DIGITAL COLLABORATIVE LITERACY, CRITICAL LITERACY, AND WRITING
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: A CASE STUDY OF MEANINGFUL LEARNING IN A
FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM

by

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ABSTRACT

KATHERINE STOVER. Digital collaborative literacy, critical literacy, and writing for social justice: A case study of meaningful learning in a first grade classroom. (Under direction of DR. KAREN WOOD and DR. BRIAN KISSEL)

The need for twenty-first century learning skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and the use of technology are paramount to success in today's classroom. The purpose of this study was to explore what happened when children engaged in collaborative and critical discussions of themes related to social skills and social justice using children's literature as a springboard. Furthermore, this study extended the analysis of critical literacy to critical writing pedagogy to explore how students used writing in digital spaces to reconstruct text and advocate for social justice. A critical pedagogy and socio-cultural lens guided this research. Specifically, I employed a qualitative case study design conducted over six weeks during the fall of 2011. Participants included twenty first-grade students, their teacher, and their teacher's assistant. I conducted this study in a public charter school located in a suburban area outside of a large southeastern city in the United States. I triangulated my data by collecting from various sources including individual interviews, observations, and classroom documents. Data analysis included a holistic in-depth, interactive, inductive, and recursive examination of themes and patterns in data.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the twenty first graders, their teacher, teacher's assistant, and children and teachers around the world. We all have voices and can make a difference to make this world a better place.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In order to better prepare students for today's world, it is essential to incorporate twenty-first century readiness skills in the classroom. These skills require students to engage in meaningful learning situations that foster authentic instruction, student construction of knowledge, and critical thinking skills about real-world issues and problems (Cramer, 2007). The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a leading national organization, offers a framework that integrates the content of the three R's with the life skills of the four C's (2007). Along with reading, writing, and arithmetic, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills suggests that critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration are paramount to the success of the 21st century learner (2007). Furthermore, in a constantly changing digital information age, new technologies continue to shape what it means to be literate. The incorporation of technology in the classroom is imperative to engage twenty-first century learners and enhance their abilities to read, write, think, and communicate in new ways.

With the constantly evolving landscape of today's world, new demands and standards are needed to foster critical thinking skills, collaboration, communication, and proficiency with technology. Today's definition of literacy includes the need for a wide range of meaningful reading and writing practices and competencies to carry out complex tasks (NCTE, 2008). Current literacy practices extend beyond the traditional definition of literacy that limit reading and writing to a series of isolated print specific skills. With the

increasing role of technology in our daily lives, in order to be literate, one must engage in multiple and dynamic literacies that may include online reading and interaction. According to the policy research brief on twenty-first century literacies from the National Council for Teachers of English, "as new technology shapes literacies, they bring opportunities for teachers at all levels to foster reading and writing in more diverse and participatory contexts" (NCTE, 2007).

The use of a student-centered curriculum that engages the learner in opportunities to interact with text in meaningful ways through critical reading, collaborative discussion, and writing about topics that are relevant to their lives as well as the lives of others both in and out of school, can begin to meet the demands of the 21st century classroom. No longer can the traditional approach to literacy be implemented if students are expected to effectively participate as active thinkers and citizens in the 21st century.

During the previous century, John Dewey (1916), a progressive educator, made a similar claim. He called for a shift from a factory model approach of instruction to one that fosters social interaction and promotes a democratic society. He suggested that students need multiple opportunities to learn how to live a democratic way of life. Unfortunately, in this regard, little has changed as we have already moved into the new millennium. Despite the call for a more student-centered curriculum that fosters critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, much of the instructional methods being used continue to rely on the factory model of scripted instruction and a test-driven curriculum focused on the acquisition of low-level skills through teacher-directed learning. The use of basal programs has historically been the core materials for reading instruction (Durkin, 1981; Goodman, Shannon, Freeman, & Murphy, 1988; Shannon,

1982; Shannon, 1987; Smith, 2002) and has gained a strong presence with No Child Left Behind Act and the Reading First Initiative (Allington, 2002). While these commercial programs continue to be widely used, they remain controversial and insufficient for the twenty-first century learner (Shannon & Crawford, 1997). According to Allington (2005) and Duffy and Hoffman (1999), there is no single program that is perfect in meeting the needs of all learners.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

The call for basal readers and commercial programs as the most effective form of curriculum goes back as far as the early twentieth century when an industrial model was viewed as being beneficial in order to increase production and efficiency (Shannon, 2007; Smith, 2002). It was believed that the use of a script would increase effectiveness in teaching and learning. This factory approach continued to be valued at the turn of the 21st century as a way to model schools after business. Political movements such the Nation at Risk Report (1983), the No Child Left Behind legislation (2001), and the current emphasis on pay for performance have increased accountability and promoted the standardization of instruction through mandated scripted reading programs.

Narrowing of Curriculum and Focus

The centralization of control and accountability in the era of high stakes fosters a narrowed curriculum that focuses on low-level skills and test preparation (Alliance for Education, 2011a; Hilliard, 2000; Kozol, 2005; Lipman, 2004). This highly-regimented curriculum overemphasizes skills-based instruction and provides few opportunities for students to engage in meaningful reading practices and deeper learning including collaboration, problem solving, and critical thinking crucial to 21st century learning

(Alliance for Education, 2001b). A functional approach teaches basic literacy skills, such as the ability to decode printed text, follow directions, and understand literal levels of information to reinforce job-related skills and behaviors necessary to function in society (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2002; Lipman, 2004). According to Shannon (2007), "children's anthologies provided manipulated texts designed to practice skills rather than inform or engage readers; workbooks diverted children's attention from authentic uses of literacy; and basal texts simply fulfilled the assumptions that the publishers had made about reading and learning" (p.135).

Although the need for critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration is established as fundamental for 21st century learning, there is often little emphasis on deep comprehension and thoughtful discussion of text particularly in primary grade classrooms (Taberski, 2011). Through the use of direct systematic scripted instruction, "learning to read" becomes compartmentalized without focusing on "reading to learn" specifically in primary grades, where emphasis on phonics and phonemic awareness instruction is a fundamental component of reading instruction (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2002; Taberski, 2011). Since the release of the National Reading Panel Report (2000), much of the reading instruction and scripted commercial resources for teaching reading focused on the five pillars of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In primary grades, more emphasis is placed on phonemic awareness, phonics skills, and basic comprehension skills than on fluency and vocabulary. The major tenant of the National Reading Panel (NRP) issued in 2000, included the focus on phonics instruction, particularly in kindergarten and first grade before students learn to read independently. The NRP suggested that beginning readers

must learn to read by breaking the code before emphasizing meaning and reading for

deeper understanding (Allington, 2002). The overemphasis on teaching decoding and

superficial levels of comprehension leaves little space for critical thinking and rich

discussion about the text. Cadiero-Kaplan (2002) posits that "such instruction does not

encourage students to challenge texts or ideas and further reduces literacy to a primary

skill learned in parts" (p. 374). This type of back-to-basics factory model of instruction

encourages replication and regurgitation of information with little emphasis on

comprehension instruction (Comber & Nichols, 2004; Durkin, 1981; Shannon, 2007;

Leland, Harste, & Huber, 2005). Furthermore, rather than promoting the construction of

meaning with authentic instruction, scripted programs leave little space for social

interaction, critical thinking, or the exploration of sociopolitical issues (Hargood, 2008).

Freire's banking method of education(1970, 2000), which Freire exposed as a

passive learning regime, is often associated with scripted curriculum because such an

agenda narrows the curriculum with a predetermined focus and set of correct answers

determined by the teacher or the program without any critical analysis or questioning.

Using this approach, students are treated as passive vessels waiting to be filled with the

teacher's knowledge. This method positions the teacher as the holder of knowledge and

limits students' abilities to think critically or develop a sense of agency. According to

Jordan, the use of scripted programs such as Direct Instruction or Open Court silences the

voices of students (2005). Furthermore, Lipman laments that "the ideological influence of

standardized test preparation teaches students that they are neither creators nor arbitrators

of knowledge" (2004, p. 111). According to Freire, "the more completely [students]

accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them" (1970, p. 54).

Focusing Curriculum on Students

Even amidst the growing demands of the 21st century, it is the aforementioned model of functional literacy that we often see occurring in schools today. Instead of this factory approach to teaching literacy, a more student-centered curriculum that fosters collaboration and critical thinking can be implemented to encourage extended and deeper interactions with text. This can be achieved when students analyze historical, cultural, and political contexts in text and make connections to their own lives as well as the lives of others (Hargood, 2008). Students need opportunities to develop a critical lens in order to examine and describe multiple meanings and perspectives. Authentic learning is about extending students' abilities to think in a more contextualized and meaningful way. Comber and Nixon (2011) argue the need for an expanded view of literacy in an era of accountability to include critical reading of texts with social and political significance to students and their communities. Therefore, there is a need for alternative approaches to current instructional practices such as scripted programs and a test-driven curriculum.

The examination of a critical and collaborative stance to reading and writing is valuable. While research in the area of critical literacy has increased (Comber & Nixon, 2011; Comber & Simpson, 2001; Luke & Freebody, 1997), there remains a limited amount of research focused at the primary grade levels. The work of Hargood (2008) and Vasquez (2004, 2010) has explored critical literacy with primary students, yet this continues to be an area of needed additional research. Young children are naturally curious and question things in everyday life (Hargood, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to

incorporate this type of inquiry and questioning using a critical stance when reading. Without opportunities to engage with texts in meaningful ways to critically deconstruct and examine social, cultural, and political issues, young children can become indoctrinated into the dominant ideology of texts as well as in society (McDaniel, 2004). "Early childhood programs that incorporate a critical literacy ideology will enable young children to examine various perspectives and issues, as well as foster their abilities to make competent decisions on how to behave differently and effect change" (Hargood, 2008, p. 8). Through critical reading and collaborative discussion, even young learners can develop their awareness and understanding of social issues and advocate for social justice through oral, written, and digital communication.

A variety of barriers impede students' abilities to engage in critical thinking, collaborative discussion of text, and writing for social transformation. Implementation of skill and drill through scripted reading programs and test-driven curriculum is overemphasized. Scripted instruction leaves little space for deeper analysis of text. Furthermore, students are limited to the literature provided in the basal readers. Oftentimes the stories included in these basal programs are contrived decodable texts aimed to improve students' abilities to be word callers. Many of these texts in primary basal series are literal level stories without rich, quality content. Additionally, another barrier includes the belief that primary students are not yet mature enough to be exposed to topics related to social issues.

Some teachers may feel uncomfortable exposing young children to mature topics related to equity, injustice, and other social issues that they may deem as harmful to their innocence (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Fear of backlash from administrators or parents for

covering what could be viewed as controversial topics may result in teachers being reluctant to incorporate critical literacy in their classrooms (Bargiel, Beck, Koblitz, O'Connor, Mitchell, & Wolf, 1997). Lastly, some teachers may resist critical literacy because it disrupts the status quo (McDaniel, 2004). Rather than expose children to sensitive topics, adults often censure children from reality (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). In many traditional classrooms, teachers attempt to protect children's innocence by omitting complex topics that challenge the status quo (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2000). "In general, children in the United States are taught not to question the status quo and to accept and obey the voice of authority" (McDaniel, 2004, p. 473).However, if teachers do not incorporate critical literacy in their classrooms, we run the risk of perpetuating stereotypes and inequities as children accept things for the face value without questioning the power relationships and political agenda hidden in the text. Through the use of critical literacy, collaborative discussion, writing, and new technologies, students can advocate for issues of social justice in their own lives as well as beyond the walls of the school. McDaniel states that "by developing critical perspectives towards texts, students can transfer these skills to the larger society, thereby "reading" their world through a critical stance that leads to empowerment" (2004, p. 473).

Throughout this study, I investigated an alternative approach to the traditional factory model of a functional curriculum that limits student engagement and sense of agency. Specifically, I examined an alternative to scripted curriculum by incorporating the use of collaborative literacy and critical literacy with first graders to explore the critical examination of text. During this study, the students discussed a variety of social issues present in text, in their lives, as well as in the world around them. I examined what

happens when students take on a critical stance that challenges power relationships and questions social norms using literature as a springboard for discussions. Furthermore, I described digital collaborative literacy in the form of first grade children's discussions about issues of social justice as well as purposeful writing in digital spaces; the latter serving to advocate for issues of equality and fairness with a wider audience.

Research Questions

Through this study, I documented critical features of an alternative approach to traditional scripted reading programs and the extent to which it fostered twenty-first century learning skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration while enhancing students' understanding of social issues. Moreover, the use of technology for writing to promote social justice provided students with a wider audience allowing their voices to be heard as well as the opportunity for meaningful response. This study was guided by the following research questions:

(1) In what ways does the teacher incorporate collaborative and critical literacy approaches in her classroom?

(2) What happens when first graders engage in collaborative and critical literacy?

(3) In what ways do students use digital writing to advocate for issues of social justice?

(4) In what ways does the use of a collaborative literacy approach affect students' views of collaboration both in and out of the classroom?

Purpose of the Study

The traditional use of scripted curriculum for literacy instruction leaves little space for students to engage in meaningful learning opportunities. The overreliance on

commercial reading programs situates the teacher as well as the program itself as experts and holders of knowledge, thus limiting active engagement for students to participate in their own learning process. With the overemphasis of basic skills through repetition and regurgitation, opportunities to engage in authentic reading practices that foster deeper learning are limited.

Research indicates that understanding is enhanced when the learner actively participates in the learning process. Given that social interaction plays an integral role in learning, it is vital that students have opportunities to discuss and collaborate with their peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Through social interaction, students can develop deeper understanding and enhance their abilities to work together. The ability to collaborate, problem solve, and co-construct knowledge are paramount skills for the twenty-first century. Furthermore, students in the twenty-first century classroom must also be critical thinkers. In order to examine text meaningfully and foster deep comprehension, a critical lens must be developed. Students should no longer be taught to accept information at face value without critical examination. A student-centered curriculum that fosters critical interaction with text can enhance students' awareness of social issues while developing their abilities to read and write in meaningful ways.

Researchers reveal the value of incorporating critical examination of literature into a social constructivist classroom. However, few studies have examined the use of critical and collaborative discussion as well as writing to advocate for social justice with young learners. Additionally, as previously mentioned, several barriers can prevent this type of work from occurring with primary students. Therefore, I examined an alternative approach to scripted instruction that investigated what happens when first graders use

authentic children's literature as a springboard for collaborative and critical discussions related to social issues. The purpose of this study was to explore how collaborative and critical discussions of children's literature created deeper interactions with text and enhanced students' awareness of social issues present in the text as well as in their lives and the world around them. I investigated what happens when children engaged in critical discussions of social issues and challenged ideology and power relationships present in text. Furthermore, I explored how students used writing as a form of communication to advocate for issues of social justice in digital spaces. This study demonstrates the importance of the inclusion of technology and twenty-first century skills to move beyond traditional reading instruction that limits active thinking and problem solving skills and instead, fosters active co-construction of meaning through collaboration, critical thinking, and communication.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

The researcher explored the use of children's literature as a springboard for collaborative discussion around issues related to teamwork, acceptance, perseverance, and fairness (Kissel, Hathaway, & Wood, 2010; Wood, Roser, & Martinez, 2001). The presence of the aforementioned themes in children's literature allowed students to engage in discussion of important life lessons in the text as well as how they relate to their own lives, situations at school, home, and in the world around them. Discussions regarding these topics helped students develop their understanding of the importance of collaboration with others and the need to seek social justice as citizens living in a democracy. Furthermore, this study investigated the use of authentic writing across a digital platform to advocate for social justice. This study is a significant for several

reasons. First, students were encouraged to read more critically to examine texts for a deeper meaning beyond the surface level. This allowed students to become text critics and text analyzers (Luke & Freebody, 1999) which fostered critical thinking skills as well as questioned the status quo. Secondly, students had increased opportunities to engage with their peers in meaningful conversation around a commonly read text. This is important based on the work of Vygotsky's social learning theory. Through this paradigm, Vygotsky asserts that learning is a social process and is enhanced through the co-construction of knowledge (1978). Collaborative reading provides students with the opportunity to engage in collective dialogue around a shared text. Lastly, this study allowed students to engage in writing for authentic purposes and audiences as they wrote to advocate for social justice using technology as a platform to share their voices. Consequently, this study has the potential to inform and guide the use of 21st century technologies and digital literacy with young learners.

In an age of high stakes assessment and scripted instruction, it is important to demonstrate an alternative approach to teaching literacy that fosters student-centered learning with opportunities for students to engage in meaningful and open-ended discussion beyond answering the teacher's or the program's predetermined questions and answers. This study sought to develop a deeper understanding of what happens when first graders engage in an exploration of topics related to social justice through reading and writing practices. While some research has been done on the use of critical literacy as an instructional framework, there has been little research of this approach with primary students. This study extends the analysis of critical literacy to critical writing pedagogy to explore how students use writing to advocate for social justice.

This research study has the potential to inform and guide literacy instruction in the primary grades that fosters social justice through authentic reading and writing purposes beyond scripted curriculum and the teacher as the sole audience. It contributes to the research base on literacy instruction at the primary level but could be applicable to any level. Social learning through reading and writing for social justice with authentic purposes beyond scripted instruction using the banking method (Freire, 2000) provides insight for classroom teachers in terms of how to implement an alternative approach to scripted reading instruction. This research has the potential to influence the way students become more literate, compassionate, and socially-active citizens and participants in democracy.

Definitions of Terms

The following section was developed to ensure the readers' understanding of relevant terms. The definitions of each of the terms below reflect the way the word was used throughout the context of this research study.

Collaborative Literacy

Collaborative literacy incorporates the use of peer discussions of literature as a springboard to develop social skills including cooperation and collaboration through discussion and the study of themes in literature such as working together and getting along while learning life lessons (Wood, Roser, Martinez, 2001). In this study, first graders engaged in whole group and small group collaborative discussions of literature to learn about how characters work together and get along, while making connections to their own lives, situations at school, at home and in the world around them.

