in their seats with their materials, ready to get down to business. And Blanche kept those students focused on academic learning for the entire 90-minute period. Although she changed up the activities fairly regularly, intertwining reading and watching *Romeo and Juliet* with engaging discussion, the vast majority of her students were almost never off-task or not focused on the academic objectives. She helped ensure this type of intensity by grading students on their class participation and disciplining students who put their heads down or otherwise became disengaged. Her no-nonsense attitude was definitely evident during her interview:

I do think there should be an effort involved; I don’t think it should be easy; I don’t think it should be fun and games. I don’t care how many pictures you draw or how many songs you sing, and those things are good and fine. But as long as the state’s end-of-course test is going to test us on reading and writing, then we have to be able to read and write.

She also stressed the importance of transmitting critical discipline-based information. When asked which goals high schools should focus on today, she said, “We have this collective body of knowledge, too. She we need to teach them [students] about our culture.”

This transmission of cultural knowledge was very important to Jane as well. When asked about the debate between teaching the classics and contemporary literature, she made an important connection between this idealistic belief in passing along cultural knowledge and academic rigor:

My own epiphany about literature was that people have been going through the same personal problems down throughout the ages despite totally different living circumstances. They have had the same human problems and have been dealing with it over time, and the ability to see literature over time is to know what different people have

figured out that I didn't have to just think on my own thinking but I could just use somebody else's just as well. If you can't decode something from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, then you can't use that knowledge, you can't benefit from that knowledge. So I think there is, despite the fact it's difficult for kids and not the way we necessarily express things anymore, I think it is important for them to be able to decode them.

She seemed disturbed by current trends in education when she explained what she thinks high schools should be:

It's becoming more and more career-oriented, but, and I think the students and parents and probably the employers would like it if that was the case, if people were pretty focused on a goal. But I still believe in the old idea that high school is the place where you should be able to check out a bunch of things that are new, that you might be interested in and see how they feel. It's becoming less and less that way; it's becoming more a place where you want to gain your skills to go on to some career where you're going to use those skills whether it be welding or college professor.

But Jane was not the only participant to make this connection.

Juliet also felt it was important for students to be familiar with the classics. She explained:

It's important for me to teach some classics. I try to do both—with both modern and classics. And then you do appreciate classical literature, and they need to appreciate all of its merits. Also, they gain confidence reading classics and understanding them and seeing how it connects to their modern lives. That's why they are classics.

Like Blanche, she also emphasized the need to make the most of class time, and this was apparent in the observations as well as the interview. Juliet made a powerful statement about how the process of National Board Certification impacted the intensity and rigor of her classes:

Every day really is important; there isn't just a day where we goof off. We have at least some kind of lesson because there's so much that you have to integrate into the curriculum and that every day is important. And it also proved to me how every lesson is important, how having a lesson with just one objective is not worthwhile. You have to integrate different types of literature like a poem and a short story together. Like the way you formulate units is very important, trying to get the biggest bang for your buck. It just really changed the way I look at my planning, like I try to incorporate as many standards as possible on any given day.

During the observed classes, Juliet demonstrated this type of integration. She blended reading, writing, and discussion seamlessly in her study of “The Man Who Was Almost a Man,” and she made use of every moment of class time. The academic intensity was one reason Juliet chose to teach high school rather than middle school:

I felt like they [high school students] were learning more as far as content, like I could really teach more literature and writing and see more growth. Whereas, in middle school, I felt like I was doing more coaching on behavior and life skills.

“High standards” was a phrase she used to describe her teaching style, and that was the impression her class made.

Academic rigor was one of the major factors that brought Hester to her current school, an academic magnet school, considered one of the best in the state. She explained, “The students have to apply to come here, so they want to be here, and I thought that I would enjoy that more.” Like Blanche and Juliet, Hester is, in her own words, “protective of class time.” And she managed class time extremely well in her classes. In one observed class, she allotted a precise number of minutes to each activity and forced students to move along to the next activity at the end of that time. When describing the teacher’s role in a high school English class, she said, “Challenge them to grow intellectually. . . . The teacher should coach, guide them, allow them to find the meaning they find, but see other meanings and have high standards.” Like Jane and Juliet, she also emphasized the human and cultural understanding literature offers: “There’s a lot to teach in English about how people are that students need to know to make it in this world. English also gives them a sense of history.” Hester also felt that her graduate classes in English gave her an advantage in challenging her students academically: “They gave me so much more subject knowledge. This helped me move students more into the traditional canon of literature. And the extra background knowledge has helped me work with students to enable them to

synthesize what they read.” For her, this was one of her strengths as a teacher; she explained, “I try to be rigorous and challenging in my courses, and I bring in lots of outside resources to help my students really understand the subject.”

Similarly, Jo stressed the need to keep students business-minded. Regarding the use of class time, she stated:

You have got to discipline the class, you have got to keep it under control or else there’s chaos. And you can’t do all these cool things if there’s chaos. So there’s that fine line of encouraging and nurturing and there’s that line of okay, let’s get everybody calmed down and get back to work.

For Jo, academic rigor was not so much about the transmission of a body of knowledge as much as about instilling thinking skills. She worried that “kids years ago were smarter and able to achieve more. All this testing has produced kids that can’t think.” Jo seemed upset that higher-ability students are receiving much less attention and opportunity in the current educational atmosphere; she commented, “With gifted kids, learning is their gift. And I would love to be able to just nurture that gift just as fast and furious as those kids want to go.” In regard to the importance of thinking skills, she added:

Our emphasis on testing gives us very much a shallow content that’s tested, and the language arts gives students the deep thinking, it give them the way of looking at life and thinking about life. It gives them the rich, rich content.

Jo also viewed teaching students to question an important part of her job: “I mean their brains are still growing so much, but I think just putting ideas in front of them and getting them to question things is like a major role I need to play.” Clearly, the development of critical thinking skills is a strong component of Jo’s teaching.

This was the case for several other participants as well. Hester argued that studying the language arts is necessary for building students’ thinking skills; she said, “Although schools are pushing math and science, students need to learn language; that’s how we communicate in this

world. Reading and writing require metacognition, higher-level thinking skills.” Taking thinking to a higher level was also important to Elizabeth. She explained that she not only wants students to think, but she wants them to “think about what they think about it.” And Jane put it aptly when she said, “I think a teacher’s role should be to spark the inquiry.” Along these lines, Hester stated, “When kids graduate, we give them a certificate saying they can be lifelong learners; if we haven’t ignited some sort of curiosity, we’ve failed.” And these teachers appeared to live up to their words. In every classroom, students were asked challenging questions or give challenging assignments that would help them build these critical thinking skills the teachers indicated are so important.

However, challenging students went beyond transmitting discipline-specific or cultural knowledge and building critical thinking skills for these teachers. For so many of these teachers, a serious part of their jobs is challenging students to broaden their world view and see beyond their own limited experiences. As Jo explained, “I think it’s critically important because kids have got to start thinking about what’s happening in the world around them.” She even provided an example from an upcoming unit of how she hopes to expand students’ perspectives: “What I’m doing with my class, *Forbidden Face*, this novel is about Afghanistan and we’re going to delve into that and, because of my teaching style, we’re going to learn about Afghanistan and then look at the text itself.” Teaching in a Southern, rural school, Daisy saw the need to prepare students to succeed in a world perhaps very different from the one they’ve grown up in:

I try to make them realize that you are judged by what comes out of your mouth—like it or not—and that you can still be fine to use dialect and slang with your friends and family members. But in a professional setting you need to choose your words carefully because people will judge or stereotype your education level. . . . I think in our society today, whether you like it or not, you are judged by how well you write and how well you speak and present yourself. And language is one of the key ways to present yourself and your ideas.

She even argued that studying works from their own culture is actually broadening the perspective for many of these students:

I think English represents what's happened in the world. English and history go hand in hand. English is history of humanity and our thoughts and I think, especially with teenagers today inside their box with their text messaging and their cell phones and their video (you know, their junk food for their brain), I think that sometimes reading, trying to imagine why someone would even listen to *Beowulf* makes them more empathetic, compassionate. Plus, a large portion of the world doesn't live like they live. And English represents—they can't visit these places—a book is a world into itself. Plus, they can teach you a whole lot. So books are, English language textbooks are, fiction and nonfiction, are a record of what we have already done. And imagine if you were going to be a doctor and you had to learn everything all over from scratch again. It records our endeavors, our successes.

From both her experiences inside her classroom and on travels she has made around the world, Daisy discovered how close-minded students can be, and she asserted that a major goal of high schools today needs to be:

Getting a lot of American students to look outside and say, "Whoa! There are other people who live a certain way and think a certain way." Getting them outside their box a little bit instead of their white middle class, "Hey this is the way the world is. My beliefs are number one. Go America!"

Jane, when asked about the ideal high school English class, mentioned goals very similar to those outlined by Daisy:

Getting outside themselves because I think especially freshmen, they're so, their world is like this close, and then it becomes a little broader as they get older, but freshmen have to think about something other than themselves.