Critical Literacy

Through critical literacy, the reader develops a critical consciousness and interrogates the text (Luke & Freebody, 1997). By peeling back the layers to deconstruct text, the reader examines the text beyond the surface level to challenge issues of power and privilege and question whose voices have been left out of the text as well as who benefits. Through reconstruction of the text, the reader explores different perspectives and considers how the story would be different if told from an alternative point of view to counter social injustices present in the text (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). In this study, first graders engaged in the critical deconstruction and reconstruction of text to explore issues such as acceptance, fairness, and justice in the books they read and in relation to their own lives, situations at school, at home, and in the world around them.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy refers to the art of teaching for critical consciousness of self and society to uncover sources of oppression and emphasize liberation for individuals and broader society. An example of a theory of transformation, the central concern of critical pedagogy is transformation and development of agency to become empowered and take action for social justice. Critical pedagogy is a view of the world through a critical lens in order to examine issues of power, dominance, and ideology. Concerned with injustice, critical pedagogy develops an awareness of self and others through a critical consciousness. The early work of critical theorists such as Horkheimer and Habermas, from the Frankfurt School of Germany, laid the foundation for this theoretical framework.

Digital Collaborative Literacy

Digital collaborative literacy follows the framework of collaborative literacy with the addition of a digital component. Student discussion of themes in literature related to working together, getting along, as well as broader social issues such as racism and perseverance, can be enhanced through the incorporation of technology. Online book clubs and the use of Web 2.0 applications such as wikis, blogs, and Voicethreads provide students with a digital space to communicate and discuss with a wider audience. In this study, first graders used Voicethread as an online space to share their writing to advocate for social justice with a larger audience.

Scripted Instruction

Scripted instruction refers to commercial reading programs that provide a teacher manual with step-by-step instructions of how to deliver reading instruction through the use of the provided student readers, workbooks, and other supplemental materials. Scripted instruction was not used as part of this study. It is discussed both to provide a context for the traditional, widely used form of literacy instruction but also to juxtapose it with the implementation of collaborative and critical literacy to engage first graders in deeper reading and discussion of social issues relevant to the text and their own lives.

Social Justice

Social justice refers to the principles of equity and fairness in society. A democratic society that fosters social justice respects others and allows all individuals regardless of race, class, or gender the equal opportunity to live a fulfilling and promising life. In this study, social justice is a theme present in the children's literature being discussed. Students made connections to the social themes in the literature as it related to

their lives, situations at school, at home, and in the world around them. Social justice was the focus for student writing.

Social Constructivist Theory

One theoretical paradigm for this study is the Social Constructivist theory. This theoretical framework describes the social nature of learning by understanding how meaning is created through social interaction.

Summary

Chapter one establishes the foundation for this qualitative research study. The researcher introduced the importance of twenty-first century learning skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007). Additionally, the role of technology and student construction of knowledge through meaningful learning is paramount twenty-first century skills (Cramer, 2007). Despite the call for a student-centered curriculum where students meaningfully interact with text and participate in social learning, commercial reading programs that focus on the development of isolated low-level skills continue to be prominent forms of scripted instruction in today's classrooms. These scripted programs provide few opportunities for meaningful reading and deeper learning. Students become silenced and learn to passively accept the world (Freire, 1970, 2000). This study addresses the need for an alternative approach to literacy instruction that fosters co-construction of knowledge and critical examination of text, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Critical literacy is crucial in order to avoid maintaining inequities and ideology in text and society. The use of writing in digital spaces to advocate for social justice will be explored. This chapter includes the research questions that guided this study as well as the description of the

nature and significance of this study. Chapter two establishes the theoretical framework

and provides a synthesis and review of the literature related to my study.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore an alternative approach to scripted literacy instruction that involves the use of authentic literature as a springboard for collaborative discussion of common themes such as working together, acceptance, fairness, and perseverance. More specifically, this chapter will examine the use of collaborative literacy, critical literacy, and the use of writing in digital spaces to reconstruct text and advocate for social justice. Additionally, this review will describe how technology intersects with literacy learning in the twenty-first century. First, I begin by describing the theoretical framework used to guide this study. Secondly, the review of the literature will examine four key areas. The review will examine the use of collaborative literacy as a way to engage students in meaningful discussion of social issues such as working together and getting along using children's literature as a springboard. Third, it will explain the foundations of critical literacy research and practice to encourage students to read more critically and examine deeper layers of meaning in text. Then, the review will describe ways to deconstruct and reconstruct the text through discussion and writing to advocate for social justice. Last, the role of technology in the twenty-first century literacy classroom will be examined.

Theoretical Framework

This study demonstrates the need for an alternative literacy curriculum to the traditional framework driven by commercial reading programs and standardized tests.

Critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration juxtapose the functional approach to literacy instruction where scripted curriculum is commonly used. To build awareness of social justice issues, I explored what happens when students engage in a critical examination and reconstruction of text through collaborative discussion as well as purposeful writing. Through authentic and meaningful literacy instruction that explores issues of equity and transformation in text, students enhanced their critical thinking skills, developed both oral and written communication skills, and improved their abilities to interact in a social setting. A theoretical lens of critical pedagogy and a social constructivist perspective was used to frame this study.

Critical Pedagogy

A lens of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970, 2000) can be used to critique the imbalance of power and oppression in society and institutions such as education. Critical theorists like Brazilian educator, Paolo Freire increased the awareness of the need for critical examination of the inequitable structures of society and how they are mirrored in education. Freire suggests that education is not neutral and can in fact be oppressive through the use of a stratified curriculum that serves the interests of the status quo. The production of knowledge, ownership of knowledge, and the use of a standardized curriculum results in a process of schooling that silences those who are oppressed and viewed as inferior. According to Lipman, "accountability and the centralized regulation of schools and teachers sharpen disparities in curriculum and teaching" (2004, p. 3).

An awareness of self and others through a critical consciousness can be developed through Freire's critical pedagogy (1970, 2000). Critical pedagogy refers to the art of teaching for critical consciousness of self and society to uncover sources of oppression

and emphasize liberation for individuals and broader society. Through a critical

pedagogy, students can begin to develop an awareness of inequities and question the

ideology of social norms and the status quo. A central tenant of critical pedagogy is the

inclusion of student voices through a problem-posing approach that encourages dialogue

and social learning. Moreover, other important elements of critical pedagogy include the

critical examination of knowledge, the gatekeepers of knowledge, and questioning of

assumptions.

Freire suggests the need to emphasize the power of individuals to overcome and

revolutionize the oppression that controls them. He states, "the pedagogy of the

oppressed must be forged with, not for, the oppressed in the incessant struggle to regain

their humanity" (2000, p. 48). Because it is common for the oppressed to initially be

blinded by the ideology and belief of their oppressors, it is imperative for them to be

critically reflective and transformative from within. In order to achieve this praxis and

become liberated, the oppressed must view their reality and the potential to transform

their situations (Freire, 2000).

To become liberated, the oppressed must become conscious beings and reject the

banking method, replacing it with a more problem-posing approach. Teachers need to

begin to question whose interests are being served through the use of a critical stance to

reading. By rejecting formal predetermined curriculum that does not take into account the

culture, background, and interests of students, teachers can begin to foster a more

student-centered problem-posing approach to learning. Educators can lead students

through a more dialogic approach to teaching instead of the traditional "banking

method," where students are viewed as bank accounts waiting to be filled by the teacher

through transmission of facts. With this method, the teacher or the program is the expert and dispenser of knowledge. In contrast, Freire advocates for the abolishment of the teacher-student relationship for one of a more reciprocal nature, where the teacher both learns and educates and students' voice and knowledge is valued.

An emancipatory learning process can be embraced by challenging the institutional factors contributing to oppression and the status quo. One way to begin the process of exploring our underlying beliefs and perceptions of the life world that maintain the status quo and power relations is critical reflection through problem posing and dialogue. The liberation and transformation process is crucial to the ability to think critically and engage in a dialogue. Students increase their human agency and can become critically conscious to promote social change by exploring the world around them, sharing perspectives and observations. The inequities that occur between the systems and the life world can be addressed through dialogue. The essence of education and freedom comes as a result of discourse and cultural unity. Dialogue humanizes and brings the people one step closer to a revolution.

Critical pedagogy examines knowledge and questions social and historical contexts and their role in oppression (Freire, 2000). This form of liberatory teaching counters the hegemonic curriculum enforced by the overemphasis on testing and scripted instruction that limit representation of students' identities. Through the promotion of a more culturally relevant curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2009), academic success and social justice can be advocated. The use of a critical pedagogy will increase students' agency, giving them a voice and ownership of their own learning. By developing a sense of agency, oppressed groups can achieve transformation through praxis. Upon gaining

critically consciousness, learners can become empowered and take action for social transformation. Lipman contends that all students "need an education that teaches them to think critically about knowledge and social institutions and locate their own history and cultural identity within broader contexts. Students need an education that instills a sense of hope and possibility that they can make a difference in their own family, school, and community and in the broader national and global community while it prepares them for multiple life choices" (2004, p. 181). Challenging oppressive conditions within social institutions, such as school, is the first step for young learners to see their potential and possibility.

Social Constructivism

In additional to the use of a lens of critical pedagogy, this study is grounded in social constructivist theory. Social constructivism is rooted in the work of twentieth century Soviet psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. He theorized that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and the use of language to mediate understanding. A major tenant of Vygotsky's social learning theory is that learning cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and historical context that frames it (1978). Considering this premise, learning is dependent on the individual learner as well as on the role of the social setting. Meaning is therefore negotiated through social interactions and is reliant on the social constructs.

In this paradigm, researchers emphasize the notion that learning is socially situated. The social constructivist theory provides a framework for examining how literacy practices such as reading, writing, and discussion are socially constructed. Literacy is a multifaceted social practice (Freire, 2000; Gee, 1990; New London Group,

1996; Street, 1984). Sociocultural theorists view how language, literacy, and learning are interrelated to create meaning. This perspective suggests that literacy is not an isolated skill (Vygotsky, 1978). Instead, literacy is influenced by social, cultural, historical, and linguistic processes (Gee, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). This theory is relevant due to the social nature of the classroom setting (Street, 1984) where literacy practices are co-constructed through shared ideas and social identities of the teacher and the students. In the classroom context, all members are involved in the collective construction of meaning. The collaborative construction of knowledge through interaction of individuals demonstrates the value of shared understanding dependent on the social learning context.

The use of a sociocultural lens for this study offers potential insight into the role of the interdependence of the social, cultural, and historical context in the process of the human production of knowledge. Literacy is a social endeavor where meaning of text is determined based on the reader's individual as well as collective understanding and experiences. Critical literacy and collaborative discussion challenge traditional scripted approaches and provides a space for increased student interaction and dialogue. Students are no longer passive vessels waiting to be filled with the teacher's knowledge. In contrast, they become active members in the process of co-constructing knowledge. Students become active participants by engaging in discussion of social issues using literature as a springboard. Social interaction and consideration of multiple perspectives expands students' thinking, broadens their understanding, and fosters the use of language for communication (Wood, Roser & Martinez, 2001). Furthermore, discussion enhances students' abilities to develop deeper and richer responses. Lastly, a social constructivist paradigm allows for more authentic discussion than the traditional initiate-response-

evaluate model that fosters replication and regurgitation with the teacher as the authority figure and holder of knowledge. In the theoretical framework of social constructivism, learning is viewed as a collaborative process as well as a medium for social transformation. The social constructivist theory provides a framework for understanding how literacy can be learned and applied in the present study.

Collaborative Literacy

Collaborative literacy is an instructional approach to reading, analyzing, and discussing literature with common themes related to working together and getting along. Collaborative literacy fosters the development of social skills such as cooperation, respect, and acceptance using literature as a foundation for discussion. According to Wood, Roser, & Martinez (2001), "In collaborative literacy, literature is the springboard with the potential to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for students to make positive contributions to the classroom, at home, and in society as a whole" (p. 102).

When students come together to discuss literature collaboratively, there are a myriad of benefits including the promotion of social learning opportunities, development of a sense of community, as well as enhanced literacy skills and abilities. The collective environment that is created is conducive to building relationships and fostering collaboration. Within this safe space, students can take risks to contribute their ideas, develop their listening skills, and learn to respect their peers' perspectives and input. The selection of literature with themes related to teamwork and cooperation develops students' abilities to achieve both personal goals, as well as to enhance the collective efforts of the group to reach a common goal. By uncovering themes such as cooperation in children's literature, students engage in conversations to discuss the value of getting

along with others and working together, not only in the context of the literature, but also in the lives of students, others, and the world around them. Therefore, when students engage in collaborative literacy, not only do they deepen their comprehension, but also learn and apply life lessons such as how to communicate effectively and respectfully with others. Working together is an essential 21st century skill for all aspects of school and society. Students will socially construct an awareness and understanding of social issues including treating others with respect, teamwork, and acceptance that exist in their lives and in the world around them through the implementation of collaborative discussions using children's literature as a springboard.

Bullying and social skills. In light of recent school violence issues, there is a clear need to immerse students in a curriculum that fosters social skills. School violence remains an issue for youth in America. After the school shootings at Columbine in 1999, the issue of bullying became prevalent in discussions among parents, teachers, and administrators. According to the Bureau of Justice School Bullying Statistics and Cyber Bullying statistics for School Crime and Safety, revenge was typically the motive for school shootings. Eighty-seven percent of those surveyed revealed that shootings were motivated by a desire to "get back at those who hurt them." Bullying played a major role in the motivation for school violence. Many attackers were bullied or victimized as children, according to Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, and Modzeleski (2002). Moreover, according to Dake, Price, Telljohann, and Funk (2003), most attackers felt bullied and threatened themselves at some point prior to the incident.

The issue of school bullying has captured media attention and has encouraged a campaign by President Obama to dispel the myth that bullying is a "normal rite of

passage." Obama has also convened a Department of Education Summit to examine some of the structures that interfere with children's feelings of safety at school. The first ever Federal National Bullying Summit was held in August 2010 in Washington, D.C. The summit was sponsored by the Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Steering Committee and collaboration between the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services (HHS), Agriculture, the Interior, and Justice.

Schools should be places of possibility where children can go to engage in meaningful learning opportunities and develop social skills to make them productive members of society. Unfortunately, between twenty-four to forty-nine percent of students in the United States experience being victims of bullies and nineteen to thirty-one percent bully others on a regular basis (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruari, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). According to the New York University Child Study Center, fifty percent of children have been victims of bullying and ten percent are regularly victimized (2005). Bullying begins as early as elementary school. Nine out of ten elementary students have been bullied and six out of ten elementary students have taken part in the act of bullying (Stanford University Medical Center, 2007).

Bullying whether physical, psychological, or emotional involves repeated harmful behavior towards someone less powerful. Characteristics of bullying behavior include intentional action to harm the victim, repetition of the behavior, and an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim (Schoen & Schoen, 2010). According to Hazel (2010), "bullying is an expression of intolerance that perpetrates discrimination and power imbalances" (p. 340). This type of harmful behavior negatively influences a

child's development. According to Craig, Kochenderfer and Ladd (as cited in Wei, 2004), children's psychological well-being as well as their academic learning can be hindered as a result of peer victimization. Children need to feel a sense of competence, autonomy, and belonging to experience positive relationships with their peers and school in general (Siris & Osterman, 2004). When these needs are not met, children experience a sense of powerlessness and disengage from school. They become detached, withdrawn, have negative attitudes, and may even become aggressive (Siris & Osterman, 2004). It is common for bullied students to have difficulty making friends as a result of the peer rejection they experience. Buhs, Ladd, and Herald (2006) studied kindergarteners and found that the children least accepted by their peers were at greater risk in later grades for continued mistreatment. In addition to the social problems that can ensue as a result of bullying, academic difficulties are also a concern for children being bullied in school (Wei & Williams, 2004). Peer rejection is a strong predictor of academic achievement according to Buhs, Ladd, and Herald (2006).

Henry (2000) suggests that elementary students are less likely to engage in aggressive behavior if they participate in classroom activities that foster positive communal behaviors. Additionally, the emphasis on cooperative group work, discussion groups, and the development of peer mediation and social skills can decrease victimization. The development of classroom community and human agency are important factors in empowering students to prevent bullying behaviors and ensure academic success and life skills. It is crucial for teachers to create a caring climate where students feel safe to engage in discussions around issues related to bullying and other social issues. Furthermore, literature can be used to discuss a variety of topics, such as

respect, working together, and acceptance to provide a safe environment for students to engage in conversation about relevant issues pertaining to social situations they may experience or witness in their lives, classroom, and community.

Collaborative literacy and social learning. By reading about and discussing characters and events in literature that emphasize working together for a common goal, students can begin to respond to the text by making connections between the themes in the text and their own lives (text-to-self connections), other texts (text-to-text connections), and to the world around them (text-to-world connections) (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). These connections are critical in fostering a deeper understanding of themes uncovered in the literature as they relate to students' lives and beyond to foster awareness of larger universal social issues. According to Wood et al., "collaborative literacy is a multidimensional terms to describe how engaging students in group activities to read, discuss, and analyze literature on the theme of working together can help them learn many of life's important lessons" (2001, p. 102). Through collaborative book discussion, students can develop their communication skills and extend their thinking.

In order to effectively engage students in collaborative literacy, the teacher begins with a shared reading experience, modeling and thinking aloud, then gradually releasing responsibility to students (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). By demonstrating a variety of thinking, questioning, and discussion skills needed during a collaborative book talk, the teacher demonstrates how she uncovers the layers of meaning and themes in the text. The teacher also provides explicit modeling of how to effectively engage in a meaningful conversation and gradually invites students to participate in the discussion and share their

own thoughts, reactions, and insights to the text. Instruction of conversational skills, including how to participate in fluid dialogue where threads of the conversation build off of one another instead of isolated or linear comments, can be modeled, demonstrated, and practiced within the collaborative literacy framework.