She brought the topic up again later when asked about the reasons for studying English:

I think it's important for people to be as broadly educated as possible, and I think it's important for their lives and for their development. Although some people don't think it's important. But I don't think that educating somebody for a trade from the time they're young is a good way to go. They may have things out there for them that they have never known and that they have never discovered, and they'll never discover it unless they are exposed to a whole bunch of things.

Evidently, challenging students in one way or another was very important to the participants.

As with so many of the other common aspects of their teaching, the participants seemed to have been influenced to challenge their students by their own school experiences. For example, Jane, who argued that students be “as broadly educated as possible,” had these memories of her own high school experience:

I think it was just a wonderful time where there were this whole group of really wonderful teachers in New York City at the time and I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood where their big emphasis was on education and the competition in school was intense and, uh, I just loved learning a lot. . . . I remember the thing that made somebody a good teacher for me was they had an unusual way of thinking about things or would introduce me to a different way of thinking.

Juliet also emphasized the challenge her favorite teachers offered her in high school, saying, “I liked their personalities, but they also had high standards for us.” Hester also picked a rigorous teacher as her favorite: “He taught Humanities, and it was evident he loved his subject. He brought in so many extra resources to class, and his class was very rigorous and demanding. And I liked that.” And Jo’s and Daisy’s favorite teachers, described earlier, who required “lots and lots of reading” and “was constantly asking us to ask questions,” respectively, also seemed to set a powerful example for their students.

*Teachers as Lifelong Learners.* One thing that was clear in all the observations and interviews was that the participants are truly lifelong learners. These teachers were committed to expanding their own knowledge base and sharing it with their students. Jo described herself as:

One of those people that loves to learn. And being a lifelong learner, I didn’t know what that meant as far as a label, but I’ve always lived that. I’m always trying to absorb information; it’s just a part of my personality.

All seven teachers described doing a great deal of reading beyond the texts studied in their classes. Elizabeth seemed especially enthusiastic about how this outside reading has impacted her classroom instruction:

I belong to a book club and I've gotten more books out of the book club for my class. We had one this year, *Saints at the River*. . . . Oh lord, it is wonderful. And I added it to my honors class, *Saints at the River* by Ron Rash, and my book club read it, and everyone loved it so much, and Ron Rash teaches at Western Carolina, writing about the Nantahala River, and it is such a great story, so I've got so much from that. And we've added books into our curriculum throughout the levels like *Year of Wonders*. We added that to our AP classes.

Hester mentioned reading a variety of written sources:

I also always read the *Columbia Journalism Review*, *English Journal*, and *The New York Times* because I believe it is the best newspaper. I also read books regularly. Several books have really impacted my views on education like Jonathan Kozol, *Possible Lives* by Rose, and, of course, *In the Middle* by Nancy Atwell.

And Blanche explained how she uses her reading to generate ideas for her journalism class:

I'm always reading. I probably take fifteen magazines at my house, so I'm always reading. And they'll just stack up sometimes. I don't have time to read them. It's embarrassing. I'll go through and pull things out, and I've got boxes full of articles. I'll pull things out and say, "Well, we could do an article on that" or whatever. So I'm forever pulling stuff. So I do read a good bit.

But reading traditional printed texts is only one facet of the participants' quest for knowledge.

Nearly all of these teachers described using the internet on a regular basis for research for their classes. As Juliet explained:

I use the Internet quite a bit; I really like Web English Teacher quite a bit. I probably go there first when I'm starting something new, and it has a lot of good links to other professional sites. I would say that's probably my main source.

Jane also indicated that she relies heavily on the internet: "Whenever I'm trying to present something that's new, and I do that fairly frequently because I get bored easily, I start looking things up on the internet." Daisy, when asked about her reading, described a recent class activity spawned by an article she found online:

I am constantly searching for outside the box like Purdue University, Stanford University. I just got an article that relates the movie *The Matrix* which I'm teaching in first period, doing all the allegory and biblical allusions in *The Matrix*. So I guess on the internet, academic articles.

And Hester also said, "I am constantly going to the internet to look things up, keep up with current events." Jo also emphasized a desire to keep up with current events:

I'm always doing research on the computer. If we learn about something in my class, if we read about something, I'll always go get on Google and Google it and figure it all out and know what it is. I keep up with current events and do a lot of research to understand the current events. I get newspapers from the *Guardian* and *The London Times*. I get different British newspapers and international newspapers that I read including *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* so that I can kinds of keep up with what's happening in the world.

Interestingly, there appeared to be no correlation between age or teaching experience and using the internet. In fact, those teachers over the age of 50 seemed just as likely to use the internet for research.

Opinions were not as consistent when the subject turned to official forms of professional development. Surprisingly, six of the seven participants were not members of NCTE, although four of them did mention being members of other professional organizations. Jo expressed the view that many of the participants had that NCTE membership is simply too expensive:

They're expensive and paying all those dues and fees and then our county doesn't cover all the expenses of traveling to the meetings and it's right now, I'm just barely breaking even, well, I don't always break even with my salary so that's not even an option.

The participants who did mention belonging to professional organizations generally belonged to NEA and their local education associations or to journalism organizations. Many of the participants also had harsh words to share about much of the pedagogical professional development they are forced to complete as part of their jobs. When asked whether she attended many conferences or seminars, Elizabeth quickly responded:

I'm very jaded, so I try very hard not to. Because I get so annoyed. My time, I think, is so precious, because I spend so much of it at work. I mean, I completely immerse myself in work and I never have a weekend that I don't lose an entire day to grading papers or preparation or both. And some weekends I lose the entire weekend; that was what last weekend was like. So I'm not fit to talk to this week because I'm just so tired of grading papers. So because of that, you know, I try not to do things that are school-related if I can help it. I try only to do things that are going to be uplifting to me and get me out my set little rut and do something else. So I'm very unpleasant in those kinds of things because they are talking idealism and after 32 years you know, it's hard to accept that when Connie Prevatte tells us that we shouldn't put posters up on the wall because it will distract the children, oh please. So I have trouble with that.

Jo also expressed negative feelings about these types of in-service experiences: "I think I get really bored with the pedagogical stuff that they cram down our throats in this district. They don't give us a chance to find something that's really of interest like, what I'm doing with my class." Jane had a more even-handed attitude about the situation: "Some of them are great; some of them are crappy."

One thing that seemed to improve the participants' attitudes about professional development was personal choice. Even Jo was enthusiastic about professional development activities for which she volunteered. The activities she mentioned as those that had had the most impact on her teaching seemed far more time-consuming than typical district-offered options:

There was a program called Sun Coast Area Clinical Teacher Training, or something like that. It was an Honors program through the College of Education and I got involved in that and it was all on my own time. You had to commit a bunch of hours and go to a lot of seminars and things. And it was training above and beyond what the classroom at the college was offering. . . . Then once I was in the classroom, after a year, I took the program, the Honors program, at USF for teachers who wanted to work with new teachers and it taught us what was then called the Florida Performance Measurement system and it was all the research-based indicators that showed how to improve student learning so that my whole first few years was devoted just to measurably impacting students with different interventions so that they could learn. So I was always trying to get the best, the best learning, the most learning.

Elizabeth also mentioned a preference for choosing her own activities to fulfill professional development requirements:

Once I understood that I could take care of it myself by taking courses at the community college, which is what I usually do, I usually take a computer course which has been wildly useful to me. I took PowerPoint. I took a course in repairing computers, so I am real handy with a computer now, and I am fairly decent at technology.

Despite having to complete a great deal of professional development, Juliet seemed fine with it because of the choices provided:

We are required to do quite a bit of professional development here in order to renew our license, and that's new to me because this is just my third year [in this state]. . . . So every workshop or conference you go to counts as something. So I really like that; we just have to get to a number and then we get to choose what we're doing. It's not set forth by our district like, "You have to do this." You know, you get to pick.

Daisy also liked the fact that she was able to tailor her professional development activities to the particular classes she teaches. She explained that last summer she spent an extended amount of time at a nearby university working on matching the curriculum of her Dual Enrollment classes to the beginning composition classes taught at the university. She was also allowed to attend AP workshops that would be of little interest to most of the other English teachers at her school. So, all in all, the participants' attitudes about professional development varied widely depending on the circumstances.

National Board Certification also seems to have been a valuable learning experience for most of the participants. And while the teachers in those states with a large salary supplement for National Board Certification mentioned money as the primary reason they decided to go through the process, an intrinsic desire to improve themselves and increase their knowledge probably also played a role in the decision. Juliet clearly saw National Board Certification as an educational experience:

The only Master's degree I was interested in was a Master's degree in English. And there wasn't a school convenient for me. And I didn't want to do administration and I didn't want to do guidance, so I chose NBC because that counted as our Rank I, the highest level without the Ph.D. But once I got into it, I realized how valid it was. It really was a valid program and I learned a lot going through the process.

Jo also felt it was a valuable learning experience:

I really enjoyed going back and learning all of the new research they were putting in each section for us to read and understand before we started working on that. The process almost killed me because I was one of those procrastinators who did it all in 2 ½ months instead of spreading it out over many months. But that's all I did for twelve hours a day, and I was here very weekend for a lot of hours, too, so the process almost killed me. But once I finished with it, I thought I'd had a really good refresher course, and it took me six months to recover from that, before I felt that. I felt like I had a really good refresher course, and I felt a lot more confident in that everything I was doing was research-based.

Hester focused on National Board Certification's emphasis on reflective teaching as the most important aspect of the program: "The idea of looking back at what you're doing in the classroom and what works has really helped me improve my classroom practices."

Despite the fact that several of these teachers had complaints about the quality of some pedagogical professional development activities, they expressed genuinely positive views about the importance of lifelong learning experiences. Perhaps the negative attitudes about some experiences can be ascribed to the teachers' confidence about their effectiveness in the classroom. Because of this confidence, they may be focusing their learning in areas of new knowledge rather than new skills.

### *Toward a Theory of Teacher Types*

Although the limited number of interviews and observations included in the qualitative study did not provide the extensive amount of information needed for the development of a complete theory related to teachers' beliefs and their instructional strategies, a theory did begin to emerge from the data. Despite the overarching similarities among these teachers, three distinct teacher types seemed to be represented among the seven participants who were observed and interviewed: teachers whose primary focus seemed to be on strict academic learning within

the discipline of English; teachers whose primary focus seemed to be on more generalized learning, or helping students become well-rounded individuals; and teachers whose primary focus was the emotional well-being of their students. For the purposes of this study, these will be called English-Driven Teachers, Citizenship-Driven Teachers, and Relationship-Driven Teachers, respectively.

*English-Driven Teachers.* Two of the teachers interviewed and observed appeared to place much more emphasis on the development of student skills and knowledge within the traditional concept of the English discipline. These two teachers were Blanche and Juliet. Although they both seemed to have positive relationships with students and may have mentioned the need for students to develop broader knowledge and understanding, their classroom activities and behaviors made it clear that their business was to teach English. And the English they taught was much more centered on the traditional staples of the English classroom than what was being taught in the other classrooms. For example, these were the only teachers who emphasized the teaching of advanced literary terms and techniques with general groups. This emphasis was seen in Blanche's handouts on *Romeo and Juliet* that included 40 literary terms that her regular freshman classes were expected to learn. It was also seen in Juliet's use of daily keywords that were not general vocabulary-building terms but literary terms related to the day's text.

These teachers also used nearly every moment of class time for English-related learning. Both Blanche and Juliet began class as soon as the bell rang and continued with English-oriented activities until moments before the bell. This situation contrasted with most of the teachers who seemed somewhat more laid-back about using every minute of class time or at least using it for the development of English skills and knowledge. Blanche seemed particularly interested in

having the students' attention throughout the class period: "Well, part of their grade in my class, is class participation. So when I call on them, I expect them to know where we are on the page. . . . To be ready to respond." And Juliet felt that every day needed to be focused on learning about English language arts; she said:

I want my students to know more about English language arts at the end of the year than they did at the beginning. And, depending on where they were at the beginning, in their attitudes and their skills level, that will determine how far I get to take them. But I want them to learn a little bit every day, and with higher-level students, of course, we have much higher standards. I have more, higher standards for what they should be learning. My philosophy is I want them to learn and to love writing and reading.

In both teachers' classrooms the lessons remained tightly focused on the literature being studied with few or no excursions into non-English-related material. In fact, the only exception was when Juliet engaged the students' personal experiences in order to motivate the students to read that day's story. And her business-first attitude throughout the class period revealed that these discussions were more about getting the students to learn English than to connect with them or help them emotionally, even though these secondary goals were probably helped as well. These two teachers were also more tied to teaching the classics than the other teachers seemed to be. Juliet declared that teaching the classics is "important for me." And in Blanche's discussions of the texts she teaches, classics comprised the majority of the curriculum.

Blanche and Juliet also had some other striking similarities. Interestingly, Blanche and Juliet were the only two teachers who went to college right out of high school to become English teachers and who went directly into teaching after college. Their lack of emphasis on building a broader education may stem from their own lack of experience outside the academic realm. Both teachers also had extremely similar responses to the beliefs statements on the survey. In fact, out of 5 possible choices for each question, they had the exact same response on 9 out of 16 questions. And many of their responses were indicative of a fairly traditional philosophy. For

example, they both agreed with the statement “Academic learning should be the top priority of schools,” and they both disagreed with the statement “Students learn better when they can choose or direct their own learning.” These responses suggest that both of these teachers are committed to academic learning and to maintaining curricular and instructional control of the classroom, something that probably has to be done when the objectives are so discipline-oriented.

Jane also exhibited some of the tendencies of the English-Driven Teacher, but only in her AP English Literature and Composition course. While she remained fairly laid-back about the use of class time with the AP group, the main content of the course was strictly focused on advanced discipline-related material. Of course, that particular AP exam requires that type of discipline-specific knowledge. In her other classes, where she seemed much more natural and comfortable, Jane was much more interested in engaging her students with the world around them through experiential, hands-on activities and learning experiences that caused them to broaden their viewpoints like service-learning activities.

*Citizenship-Driven Teachers.* Teachers who behave the way Jane did with her other classes besides AP seem to establish a distinct category of teachers who are much more interested in their students learning about the world around them and learning knowledge—generally English-related—that they can use in everyday life. To these teachers, literary terms and other types of “school-only” knowledge did not seem nearly as important as skills and knowledge that the students could use once they left school. In contrast to the English-Driven Teachers, these teachers had all worked outside education before becoming certified and entering

the classroom later in life. This fact suggests that they might have been motivated to help students succeed in the world outside school because of their own experiences.

Jane, Jo, and Hester appeared to fall into this category. All three of them emphasized useful life skills in their class activities and pushed students to broaden their perspectives. For example, both Jo and Juliet had their students write letters as if from a character in the story. But Jo's approach was quite different from Juliet's. Jo required the students to use a computer to draft their letters, and she emphasized the importance of building students' computer skills during her interview:

We have only one traveling computer cart, and then we have two labs, and I've been accused . . . when the new librarian came in, he said, "Yeah, I heard you were the computer hog." And I said, "You betcha." I sign up way in advance. If they want it, they need to sign up way in advance, too. I want my kids to have access to technology.

Jo also spent several minutes reviewing the exact way to format a letter by modeling it through her computer and displaying on the projector screen. In contrast, Juliet told her students it was not important that they follow the letter-formatting rules. For her, the letter writing was about reinforcing reading and writing skills, while for Jo, it represented a chance to teach job and life skills.

Also, these teachers seemed less tied to the traditional canon of English literature than the English-Driven Teachers. Although Jane taught the classics with her AP class, she seemed much more open to contemporary literature and film studies with her other English classes. When asked about some of her favorite teaching strategies, she said:

Using film to, to do reading strategies. I mean, the book [that gave her the idea about film studies] says that what's happening, you know I didn't really realize that, but when you point out what's going on in a film, it is things that students are noticing and you're using to create an opinion or a mood or tone. And they don't know they're doing it, but when you point it out to them, they then can recognize it in film. And once they recognize it in film they can easily recognize it in literature.

When the English-Driven Teachers spoke about using films, the practice seemed to be much more of an after-thought, something only used as a complement to traditional reading studies.

As with the English-Driven Teachers, all three of the Citizenship-Driven teachers answered some of the beliefs statements the exact same and answered many of them in the same direction (e.g., all three answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree” on the same question). For instance, they all agreed or strongly agreed with both statements about the importance of having “real-life tasks” or “practical skills” for students to learn. They also all agreed or strongly agreed that “Today’s students need updated instructional strategies that fit their current needs.” And they all disagreed with the statement “Teachers should direct all student activities and assignments.” These responses indicated that the Citizenship-Driven teachers are somewhat more progressive than the English-Driven Teachers and that preparing students for the “real-life tasks” ahead of them is more important than transmitting an established canon of discipline-specific knowledge.

*Relationship-Driven Teachers.* Two of the teachers, Elizabeth and Daisy, appeared much more motivated by helping their students succeed in their personal lives, to be happy people. Several of Elizabeth’s statements cited above indicate the close, personal relationships she cultivates with her students. For example, her claim that “the older I’ve gotten, the more I’ve understood that the feelings are more important than anything else that goes on” shows the importance she places on her students’ emotions. She also mentioned several times the need to take on a parental role with her students. Daisy also made a revealing statement when she explained that she chose to go into teaching because she likes “being around students probably better than adults.”

For both of these teachers, the curriculum is dictated as much as possible by the students themselves. While Elizabeth felt compelled to teach some classics because of a school-mandated curriculum, she used all the leeway she had to allow students to select whatever texts they wanted from the fairly student-oriented freshman library. For Daisy, the curriculum was primarily determined by her attempts to “find writing that is pertinent to the students.” A text one of her classes was reading, *The Gospel according to Larry*, would probably never have been chosen by one of the English-Driven Teachers. And the same thing might be said of *Jurassic Park*, which Elizabeth was so fond of reading with her students.