Gradually, teachers release students to engage in similar small group discussions to explore how themes in literature relate to their lives, situations at school, home, and the local or global community. The use of book clubs and literature circles promote an effective framework for collaborative literacy. Traditional book clubs (Daniels, 2002; Kong & Fitch, 2002; McMahon, Raphael, Goatley, & Pardo, 1997; Raphel, Florio-Ruane, George, Hasty & Highfield, 2004) incorporate a literature-based instructional model where small groups of students form to explore meaning of commonly read text through dialogue and in depth discussion with peers. Book clubs provide students with the space and time to engage in student-centered, open-ended discussions about quality authentic literature. Students actively engage in reading, writing, and discussion about literature within a non-threatening peer group setting where they can share their thinking, pose questions, and collaborate while constructing meaning of the text as well as personal life experiences and lessons. Book clubs improve the readers' abilities to think critically about the text and improve their overall comprehension.

The use of a book club framework is based in Vygotsky's social learning theory (1978). According to Vygotsky, when students engage in social interaction and use of language, their thinking is expanded, understanding is deepened, and their abilities to express themselves are enhanced. Gee (1999) and Luke (1991) suggest that literacy is a social practice. Therefore, using a social constructivist paradigm, students can begin to

develop and enhance their thinking through social interaction with peers. Collaborative literacy provides a social context where students' thinking is enhanced.

A variety of studies indicate that children from a variety of settings and backgrounds can successfully participate in discussion of literature and construct meaning from text (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1995; Long & Gove, 2003). Eeds and Wells (1989) examined what happens when students and teachers gather to discuss commonly read text. They found that students who participated in grand conversations within collaborative groups, effectively articulated their understanding of text, shared connections, participated as active readers, and interpreted the author's purpose and message through rich discussion. Goatley, et al.'s study (1995) explored the social construction of meaning of fifth grade English as Second Language (ESL) and Exceptional Children (EC) students who participated in book clubs with their regular education peers. In a study conducted by Long and Gove (2003), fourth graders successfully participated in literature circle discussions to deepen their understanding of social issues, such as racism and discrimination, through the investigation of information provided in text, open-ended questions, and critical thinking. Grattan (1997) explored the use of book clubs with first and second graders. She found that primary level students extensively discussed complex literature and thought about books in new ways as a result of gradually releasing responsibility with teacher modeling, directed discussion, fish bowl conversations, whole group sharing, and the use of written response as a framework. According to Grattan (1997), "students' discussions from that unit reflected higher levels of engagement, more meaningful exchanges among the students, and stronger connections across texts" (p. 281).

Collaborative literacy can be an instructional technique that provides students with a shared experience and a forum to engage in critical discussions to develop a sense of classroom community and a caring, respectful environment. According to Kissel, Hathaway, and Wood (2010), discussions related to the theme of cooperation can lead to addressing larger societal issues, such as homelessness, racism, oppression, "fitting in," and tolerance, to name a few. Students will take these conversations about literature to the broader context to discuss how it relates to their lives, their homes, as well as their communities. Collaborative literacy can incorporate a more active, cooperative way of engaging students to work together to construct understanding. Furthermore, topics related to working together, respect, fairness, equity and justice can be explored through critical discussions of literature.

The Four Resource Model

In an effort to move beyond basic recall and literal level of meaning, Luke and Freebody (1990, 1999) advocate the use of the Four Resource Model to develop students' reading skills and strategies that engage them with texts in meaningful and critical ways. In this model, Luke and Freebody suggest that there are four levels to effective reading instruction and practices. The following four levels of reading are neither linear nor hierarchical: coding practices, text-meaning practices, pragmatic practices, and critical practices. When engaging in these four roles, readers decode text, construct meaning, consider text across contexts, and critically analyze and evaluate texts to consider issues of social, cultural, and political power (Jones, 2006). Students taught using traditional models of literacy instruction most likely do not move beyond the first two levels of readers since the focus is on skills-based instruction and the repetition and regurgitation

of information,. The inclusion of only the first levels in this model represent a functional approach to teaching reading, where skill and drill focuses on decoding words and answering specific comprehension questions. "Such instruction does not encourage students to challenge texts or ideas and further reduces literacy to a primary skill learned in parts" (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2002, p.374). Furthermore, a functional approach emphasizes consumer literacy, where the need to be literate focuses on the ability to understanding signs, advertisements, create grocery lists, and complete job applications. A functional literacy ideology promotes the maintenance of social stratification by emphasizing basic skills and reducing people by sorting them into a polarized labor market based on test scores (Lipman, 2004). This approach focuses on learning to read through a factory model and back to basics movement as opposed to reading to learn. According to Cadiero-Kaplan, "the functional approach does little to engage texts and stories critically or to engage the historical and lived contexts of student lives" (2002, p. 374).

Luke and Freebody posit that effective readers engage in all levels of the resource model. By participating in the process of reading as context users and critical thinkers, the reader begins to engage with text at a deeper level. Going beyond the first two levels to include all components of the Four Resource Model requires readers to navigate the complex nature of power relations and perspective in texts (Comber, 1998; Comber, Thompson, & Wells, 2001). This asserts that reading is never neutral and is shaped by ideologies and beliefs that influence our actions (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Vasquez, 2010). Readers need to be able to interrogate their own beliefs as well as the assumptions embedded in texts. Luke and Freebody (1999) posit that the act of engaging in literacy is socially constructed and socially defined (Gee, 1999). Therefore, it is important for

students to analyze texts to see beyond the familiar and examine the relationships of power, privilege, and position in the text. Effective teachers can assist even young learners in deconstructing texts by reading the word as well as the world (Freire, 2000). Thus, literacy can be reconstructed through analysis, discussion, and representation of other perspectives and points of view as it is based on social construction and dependent on different social contexts. Teachers can incorporate a collaborative and critical approach to literacy instruction by engaging students in all levels of the Four Resource Model. Specifically, students can use literature to examine issues of power and micro-politics in their own lives, the context of the classroom, as well as the larger world around them. Readers can disrupt the power relations and reconstruct them to foster social change by considering alternative ways of thinking.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy incorporates Luke and Freebody's Four Resource Model (1990, 1999) and provides a more authentic and culturally relevant approach to literacy instruction. With this approach, students are no longer subjected to a factory model of learning where they are passive recipients of the teacher's predetermined selection of information, knowledge, and correct answers. Ladson-Billings (2009), Haberman (1995), and Wiggan (2008) advocate for a more culturally responsive curriculum, in contrast to a teacher-centered deficit view common in scripted programs and traditional approaches. Critical literacy, as one such approach, encourages students to become active co-creators of the learning process and the knowledge that ensues. In culturally relevant classrooms, "knowledge is constructed, re-constructed, recycled, and shared by teachers and students alike" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 28). Through this framework, students become active

members of the classroom community and contribute as co-constructors of knowledge in a space where their voices are welcomed and valued. By valuing and building on students' knowledge and experiences, students are less alienated from the learning process and begin to have a sense of ownership over their knowledge. The power relationship of the teacher as a figure of authority and holder of knowledge is blurred as students become producers and stakeholders in their own learning process. Furthermore, students begin to recognize that knowledge can be empowering and liberating through the use of critical literacy (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Critical literacy does not follow a step-by-step sequential guide of implementation instructions or a one-size-fits-all approach found in scripted programs. On the contrary, critical literacy is an abstract concept that is dynamic and difficult to define in the sense that there are multiple ways to incorporate critical literacy depending on the socio-cultural context and the setting. Critical literacy is an approach to engage students in deeper reading of text, to move beyond the passive acceptance of the written word and literal levels of meaning (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Reading with a critical stance teaches students to be more active readers, to dig beyond the surface level of the print, and to read between the lines. It does not represent a prescriptive finite set of practices, but instead suggests a framework that engages readers to move beyond decoding and comprehension to challenge text and life as it is known (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2010). VanSluys (2003) describes critical literacy as "the assembly, manipulation and constant renegotiation of practice that encourage(s) people to become active participants that question how the world is and work toward more just images of what it might be" (p. 401). Critical literacy can be viewed as a lens for

increasing students' critical and social consciousness and a way for viewing the world (Vasquez, 2010; Wood, Soares, & Watson, 2006). This suggests that readers need to move beyond the passive acceptance of the printed word at face value and literal levels of meaning to begin to question power relationships and challenge the acceptance of social norms present in the content as well as the construction of the text (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2010). The reader can begin to confront social, political, and cultural issues and promote social change by becoming more active participants as critics in the reading and thinking process.

Critical literacy is rooted in the work of Brazilian educator, Paolo Freire. His seminal work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970, 2000), discusses the inequalities that plague the poor oppressed people of his country of Brazil. Freire suggests that education is political and fails to provide equal opportunities for all people. Therefore, emancipation is needed in order to overcome oppression. According to Freire, the poor become victims of an unjust political system including the institution of education. He posits that the use of critical literacy as a tool to empower the oppressed can lead to liberation. First, the roles of student and teacher need to be redefined to value students as holders of knowledge and encourage students to more actively question the world through authentic dialogue. Secondly, reading is viewed as a complex cognitive process that requires both conscious and unconscious interaction between the reader and the text. Critical literacy provides a social view of reading where students are positioned as critics of the socially constructed relationships and events within the context of the text as well as in their own lives, and in relation to their school setting, home, community and global context. Readers can begin to become empowered and engage in transformation through

praxis by confronting social, political, and cultural issues within text. According to Freire (2000), praxis refers to the "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51). It is this transformation that creates change within the individual as well as the potential to promote social justice in the larger society.

Examining privilege, perspective, and power. The inequities that exist in society can be reflected in written text. One major tenet of critical literacy includes the notion that texts are never neutral (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Vasquez, 2010). Instead, all texts are created from a particular perspective and position the reader to believe certain truths by communicating both explicit and implicit messages that promote ideologies. Therefore, it is essential for readers to examine text with a critical stance to question issues of power and challenge the acceptance of social norms and status quo. Text can be examined to determine what is both included and excluded in the content and message being portrayed. Oftentimes, hidden meanings are implied through text and can simply be accepted if not examined with a critical lens.

Critical literacy transcends conventional ways of reading and writing to include a deeper analysis of literature. Using a critical literacy approach allows students to see beyond the familiar to examine ideological beliefs and perspectives present in text and how it relates to them and the world around them. Critical literacy not only encourages the reader to consider issues of power in text, but it also goes beyond the text as a way of viewing the world in which we live. In critical literacy, readers negotiate, renegotiate, and question continuously. By going beyond the surface level of text, students take on a questioning stance to challenge embedded messages and norms, and understand the purpose of the text to avoid being manipulated by it. Using a critical literacy framework,

the reader engages in an active process of dialogue to challenge the common place, consider multiple perspectives, examine the role of power and sociopolitical issues, and take action for social justice (Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys, 2002). Students begin to make connections to the social and political forces that shape their lives and the world around them when they are taught to question text and examine issues of power relations within the text. Readers can begin to develop a critical and social consciousness through the use of critical literacy (Vasquez, 2010).

Deconstructing text.   Foss (2002) compares the critical literacy process to peeling back the layers of an onion. Deconstruction of text is the first layer in the interpretation of texts and deeper implicit or explicit meanings. According to Jones (2006), "all texts are embedded with multiple meanings and one way to examine some of those meanings is to peel away the layers through the consideration of perspective, power, and positioning" (p. 79). Deconstruction refers to the notion that anything that can be created can be taken apart and examined. By pulling back the layers of meaning as well as hidden messages found in text, students can begin to deconstruct text to question the ideology and study how systems of power impact people's lives (Leland, Harste, Ociepka, Lewison, & Vasquez, 1999; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004).

Students can engage with texts by making connections and situating themselves in a larger socially constructed context (Clark & Whitney, 2009). Connections between students' individual lives and the social nature of text create a space for greater transformation of self and world. Students are able to internalize and personalize issues that are relevant to their lives as well as issues that do not impact them directly by

examining text-to-self and text-to-world connections as well as disconnections with the text.

Through interrogation of the status quo, students can begin to ask whose interests are being served and what role positioning, power, and privilege play both in the construction and context of the text. This deconstruction process often leads to in-depth conversations of similarities and differences with peers. Furthermore, dialogue includes multiple voices that can expand the view of a single dominant perspective. Critical discussion plays a valuable role in the process of deconstruction of texts to explore issues of privilege, perspective and power that can help students deepen their understanding of the meaning of the text and its implications for life as they know it. Through the deconstruction of text, readers can begin to uncover layers of power relations and inequities, and examine how this can be mirrored in society as well as in their own lives (Jones, 2006; Vasquez, 2010).

Privilege. First, readers must begin by problematizing the content of the text to examine how language shapes identity, ideology, and a view of the world. Oftentimes, authors construct text typifying the ideology of mainstream society with little consideration of the plight of marginalized 'others.' Reading is a political act that can either maintain or challenge the status quo (Comber & Simpson, 2001). Without a critical lens, children may unknowingly embrace the dominant ideology, thus perpetuating a system of inequity. Therefore, it is essential that students challenge their own assumptions and values as well as those present in the text. Students can begin to question the dominant ideology of text by disrupting the norms rendered as commonplace. It is necessary for readers to recognize how the dominant view influences

them as readers to consume a particular message or idea. Critical readers can either adopt

or reject the texts based on how the ideas align with their own worldviews (McDaniel,

2004). Readers can challenge the status quo by posing questions such as: Whose story is

this? Who benefits from this story? Why are things the way they are? The reader can

choose to support or disrupt the status quo in texts as well as in the larger social context

by interrogating the way things are presented.

Perspective. Secondly, the use of a critical literacy framework provides a lens to

disrupt the commonplace by exploring it from multiple perspectives (McLaughlin &

DeVoogd, 2004). This principle demonstrates the value of acknowledging alternative

points of view for issues addressed in the text. When the reader examines the voices

heard and omitted from the text, an awareness of the power the author holds by

determining who or what gets included and excluded from the text is developed. Sample

questions to examine perspective in text consist of: Whose voices are included in the

text? Whose voices are silenced or marginalized by the text? Who gains from reading this

text? Who loses as a result of reading this text? What would an alternative text say? This

principle encourages readers to consider how text may be changed based on different

perspectives. Underrepresented or omitted voices that are ignored by the author can be

addressed by the reader (McLaughlin, 2001). By examining different points of view,

students will develop a sense of empathy and a deeper understanding of others. As Jones

(2006) suggests, "the more perspective we are able to see and understand, the more likely

we will resist age-old stereotypes used to judge people, and the more likely we will

recognize when we, as readers of texts, are being influenced to take on perspectives that

do not align with our goals of social justice" (p.80).

Power. Lastly, the role of the power that is embedded within texts is demonstrated by the omission of voices of the marginalized or oppressed groups. Language is socially constructed and can either empower or disenfranchise certain groups. Therefore, it is imperative that students read between the lines of the text to scrutinize how the sociopolitical issues, language, and power intertwine together. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) posit that "critical literacy helps us to move beyond… passive acceptance and take an active role in the reader-author relationship by questioning such issues as who wrote the text, what the author wanted us to believe, and what information the author chose to include or exclude from the text" (p. 6). Critical literacy encourages readers to ask questions such as: What role does power play in this text? What are the author's intentions? What does the author want me to think? When students use a critical lens to question text and life as they know it, they develop an awareness of the inequities, stereotypes, and oppression that exist. By problematizing texts to examine and expose power relationships that are explicitly or implicitly present, the reader seeks to understand the complexity of the problem of domination and oppression (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Jones (2006) contends, "challenging power that is intentionally used to dominate, then, is crucial in protecting the rights of individual and groups of human beings" (p. 83). The legitimization of power relationships must be challenged for oppressed groups to participate in society through consciousness and transformation. In addition to examining the power relationships in text, critical literacy aims to position the reader with a sense of power to reflect on issues of importance and to take action to alleviate injustices and unfair practices. While power plays a significant role in the creation of oppression, it also plays a role in the transformation process to resist

domination. Students can become more aware of power relationships in their lives and the world around them by examining power relationships in literature. This helps them develop agency to confront the inequities and promote social change.

Reconstructing text. The movement beyond decoding, comprehending, and critiquing is necessary to actively participate in a democracy and promote social action. Issues related to privilege and power in the classroom as well as in the community and global context can be reexamined and reconstructed to represent a new perspective and portray a more equitable way of thinking and viewing the world. According to Jones (2006), "reconstructing identities of people who have been marginalized and devalued over the course of time is crucial in the work of critical literacy" (p. 77). Given multiple opportunities to engage in discussion and deconstruction of text, students can begin to reconstruct the text to tell the story of the voices who were left out. Students can include the voices of the marginalized 'other' by reconstructing text through different perspective.

When space is considered for both mainstream as well as marginalized perspectives the silencing of the 'others' can be broken and a more accurate account can be portrayed through their voices. Oppressed groups can be liberated by exposing issues of inequities and retelling the story of the 'others' from multiple perspectives. "When our students are among disenfranchised groups, they need urgently to be able to tell their story, because it is those stories, as much as it is high rhetoric or programmatic proposals, that will provoke change" (Bomer & Bomer, 2001, p. 5). The inclusion of various perspectives helps us consider multiple points of view and avoid stereotypes. When reconstructing texts, it is helpful to ask questions such as: What would an alternative text

say? What role can I play to make changes for a better, more just world? How can readers use this information to promote equity?

Freire advocates that by reading the word, we can also read the world because reading is a political act (1970, 2000). However, critical literacy surpasses just reading the word and the world. It involves writing the word and rewriting the world by developing a sense of agency and acting against social injustices (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Writing can be an effective means of reconstructing text. Writing is a way to speak out and allow one's voice to be heard by actively participating in the democratic process. A few ways that text can be reconstructed to take action beyond deconstruction and discussion include the use of journals, diary entries, interviews, letter writing, social narratives and rewriting familiar stories from alternative perspectives. Active involvement, achieved by writing for real purposes and authentic audiences, can be more meaningful for students as they become passionate about key topics of relevance to them and society at large.

Heffernan and Lewison (2003) describe the use of Luke and Freebody's Four Resource Model of reading (1990, 1999) in the writing workshop setting where third grade students reconstruct salient social issues by writing social narratives. The creation of social narratives demonstrates the call to attention of the issues students face in their daily lives at school. Heffernan and Lewison found that when students created narratives based on classroom discussions of social issues that came about after reading a variety of children's literature, many of the students wrote about the issue of bullying. This was a relevant and important issue that needed to be addressed and the author's were able to do so through the use of collaborative literacy and critical writing workshop.

Using social narratives, students can oppose and criticize the world of school to reveal the flaws of the institutional system. Writing workshop becomes a vehicle to analyze and reconstruct the social worlds of students and describe the silencing of certain individuals. By writing for an authentic audience, students write with purpose to encourage people to think and advocate change. Writing is a form of praxis to foster social transformation and change. The foundational framework of deconstruction and reconstruction of texts are the building blocks that lead to social justice. Furthermore, Bomer and Bomer (2004) advocate for the inclusion of writing for social justice in the curriculum for students to better understand themselves and the world around them. Rather than reducing literacy to discrete, meaningless skills, critical literacy can become the praxis to begin the work to promote social change for a better world (Bomer, 2004).

Fostering social action. Critical literacy can empower students to make changes for social justice. Literature can be used as a springboard to build awareness and examine complex social issues in text as well as those in everyday life. However, it is not simply enough to read and discuss topics of importance. Students must learn to take social action in response to these issues. Teachers can foster a more equitable classroom and encourage students to take a more active role in the promotion of teamwork, fairness, and social justice by teaching students how to deconstruct and reconstruct texts to examine stereotypes and issues of power, privilege, and perspective. Students can develop a habit of speaking and writing about topics they care about when this type of democratic setting is fostered in the classroom (Bomer & Bomer, 2001).

Students can position themselves to advocate for social change by widening the exploration to move beyond the text to see themselves and others in a larger world

context. A key aspect of critical literacy is the praxis through reflection and action on the world to transform it (Freire, 2000). According to Bomer and Bomer, teaching students to habitually reflect about social and political problems and possibilities lies at the heart of critical literacy (2001). Critical literacy fosters a sense of understanding of diverse cultures and the marginalization of 'others.' Students begin to have a deeper understanding of self and others, appreciate diversity, and take part in social action projects by analyzing and questioning the use of language and text as a form of domination. Students can take a more active role to engage in and promote social justice in the world outside of the four walls of their school building by joining with local communities of people and organizations focused on similar interests. The use of critical literacy promotes social learning by encouraging students to be active citizens and work towards social change. Furthermore, in an increasingly digital age, the use of technology allows students to deepen their understanding and broaden their audience and connections with the community at large.

Digital Literacy in the Twenty-First Century

In a twenty-first century world, technology is increasingly becoming a central part of our everyday lives (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2004). Specifically, the wide use of the Internet for literacy and learning has increased tremendously (Friedman, 2005; International Reading Association, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2004). The International Reading Association's position statement on twenty-first century literacy suggests that literacy instruction should foster critical and culturally sensitive thinking into both print and digital practices (2009). In 2004, 75% of U.S. households had Internet access, with three out of four Americans having access to the Internet (Nielson/Net

Ratings, 2004). According to Leu et al. (2009), most of the world will be online in approximately ten to fifteen years. In the United States, 93% of children aged 12-17 report using the Internet, with approximately 11 million doing so each day (Jones & Fox, 2009). Not surprisingly, even young children engage in Internet use. According to a report conducted by The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop, 80% of children under age 5 use the Internet on a weekly basis (Gutnick, Robb, Takeuchi, & Kotler, 2011).

It is common for children of all ages to regularly and naturally engage in the use of technology. Children growing up in the new millennium can be described as digital natives (Prensky, 2000). The term digital natives refer to the new generation of learners who are the first to grow up in the digital age. These children are naturally familiar with technology as a way to communicate, create, and share information with a broader, global audience. Digital natives have the natural ability to navigate and use technology without assistance, as a result of increased exposure to technology as a constant part of their lives.

With the increase of technology and the use of the Internet in homes and in the labor force, there is a clear need to incorporate the use of the Internet in classrooms as well (Leu, 2000). Consequently, a shift to increase technology in schools can be observed. In 2005, 93% of K-12 classrooms in the United States had Internet access in comparison with only 35% in 1994 (Wells & Lewis, 2006). With the constantly developing landscape of the digital age, it is imperative that educators bridge students' out-of-school literacy practices with their in-school literacies. It is essential to consider the role of technology in daily lifestyles as well as in the increasingly technological job market to prepare students for a rapidly changing digital age. The explosion of the

Internet as a commonly used tool brings about new demands that require new ways of thinking. The constantly evolving technology, such as the Internet, requires an expanded redefinition of literacy (Leu, 2000). Lankshear & Knobel (2007) define literacy as ways of generating, communicating, and negotiating meaning through texts in social contexts of Discourse participation. Discourse, according to Gee (1990, 1996, 1999), includes ways of acting, thinking, feeling, speaking, reading, and writing.

Children need to be prepared to read, write, and communicate in new ways beyond the twentieth century traditions and definitions of what it means to be literate. Literacy is no longer a linear process where students encode, decode comprehend, and construct conventional linear print text and progress through a series of skills with the teacher, at the center of instruction, as the dispenser of knowledge (Freire, 2000). This narrow definition of literacy that expects students to master a set of basic literacy skills can no longer be viewed as the corpus of pedagogy. Instead, the traditional compartmentalized view of teaching literacy is transcended by a multimodal and discursive process that engages the learner at the center of the meaning making process through social practice.

Classroom instruction and literacy learning has been influenced by the significant shift in the nature of technology within and outside of the classroom in the past decade. "To become fully literate in today's world, students must become proficient in the new literacies of 21st century technologies. As a result, literacy educators have a responsibility to effectively integrate these new technologies into the curriculum, preparing students for the literacy future they deserve" (International Reading Association, 2009). The Internet is a vital component of literacy in the 21st century (International Reading Association,

2002). Thus, the way we prepare students to become literacy learners is shifting in step with the changing nature of reading, writing, and communicating as a result of the influx of technology and the use of the Internet.

Students must be prepared for new literacies to be fully literate. The new literacies refer to a movement away from more traditional print literacies to interactive and socially constructed literacies. The New London Group (1996) coined the term multiliteracies to refer to technologies such as informational and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital technology that shape the way we communicate. The use of multiliteracies has come about mainly for two reasons. First, the rapid change in literacy can be associated with the "flattening of the world" (Friedman, 2005) as a result of globalization. Secondly, the vast increase in technology and multimedia created a need for a variety of multimodal texts. Meaning can be constructed in numerous ways within specific social settings through the use of multimodal literacy. All forms of expression and communication including print, oral language, visual images and video, auditory, and theater are considered relevant modes of meaning making. The incorporation of multimodal literacy creates a connection to the way people live their daily lives and their out-of-school literacies (Gee, 1996; New London Group, 1996).

It is necessary to reexamine what it means to read and write in a digital age to help students prepare for their future. Castek, Hartman, Leu, Coiro, Henry, & Zawilinski(2007) posit that "one-sixth of the world's population is now reading and writing online, redefining what it means to be literate in an online world" (p. 34). The digital revolution has shifted the traditional definitions of literacy beyond reading the black text on the white page. Reading and writing across new digital terrain involves an

expansion related to the advancement of technology, resulting in more multitasking and the use of multimodal texts. According to Leu, "in this new world, what becomes critical to our students' literacy futures is the ability to identify important problems, gather and critically evaluate relevant information from information networks, use this information to resolve central issues, and then clearly communicate the solution to others" (2002, p. 466). Students are now required to engage in higher level thinking and critical thinking beyond the traditional decoding and encoding linear process of literacy. They must be collaborative, creative, and able to communicate and problem solve effectively.

Web 2.0 applications. It is crucial to integrate the new literacies in education to meet the needs of the twenty-first century learner. According to Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack (2004), the ways in which we read, write, obtain and evaluate information, and communicate are ever changing. The recognition and awareness that the world has changed as a result of technology allows teachers to engage students in digital literacy practices that are more parallel to their lives outside of school. The definition of digital literacy is continuously changing due to the nature of the ever-developing digital world. Thus, digital literacy involves the incorporation of new tools and interactions in the process of constructing and creating meaning. Digital literacy is a non-linear process that involves interaction with a variety of sources. New possibilities through digital literacy allow for new patterns of authorship and publishing as well as the reproduction and dissemination of information (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2007). Therefore, an expanded definition of literacy is crucial to include production, reception, and interpretation of text.

As access to and use of the Internet observably increase, Web 2.0 applications can be valuable tools for the construction and interpretation of mulitliteracies. Web 2.0 applications such as wikis, blogs, social networking websites, podcasts, and Voicethreads, are increasingly becoming prominent in society as well as in educational settings. Web 2.0 allows users to upload, create, and build content and information on the Web (Knobel & Wilber, 2009). Furthermore, this type of 2.0 Internet based software allows for multi-way communication, contribution, and collaboration. The creation of a social space for people to interact, share, and collaborate "to harness their collective intelligence" (O'Reilly, 2005) is a major aspect of Web 2.0 applications. This type of technology is increasingly popular both in and out of the school environment. An increase in the use of Web 2.0 applications can be observed in schools as a way to connect students' home literacies to school literacies. Online collaborative communities such as www.edublog.com, www.pbworks.com, and www.voicethread.com have become part of some educational settings.

In traditional educational settings, it is rare for students to have opportunities to communicate to wider audiences beyond the classroom (Merchant, 2005). The use of Web 2.0 applications can change this. Web 2.0 offers opportunities for student centered learning and provides a platform for students to communicate, express their ideas, and share their understanding. This social and collaborative space allows students to become both active consumers and producers of literacy. Web 2.0 tools allow writers to publish information, share with a larger and more public audience, obtain feedback, and participate in discussion and collaboration. Students' work can be read and commented on by a larger audience than in a traditional classroom environment. With Web 2.0,

authorship reaches wider domains and increases the potential for partnership and creativity. It is necessary for students to be given opportunities to read and write for authentic purposes. Web 2.0 provides a space where students can write for a larger audience for a variety of purposes. They can write to inform, communicate, or entertain. In this study, students utilized Web 2.0 applications as a publishing space for their writing for social justice projects. Students may publish social narratives, information about a particular cause or issue, or even persuade the reader to take action for social justice through their writing. Additionally, Web 2.0 applications create a rich and engaging learning environment where students have the opportunity to interact with an authentic audience and obtain feedback and response from their peers as well as readers outside of the classroom.

The use of Web 2.0 applications allows students to express their ideas and understanding in familiar ways. Digital storytelling remains true to the writing process approach, but combines multiple modes of literacy including reading, writing, listening, speaking, visual representation, and digital production into a coherent narrative. Multimedia texts can be composed using a variety of modes of communication including word processing, videos, images, and voiceovers. According to Solomon and Schrum (2007), a shift to Web 2.0 tools can have a profound effect on learning and thinking.

Voicethread. A Voicethread (www.voicethread.com) is one type of Web 2.0 technology that can easily be implemented in the classroom. Voicethreads are interactive web-based learning tools that have the potential to boost students' learning skills, promote student engagement, and enhance their motivation (Brunvand & Byrd, 2011). This multimedia slideshow tool allows the user to interact with a variety of texts

including images, videos, pdf files, word documents, and Powerpoint to express ideas, share information, and communicate in an online community. Students can participate in the creation of online and offline content around an endless possibilities of topics. "A VoiceThread allows every student in a class to record audio commentary about the ideas and experiences that are important to them. Whether an event, a project, or a milestone, children can tell their story in their own voice, and then share it with the world" (www.voicethread.com). This collaborative learning space allows the user to share ideas with a wider audience and also facilitate a discussion or obtain feedback by allowing others to share their responses, making it an interactive discussion tool.

The composition of digital texts enhances collaboration and includes multiple voices. The ease of sharing allows students to upload their work on the web for a wider audience beyond their peers, allowing them to obtain more extensive feedback. Students can receive feedback and comments from an extended audience using Voicethreads. A myriad of options are available for students to receive feedback. For example, a range of commenting options including verbal comments recorded as audio or video files or written comments typed within each slide. There is also a doodle feature which allows the user to highlight specific aspects of the published content or comments. The feedback option allows for a fresh perspective, challenges students' thinking, and develops a deeper understanding of the information being presented (Rodesiler, 2010).

There are numerous benefits to using Voicethread in the classroom. First, the flexibility and possibilities with Voicethread allows students at all levels to participate. Those students who are not yet writing can still compose and comment orally and through the use of visual images. Secondly, this Web 2.0 application can be used in a

whole group setting, a small group, or individually for a wide range of purposes and audiences. It allows for active participation in both the output and input and the collaborative development of knowledge. Students are motivated to engage in the construction of high quality work with an authentic audience (Smith & Dobson, 2009). Importantly, Voicethread allows the teacher to moderate the comments to ensure appropriateness. Additionally, Voicethread can be customized, providing privacy options to allow or restrict the ability to comment by all users or invited guests only.

Voicethreads are an innovative way to include the voices of students in the learning process and create an opportunity for students to enhance their reading and writing skills. Little research in the area of Web 2.0 technology has been conducted with young learners (Marsh, 2004). Much of the research with emergent learners has been limited to the study of print literacy. Multiliteracies and digital literacy become more universal practices for young children as technology continues to change the dynamics of literacy. Less extensive research has been conducted on emergent literacy practices, technology, and multimodal ways of creating meaning (Kress, 1997). Therefore, this study contributes to the corpus of research in the area of digital literacy with young learners. Specifically, this study examined how first graders use Internet spaces such as Voicethreads, to engage in digital collaborative literacy practices specifically writing to advocate for social justice.

Digital collaborative literacy. The use of digital collaborative literacy (Kissel, Hathaway, & Wood, 2010) shows how the collaborative literacy framework can be expanded by incorporating shared online writing spaces. "Digital collaborative literacy [is] a thematically-based approach for applying the book club concept in an age of

increasing use of digital sources of information and learning" (Kissel, Hathaway, & Wood, 2010, p. 63). The authors suggest the use of online book clubs as a digital setting for discussion of literature while motivating students and enhancing their digital experiences. Students can extend their thinking and learning beyond their individual interaction with the text through collaborative written discussions and postings in an online space by using a Wiki, a Web 2.0 application. A Wiki provides students with an online collaborative space where they can upload information pertaining to the text read such as a summary, personal responses and reactions to the text, as well as life lessons learned from the literature. This online forum allows students to generate writing collectively and collaboratively contribute to conversations about the commonly read text. As a result, students will enhance their understanding and probe further thinking related to the online discussion as well as the world around them. "While digital collaborative literacy should ideally begin with texts that encourage students to think about cooperation, we believe it opens spaces to address additional these with larger societal connections, such as homelessness, poverty, "fitting in," individuality, overcoming adversity, racism, oppression, risk-taking, courage, perseverance, and tolerance" (Kissel, Hathaway, Wood, 2010, p. 63).

Summary

Scripted curriculum and testing overemphasize basic skills and rote practice, leaving little room for the development of critical thinking skills and engagement in deep learning. As a result, students are ill-equipped for careers requiring critical thinking and social reproduction persists. In a world constructed around socially-created norms by only the dominant perspective, marginalized groups continue to be oppressed through

barriers, even at the school level. "Children cannot think about, much less write for, social action in a classroom that is rule-bound, teacher-centered, and test-driven, with no room for them to follow their own interests and desires" (Bomer & Bomer, 2001, p. 99). Students will develop the higher level, critical thinking skills, as well as communication skills needed to collaborate, question, and overcome the social injustices that surround them by engaging them in an alternative approach to scripted instruction focused on collaborative and critical literacy. Furthermore, students become more active and caring citizens by examining social issues such as cooperation, acceptance, and fairness through a collaborative and critical approach to literacy.

This pedagogical approach engages students with questioning practices that examine social issues, the reasons for their existence, and possible solutions. Functional approaches to literacy instruction require students to fill in the blank or determine the correct answer. In contrast, critical literacy encourages students to challenge the notion of one answer or one voice as being dominant. This concept is paramount since the dominant perspective of the teacher and ideology is often included while marginalized voices of students continue to be omitted and oppressed. Students work together to investigate multiple perspectives and develop a critical awareness of the silencing and oppression of marginalized groups when collaborative and critical literacy is incorporated in the classroom. In an effort to create a better world, students learn to take action against oppression and promote social justice using writing in digital spaces to accomplish such efforts.

Student-centered teaching practices, such as the use of collaborative and critical literacy, can better meet the needs of students and promote active participation in

democracy by teaching students to challenge the status quo and build an awareness of power and privilege in texts as well as in the world around them. This awareness can lead to a deeper understanding of the societal inequities that continue to permeate the four walls of the classroom as well as life in the local and global community. All children can strive to work together and create a more harmonious existence with a culturally-relevant curriculum that employs the use of collaborative and critical literacy to foster a deeper understanding of social issues.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter includes descriptions of the research design, procedures employed, and limitations of qualitative methodology. The goal of qualitative research is to offer a holistic and in-depth analysis and description of data beyond statistical figures and numbers typical in quantitative data. A qualitative research design provides a way to explore and understand development of a group towards a social situation or phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). I employed a qualitative research design for this study to understand how students enhanced their understanding of social issues through collaborative discussion of children's literature, critical literacy, and writing to advocate for social justice. Using a qualitative research design lends itself to the complexities of the situation (Creswell, 2009). This methodology allowed me to examine complex data about the thinking, conversations, and writing first graders engaged in when reading children's literature with themes related to social issues. To understand this phenomenon, I sought answers to the following questions: (1) In what ways does the teacher incorporate collaborative and critical literacy approaches in her classroom? (2) What happens when first graders engage in collaborative and critical literacy? (3) In what ways do students use digital writing to advocate for issues of social justice? (4) In what ways does the use of a collaborative literacy approach affect students' view of collaboration both in and out of the classroom?