Both of these teachers had several similar responses in both the interviews and the survey. For one thing, they both used the word “guide” to describe what the teacher’s role in the high school English classroom should be. And the importance of guidance came across in many instances during the observations of both Elizabeth and Daisy, whether it was Elizabeth counseling a distraught student during her own lunch break or Daisy using about a third of her class time with one class to have a frank, open discussion with students about life after high school. On the survey, they both responded the same way in the response to several belief statements. They strongly disagreed with the statement “Students learn better when they work independently of, not cooperatively with, their peers.” And they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “Traditional instructional methods are usually more effective than newer ones.” Like the Citizenship-Driven Teachers, these teachers seem to be more progressive in their beliefs than the English-Driven Teachers, yet their classrooms were distinguished from those of the Citizenship-Driven Teachers by much more personal interaction and personal discussion.

### *Cross-Analysis of the Quantitative and Qualitative Studies*

Once the data from both the quantitative and qualitative studies were analyzed independently, the two sets of data were compared to one another. Much of the information from each study served to confirm the information from the other. For example, the quantitative study failed to find significant differences among teachers with different levels of education or from various school settings, and the interviews and observations of the qualitative study did not find these to be significant influences either. Likewise, the interviews and observations revealed a variety of strategies most preferred by that group of teachers that matched very closely those most frequently identified in the quantitative study. For example, whole-class discussion of reading texts, the most frequent activity found through the quantitative study, was probably the most frequent activity observed in teachers' classrooms. Therefore, the mixed methods approach did help to triangulate the data of both studies and assist with the formation of conclusions and recommendations.

More than any significant differences, what the data from both studies suggest when combined is that NBCTs in English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood is a fairly homogenous group of teachers. Despite the differences suggested by the theory proposed above, the similarities among these teachers as described in the six themes were much more compelling and apparent.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH

#### *Introduction*

William Arthur Ward, author of *Pertinent Proverbs* wrote, “The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.” Many of the teachers included in this study do much more than tell, explain, and demonstrate; they represent the highest level of teaching accomplishment that has been scientifically established and documented; and they merit both continued study and high regard for their accomplishments.

Through a survey of 162 teachers holding National Board Certification in English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood and interviews and classroom observations with seven hand-chosen members of the survey population, several findings and recommendations have been made. The surveys were analyzed to provide a picture of this accomplished group of teachers as well as to explain more clearly the activities they use in class and the factors that affect their teaching methods and beliefs. The series of intense interviews and classroom observations provided deeper analysis of many of these same issues as well as a closer look at the influences that made the participants the teachers they are today.

While the initial impressions these seven teachers made in their classrooms varied widely, a close analysis of their words and actions revealed more similarities than differences. This result was confirmed by the survey analysis as well. Although the statistics and interviews did not produce any earth-shattering revelations, the homogeneity of this group of teachers, according to the findings of this study, suggests that studying NBCTs in English Language Arts/

Adolescence and Young Adulthood as models of quality teaching may be both easier and more fruitful than if the group were more heterogeneous.

### *Conclusions from the Study*

The conclusions of the study were developed by analyzing the data in response to the research questions. However, because some of the research questions pertained only to the quantitative or qualitative portions of the study while others pertained to both, the conclusions do not align perfectly to the stated research questions for each part of the study. As a result, the study's findings were organized around the following topics regarding NBCTs in English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood:

1. a portrait of these teachers,
2. their instructional strategies,
3. the interrelationship of teaching experience, traditional teaching methods, and traditional beliefs,
4. the interrelationship of school setting, the use of technology, and beliefs about technology,
5. the interrelationship of education level, the use of contemporary instructional strategies, and a variety of teacher beliefs,
6. the interrelationship of gender, use of class time, and beliefs about progressive instructional methods,
7. the interrelationship of gender, approach to teaching literature, and beliefs about cooperative learning,
8. the impact of education on teaching methods,

9. the impact of beliefs about education on teaching strategies.

Both findings and recommendations were generated in regard to these nine topics.

### *A Portrait of NBCTs in English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood*

#### *Findings*

Although demographically a wide range of teachers responded to the survey, several characteristics stood out. Perhaps most important was the gender disparity of the initial mailing group and the respondent pool suggesting that there are far more female NBCTs than male NBCTs in English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood. Also, according to the survey responses, these NBCTs are most likely teaching full-time, are teaching primarily English classes, are still in the first 15 years of their career, have a master's degree, teach on block schedule, and are teaching in a suburban school. In fact, the only one of these characteristics that was closely distributed with one of its alternatives was the scheduling; nearly as many teachers taught traditional, year-long classes, suggesting that school schedule may not impact a teacher's willingness or ability to obtain National Board Certification.

Information from the interviews and observations helped flesh out this portrait of the NBCTs. From their interviews, these teachers demonstrated themselves to be people who love learning and who intend to be life-long learners. They also tended to be people who sincerely cared for their students, for whom a main concern was preparing students for their future lives and careers, and who felt compelled to take on parental roles when their students needed them to do so. The interactions these teachers had with their students during the observations were extremely positive; not a single episode of negative affect on the part of the teacher or any

student was observed. The vast majority of students appeared interested in and committed to learning in these classrooms.

### *Recommendations*

Several areas for further study became apparent. Finding out what accounts for the gender disparity is important. Determining whether the ratio between the number of women and the number of men in this pool of NBCTs is typical of overall distributions of secondary language arts teachers may help determine whether women are more likely than men to pursue National Board Certification. If so, research will need to be conducted to examine the reasons for such a difference. Research may also be needed to examine why teachers in the early years of their careers are much more likely to pursue National Board Certification. Was the program emphasized in their teacher education experiences? Do they stand to benefit significantly more because of the number of years they still intend to work? Are the demands of the certification process too daunting for many late-career teachers? If the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards wants to expand National Board Certification to as many qualified teachers as possible within the next 5 years, these questions must be examined. Also worthy of further study is the fact that most (over 75%) of these teachers had at least a master's degree. Research needs to examine whether National Board Certification is more appealing to teachers with advanced degrees or whether teachers without advanced degrees are less likely to achieve certification.

Most research suggests that National Board Certification is a valid tool for identifying strong teachers and that its use should be expanded. This research suggests that more work needs to be done to reach out to teachers who may only teach parttime or who have more years of teaching experience. In addition, the study shows that more work may need to be done to

promote National Board Certification in both urban and rural schools. Also, school systems and schools of education may want to encourage more life-long-learning opportunities and professional development activities that deal with building positive relationships with students as ways of developing excellence in teaching.

*The Instructional Strategies of NBCTs in English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood*

*Findings*

Reading was emphasized far more than any other language arts strand in these teachers' classrooms although the quantitative study only found a 4.5% perceived difference in use of class time in favor of reading. The classroom observations, interviews, and survey questions 7-10, however, did not indicate such a relatively small difference in the use of instructional activities. This fact suggests that teachers' perceptions of their use of class time may not be accurate and may cause teachers to spend disproportionate, and perhaps unjustifiable, amounts of time on some skills in favor of others. As expected, these teachers, who had to focus on class discussion for two of their four National Board portfolio entries, made class discussion a central component of their classroom activities. Activities like discussion that engage students actively in learning are clearly important to and emphasized by these teachers. The classrooms of NBCTs in English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood are very student-centered with the teachers functioning as facilitators, not lecturers.

One important finding of both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study is that these teachers are likely to use research-based instructional approaches as identified in the Review of Literature. For example, vocabulary instruction is more often than not tied to reading

texts, students are engaged through discussion, grammar instruction is rarely taught in isolation from writing experiences, annotation of texts is one of the most frequently used instructional strategies, and teacher modeling is emphasized in both reading and writing instruction. Overall, the findings indicate that these NBCTs are knowledgeable of current research in teaching the language arts and incorporate that knowledge in their classrooms.

### *Recommendations*

More research needs to examine the discrepancies between teachers' perceptions of their class activities and their actual class activities. Gross misperceptions could adversely affect teachers' abilities to meet all learning objectives; therefore, schools of education, in particular, may need to develop methods for improving teachers' perceptions of their classes in order for those teacher to do a better job of self-monitoring. More research also needs to be done to explore whether the strong emphasis on reading and, to a lesser degree, writing is preventing these teachers from achieving important goals in other areas of the language arts. In addition, the possibility exists that the particular types of activities stressed by the current process for National Board Certification are unfairly giving an advantage to teachers who use certain instructional strategies that are not necessary for accomplished teaching. The homogeneity of this group of teachers perhaps suggests that only limited types of teachers tend to succeed through the National Board process. More research needs to be done to explore whether a wider variety of accomplished teachers can earn the certification.

Research suggests that NBCTs tend to have higher student achievement than non-NBCTs, and this study determined several practices of successful NBCTs. More should be done to promote some of these practices in high school English classrooms. For example, teacher education programs need to do more to emphasize the importance of creating a reading-rich

classroom, modeling both reading and writing practices, and integrating grammar and vocabulary instruction with reading and writing activities. School systems also need to do more the help later-career teachers remain informed of the latest research findings in their subject areas.