The qualitative research process is inductive (Patton, 1990) in that the researcher explores data to discover understanding. This study used interpretive methods to describe, explore, and explain a given phenomenon. A natural setting is used in qualitative research as the source of data to study "real world situation as they unfold naturally" (Patton, 1990, p. 40). This method was appropriate for this study because the goal was to understand what happens when students engage in critical reading and collaborative discussion of social issues using children's literature as a springboard. The classroom setting is an example of a natural setting where the researcher becomes an instrument of data collection (Creswell, 1998). I collected data in a first grade classroom to study the collaborative and critical conversations and writing about social issues. I sought a holistic understanding of an event or situation through the collection of thick, rich description using multiple data sources (Yin, 2009). I used multiple sources of data in this study including interviews, observation, field notes, and classroom artifacts.

I employed a case study design to understand the collaborative and critical discussions and writing of first graders. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I describe the study's research methods and discuss the following components: rationale for the research approach, role of the researcher, description of research context, methods of data collection, data analysis process, and trustworthiness. I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of this study's research methodology.

<center>Case Study Design</center>

The use of a case study research provides an in-depth description of a case, phenomenon, setting, or topic to develop a deeper understanding. A case study is often used "for its uniqueness for what it can reveal about a phenomenon, knowledge we would

not otherwise have access to" (Merriam, 1998, p. 33). In this study, a case study design was used to explore how one first grade class engaged in collaborative literacy, critical literacy, and writing for social justice. Dyson & Genishi (2005) suggest that the goal of case study research is to explain a phenomenon socially enacted within a case. They argue that the social situation contributes to the meaning construction process. Thus, meaning develops from the social practices of the classroom. In this study, meaning developed from the social interaction of first graders and their teacher in both whole group and small group discussions of social themes present in a variety of children's literature as well as through the negotiation of collaborative writing projects.

Case study research seeks to describe, explain, and explore individual or complex situations in real-life natural contexts (Yin, 2009). A major characteristic of case study research involves collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular group or a bounded system of analysis (Stake, 2000). In the field of education, a bounded system could be a classroom, a school, a school district, or even a small group. A bounded system is determined based on inclusion and exclusion of certain criteria and is focused on a particular phenomenon. For this case study, one first grade classroom was studied as a bounded system focused on the phenomenon of the collaborative and critical discussion of social issues present in text and the lives of students and the world around them. As a case study researcher, I was concerned with how teachers and children engage in the world around them (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). For this study, I used a case study to understand the meanings students created from critical and collaborative discussion of social justice issues using children's literature as a springboard.

I chose a case study methodology with an emphasis on qualitative data collection and analysis methods to gain insight into this phenomenon. Case study research involves a detailed analysis through the use of multiple data sources while investigating a social phenomenon within a real-life context (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2009). This study provided highly detailed thick, rich description of the class and the phenomenon being studied.

Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and have three main criteria (Merriam, 1998): 1.) they represent a specific case, 2.) provide thick, rich description, and 3.) help the reader develop a deeper understanding. This study represents a case study of a first grade classroom where students and their teacher engaged in reading, discussion, and writing about social issues present in children's literature, their own lives, as well as situations in school, home, and the world around them. I provided rich description of the events to help the reader have a better understanding of what happens when first graders engage in collaborative and critical discussions and writing about social issues through the collection of recorded observations of discussions, interviews, and student writing samples. Stake (1995) describes three types of case studies including intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case studies. Intrinsic case studies provide information and description about a specific case and go beyond the surface level. Instrumental case studies use the case to provide information about other situations. Collective case studies examine multiple cases to provide broad generalizations. I used an intrinsic case study approach as the primary means for reporting qualitative research due to the descriptive nature of a single and specific case. Since this study examined what

happens in one first grade classroom and was not be used to make comparisons with other contexts, intrinsic case study design is most appropriate.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary investigator and is at the heart of the data collection and analysis process (Patton, 1990). Consequently, I became an insider within the group being studied. For my research study, I became an insider in Judy's classroom due to the extensive time spent in her class over the last school year. I joined a teacher research group under the direction of Dr. Brian Kissel, the university affiliate during the fall of 2010. Monthly meetings consisted of sharing one page written reflections and discussions of classroom level research in the area of writing. Topics ranged from the use of daybooks, to portfolios, reflection, and digital forms of writing. I joined Judy (all names are pseudonyms), a kindergarten teacher at the time, to explore the use of daybooks throughout the writing process with her kindergarten students. Judy moved with her students from kindergarten to first grade for the 2011-2012 school year. I gained access as an insider and developed working relationships with Judy and the teacher assistant by spending time in Judy's classroom each week during their kindergarten school year. Furthermore, I developed rapport and enhanced the level of trust with Judy and her students.

For this study, I chose a site based on accessibility, where activities occur frequently, and where I had the ability to remain unobtrusive (Spradley, 1980). As a participant in the classroom, I was immersed in the social and cultural setting of the classroom. As an observer and participant, I took detailed notes. My role as a participant observer changed depending on the nature of the research study, but my primary stance

was that of *observer as participant* (Glesne, 2006). As a participant observer, I experienced some interaction with participants while the classroom teacher conducted lessons and facilitated discussions of literature. I was present to collect data such as observations, interviews, and field notes, but did not directly teach Judy's class and participated minimally in the classroom discussions. While my stance as a *participant as observer* can impede my ability to remain an outsider, the benefit is that I was able to obtain deeper insight and information by engaging with the participants (Glesne, 2006).

Being an insider provided me with a deeper understanding of the classroom community and overall climate and allowed me to build rapport with the participants. As a result, I built a close relationship with the participants which have resulted in personal bias. It is important for me as the researcher to acknowledge this bias throughout the research process (Merriam, 1998). Admitting bias is a unique characteristic to qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). It is therefore necessary for the researcher to be highly reflexive to account for these potential threats to validity. It is important to take note of how these experiences influence the research process since our personal and professional experiences inform our research (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). I wrote ongoing memos and notes to record my thinking throughout the data collection and analysis process Through the use of research journals.

<div align="center">Research Context</div>

Description of Setting

This study took place at Smith Road Community School (a pseudonym), a public charter school located in a suburban area outside of a large southeastern city in the United States. This school serves kindergarten through tenth grade and will expand at a rate of

one grade per year through twelfth grade. The estimated overall enrollment is 1,042 for

the 2011-2012 school year. The school demographics include 28.63% of students

classified as Exceptional Children (EC), 1% self-contained EC, and 1% Limited English

Proficiency (LEP). 3.71% of students at Smith Road Community School receive free or

reduced lunch. The students at Smith Road Community School (pseudonym) represent

88.68% White, 3.84% African American, 4.32% Multiracial, 1.58% Asian, 1.34%

Hispanic, and 0.29% American Indian.

     This research site was chosen for a variety of reasons. First, the school was

selected based on convenience. Gaining entry was accomplished through my previous

work as part of a teacher research group at the school during the 2010-2011 school year.

Dr. Brian Kissel, a co-chair for my dissertation committee first told me of his

involvement at the school and invited me to participate in the teacher research group he

organized and facilitates. Through this group, I had the opportunity to work in Judy's

kindergarten class to study and learn about the use of daybooks with kindergarteners.

Judy will loop with her students for the 2011-2012 school year and kept her kindergarten

students for first grade. I was able to become an insider, develop relationships with the

teacher, the teacher's assistant, as well as the students since I worked with Judy and her

students the previous year. During my time spent at the school, I discussed my intended

research goals and implementation procedures with the teacher and gained principal

permission to conduct the study. Informal emails were shared with the director to keep

her abreast of my work at her school. Also, letters were sent home to parents in

September to obtain consent and inform families about the purpose of the study and the

overall process. I was able to build rapport, enhance Judy's comfort with the research

process, and develop my status as an insider through ongoing conversations and my presence in the classroom.

I kept a self-reflective journal throughout the research process to continuously record reflective and analytic notes. By doing so, I recorded initial thoughts, impressions, speculations and plans for upcoming field work (Glesne, 2006). I used a reflexivity journal as an additional source of triangulation to help me answer my research questions.

Description of Participants

I intentionally selected participants to deepen my understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2002). I was able to select a case that provided rich insight into the phenomenon being studied through the use of purposive sampling (Patton, 1990). According to Patton, "the logic and power of purposive sampling… leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research…" (2002, p. 46). I chose participants based on the purpose of my study, access, and ability to engage in the study without limitations or restraints. I chose the participants since they were already familiar with me from previous work in their class. I believe that this made it easier for me to gain access to students. Since the participants already knew me, they felt more comfortable during observations and interviews and opened up more to share their thinking. I also chose the participants since I was familiar with the teacher's philosophy and teaching style and thought that she would be interested in participating in the study without any conflicting beliefs.

Judy's class was selected based on the ability to study the participants in depth to gain a deeper understanding. I was able to describe the collective understanding of the

students and develop insight into this particular case focusing on one classroom, as opposed to a broad spectrum of classrooms. The participants in this study consisted of the classroom teacher, the teacher assistant, and the students in Judy's classroom ranging in age from five to seven years old. Of the twenty students, eleven were boys and nine were girls. Seventeen students were white, two were Hispanic, and one was American Indian. Three students were English Language Learners (ELL), however one of these students did not qualify to receive services for English as a Second Language (ESL). Students represented a range of reading and writing abilities. All participants including the teacher, the teacher assistant, and the students were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

This study took place over six to eight weeks in Judy's first grade classroom during the months of October and November in the fall of 2011. Students engaged in critical reading and collaborative discussion of thematically based literature through the use of interactive read alouds and small group discussions. Interactive read alouds allowed the teacher to facilitate discussion of social justice issues through questioning and building a classroom community where students felt safe to participate in whole class collaborative conversations. The teacher engaged students in discussions around the themes of working together, teamwork, perseverance, acceptance, and fairness using literature as a springboard. In both whole group discussions, as well as small group discussions, students were encouraged to make connections to their own lives, their experiences at school, home, and the world around them. Students chose topics they felt passionate about and advocated for these issues using digital collaborative writing using the literature and collaborative conversations as a springboard. Considering authentic purposes and audiences, students engaged in writing using their own processes and

published their writing in digital spaces. Their final drafts were published using

Voicethread (www.voicethread.com), a public online space to give students a voice to

reach a wider audience and obtain response to their writing.

After approval from the International Review Board (IRB), I sent home consent

letters in September along with assent forms to describe the research study to parents.

Parents were directed to sign and provide permission for their children to participate in

the study.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

I used a variety of methods for data collection consistent with a qualitative study

methodology. These methods included the combination of observations, interviews (see

Appendix G, H, and I), field notes, and collection of classroom documents, such as

student written connection responses to literature (see Appendix E), book club discussion

exit slips (see Appendix F), and student writing samples. I was able to examine what

happens when first graders discuss social issues as they relate to their reading, their lives,

and situations at school, at home and in the world around them by observing whole group

and small group discussions. The use of observations was at the heart of data collection.

Observations of discussions and student interaction allowed me to capture the nuances of

social interaction. I used semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insight into students'

thinking and experience with discussion of social issues using literature as a springboard.

I collected daily field notes to refer to during the transcription process. Additionally, I

used a reflexivity journal to clarify my understanding and interpretation of data

collection. I collected multiple forms of data to provide thick, rich description of the

critical and collaborative discussions of social themes in children's literature as well as

children's writing to advocate for social justice. Furthermore, the use of multiple sources of data increased the trustworthiness of data. The triangulation of multiple data methods involved relating the various sources of data to each other and reducing the chance for threats to validity.

I began data collection in the fall of 2011 over the months of October and November for six weeks. The research study occurred in three phases: before, during, and after the implementation of the digital collaborative and critical literacy unit on social justice (see Appendix B). Phase I occurred before the implementation of the study and included the planning of the research timeline and the instructional framework. Much of the data collection was done during the actual implementation of the study during phase II as well as at the conclusion of the study in phase III.

Phase I: Planning. Phase I of the study occurred in August when I met with the teacher to discuss the purpose of the study as well as implementation procedures. Prior to implementing the digital collaborative and critical literacy unit in Judy's first grade class, I met with her to develop a research timeline (see Appendix C), an instructional framework (see Appendix D), and brainstorm appropriate children's literature to read and discuss during the research study. I developed a research timeline (see Appendix C) and shared it with the teacher to provide her with a broad overview of the research process and procedures. The instructional framework (see Appendix D) provided the teacher with an overview of instructional practices to implement during the research study. For example, the instructional framework included a list of questions the teacher could use to engage students in collaborative and critical discussion of text, a template of a language chart that can be used to summarize key concepts of each text after it is read, and

suggestions for student written response and evaluation for book club discussion. The instructional framework also provided an overview of how to get students engaged in writing to advocate for social justice after the in depth study and discussion of literature. During phase I, I also met with the teacher to determine the date and time for initial teacher and student interviews.

Phase II: Data Collection. Phase II began after IRB approval. During this phase, I used a variety of data collection methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the research questions and explore a variety of perspectives. I created an in-depth case study of Judy's classroom through the use of ongoing observations and interviews. I conducted observations during whole group discussion of read alouds and small group literature discussions. Conversations using literature as a springboard critically examined deeper social issues within children's literature, the children's lives, the school context, and their community and larger world in which they live.

I collected field notes during the observations. The conversations were audio taped and transcribed daily. I used a digital audio recorder to provide a record of the discussions aiding in deeper analysis during the interpretation process. After transcribing the data, I wrote analytic memos noting the themes that emerged on a weekly basis. Field based observations occurred over a six week period. I scheduled the observations in order to attend whole group and small group discussions a minimum of three times per week.

During whole group literacy, I sat on the carpet with the students and recorded their conversations with an audio recording device. I noted students' names and topics discussed in my field notes to reference during transcription. Each day I recorded the events and discussions in Judy's class as I observed them. After whole group literacy,

students participated in small group book club discussions. I observed these small reading groups and used an audio recording device to record the discussions. I also collected field notes to provide additional description of the events. Students' names and the topic of discussion were noted. Field notes of the small group discussion were referenced during the transcription process.

As a participant observer, it is important to consciously observe and collect field notes pertaining to the setting, participants, and events from the onset of the study. Written field notes were collected in conjunction with observational data (Merriam, 1998). I collected field notes in a field journal to highlight key events during the observations, make analytical notes, and engage in reflection. Spradley (1980) suggests the use of research journals to record experiences, ideas, problems, and personal reflections from field work. Research journals can be used to documents sources, plan, and record comments, thoughts, or interpretations (Merriam, 1998). According to Yin (2009), field note protocol involves description of setting, context, participants and documentation of interactions. I used field notes to gather more in-depth information and make meaning from my observations. Field notes should consist of factual information. The collection of field notes allowed me to capture short quotes and snippets of key information gleaned from participants' comments and reactions as well as the main context of the discussion. I collected field notes to describe the classroom setting, participant discussions and classroom activities (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). I also recorded my own reactions to observations and interviews in the margins. At the end of each day, I used the research journal to combine my field notes with my initial analysis.

In addition to observations, I collected data through interviews. I conducted interviews at the beginning and at the conclusion of the study. Students were interviewed individually at the end the study. A semi-structured interview protocol was used for both teacher (see Appendix G and H) and student interviews (see Appendix I). Interviews are valuable tools in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). Interviews were used to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's perceptions of the collaborative and critical reading and discussion of literature, along with their views of the writing for social justice project. The interviews were conducted in the teacher's resource room within the classroom. The use of the teacher resource room provided a quiet environment conducive to audio taping without loud background noise or distractions to the participants. The accuracy of data collection was ensured by recording the interviews with audio tapes. I was able to capture more accurate details by recording the interviews by positioning handheld recorders at the table. I transcribed and summarized these recorded interviews on a nightly basis. The participants' level of comfort and their ability to fully express themselves and their ideas was enhanced by the use of an informal and familiar environment outside of the actual classroom setting.

Interviews provided credibility to the study by filling in the gaps of information and clarifying any ambiguity. I was able to glean further information about the participants' experiences through interviews. I also gained additional insight from the participants' perspectives through the interviewing process. A semi-structured interview protocol was designed with open-ended questions that allowed me to probe further and gain a greater understanding about the participants' experiences (see Appendix G, H, and I). Specifically, I aimed to capture the participants' perceptions of the issues discussed in

the whole group and small group setting in their own words. This format allowed me to obtain more in-depth clarification through the participants' responses. I used member checks, where the interview transcripts were shared with the research participants, to verify that the information obtained and transcribed by the researcher was accurate (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 1998).

Another form of data collection was classroom documents such as student work samples. I collected physical artifacts such as student writing was collected to corroborate the data sources and obtain more in-depth information. Specifically, such written material included written responses to reading (see Appendix E), plans for writing, drafts, published writing, as well as digital writing such as Voicethreads or wikis was collected. I also collected students' self-evaluations of their small group discussions using the book club discussion exit slip (see Appendix F). As the researcher, I was reflective throughout the data collection process and used a journal to record my thinking and interpretations. I also engaged in a peer-review process by discussing the data collection process with my colleagues and dissertation committee co-chair persons to obtain external input. Triangulation was conducted to ensure validity of information through the use of multiple sources of data collection. This process also provided for deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In this case, I explored verbal and written responses of first grade students discussing social issues using children's literature as a springboard. Observations, interviews, and physical artifacts such as student writing provided supporting evidence to answer the study's research questions.

Phase III: Follow-up. At the conclusion of the digital collaborative and critical literacy for social justice unit, I interviewed the teachers and students using the post

questions on the semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix G, H, and I). Follow-up interviews provided insight into what happened when students use children's literature as a springboard for collaborative and critical discussions about social issues. The interviews also helped to understand the ways students write to advocate for social justice in digital spaces. The interview protocol, in addition to the observations and artifact collection, were designed specifically to explore the research questions and facilitate data analysis. The use of multiple data sources and triangulation throughout the data collection phase was an important aspect in gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

<p align="center">Data Analysis</p>

Data analysis played a crucial role in the research process, specifically in regards to the presentation of findings pertinent to the research questions and the focus of the study. Qualitative data analysis includes a holistic in-depth, interactive, inductive, and recursive examination of themes and patterns in data. I used qualitative data analysis methods to answer the following research questions: In what ways does the teacher incorporate collaborative and critical literacy approaches in her classroom? What happens when first graders engage in collaborative and critical literacy? In what ways do students use digital writing to advocate for issues of social justice? In what ways does the use of a collaborative literacy approach affect students' view of collaboration both in and out of the classroom?

Data analysis required the organization of data to make sense of it and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. During data collection and analysis I examined and interpreted data from multiple sources to weave together a

complete story that addressed the research questions. Through this analysis process, I described, explained, hypothesized, and developed theories (Glesne, 2006). Utilizing thematic analysis involved coding and organizing data using codes for further analysis. In order to do so, I categorized, synthesized, searched for patterns, and interpreted the data (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002).

Various levels of analysis occur for qualitative research. Specifically, the researcher is able to develop a method to determine what is occurring in a case being studied through coding of data. According to Glesne (2006), "coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data (i.e. observation notes, interview transcripts, memos, documents, and notes from relevant literature) that are applicable to your research purpose" (p. 153). Using multiple readings, the researcher examines the data to determine themes and patterns. The researcher reads the data line by line to note key words, phrases, themes, and patterns relevant to the study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). After my initial data interpretation, I read the data again to become intimate with it and developed codes for themes and patterns, words and pertinent phrases. Coding the data by looking for words, examples, and pertinent phrases, allowed initial themes to begin to emerge. I was able to identify initial themes that emerged as a result of the coding process. These preliminary and initial coding and analysis processes determined major categories within the data. Thereafter, I placed these codes in categories, which were subsequently collapsed and revised. This collective process created an organizational framework for the data. The coding process went beyond description to be interpretive and tell a story. It was similar to the process of putting the puzzle pieces back together to create a whole story. I was able to collect and

analyze data more holistically to construct a more complete picture by using a case study. For this study, I analyzed the collection of qualitative data sources to describe the outcome of student discussions and writing around how students create meaning of social issues arising from critically reading children's literature.

Qualitative researchers begin the ongoing data analysis process during data collection. Because this type of data collection and analysis process can be subjective, it is important for me, as the researcher to constantly be reflective during the data collection and analysis process. I kept a self-reflective journal to accomplish this end. Upon entering the field, I began the data analysis process by writing memos and analytic notes in the research journal. I used my reflective journal to jot down thoughts and questions as they occurred, which helped make working with the data fresh and more accurate. It was paramount to keep a notebook and audio recorder with me at all times to capture analytic thoughts and ideas. Additionally, it was important to have good methodological organization particularly with the vast amount of data being collected and analyzed. I transcribed conversations and discussions from observations and interviews within twenty-four hours of data collection to develop appropriate codes early on that corresponded with the research questions. I was beneficial to perform this level of analysis during the data collection stage, as I interpreted the information and found emerging themes along the way. I then immersed myself in the corpus of data to confirm and disconfirm the various themes related to the research questions being studied. Using an interpretivist approach (Erickson, 1986), I determined the strongest themes that emerged from the data as the basis of my findings.

Trustworthiness: Reliability and Validity of Design

Since the researcher is at the heart of the data collection and data analysis process (Patton, 1990), it is essential for the researcher to be credible. Therefore, there is a need for consistency in the data collection process. Trustworthiness refers to the credibility and dependability of the research (Creswell, 2003). As the researcher at the heart of the research process, I used a variety of measures to ensure trustworthiness in my study. I included the use of multiple sources of data collection, member checks to ensure accuracy of information, and personal reflexivity throughout the study to acknowledge my biases to increase trustworthiness (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998).

The validity of the research and creation of more accurate conclusions was increased by the use of multiple sources of data collection, or triangulation (Yin, 2009). The convergence of multiple types of data revealed a more complete analysis of the case being studied. When multiple sources of data are triangulated, overlapping descriptions of the case provide conceptual depth (Merriam, 1998). Triangulation of different data sources was used to "check the accuracy of findings" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). I collected multiple sources of data including observations, interviews, classroom documents, as well as field notes, as mentioned earlier. I was able to explore the phenomenon from different perspectives by triangulating multiple forms of data. Furthermore, by collecting data from multiple participants, another attempt to ensure validity was conducted. I kept intact records including interview transcripts, digital recordings, field notes, as well as physical documents. I increased the likelihood of trustworthiness in my study by maintaining this type of audit trail.

I also used member checks to ensure trustworthiness. Member checks ensure and validate the accuracy of information collected as well as the researcher's interpretations. I conducted member checks by sharing interview transcripts with participants to make certain that their ideas were accurately depicted. The transcripts were read aloud to the participants since the participants in this study represent a range in reading abilities.

Another procedure used to verify trustworthiness in qualitative research was peer debriefing. Ongoing peer debriefing sessions occurred throughout the study to obtain external input. I regularly debriefed with colleagues and my dissertation co-chairpersons to gain an outside perspective. This process forced me to examine my assumptions and interpretations and increases credible findings. The use of peer review is another way to enhance trustworthiness of qualitative research.

The use of personal reflexivity is critical to ensure trustworthiness since a relationship always exists between the qualitative researcher and the participants. Reflexivity is a method to develop awareness and consciousness of one's own perspective (Patton, 2002). The need for reflectivity is evident based on the role that researcher subjectivity role of researcher subjectivity and the ever-present bias can potentially play. It was important to reveal my biases contained in my background, experiences, and beliefs. I employed the act of writing in a reflective journal throughout the study to avoid bias whenever possible. I wrote in this reflective journal to increase my conscious awareness of my social identity, experience, and beliefs as it pertained to this studied case. I also used a digital recorder to capture my thinking as it occurred so it did not become lost in translation. I read my reflections and listened and transcribed my

voice recordings regularly. Reflexivity was an additional way ensured trustworthiness of my research process.

I also addressed trustworthiness in qualitative research through extended time in the field and the use of thick, rich description. Extended time in the field strengthened my understanding of what happens in a classroom, thus increasing the reliability and credibility of my research (Merriam, 1998). Patterns emerged in data collected from the field over extended periods of time rather than from isolated bits of information. I was able to develop trusting relationships, build rapport, and learn about the group being studied when more time was spent in the field. Participants were more likely candid and interviews were smooth and unrestrained as a result of the immersion.

Lastly, the use of thick rich description in qualitative research allows the reader to enter the research context and create a deeper understanding of the research study. This in-depth description forced me to describe and explain numerous elements of the research process for the reader to have clear insight. The inclusion of the aforementioned factors increased the consistency of the data collection process as well as the researcher's credibility.

<div align="center">Anticipated Ethical Issues</div>

When beginning this research study, I became familiar with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Standards for conducting research and completed an online tutorial. I completed the necessary steps in order to obtain IRB approval for my research study. Additionally, all participants signed informed consent before conducting this study. Violation of participant confidentiality was an anticipated ethical issue for this study. I protected participants' privacy by locking all data collected such as field notes and

recorded transcriptions in a locked filing cabinet at home to address this issue. Furthermore, I assigned each participant a pseudonym to protect his or her privacy and ensure anonymity. The pseudonym was used in place of the participant's given name throughout the study. Names were also removed from all original documents and replaced with the participants' pseudonyms. The risk of misinterpretation of data was another possible ethical issue. I used member checks and peer debriefing to address this issue. I kept field notes as a form of quality control to avoid personal bias and misinterpretation of data.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study (Creswell, 2002). I have identified potential limitations for this study. This particular study was limited by the following factors. First, it was difficult to schedule interviews and obtain in-depth information from first grade students. To address this potential limitation, I interviewed students after each small group discussion as opposed to waiting until the end of the study. I believed this made it easier for students to recount aspects of the conversations as they were thinking about it. Secondly, it was difficult to compare the generalizations of the results due to a majority representative homogenous population. The complexities of classroom interactions and situations are unique to each classroom setting (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). The findings in case study research are not meant to be universal, but instead are intended to provide a holistic examination of particular contexts. Third, this study is limited based on the methodological design. The use of purposive sampling may limit the study to only the select participants resulting in a narrowed outcome not necessarily generalizable to larger populations. Case study research aims to optimize the

particular case and not generalize findings for the larger population being studied (Stake, 2000). Lastly, a limitation may include researcher bias towards the research setting, the participants, and the topic being studied. Being an insider in the research setting has advantages and disadvantages. In this case, being an insider may prove to be a disadvantage in that as the researcher, I might have been biased and interpreted the data through a specific lens due to my own personal biography and the relationship between me and the participants being studied (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I addressed this potential bias by developing my credibility through triangulation of multiple data sources and by incorporating member checks by sharing field notes with the classroom teacher to interpret.

Based on my experience and interest in the topic of critical literacy, collaborative literacy, and writing for social justice, as the researcher, I may have preconceived assumptions that may influence my interpretations of data. While this can be a limitation, I remained reflexive to avoid compromising my findings through the use of a research journal.

<center>Summary</center>

As the researcher, I used a case study design to examine how first graders perceive and create meaning from critical and collaborative discussions about social issues using children's literature as a springboard. I used the stance of observer as participant in my study. I conducted the study in the fall semester of the 2011-2012 school year. My case study included twenty-two participants including one teacher, one teacher's assistant and twenty students. Of the twenty students eleven were boys and nine were girls. Seventeen students were white, two were Hispanic, and one was American

Indian. Students ranged in age from five to seven years old. I triangulated my data by collecting three different sources of data including observations, interviews, and classroom documents. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings are discussed as significant only to the particular group studied. The following chapter discusses the findings of this study.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Chapter one provided the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study and significance of this research. In this study, I researched an alternative approach to the use of traditional scripted curriculum that limits student engagement and sense of agency. Specifically, I examined an alternative to scripted curriculum by incorporating the use of collaborative literacy and critical literacy with first graders to discuss children's literature and explore a variety of social issues present in the text, in students' lives, as well as in the world around them. Furthermore, I investigated how first graders engaged in collaborative discussions and purposeful writing in digital spaces to advocate for social justice with a wider audience. The questions that guided my research included: (1) In what ways does the teacher incorporate collaborative and critical literacy approaches in her classroom? (2) What happens when first graders engage in collaborative and critical literacy? (3) In what ways do students use digital writing to advocate for issues of social justice? (4) In what ways does the use of a collaborative literacy approach affect students' view of collaboration both in and out of the classroom? Chapter two included the theoretical framework and established a review of the literature for this study. Chapter three consisted of the methodology employed in this study. This chapter describes the findings of this study.

Chapter four identifies and describes five main findings that emerged from the data. These findings revealed the influence of the teacher, the literature, peer interaction

and meaningful writing on students as collaborative and critical literacy learners and agents of change in the world. Specifically, the findings are as follows: (1) The teacher influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners; (2) The literature influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners; (3) Peer interaction influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners; (4) Students engaged in meaningful writing for an authentic purpose and audience in a digital space; and (5) Participants take action to make a difference. Each finding was divided into categories and will be described below. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the findings.

First Finding: The Teacher Influenced Students as Collaborative and Critical Literacy Learners

The teacher influenced the students as collaborative and critical literacy learners in several ways. Three categories, one with sub-categories, emerged under this finding as evident in my data (FIGURE 4.1).
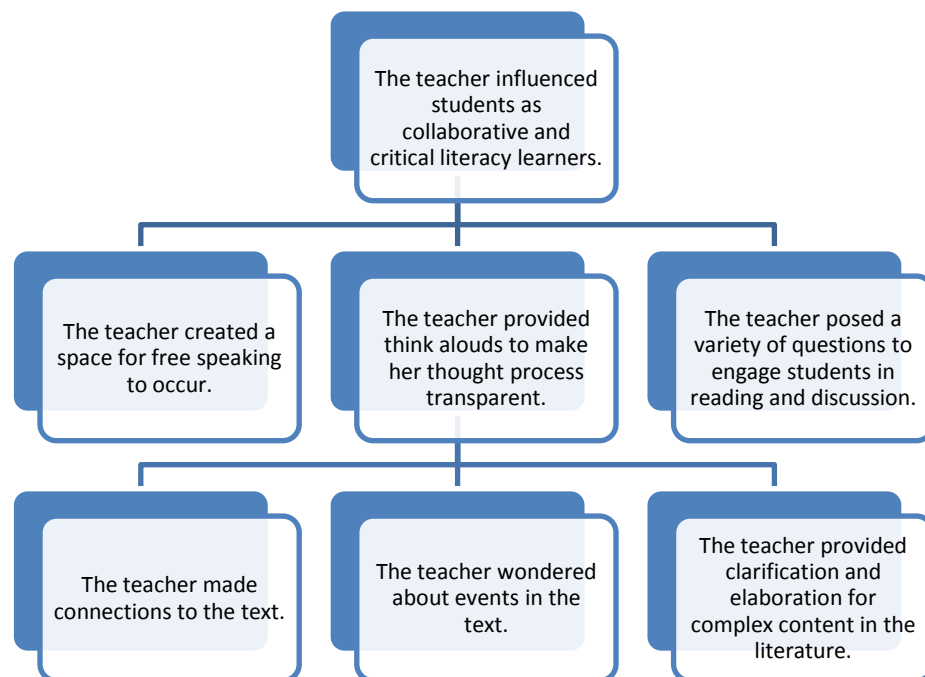
FIGURE 4.1. First Finding with Categories and Sub-Categories

The teacher influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners in a variety of ways including creating a physical and psychological space for free speaking, providing think alouds, and posing a variety of questions to engage students in reading, discussion, and consideration of life lessons.

The Teacher Created a Space for Free Speaking to Occur

Upon entering Judy's classroom, I was struck by the warmth and energy that surrounded me. Judy's use of physical space fostered classroom community and created a space that supported free democratic thinking and sharing. I observed a warm, colorful space full of energy and life, from the calming, gentle sounds of the water filter in the turtle aquarium, to the endless commotion of the gerbils playing inside their cage, and the sounds of children interacting with their peers within their cooperative learning groups. Colorful bins containing pencils, erasers, glue sticks, and scissors were centerpieces for students' tables with each student's individual seat marked by their water bottles. Scanning the perimeter of the room revealed student cubbies, a counter and sink in the back of the classroom with shelving areas for supplies, a table with a desktop computer, a writing center with a variety of paper and utensils, colorful bins filled with math manipulatives, and a science area with observation logs and a vast array of science equipment. A large green paper globe lantern hung above the comfortable slip-covered sofa filled with pillows where children regularly gathered to enjoy some of their favorite books. Judy's classroom represented a print-rich environment with an extensive library of children's literature and student work adorning the walls of the classroom. Students had freedom to navigate all areas of the classroom openly.

In the center of the classroom was a large carpet sectioned into colorful squares of red, green, blue, and yellow with a comfortable chair, easel, book shelf full of thematically related literature, daily schedule, word wall, and a student-created calendar at the front of the room. This large open gathering space was at the heart of Judy's classroom, both in its location and in the purposeful use of this space. Students gathered in this space for class meetings, instruction, learning, and sharing throughout the day.

Judy's use of the carpet as a space for fostering classroom community was evident from the start of each school day. After students unpacked and settled in, Judy called the students to the carpet meeting area by playing music. Students came to their assigned squares on the carpet and joined in with singing the familiar tunes. As a collective whole, the teacher and students greeted each other for the day with the morning meeting which included student-led calendar activities, the weather report, and a shared writing experience to honor the student of the day. Students were valued as community members and as equal contributors in Judy's classroom.

This space played an integral role during whole group literacy and teacher read aloud as well. After morning meeting, the teacher transitioned students' attention to the book they were going to read and discuss as part of this study. Sitting in her plush chair, Judy leaned in and engaged students in the reading experience and her think aloud process before, during, and after reading. However, after reading and thinking aloud, Judy transitioned students and asked them to move from their individual seats on the carpet to create an outside discussion circle where they faced one another. Once again, Judy used music as a cue for students to transition. Prior to this study, Judy predominantly employed a teacher-led approach where students raised hands and waited

for permission to speak. In our initial interview, Judy stated, "To talk about books in a collaborative way is something new to me as far as, we discuss books as we read them, but it has always been raising hands. I think we have had ok discussions but it is a lot of my input and my leading the discussion. So I can see doing it more of a student led discussion. I am interested in seeing what happens. I need to keep my mouth shut."

Judy demonstrated the importance of a shared and equal space between the teacher and the students by sitting on the floor and joining students in the circle. In a discussion circle, students were more attuned to one another, with the teacher less prominent as the focus of attention, which created a space for free democratic speaking. In this space, Judy engaged students in a discussion using the literature as a springboard to explore social issues in the text and in their lives such as working together, inequalities, and fairness. Judy noted, "When we did the circle and didn't raise hands, more of a Socratic seminar thing, more people responded. Although it was interesting because different people contributed this time. It was interesting to note that the people who are so eager to raise hands, when it was Socratic Seminar, they didn't talk as much. That was unusual. I don't give them as much time to talk and talk and talk. With this unit, I did that more and gave them a chance. I saw more talking but it was certain students who are not as involved and engaged were more involved." The collaborative discussions allowed Judy to have a window into the thoughts of children who were typically uncomfortable sharing in the traditional teacher-led group setting.