*The Interrelationship of Teaching Experience, Traditional Teaching Methods, and Traditional Beliefs*

*Findings*

The statistical tests showed no significant relationships between years of teaching experience and the frequency of the use of traditional instructional activities, meaning that teachers who had taught for a long time were not more likely to use those activities that are considered more traditional such as sentence diagramming. In addition, the tests revealed that there were not significant relationships between years of experience and traditional beliefs and between the use of traditional strategies and traditional beliefs. These results indicate that factors other than the number of years a teacher has been in the classroom or the time period during which a teacher was prepared to teach do not have as much impact as other factors. Also, the tests suggest that the teaching strategies a teacher uses may not be directly connected to his or her underlying beliefs about education. These findings were supported by the qualitative portion of the study; in the interviews, there was often not a direct correlation between the teacher's stated beliefs and her teaching practices.

*Recommendations*

Further research needs to be done to understand the connection between teacher beliefs and the instructional strategies they use. Only by knowing what factors cause teachers to use

particular strategies can teacher education programs effectively help teachers use research-based approaches. Because the activities identified as “traditional” in this study are not generally supported as effective in current research, more information about how to reduce the use of these practices is needed. If, as the interviews indicated, the teacher’s own experiences as a student play a significant role in his or her teaching style, teacher education programs will have to find a way to break this teacher-student cycle in order to eliminate substantially the use of outdated practices.

### *The Interrelationship of School Setting, the Use of Technology, and Beliefs about Technology*

#### *Findings*

This study’s analysis showed no significant relationship between school setting and the frequency with which teachers used technology in their classrooms. The study also indicated that there is no significant relationship between school setting and teachers’ beliefs about technology. However, the study did show a significant relationship between teachers’ use of technology and their beliefs about technology. Teachers who used technology the most were much more likely than those who used it the least to have positive feelings about the effectiveness of technology in the classroom.

#### *Recommendations*

Further research needs to be conducted to see whether this lack of difference in regard to school setting applies to language arts teachers or teachers in general, not just these NBCTs. Possibly these teachers are more inclined to use technology regardless of their school setting because they are more computer-literate than the general teaching population. Perhaps National Board Certification, with the required computer-based test and extensive word-processing

criteria, does not appeal to teachers disinclined toward the use of technology. If subsequent research determines there is a general technology gap for students based on school setting, perhaps National Board Certification could play a role in diminishing it. Also, because an important goal for all schools must be to prepare students to succeed in a media-rich society, more research needs to examine the causes of negative beliefs about technology and how to change those beliefs because they appear closely connected to teachers' willingness to use technology in class. Ultimately, school administrators may need to take a more active role in monitoring teachers' use of technology to ensure that all students have equal access to activities that will build the technological skills they need.

*The Interrelationship of Education Level, the Use of Contemporary Instructional Strategies, and a Variety of Teacher Beliefs*

*Findings*

This study showed no significant relationship between a teacher's education level, as determined by highest degree obtained, and the frequency with which he or she uses contemporary instructional activities. The study also determined that there was no significant relationship between a teacher's education level and his or her beliefs about the purpose of school. Nor was there a significant relationship between the frequency with which a teacher uses contemporary methods and his or her beliefs about the purpose of school. In addition, neither education level nor the use contemporary strategies had a significant relationship with teachers' beliefs about student motivation. Also, there was no significant relationship between education level and traditional beliefs. However, a significant relationship was found between the

frequency with which teachers use contemporary methods and traditional beliefs, indicating that teachers who use contemporary methods the least are more likely to hold traditional beliefs.

### *Recommendations*

These tests supported the earlier findings that, in general, there is a weak connection between stated teacher beliefs and instructional strategies. Only when extreme cases were examined, such as *contemporary* methods and *traditional* beliefs, did a significant relationship emerge. Some of the failure of this test to find such relationships, however, may have been connected to the limited number of questions on the belief portion of the instrument. As a result, more research may need to be conducted with a more extensive belief instrument that could detect more subtle differences in the population.

The findings regarding education level were quite interesting. Why do advanced degrees appear to have little or no effect on teacher's use of contemporary methods? If the degrees are in administration or other areas outside curriculum and instruction, the lack of impact is understandable. But, because the vast majority of these teachers were still in the classroom, curriculum and instruction has probably been the emphasis for many of these advanced degrees. Consequently, schools of education need to examine their graduate programs in curriculum and instruction and determine whether they are having any impact on their graduates' teaching practices. If not, they need to find more effective ways to update their students' actual teaching practices with the latest research-based strategies.

*The Interrelationship of Gender, Use of Class Time, and Beliefs about Progressive Instructional Methods*

*Findings*

The study showed no significant relationship between teacher gender and the use of class time in regard to the percent of class time devoted to each language arts strand. The study also showed no relationship between gender and progressive beliefs or between the aforementioned use of class time and progressive beliefs. This finding indicates that both male and female teachers in this NBCT population spend about the same amount of class time on reading, writing, grammar, speaking, listening and viewing. It also shows that men are generally as likely as women to hold progressive beliefs and that a teacher's use of class time does not appear to be greatly impacted by or to impact progressive beliefs.

*Recommendations*

Because the population of this study included only 16 males, a more extensive survey could be conducted to increase the included male population, hence providing a more accurate examination of gender differences. More research could also be conducted to study whether other gender differences exist within this population (e.g., in terms of traditional beliefs, the use of technology, the use of traditional methods, etc.). More open-ended questions and discourse analysis might reveal more subtle gender differences, suggesting that a qualitative study of these issues would be more informative.

*The Interrelationship of Gender, Approach to Teaching Literature, and Beliefs about  
Cooperative Learning*

*Findings*

The study revealed a strong difference in the approach to teaching literature between men and women. The men in the study were far more likely to use a reader-response approach while women were more likely to use a New Critical or biographical and historical approach. Women were also more likely to respond that they use a combination of approaches. The study, however, showed no significant relationship between gender and beliefs about cooperative learning or between approach to teaching literature and beliefs about cooperative learning.

*Recommendations*

As with the previous topic, one recommendation is to extend the study to include more men. The dramatic differences in approach to teaching literature might be attributed to the small number of men in the survey pool. However, the findings as they stand prompt some interesting questions about how men and women approach literature in the classroom. These findings suggest that men prefer a more subjective, emotion-emphasizing approach while the women prefer the more scholarly approaches. More research needs to examine why this would be the case and the impact that these different approaches have on students. Also, more research may be needed to explore the advantages and disadvantages of using a variety of literary approaches with high school students.

## *The Impact of Education on Teaching Methods*

### *Findings*

None of the quantitative tests that examined the association of education level found any significant relationships; however, the qualitative portion of the study did find influences of education on teachers' teaching methods. The major finding of this study regarding education was the profound influence that these teachers' own experiences in high school seem to have had on their teaching methods. A connection between the methods of a teacher's favorite teacher and that teacher's own methods was found in six out of the seven teachers interviewed. And only one of these favorite teachers was a college teacher, not a high school one. This finding suggests that teachers' methodologies may be largely developed and perhaps even solidified before a teacher enters a teacher education program. The quantitative findings that suggested that advanced degrees had little impact on instruction confirmed these findings from the qualitative study. In addition, the teachers' largely negative attitudes toward pedagogical professional development experiences centered on the fact that they felt most of these experiences were pointless, and they seemed most negative about those professional development experiences that challenged their own approaches. Overall, this study found that teacher-education programs and later professional development activities may have little impact on classroom instruction.

### *Recommendations*

More research needs to be conducted to examine what types of teacher-education and professional-development experiences actually carry over to classroom instruction. In addition, more research needs to explore the influence a teacher's own teachers have on him or her. Only when schools of education understand these issues can the programs be more effective at influencing and guiding teacher instruction. In the meantime, teacher education programs need

to require their students to examine their own school experiences more, critically examining the practices they witnessed in light of current research and reflecting upon how these practices are likely to influence them. Perhaps working with teachers to make them aware of these tendencies can be a first step toward breaking the cycle of less-effective strategies and approaches.

### *The Impact of Beliefs about Education on Teaching Strategies*

#### *Findings*

Despite the overall homogeneity of this elite group of teachers, the qualitative portion of the study, augmented by those participants' responses to the survey, suggested that not all of these teachers are motivated to teach by the same underlying beliefs about education. Instead, three distinct belief systems about the primary role of a high school English teacher emerged: those who believe in the primacy of the English discipline, those who believe in the primacy of learning in general, and those who believe in the primacy of each individual student. Yet, despite these different belief systems, significant differences in the teaching strategies of teachers with different beliefs systems did not emerge. Overall, the teaching strategies these teachers used were far more similar than different. Therefore, for this group of accomplished teachers, beliefs about the purpose of education did not seem to have much of an impact on teaching strategies as did the teachers' own educational experiences.