When students struggled with the open format of the discussion, Judy addressed the situations immediately. For instance, students had difficulty initially transitioning to an outside circle on the carpet. They quickly learned, however, that this became part of a

predictable routine and structure that the teacher established for whole group literacy instruction after reading aloud to them. On the first day of collaborative literacy discussions, some students found it challenging to make space for their peers on the carpet and others refused to move out of their initial space even though their peer was crowded (see FIGURE 4.2).

While much of the discussion remained teacher driven in both whole and small group settings, students have begun to negotiate how to participate in collaborative conversations with peers. The first day of whole group instruction proved to be somewhat challenging for students to get into their discussion circle on the carpet after the teacher read aloud. They argued with one another about where to sit saying things like, "Tim won't move over," "I was sitting there," and "I'm squished." With each day that followed, students were able to get into their discussion circle more quickly with less arguing. They began to recognize the importance of taking turns and allowing everyone the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. For instance, when Miranda began to share her thoughts, she stopped to let Polly share instead. This happened again when Terrance allowed Shelly to share after she interrupted him. "I'll let Shelly go before me. I don't even know what I was going to say now." However, while this was a polite gesture, the interrupt forced Terrance to lose his train of thought. Other instances of interrupting peers continued but were minimal. During the small group discussion, Lauren was interrupted and spoke up saying, "I was trying to talk." Tony supported her by stating, "I was trying to listen to Lauren." Some students, including Lauren, tended to dominate the conversation while others remained

quiet. Students did not appear to be looking at each other when they were

speaking.

FIGURE 4.2: Reflective Memo – 10.13.11

When students argued over physical space, Judy immediately addressed their

behavior and referenced the literature as an example of teamwork. She encouraged

students to consider lessons learned from the text as it related to cooperation in a shared

space. Judy talked with her students about the importance of working together as a team

similar to the character in the book, *Winners Never Quit* (Hamm, 2004). Thereafter,

students began to transition more smoothly and quickly to begin their group discussions

as evident in the observation transcription below from day two of collaborative

discussions.

Judy: Get in our outside circle. I am going to countdown from 5.

Judy: Good job!

Gabe: Teamwork!

Judy: Yes, good teamwork Gabe. Nice work!

Judy established and facilitated a space that fostered free expression and

participation. She reinforced positive behavior by complimenting students who

demonstrated respectful behavior and effective speaking and listening skills. When many

students began talking at the same time or when others dominated the discussion, Judy

invited students in the problem solving process. By eliciting feedback from students

about how to enhance the open discussions, they actively participated as stakeholders in

the democratic learning environment.

Students were aware of expectations and classroom procedures as they participated in a democratic setting where they collaboratively negotiated space and contributed ideas with their peers and teachers. Furthermore, students were given a sense of freedom to actively participate in discussions without waiting to be called on by the teacher for permission to respond. Students were attentive to their peers' comments, were conscientious of classmates' body language, and were aware of when they wanted to speak or finish expressing a particular viewpoint. Students were active members of the classroom community and engaged in learning in an environment that supported free democratic expression.

The Teacher Provided Think Alouds to Make Her Thought Process Transparent

When engaging her students in collaborative and critical literacy, Judy employed a variety of think alouds to make her thought process before, during, and after reading explicit for students. Examples of teacher think alouds included connections between the text and the teacher's experiences and prior knowledge, connections with other texts read and discussed in the class, as well as connections to events and situations in the world. Judy also included wondering about characters and events in the text, clarification and elaboration about content and events in the text, in addition to posing a variety of questions during reading and discussion.

The teacher made connections to the text. To enhance student understanding of text, Judy modeled proficient reader strategies such as making connections. By making her cognitive thought process visible for students, Judy demonstrated how proficient readers make connections when reading to help them comprehend and think critically about the text. Judy showed students how lessons learned from literature can be applied

to various situations in school, at home, and in the larger world context. She made a variety of connections such as text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world to illustrate the different ways text connects with the reader's schema.

Judy made the connection after reading the book, *Winners Never Quit* by Mia Hamm (2004) to the importance of teamwork and working together not just in sports, but in the classroom setting as well. A key tenant of a cooperative classroom environment that fosters respect and collaboration observed in Judy's classroom was the ability of students to cooperatively gather in a discussion circle quickly and effortlessly with minimal time lost and without argument.

Addison: I'm thinking tomorrow when we go to gym we can practice how to throw and hit balls.

Judy: So you are thinking about sports you play. We are talking about things in sports. Good point. For me sometimes I think about when Mia Hamm says, 'Winners Never Quit' that you have to keep trying and be a team player. We just talked about sitting around the carpet instead of getting mad and saying things like, "I can't sit in my seat" and get really upset or saying, "I really want to sit there." I think we have some good team players in our classroom. I noticed how some people let other people have turns. And friends who are participating is being a good team player too. So let's think about how we can use teamwork in our classroom like Mia Hamm shows teamwork. What can we do to have teamwork in our class?

Terrance:	Um that you could [interrupted by Shelley trying to say something]…
Shelley:	uuuuuuuuuuuuhhhhhhhhhhh [in frustration]
Judy:	I think we need to work on teamwork in our discussions. Saying, 'uuuuuuuuuhhhhhh' is that a team player? I know it is frustrating to wait your turn but we need to work together.
Tyler:	I'll let Shelley go before me.
Shelley:	Also people from gymnastics never quit. Like I had a lot of courage.
Polly:	I kept trying to learn to swim in the neighbor's pool when I was little. I keep on doing it and doing it.

In her think aloud, Judy highlighted the importance of teamwork in and out of the classroom. Terrance's decision to let Shelley share first during a whole group literacy discussion is evidence of respect and collaboration. Shelley and Polly made the connections to persevering in their own sports of gymnastics and swimming, similar to Mia Hamm who learned the importance of never quitting at soccer.

In addition to learning lessons about working together in the classroom, Judy demonstrated for her students the importance of teamwork in their lives outside of school. When reading the book *You're a Good Sport Miss Malarkey* (Finchler & O'Malley, 2002), Judy made the connection that when the parents began yelling in a competitive nature at the kids' soccer team, it reminded her of when her own son became disengaged in sports. Judy's assistant, Karen also connected to the subject by sharing about how her sister who used to play tennis in college, became turned off and eventually quit when her

dad continuously yelled at her and made tennis become too competitive. It was interesting how Judy made a larger connection to the notion of competition as it related to education and schooling as well. She continued by explaining how this type of pressure and behavior can result in students feeling nervous and no longer having fun while learning.

Judy: I'm thinking of a connection when my son, Carl played soccer he had a coach like that. I think Carl was afraid of him because he was very serious. I have a sad connection to this that my son Carl doesn't like sports I think because some parents were like that on his team and the coach was like that too and it made it not fun. He liked to run around and play with bugs instead.

Karen: When my sister was in middle school and high school, my sister was one grade older than me and she was a good tennis player. The problem was that my dad would yell at her because he would say "you aren't trying," "you need to practice more," and "that was a bad shot." She tried really hard and he yelled at her. When she went to college she played tennis in college. But after that she doesn't play tennis anymore. She put her tennis racket away and said, "I'm done" because it wasn't fun for her anymore. Since then he has apologized and they have said they are sorry but she won't play tennis anymore because of the yelling.

Judy: I had a connection when I was reading. When you are really kind

             of afraid or if someone makes you feel nervous, you can't have fun

             and you can't learn. So…

[Student starts talking]

Judy: Oh wait, I wasn't finished. So at some schools, the teachers kind of

             yell at students like that. At some schools the teachers expect the

             students to make 100. You have to do this… you have to do this…

             you have to do this. And you have to stay in your seat. And I'm

             thinking that sometimes people feel like they don't want to be in

             school. School should be fun. Yes there is stuff we have to do but

             it can be fun like Ms. Malarkey made learning soccer fun.

Karen: One of the teachers is always cheering her class on the monkey

             bars outside. And our principal is always cheering us on.

Addison: I don't think the principal in the book is as nice as the principal at

             our school.

Judy: It made me think about schools a lot. You know how some schools

             have big tests at the end of the year. And some schools make it

             very scary and a big deal and the principals and the teachers make

             it like you have to win and you have to do the best on the test. At

             our school, we want everyone to do their best on the test and we do

             fun things to prepare and it is not scary. You just go in and try your

             best. You don't have to be the best in the area or best in the state.

This excerpt of teacher think aloud demonstrated the value of teamwork and perseverance both in and out of school. Both Judy and her assistant Karen showed students how to take lessons from literature and apply the same principles to their lives. In this example, Judy discussed the importance of striving for success while having fun doing so.

The previous examples showed the importance of teaching students to learn lessons about working together and perseverance through collaborative literacy. With an established collaborative environment, the teacher fostered discussion around topics found in text as they related to larger societal issues, such as racism and prejudice. Judy felt that was an essential tenant of reading instruction. She specifically wanted to address it after students in a small reading group giggled upon hearing Kristi Yamaguchi's name during their book club reading and discussion the previous week. Judy felt it was important to attend to this with her students. She decided to help students develop a critical reading lens by making connections to the way Japanese Americans were treated unfairly during World War II when they were placed in internment camps to help students develop a critical reading lens. Reading the book, *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993) and making her connections explicit, helped Judy develop students' awareness of inequities and the way people were treated negatively because of their ethnicities or their appearance.

Judy: Remember last week when you read, *Dream Big Little Pig* by Kristi Yamaguchi? Kristi Yamaguchi's last name sounds a little different, doesn't it? Yamaguchi. That is a Japanese last name. Kristi Yamaguchi's parents were from Japan and the kids in this

book are Japanese too. In WWII, America and Japan were battling against each other. There were a lot of people that had come to live in America like probably like Tony, your grandparents are from Italy and a lot of people came here and now America is their country.

Tony: My great great grandfather was in WWII.

Judy: You and I have a few connections. My daddy was in WWII and went to Japan actually.

Tony: They could have been friends.

Gabe: My relative was in WWII.

Judy: I want to tell you something else. Do you know the people who came to live in America… the ones who came from Japan, some people thought, "oh maybe they will hurt us because originally they are from Japan and we need to put them in a camp." [Judy shows the illustration.] Does that look like a camp that you would like to go to? They put them there because they were afraid they might hurt us although these people came here to make America their home. My sister's husband is from Japan and his parents moved here from Japan and he was in one of these camps when he was a little boy.

Jessica: It doesn't look like a camp place [demonstrates a triangular shape with her hands that you might see as a roof of a cabin at a summer camp for kids].

Judy: It kind of looks like a jail. Not a fun place to go. This happened a long time ago when people decided and it actually happened to Kristi Yamaguchi's mom who was born in one of these camps in the west coast like in California. My brother in law's dad just passed away this summer. He was in one of these camps in California. I'm going to read about it. That is where these kids are. I needed to give you background information.

Judy made this historical event real for her students through her connections to her father fighting in WWII, her relative who was in a Japanese internment camp, and the explicit connection to Kristi Yamaguchi's family heritage and experience in internment camps. One student, Erin asked, "Is this a true story?" Judy responded, "Yes this is a real story and this is something that really happened to a lot of Japanese Americans including my sister-in-law's dad and Kristi Yamaguchi's family."

The following transcript demonstrated increased student interaction with Judy's think aloud of text-to-world connections.

Judy: They are saying he's not very good.

Sean: Also… the guys weren't really being nice at him at the school no one was sitting beside him and no one would talk to him.

Judy: Yes because of the way he looked.

Sean: Yea the way he looked and because he was Japanese.

Judy: It reminds me of a few years ago you know how sometimes you see people who wear a birka that covers your face and head and a lot of people thought that those people are kind of people who are

against America and so I think anyone who looks like that must be bad guys. And that is silly and not true at all... Just because they wear that or because they believe in a certain religion or because they are not like us or are different.

Matthew: The other kids were mean to him because no one wanted to sit with him.

This conversation showed that students processed the events in the text and began to understand complex topics such as acceptance and prejudice. The subject of treating others differently because of their appearance was evident in the reading, discussion, and teacher think aloud of the book *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990). After reading and discussing this book, the theme of inequality and power relationships continued to surface. This book depicted the story of Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play in the major leagues in the 1940's and the racial prejudice he faced and had to overcome. Having the acceptance and support of his teammate, Pee Wee Reese demonstrated the power of teamwork, collaboration, the development of a friendship and a symbolic gesture of equality. Karen, the teacher assistant modeled her own connection to the idea of acceptance and judging others after reading. Her connection triggered something for one student who then made his own connection about a time he was treated unfairly because he lived in a different neighborhood. Sharing this connection became emotional for Liam as evident by his tearful recollection of a traumatic experience when he was physically bullied for being viewed as an outsider.

Karen: Sometimes people think because I'm short that I am not smart or I can't make good decisions.

Judy: Has that happened to anyone?

Liam: But well this kid that was at a party we were doing something that

            they just said you don't live here and you can't go in the tennis

            courts and I was in there and I live in [a different neighborhood].

            The kid went to me and holded me to the fence and made me cry

            [Liam starts crying].

Judy: They were bullies. That is scary.

Liam: My brother ran up to my dad and told my dad and the kid also

            shoved me to the fence and made me do this [shows how his face

            was pressed to the fence] to the fence.

Gabe: Did they tell anything to the kid to stop bullying you?

Liam: My dad said, "Keep your hands to yourself."

Judy: I think about a book our principal has for the middle school called,

            The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander. What do you think that

            means… bystander?

Sean: It means I think if you are being mean to someone that you don't

            know.

Judy: That is what a bully might do even if it is someone you know.

            Think of Liam's story, he was bullied. If someone was watching,

            they would be the bystander and not going to get help.

Liam: My dad was there and my brother did that.

Judy: Your brother was the bystander and he went and got help. We want

            you to be brave because it takes a lot of courage to tell when you

see someone being a bully. If you see someone doing the wrong

thing… what would you do?

Judy: I hope you've been thinking. You have a lot of connections…

Liam was confident in sharing about such a traumatic experience with his peers

after Karen shared about being perceived by others as less intelligent based on her

appearance. His connection demonstrated the importance of collaborative and critical

discussions about topics such as bullying and acceptance of others.

Another instance when Judy used her own connections as a model for the thinking

process of a proficient reader was during the reading of the book, *William's Doll*

(Zolotow, 1972). In this story, the main character William wanted a doll but his father

discouraged him from having one and bought him other toys such as a basketball and a

train set instead. In a conversation about gender roles and norms, Judy shared her

connection when family friends scoffed at her son for wanting a doll house for Christmas

one year. Karen also shared her think aloud when she described her world connection to

Danika Patrick, a female racecar driver who is breaking gender norms. Judy's and

Karen's connections to this story elicited more extensive conversation as well as

powerful student connections to acceptance, equality and standing up to bullies.

Jordan: My cousin Lilly likes to play with me with superheroes and rescue

                heroes and a lot of that stuff. We like to play with dump trucks

                and…

Judy: That reminds me when my son was little, he wanted a doll house

                for Christmas and that is what Santa brought him. We had some

friends though said I can't believe you let Santa bring him a dollhouse. Boys don't play with doll houses.

Tony: Yes they can.

Judy: Some of our friends thought it was wrong.

Jennifer: Some people think that Dora is for babies but it really isn't.

Lauren: I like Dr. Who and it is a grown up show.

Judy: Yes as long as it is ok with your parents and you like it.

Lauren: My baby cousin we have to watch Dora all of the time and I still even like Dora.

[Several students respond: "I like Dora too." And, "Me too!"]

Liam: My friend Crystal likes boy stuff.

Karen: I was thinking of my son whose sister loves Lil Pet Shop and he really likes to play with that too.

Lauren: My next door neighbor loves Lil Pet Shop and when he comes over he always asks if I want to play.

Tony: My sister still sleeps with a baby doll and some people say that is like a baby.

Terrance: I still sleep with a blanket.

[Many voices can be heard saying, "I do too" and "Me too! Me too!"]

Kaitlyn: I watch a grown up show called Werewolf and my brother thinks it is only for boys because there is only one girl in it but I like it and her name is Jordan.

Sean: I draw and my sister still draws a little.

Lauren: I love drawing ducks.

Bobby: I still sleep with my blanket.

Karen: I have a community or world connection. My connection before

           was a home connection. I was thinking lately about a woman who

           loved cars and now she's the first woman race car driver. Her

           name is Danika Patrick. You never know, something you like

           when you are little might be important in your life later on.

Addison: Like nature is really important to me.

Judy: Sounds like the author is getting us to think about teasing people

           who might be different than us. I was thinking about liking

           different food.

Bobby: Like wearing different clothes.

Judy: …or jobs that we think of as just for boys.

Addison: Some people think girls can't be doctors but I have a doctor that is

           a girl.

Judy: That is interesting because my mother in law really wanted to be a

           doctor but when she went to school, she really wanted to be a

           doctor but they said girls can't be doctors. She could be a biology

           teacher and marry a doctor but she wanted to be a doctor. They

           said only boys were doctors.

Shelley: Dr. Smith, my doctor is a girl doctor.

Lauren: If someone is teasing them we can say that is not nice and you are

being a bully because people are all different and that is what

makes people unique.

Judy's connection to teasing people based on differences resonated with Lauren, based on her response that we should take action and stand up to a bully who teased others. Moreover, she shared an important life lesson that it is our differences that make us unique. Student responses to the teacher think alouds and connections to the text demonstrated their ability to construct meaning of the text as collaborative and critical learners. Students began to think about and discuss the value of working together and the importance of acceptance of others, as it related to their own experiences in and out of the classroom and the literature that was read and discussed. Judy explained, "I think they were able to make more personal connections because the discussions allowed for more time. Usually if we are just reading and commenting, then it is a few people who have a chance to say yea that reminded me of. Or one or two people and it doesn't go far from that where they say what we are reading. Whereas when we made an effort to say what does that remind you of in your life, they were saying personal things they noticed in their life."