The differences in beliefs appeared to have much more subtle influences on the classrooms. The beliefs appeared to have much more impact on the amount of class time that was used, the amount of personal talk between the teacher and individual students, and the curriculum than on the actual teaching strategies. It is likely that National Board Certification accounts, in part, for this. Because the standards for English Language Arts—by which these

participants were all judged—advocate the use of particular strategies, these teachers are likely to be similar in terms of their strategies. The fact that these teachers were all lifelong learners may also account for some of the likeness in their teaching strategies. Their use of strategies advocated by most current research in the teaching of the language arts was probably influenced by their desire to be knowledgeable of current trends and practices.

### *Recommendations*

More research is needed to explore how beliefs affect teaching practices. A more extensive study of NBCTs might establish more differences in teaching strategies. Research into the general high school English population might also result in different findings. This limited impact of beliefs might not surface in a broader population not limited to teachers with National Board Certification. However, the fact that these teachers possessed a wide range of beliefs yet still used research-based instructional strategies suggests that National Board Certification helps overcome beliefs patterns that might interfere with using effective techniques. Therefore, schools of education should examine the National Board Certification process and use its components as one method of overcoming preestablished methodologies in preservice teachers. Also, school systems and state governments should promote National Board Certification in order to increase the number of teachers using effective teaching strategies.

### *Conclusion*

This study originated from my desire to know what accomplished, successful high school English teachers were doing in their classrooms and what motivated them to make those instructional decisions. I wanted to break through the isolation of my own classroom and discover first-hand what was happening elsewhere. And I feel as though I did just that.

As I made the long drive home from Central Ohio after my final interview, I thought about what I had learned. I learned that successful teachers come in many forms and teach for a variety of reasons. I learned that, regardless of these differences, successful teachers are doing many of the same things other successful teachers are doing in their classrooms. I learned that I support National Board Certification as a way of promoting and recognizing teachers even more so than the day I found out I had achieved the certification. Students in these classrooms were validated as human beings, were given all the tools necessary to develop the language arts skills they need to succeed in life, and were learning important lessons about English, themselves, and the world around them. These great teachers inspired me, and they inspired their students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: NBCT LANGUAGE ARTS INSTRUCTION AND OPINION  
QUESTIONNAIRE

**Demographic/Background Information**

1. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female
2. Are you currently teaching full-time? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
- If not, what is your current position? \_\_\_\_\_
- If you are teaching, what percentage of your time is spent teaching English, grades 9-12?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 0-33% \_\_\_\_\_ 34-67% \_\_\_\_\_ 68-100%
3. Total years of teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Highest degree obtained: \_\_\_\_\_ Additional hours: \_\_\_\_\_
5. If you currently teach, which word best describes your class schedule?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Traditional \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
6. How would you describe your school's setting?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Urban \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban \_\_\_\_\_ Rural

**Instructional Questions**

Directions: For questions 8-11, identify how often you use (*did use*, if not currently teaching English) the listed instructional activities in a typical English language arts class you teach using the following scale:

- F** = Frequently = 4-5 times per week  
**O** = Often = 2-3 times per week  
**C** = Consistently = 1 time per week  
**S** = Sometimes = 1-3 times per month  
**R** = Rarely = 0-3 times per semester

Mark the letter in the space provided that best indicates your typical use of the indicated strategy.

7. How often do you use the following instructional methods for teaching reading?
- a \_\_\_\_\_ In-class, student oral reading      b \_\_\_\_\_ In-class, teacher oral reading
- c \_\_\_\_\_ In-class, silent, sustained reading      d \_\_\_\_\_ At-home, assigned student reading
- e \_\_\_\_\_ Vocabulary instruction, not tied to texts      f \_\_\_\_\_ Literature-based vocabulary instruction
- g \_\_\_\_\_ Literature circles      h \_\_\_\_\_ Oral questioning of reading texts
- i \_\_\_\_\_ Written answers to text-based questions      j \_\_\_\_\_ Student journals over reading texts
- k \_\_\_\_\_ Small-group discussion of reading texts      l \_\_\_\_\_ Whole-class discussion of reading texts
- m \_\_\_\_\_ Graphic organizers about texts      n \_\_\_\_\_ Text annotations/highlighting/marking
8. How often do you use the following instructional methods for teaching writing?
- a \_\_\_\_\_ Graphic organizers      b \_\_\_\_\_ Peer revision
- c \_\_\_\_\_ Writer's workshop      d \_\_\_\_\_ Prewriting instruction
- e \_\_\_\_\_ Writing process instruction      f \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher modeling

- g \_\_\_\_\_ Traditional grammar instruction                      h \_\_\_\_\_ Required multiple drafts of writing  
i \_\_\_\_\_ Freewriting    j \_\_\_\_\_ Writing poems  
k \_\_\_\_\_ Writing fiction    l \_\_\_\_\_ Sentence diagramming

9. How often do you use the following instructional methods for teaching speaking and listening skills?

- a \_\_\_\_\_ Prepared student speeches                      b \_\_\_\_\_ Extemporaneous student speeches  
c \_\_\_\_\_ Role-playing activities                                      d \_\_\_\_\_ Organized debates  
e \_\_\_\_\_ Class discussion    f \_\_\_\_\_ Group presentations  
g \_\_\_\_\_ Individual presentations                                      h \_\_\_\_\_ Note-taking instruction  
i \_\_\_\_\_ Watching video data for information

10. How often do you incorporate the following technologies in your classroom?

- a \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher-prepared PowerPoint or other “slide show” media  
b \_\_\_\_\_ Student-prepared PowerPoint or other “slide show” media  
c \_\_\_\_\_ Literature-based films on VHS or DVD  
d \_\_\_\_\_ Documentaries on literary or historical topics on VHS or DVD  
e \_\_\_\_\_ Student use of word-processing software  
f \_\_\_\_\_ Student use of the internet  
g \_\_\_\_\_ Transparencies on an overhead projector

11. How often do you use the following assessment/evaluation techniques in your classroom?

- a \_\_\_\_\_ Reading quizzes    b \_\_\_\_\_ Vocabulary quizzes/tests  
c \_\_\_\_\_ Literature-based unit tests                                      d \_\_\_\_\_ Essays of three or more paragraphs  
e \_\_\_\_\_ Grammar exercises    f \_\_\_\_\_ Grammar tests  
g \_\_\_\_\_ Creative writing    h \_\_\_\_\_ Journals  
i \_\_\_\_\_ Projects in general    j \_\_\_\_\_ Student-created posters  
k \_\_\_\_\_ Student skits    l \_\_\_\_\_ Practice for standardized/mandated tests

12. Which of the following best describes your approach to teaching literature?

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Reader-Response—You focus on the interaction between the reader and the text—the meaning each reader makes of the text and each reader’s reaction to the text.  
\_\_\_\_\_ B. New Critical—The meaning of a text lies within the text itself, and readers must become skillful readers to decipher the clues to meaning that lie entirely within the text.  
\_\_\_\_\_ C. Biographical/Historical—Readers need to understand the historical period and biography of the author in order to make sense and understand the full meaning of the text.  
\_\_\_\_\_ D. Social Interaction—Texts provide a way for students to interact with their peers, become connected to the central issues of our society, and learn the value of community.  
\_\_\_\_\_ E. None of the above

13. To the nearest ten percent (e.g., 10%, 20%, 30%, and so forth), indicate what portion of your overall class time is spent on activities directly related to the following categories:

Reading instruction	_____
Writing instruction	_____
Grammar instruction	_____
Speaking instruction	_____
Listening/viewing instruction	_____

**Teacher Beliefs**

Directions: Rate your level of agreement with the following statements according to the following scale:

SD = Strongly Disagree    D = Disagree    N = No Opinion    A = Agree    SA = Strongly Agree

- |   |    |   |   |   |    |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 14. Students have an innate desire to learn.  | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 15. Students learn better when they can choose or direct their own learning.                      | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 16. Instruction that involves real-life tasks is more effective than instruction that does not.   | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 17. Integration of technology increases student learning.   | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 18. Grades are an effective motivator for most high school students.                              | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 19. Traditional instructional methods are usually more effective than newer ones.                 | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 20. Academic learning should be the top priority of schools.                                      | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 21. Social interaction with peers is an essential component of an effective learning environment. | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 22. Teachers need to motivate students to want to learn.  | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 23. Teachers should direct all student activities and assignments.                                | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 24. Students learn more when instruction involves practical skills.                               | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 25. Technology poses more distractions than benefits for students.                                | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 26. Most high school students today are not very motivated by grades.                             | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 27. Today's students need updated instructional strategies that fit their current needs.          | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 28. Safety and/or socialization should be higher priorities for schools than academics.           | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 29. Students learn better when they work independently of, not cooperatively with, their peers.   | SD | D | N | A | SA |

PLEASE READ OVER THE INFORMATION ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE.

In order to understand further teachers' decisions about the use of particular classroom activities and the underlying beliefs that inform those instructional decisions, the investigator is interested in conducting follow-up interviews and/or classroom observations with a small group of survey respondents.

If you would be willing to be interviewed and/or observed for the second portion of this study, please fill out the following information and sign below.

---

Name (Printed)

---

Phone Number

---

Best Time to Be Reached

---

E-mail Address

I would be willing to be (check all that apply)

interviewed.                       observed in my classroom.

---

Signature

---

Date

## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Rebecca L. Drinnon

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TITLE OF PROJECT: Teacher Beliefs and the Instructional Practices of National Board Certified High School English Teachers

This Informed Consent will explain about being a participant in a research study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer.

### PURPOSE

The intent of this study is to explore the instructional methods accomplished high school English teachers use in their classrooms and to improve understanding of how those methods are influenced by the teachers' beliefs. Through a survey of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) and follow-up interviews and classroom observations with selected survey participants, the researcher will shed light on the variety and frequency of practices experienced teachers use and the beliefs that influence teachers' instructional decisions. The interview and observation portion of the study will examine further the beliefs and motivations of those teachers who are both typical and outlying according to their survey responses.

### DURATION

Participation in the survey portion of this study will require approximately thirty minutes to complete. Those participants who volunteer and are chosen for the interview and/or observation portion of the study may expect to spend up to ninety minutes for the interview and six hours for classroom observation.

### PROCEDURES

The procedures, which will involve you as a research subject, include: completion of the attached survey instrument, a personal interview with the principal investigator which may be recorded for transcription accuracy (if you volunteer and are selected for an interview), an observation of your classroom methods using a prepared observation guide (if you volunteer and are chosen for an observation), and a review of any supplied documents relevant to your teaching practices using a prepared document review guide (if volunteered during an interview or observation).

### ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES/TREATMENTS

The alternative procedures/treatments available to you if you elect not to participate in this study are:

You may request a summation of the study's findings after completion of the study by requesting the summation in writing to the principal investigator.

### POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Because the interview portion of the study will deal with teacher beliefs and the formation of those beliefs during the participant's development as a teacher, those participants who choose to participate in the interviews may experience some stress and/or emotional discomfort depending upon the nature of those formative events. However, there are no known or expected discomforts anticipated from the survey portion of this study.

#### POSSIBLE BENEFITS

The possible benefits of your participation are a better awareness of your classroom practices and the beliefs that inform and influence those practices. This study will also contribute to the body of knowledge about NBCTs and their classroom practices. As more money has been allocated to National Board Certification from local, state, and federal governments, calls for accountability have increased. Readers of this study will have information about what NBCTs in this certification field do in their classrooms and will be able to weigh this information against research into best practices in language arts instruction as one form of evaluation of the National Board program.

#### FINANCIAL COSTS

There are no additional costs to participants that may result from participation in the research.

#### COMPENSATION IN THE FORM OF PAYMENTS TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

No compensation will be provided to research participants for participation in this study.

#### VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may refuse to participate. You can quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or treatment to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You may quit by calling Rebecca Drinnon, whose phone number is 865-765-6260. You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make you change your mind about staying in the study.

If new findings arise during the course of research that may affect your willingness to continue your participation, the researcher will make you aware of those findings.

In addition, if there might be adverse consequences (physical, social, economic, legal, or psychological) of your decision to withdraw from the research, the researcher will make you aware of those consequences **and** procedures for orderly termination of participation by the participant.

#### CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, problems or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call Rebecca Drinnon at 865-765-6260, or Dr. Terry Tollefson at 423-439-7617. You may call

the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the researcher's home at 521 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> North Street, Morristown, TN 37814 for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, ETSU IRB, and members of the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis department at ETSU have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project.

---

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

---

PRINTED NAME OF PARTICIPANT \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

---

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

---

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT LETTER

521 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> North Street  
Morristown, TN 37814

Participant Name  
Participant Street Address  
Participant City, State ZIP

Dear Participant:

I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University and a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). As part of my dissertation research, I am conducting a survey of English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood NBCTs in order to study the instructional practices and educational beliefs of these accomplished teachers. Approximately 400 NBCTs in this certification area have been randomly selected from the NBCT directory for possible participation in this study, and you are among those selected. Although a great deal of research has explored the characteristics and effectiveness of NBCTs in the elementary grades, far less research has examined NBCTs in secondary schools. This research study is intended to provide valuable information about this elite group of language arts teachers.

As a high school English teacher, I understand you probably have many demands on your time, but I hope you will look over these materials and give serious consideration to participating in this study. It should take you 25-30 minutes to complete the enclosed survey and Informed Consent document, and both documents can be returned in the preaddressed, postage-paid envelope provided. If you would like to participate, please try to complete and mail these materials within 14 days of receipt. If you would like to receive an executive summary of the findings of the study, please enclose your e-mail address or e-mail me at [rldrinnon@aol.com](mailto:rldrinnon@aol.com).

A second stage of this study will involve personal interviews with a small group of teachers who respond to the survey. *Completing this survey puts you under no obligation to participate in the interview portion of the study*; however, if you are willing to be interviewed, please fill out the appropriate contact information at the end of the survey document.

This survey is an opportunity for you to contribute to the body of knowledge about NBCTs and their classroom activities and beliefs. Please be assured that your responses will remain anonymous. I am grateful for your willingness to consider this request and, I hope, participate in this research study.

Best regards,

Rebecca L. Drinnon

APPENDIX D: SURVEY FREQUENCY CHARTS

The frequency data for questions 1-6 of the survey are reported in Table 2 on pages 83.

The mean and rank of each activity listed in questions 7-11 are reported in Table 3 on page 88.

*Frequencies of All Responses, Questions 7-11*

Item Number	Rarely		Sometimes		Consistently		Often		Frequently	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
7a	21	13.2	38	23.9	25	15.7	40	25.2	35	22
7b	14	8.8	34	21.4	33	20.8	38	23.9	38	23.9
7c	25	15.7	37	23.3	36	22.6	34	21.4	26	16.4
7d	13	8.2	17	10.7	28	17.6	37	23.3	62	39
7e	39	24.5	34	21.4	47	29.6	20	12.6	18	11.3
7f	11	6.9	33	20.8	51	32.1	31	19.5	32	20.1
7g	62	39	57	35.8	20	12.6	11	6.9	7	4.4
7h	4	2.5	6	3.8	10	6.3	35	22	103	64.8
7i	19	11.9	21	13.2	32	20.1	60	37.7	26	16.4
7j	23	14.5	37	23.3	26	16.4	37	23.3	35	22
7k	9	5.7	37	23.3	35	22	47	29.6	29	18.2
7l	0	0	2	1.3	18	11.3	44	27.7	94	59.1
7m	24	15.1	34	21.4	35	22	43	27	23	14.5
7n	21	13.2	23	14.5	30	18.9	32	20.1	52	32.7
8a	19	11.9	38	23.9	45	28.3	21	13.2	36	22.6
8b	16	10.1	62	39	41	25.8	22	13.8	18	11.3

*Frequencies of All Responses, Questions 7-11 (continued)*

Item Number	Rarely		Sometimes		Consistently		Often		Frequently	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
8c	40	25.2	54	34	28	17.6	17	10.7	16	10.1
8d	4	2.5	41	25.8	44	27.7	39	24.5	30	18.9
8e	2	1.3	40	25.2	47	29.6	33	20.8	37	23.3
8f	6	3.8	41	25.8	44	27.7	39	24.5	30	18.9
8g	47	29.6	46	28.9	33	20.8	16	10.1	15	9.4
8h	9	5.7	45	28.3	36	22.6	38	23.9	31	19.5
8i	37	23.3	52	32.7	30	18.9	23	14.5	15	9.4
8j	78	49.1	60	37.7	13	8.2	6	3.8	1	.6
8k	81	50.9	63	39	8	5	3	1.9	3	1.9
8l	137	86.2	9	5.7	6	3.8	1	.6	3	1.9
9a	81	50.9	57	35.8	13	8.2	4	2.5	1	.6
9b	110	69.2	35	22	6	3.8	4	2.5	2	1.3
9c	61	38.4	64	40.3	21	13.2	8	5	4	2.5
9d	112	70.4	38	23.9	2	1.3	4	2.5	1	.6
9e	3	1.9	5	3.1	12	7.5	43	27	96	60.4
9f	17	10.7	75	47.2	38	23.9	20	12.6	9	5.7
9g	27	17	74	46.5	26	16.4	26	16.4	6	3.8
9h	45	28.3	46	28.9	29	18.2	21	13.2	18	11.3
9i	55	34.6	73	45.9	21	13.2	7	4.4	2	1.3
10a	56	35.2	42	26.4	27	17	18	11.3	14	8.8

*Frequencies of All Responses, Questions 7-11 (continued)*

Item Number	Rarely		Sometimes		Consistently		Often		Frequently	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
10b	58	36.5	72	45.3	10	6.3	13	8.2	6	3.8
10c	34	21.4	92	57.9	19	11.9	9	5.7	5	3.1
10d	61	38.4	70	44	14	8.8	9	5.7	4	2.5
10e	15	9.4	45	28.3	36	22.6	34	21.4	26	16.4
10f	13	8.2	51	31.2	40	25.2	30	18.9	25	15.7
10g	65	40.9	28	17.6	8	5	28	17.6	28	17.6
11a	15	9.4	46	28.9	41	25.8	31	19.5	26	16.4
11b	30	18.9	57	35.8	42	26.4	13	18.2	16	10.1
11c	28	17.6	70	44	29	18.2	20	12.6	12	7.5
11d	3	1.9	51	32.1	45	28.3	29	18.2	30	18.9
11e	58	36.5	40	25.2	29	18.2	14	8.8	17	10.7
11f	96	60.4	44	27.7	11	6.9	2	1.3	3	1.9
11g	48	30.2	65	40.9	21	13.2	18	11.3	6	3.8
11h	43	27	31	19.5	25	15.7	23	14.5	36	22.6
11i	16	10.1	75	47.2	28	17.6	18	11.3	21	13.2
11j	48	30.2	73	45.9	16	10.1	14	8.8	7	4.4
11k	73	45.9	65	40.9	11	6.9	5	3.1	3	1.9
11l	44	27.7	54	34	27	17	22	13.8	9	5.7

Frequencies for question 12 of the survey are reported in Table 16 on page 106.

*Frequencies for Question 13, Percentage of Class Time Spent on Reading Instruction*

Response	<i>N</i>	%
10	9	5.7
20	17	10.7
25	11	6.9
30	38	23.9
35	9	5.7
37.5	1	.6
40	38	23.9
45	3	1.9
50	20	12.6
55	1	.6
60	7	4.4
65	1	.6
70	2	1.3
75	1	.6

*Frequencies for Question 13, Percentage of Class Time Spent on Writing Instruction*

Response	<i>N</i>	%
0	1	.6
5	1	.6
10	7	4.4
15	2	1.3
20	18	11.3
25	19	11.9
30	53	33.3
35	15	9.4
37.5	1	.6
40	29	18.2
50	8	5
60	4	2.5

*Frequencies for Question 13, Percentage of Class Time Spent on Grammar Instruction*

Response	<i>N</i>	%
0	10	6.3
1	1	.6
2	1	.6
3	1	.6
5	37	23.3
7	1	.6
10	74	46.5
15	5	3.1
20	17	10.7
25	5	3.1
30	4	2.5
35	1	.6
40	1	.6

*Frequencies for Question 13, Percentage of Class Time Spent on Speaking Instruction*

Response	<i>N</i>	%
0	12	7.5
2	2	1.3
3	1	.6
5	35	22
7.5	1	.6
10	75	47.2
12	1	.6
15	7	4.4
20	17	10.7
25	4	2.5
30	2	1.3
40	1	.6

*Frequencies for Question 13, Percent of Class Time Spent on Listening/Viewing Instruction*

Response	<i>N</i>	%
0	5	3.1
2	1	.6
3	2	1.3
5	27	17
6	1	.6
7.5	1	.6
8	1	.6
10	68	42.8
13	1	.6
15	12	7.5
20	30	18.9
25	1	.6
30	6	3.8
40	1	.6
50	1	.6

*Frequencies for All Responses, Questions 14-29*

Item Number	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree			
	Disagree		Disagree		No Opinion		Agree		Agree	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
14	0	0	10	6.3	6	3.8	93	58.5	48	30.2
15	0	0	19	11.9	9	5.7	79	49.7	52	32.7
16	0	0	2	1.3	10	6.3	49	49.7	68	42.8
17	0	0	4	2.5	25	15.7	81	50.9	49	30.8
18	3	1.9	47	29.6	23	14.5	75	47.2	11	6.9
19	18	11.3	84	52.8	42	26.4	14	8.8	1	.6
20	1	.6	10	6.3	14	8.8	78	49.1	54	34
21	0	0	3	1.9	6	3.8	103	64.8	47	29.6
22	0	0	7	4.4	10	6.3	93	58.5	49	30.8
23	25	15.7	110	69.2	6	3.8	16	10.1	1	.6
24	0	0	18	11.3	23	14.5	91	57.2	26	16.4
25	35	22	88	55.3	23	14.5	11	6.9	1	.6
26	11	6.9	86	54.1	14	8.8	41	25.8	4	2.5
27	1	.6	9	5.7	12	7.5	86	54.1	50	31.4
28	19	11.9	97	61	25	15.7	13	8.2	2	1.3
29	15	9.4	111	69.8	22	13.8	9	5.7	1	.6

## APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Background

- Describe your teaching experience and college education.

### Influences on Teaching Style and Beliefs

- In what ways have your own high school English classes, teacher education program, and professional development activities influenced your teaching practice?

### Instructional Activities and Methods

- What words would you use to describe your overall teaching style?
- What do you believe are the most effective teaching strategies you use in your classroom?

### Educational Beliefs

- What is your philosophy of education?
- What do you think should be the teacher's role in a high school English classroom?

APPENDIX F: OBSERVATION GUIDE

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Class Make-up**

How many students?

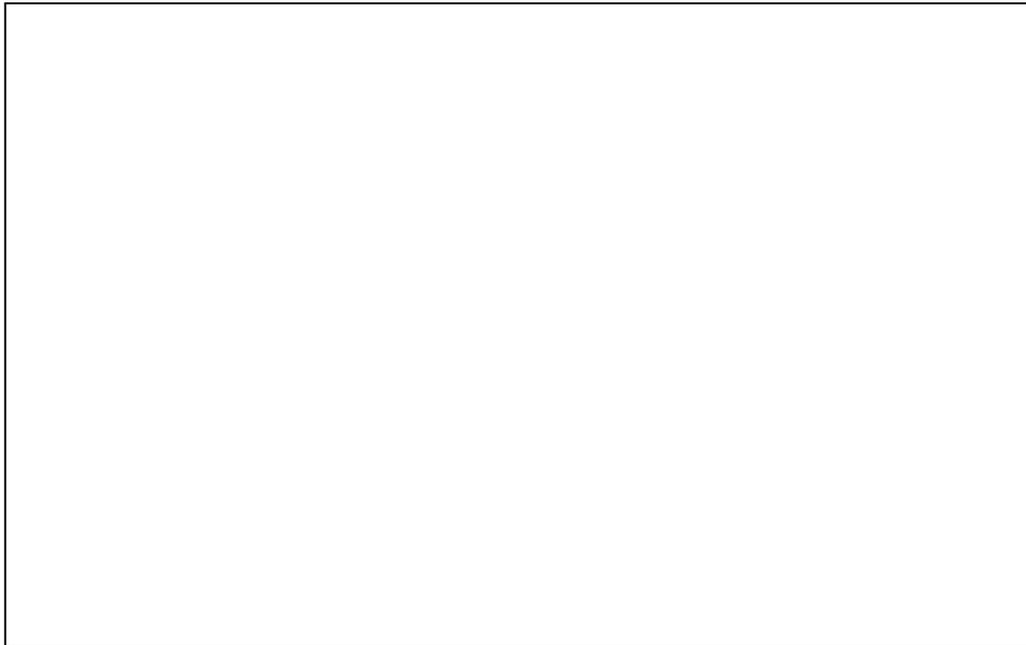
Male/Female?

Ethnic groups?

Attendance?

**Classroom Environment**

Sketch of Classroom Layout



What is on the walls and bulletin boards?

What is written on the boards? Is it teacher writing or student writing?

Is there any evidence of student work/class activities? If so, what?

**Instructional Activities—List all activities related to the following categories.**

Reading

Writing

Speaking

Listening

Viewing

Representing

Technology

Discussion

Grammar

Assessment/Evaluation

APPENDIX G: DOCUMENT REVIEW GUIDE

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Obtained: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Document: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Document: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

For what class or classes was this document designed?

What language arts strands does this document address? Check all that apply.

- |                                     |                                       |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading    | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking   | <input type="checkbox"/> Listening    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Viewing    | <input type="checkbox"/> Representing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technology |                                       |

If the document is related to student assessment, what type of student work is required? Check all that apply.

- Open-response writing
- Prescribed writing
- Short answer questions
- Multiple-choice questions
- Editing
- Peer consultation
- Student choice of topic/task
- Artwork
- Homework
- In-class completion

Amount of time needed to complete: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the relationship between teacher and student suggested by this document.

Describe student learning related to this document.

VITA

REBECCA LEE DRINNON

Personal Data:                   Date of Birth:           February 3, 1973  
  Place of Birth:        Middlesboro, Kentucky  
  Marital Status:       Married

Education:                       Public Schools, Middlesboro, Kentucky

  Harvard University, Cambridge, MA  
  Concentration in History  
  1991-92

  Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, TN  
  B.A. in English and History  
  1995

  University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH  
  Taft Graduate Fellowship in English  
  1995-1996

  Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, TN  
  M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction  
  1999

  East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN  
  Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
  2008

Professional Experience:       Teacher, Cocke County High School, Newport, TN  
  1999-present

  Adjunct Professor, Walters State Community College,  
  Morristown, TN  
  2001-2008