 The modeling of connections by the teacher and the teacher's assistant fostered a space where discussion could take place. Prior to this study, Judy's students sat in rows on the carpet. Now they sat in a circle, where they faced each other and engaged in open dialogue. Through Judy's creation of a space, both physical and psychological, rich discussion occurred. Judy provided numerous examples of discussion techniques when she modeled her own think alouds such as wonderings about the text.

The teacher wondered about events and characters in the text. The teacher used both purposeful reading and her own curiosities to actively engage students in the reading process and facilitate the examination of the concept of collaboration as it related to the text and their own lives. Teacher think aloud in the form of wonderings about the text led students to examine a critical perspective through questioning gender norms, racial prejudice, and the illustrator's use of images to portray meaning. Gradually, students began to actively engage in the reading and discussion through response to the teacher's wonderings.

In the following excerpt of Judy's think aloud before reading the book, *Winners Never Quit* (Hamm, 2004), she wonders aloud about the main character's ability to contribute as a member on a team. The character, Mia, became frustrated when she was unable to score a goal and wanted to quit the team. Judy established the importance of the title, *Winners Never Quit,* as it related to being a team player both on the field and in the classroom.

Judy: A really big part of sports is being part of a team. We started talking about that a little bit yesterday. Helping each other out and being part of a team. I want you think about as I read this story about how this person in the story is part of a team and maybe how sometimes she is not part of a team and how it reminds you of a time when you were part of a team or maybe when you didn't work as part of a team and what it reminds you of. So I want you to be thinking because that is what good readers do. Good readers think about how it reminds them of something in their own lives.

You guys are great at making connections. So this book is about a little girl named Mia and it says Winners Never Quit. I wonder what that means. Winners never quit. I want you to think in your mind. I might think aloud so you can see how I think when I read. There she is like a little baby with a soccer ball and she gets bigger. It makes me think she must really like soccer. Remember the title, Winners Never Quit. I wonder if it is better to be a team player or to be a winner. Remember, I am thinking out loud. So we are talking about sports. I am wondering what that might mean in terms of sports.

Lauren: If you lose you don't get mad.

After examining the role of the title in the story, Judy wondered aloud about the best way to engage in collaborative discussion in the classroom setting after students began interrupting one another and not acknowledging their peers who wanted to share.

Judy: I wonder how we can determine if there are a few of you who say um at the same time and you all had something to say and the rest of you kept right on talking. Finally most of you stopped but it felt a little yucky that everyone kept talking. I wondered if there needed to be a way for everyone who wanted to talk at the same time. Especially at the beginning we have a lot to say.

It was necessary for Judy to take the time to address behavioral issues as they pertained to student interaction in discussion forums. Taking the time to attend to issues

as they arose helped alleviate future problems and allowed students to engage in discussion more quickly and effectively.

The use of wondering as a type of think aloud also allowed Judy to engage students in deeper exploration of topics related to inequities and social norms. For instance, Judy wanted to develop students' understanding of the prejudice that Jackie Robinson faced as the first African American in the major leagues when reading and discussing the book, *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990). She wondered what the other teammates would say or think about Jackie being African American and a new member of their team. In doing so, Judy examined perspective and the voices of the various characters to deepen understanding of the events in the text.

Judy:	They had two kinds of ball teams: One for people with darker skin and one with lighter skin. But it says they are teammates. I wonder how they will be teammates. Here's this guy. That's a photograph. Remember it is a real story. This is Branch Rickey, the manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers and he wasn't afraid of change.
Jennifer:	He has courage.
Judy:	I wonder if the teammates will like being on the team with Jackie Robinson? Remember a lot of people believed in segregation then too. I wonder if the people liked him playing on their team?
William:	No.

William engaged in the read aloud as evident by his response to Judy's wondering about Jackie's acceptance on the team. Like William, other students began to actively participate in the read aloud in response to the teacher's wonderings. In the following

transcription, Judy and her students set a reading purpose and made predictions about the book, *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972). During reading, Judy wondered about the father's reaction when William's grandmother bought him the doll he so badly desired. This type of thinking helped students consider the father's perspective and what his response to the grandmother's purchase of the doll might entail.

Judy:	It doesn't look like William has a doll though. He has a basketball. I wonder if the basketball will be like his friend. Let's find out. In this picture the author and illustrator are telling us about the story. That must be William because he is on the cover. I am thinking there is a little girl.
Jessica:	Maybe it is his friend.
Judy:	She's holding a doll and he's looking at her. I wonder if it is his doll since it's called William's Doll. He's watching her walk away with the doll. Hmm.
Erin:	Maybe it's his.
Terrance:	I think he's going to get a doll.
Judy:	*[Reading: She [William's Grandma] went to the store and chose a baby doll… William loved it right away.]* I wonder what William's dad will think.
Jessica:	He's going to be really mad. He'll get in trouble.
Sean:	He will be confused because her got him a doll.
Erin:	His dad didn't get him a doll because he didn't want people to say mean things to him.

Student responses to the teacher's wondering suggested that gender norms created a clear dichotomy between what is acceptable for boys and what is acceptable for girls and those who stray from those norms become ostracized or ridiculed. Furthermore, one student suggested that if we do not follow those gender expectations, we can get in trouble. Students examined social norms and later explored the illustrator's use of images to create meaning through the teacher's use of wondering about events and characters in the text. Judy helped students examine what the author and illustrator want the reader to think based on the inclusion or exclusion of certain factors in the text. For instance, Judy explicitly wondered about the illustrator's use of color to develop character in the following transcript of whole group literacy.

Judy:	Look at the title: Nothing but trouble the story of Althea Gibson, hmm… that doesn't sound good does it? I wonder what that means… Most of the colors are gray and brown. But do you notice the color around Althea, they are bright? I wonder why the illustrator did that.
Bobby:	Sometimes like he does colors because she's happy and when the author doesn't do that she is sad.

[Erin agrees with sign language hand signal.]

[Later in the discussion…]

Jennifer:	Yeah, before it didn't have color on him. He was happy on the other page.
Judy:	I wonder if it has something to do with Althea.

Bobby: I still think the man has more color than the girl and the girl

           doesn't look happy and I think that is why she doesn't have too

           much colors. I think she is just surprised.

Judy: *[Reading: Althea Gibson you are nothing but trouble.]* I wonder

           how that makes her feel about herself.

Jessica: She just runs away because look at the picture.

Judy's wonderings, as a type of think aloud fostered a variety of student thinking

about the texts being read and discussed. First, students explored the nature of

collaboration as it related to Mia Hamm being a team player without quitting and how

they could work together to enhance their group discussion in the classroom. Secondly,

students engaged in reading when the teacher set a reading purpose by wondering about

the title of books, the characters, and events in the text. Additionally, students began to

critically think about what other characters would say or think. Lastly, students began to

think about what the author and illustrator wanted the reader to consider based on the

inclusion or exclusion of ideas and images in the text.

The teacher provided clarification and explanation for complex content in the

literature. Judy felt it was necessary to develop her young students' background

knowledge beyond simply reading the text. She felt compelled to address complex

historical and social issues, such as discrimination and other related inequalities,

particularly when reading and discussing the books, *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990),

Nothing But Trouble: The Story of Althea Gibson (Stauffacher, 2007), and *Baseball*

Saved Us (Mochizuki, 1993). Judy felt that the overt examples of people treating others

unfairly because of their appearance needed clarity and explanation. As Judy stated, "I really had to explain to them that they live in a different society now."

When reading the book *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990), Judy explained the meaning of the word segregation as a "yucky" word that means "splitting people up… like separation… by skin color." Judy provided additional examples, such as treating others unequally based on eye color as a way to limit access to things like water fountains, schools, doctors' offices, and baseball teams to help the mostly homogenous body of students understand the concepts of prejudice and discrimination. In her post interview Judy stated, "I told them that racism means judging people by their race and who they are on the outside. We talked about how the color of their skin is one way people judge but people can judge others by what they believe and not really knowing who they are. By their church they go to for example."

To her students, Judy explained:

> That is why they were in the Negro leagues because they weren't allowed on the other team. They would've told Michael Jordan he couldn't play on their team because of the color of your skin. They told Wilma because her skin is too dark. Think about all of the amazing ball players and they couldn't play because their skin color. They couldn't stay in hotels and had to sleep in their cars. So they would travel and play these games and they couldn't even sleep in the hotel because they said no your skin is too dark. They weren't allowed to eat in the restaurant and so they brought their own food.

Jessica: But where would the go to the grocery store?

Judy: They probably had to drive far to get to a grocery store they were

allowed to go to. Remember how Wilma Rudolph had to go 50

miles to the hospital?

Judy explained the pivotal roles Branch Rickey, Jackie Robinson, and Pee Wee

Reese played in terms of helping to break the color barrier. While many knew that

discrimination was wrong, they refused to do anything about it. In the following

transcript, Judy illustrated how these three men took a stand to contribute to a more just

baseball league and society as a whole.

Judy: This is Branch Rickey, the manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers and

he wasn't afraid of change.

Jennifer: He has courage.

Judy: He wanted the Dodgers to have the best players. He didn't care

what color your skin was. He didn't think segregation was right so

he went all over America to find great baseball players. He found a

special guy… Jackie Robinson. He was a great player but he had to

have a lot of courage and when people were being mean to him he

couldn't fight back. But Branch Rickey knew that if Jackie

Robinson started fighting back against the people being mean to

him would say 'see people of that color are only causing problems'

even though he is standing up for himself. He thought Jackie

Robinson would be the right guy. So Branch Rickey met with

Jackie Robinson and asked if he could have a lot of courage even if

people were being mean to you…Jackie Robinson said I know this

is important because he wanted other people of his skin color to be

able to play and it doesn't matter what color your skin is. It matters

what you are like on the inside. Jackie Robinson joined the team…

He broke the barrier. A barrier is like a fence. Something that

keeps you out.

Judy continued by explaining how Jackie's teammates did not accept him so they began a petition and collected signatures to remove him from the team. But when they asked his teammate, Pee Wee Reese to sign, he refused. Furthermore, when the crowd was yelling terrible things at Jackie Robinson, Pee Wee took a stand and put his arm around Jackie to show that they were teammates and friends regardless of the color of their skin.

During a subsequent whole group literacy session, when reading the book, *Nothing But Trouble: The Story of Althea Gibson* (Stauffacher, 2007), Judy highlighted the similarities between Jackie Robinson and Althea Gibson. While Jackie broke the color barrier in baseball, Judy told her students that "Althea is the Jackie Robinson of tennis because she broke the barrier in tennis and was the first African American woman to do that." Not only did she break the barrier but she was the first to win the Wimbledon tennis championship, "the most important championship in the world." She was also the first African American woman to play on the LGPA, which is the golf tour for women.

In addition, Judy wanted to build students' awareness of the difference an individual can make by taking a stand. Judy explained to her students that similar to the way Pee Wee Reese took a stand for Jackie Robinson, "there was a woman named Alice

Marble who was an influential white tennis player who wrote an article in a tennis

magazine insisting that Althea be allowed to compete. She said she would be ashamed if

Althea couldn't play… simply because of the color of her skin… She sent that note and

they listened to her and let her play." This explanation was important because it showed

students how writing can be used to advocate for key social issues such as racial equality.

Karen and Judy extended this conversation by adding an explanation about how

freedom of speech allowed the use of voices to advocate for changes towards women's

rights. In doing so, the stage was set for the students' later work with their writing for

social justice projects.

Karen:	Some courageous women broke the barrier for women. Some women wrote signs and walked around with groups with their big signs and wrote letters. They thought they should be able to do the same things that men could do like vote for our president.
Judy:	Lauren wrote about that last week. Did you know women couldn't be president? Or be soldiers.
Jordan:	In another country if someone says like 'I don't like this president' they get killed or put in jail and in our country they can just say that and they won't do anything.
Judy:	Yes we have freedom of speech in our country and we can say things and we won't get in trouble. In other countries they can't say things or they will go to jail or be killed.
Karen:	We can write letters to our president. We can say what we think and make things more fair like for even go to school even if they

don't have a lot of books. We can write people who make the laws

and say dear president… I want people to have books for school.

It was also necessary for Judy to clarify and explain about complex content of the

literature when reading the book *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993). It was essential

that Judy illustrated why Japanese Americans were placed in internment camps after the

bombing of Pearl Harbor for students to be able to make the deeper connections to the

theme of equality and discrimination in the story. Before reading, Judy introduced the

book and asked students to examine the cover to determine what they noticed. One

student, Gabe suggested that he thought this book was based on real events due to the

barbed wire in the illustration. Judy provided additional information to help the students

process this detail.

Gabe: I think it could happen because up there, there are these things up

there the spiky things. Like at the storage unit and there is a brick

wall and at the top are those things with a lot of those pointy

things.

Judy: Yea that is called barbed wire.

Gabe: It is electric.

Judy: It might be electric but it is to keep people away from climbing

that fence.

Judy helped students develop a contextual understanding of the internment camps

and the historical events that led up to the relocation of the Japanese Americans by

illustrating the importance of that particular detail in addition to further explanation.

During her explanation, one student, Terrance, contributed his own background knowledge to enhance the conversation.

Judy: Pearl Harbor is the place that Japan attacked America. It is in Hawaii and that is why people started to think the country of Japan did this and anyone who came here from Japan must be bad too because their country did that.

Terrance: Every fighter plane in America is in Hawaii. That is why Japan bombed it.

Judy: Yes and it is close to Japan.

Terrance: They blew up most of the planes.

Judy: The Americans were being mean to the people from Japan by putting them in places not in their homes. Teddy is also Japanese and he is in that camp with them.

Jessica: Maybe he's mad because he is in there.

After reading the story, Judy summarized the end of the story when the Japanese were finally released and able to return to their homes only to discover that some people continued to remain prejudiced against them. For example, she pointed out that none of the kids at school wanted to sit with the Japanese boy, the protagonist of the story. She added, "When he played baseball, people were mean to him on the baseball field and some people were even calling out mean names like they did to Jackie Robinson but they were calling out different mean names because he was Japanese. So he said that those words meant that they hated him because he was Japanese." Judy's explanation of the way people viewed Japanese Americans provided her students with an additional level of

understanding of the concept of inequality and discrimination. The historical events that set the context for these books are most likely new concepts for the six and seven year olds in Judy's class. By providing explanation beyond the printed word, Judy assisted students in developing a deeper understanding of the content in the literature as well as a critical perspective as readers.

Lastly, Judy provided explanation and clarification of her own text-to-world connection for much of the discussion about equality. She discussed her visit to a school in Guatemala a few years previously. She described the lack of basic essentials like food and water. Judy wanted to enhance students' awareness of the inequality between their school and the school in Guatemala. For example, to convey the lack of supplies, she explained that the school in Guatemala was provided with the amount of paper typically used in one day at Smith Road Community School to last them for an entire year. Judy extended the conversation by sharing that most of the students in Guatemala never owned their own books before. To make this real for her students, Judy asked them to raise their hands if they owned a book. Everyone's hands shot up in the air. Students responded with comments such as, "a lot," "me too," and "like a million." Additionally, to demonstrate the lack of equity in access to educational opportunities, Judy explained that children only attend school through sixth grade in Guatemala.

> Kids there can't go to school past sixth grade. In sixth grade there they have to
> pay $500 per student for each of their children. That is a lot of money for them.
> That is really hard for them. They asked if people could help… their parents can't
> afford to send them to school. So if you were starting middle school, they might
> say it would be too expensive and you can't go to school anymore. You wouldn't

go to high school. You wouldn't go to middle school and forget thinking about college.

It was significant that Judy modeled her own connection to help students engage in similar thinking and to set the context for the social justice projects students would write later in the quarter. Judy thought it was necessary to provide explanation about the social context of the people in Guatemala as students had little to no prior knowledge with this subject. Judy shared about a girl in Guatemala who she sponsors as a way to make this information more comprehensible for students. By sharing the story of Adriana, Judy helped students develop a deeper understanding of the reality of the socioeconomic problems that exist in Guatemala. Judy helped her students avoid a deficit perspective of Adriana and the people of Guatemala by depicting Adriana as a young girl, who participates in many of the same activities just like many of them.

Judy: Let me tell you about these people. Many people in Guatemala they work and work and work. There is a girl named Adriana and it is her last year of school because her family can't afford to send her to school anymore. She is a little girl. Twelve years old. She wouldn't get to go to school anymore. I said I would like to pay for her to go to school. Our family is going to pay for Adriana to go to school. She doesn't have a dad. Her mom works at a children's home and regularly works 24 hours a day. She works all day. Not like your moms and dads… The mom has to live where she works and takes care of the kids. She only gets to see her family sometimes. This young girl who doesn't have a daddy and her

mom is mostly not there really wants to go to university and she wants to be a teacher and I thought that was neat and that's why I want to help sponsor her and help her go to school. Her favorite sport is baseball and her favorite activity is reading. She has 5 brothers and sisters. Her oldest brother is 20. She has an 18 year old brother, a 16 year old brother, 14 year old sister and a 12 year old brother. There are six kids. No daddy and mom has to work all the time. When kids are 12 years old kids have to go to work all the time.

Bobby: Is she at the school?

Judy: Now she just works to help the school in Guatemala. … What's hard for us is not hard for them. It's really tough. They really have to persevere. They don't have a choice. This is their job.

By providing explanation and clarification for her first graders, Judy fostered a deeper understanding of the complex content found in the literature. Students' comprehension of the text, development of a broader world view, as well as a critical stance from which to examine both, hinged on difficult concepts such as the historical and social context, as it related to inequities and discrimination.

The Teacher Posed a Variety of Questions to Facilitate Student Discussion

During reading and discussion, Judy asked a variety of questions to elicit student understanding and enhance students as collaborative and critical literacy learners. Judy posed a range of both open and closed questions. The use of open ended questions encouraged higher level thinking and increased student input in discussions. Judy

incorporated the knowledge and comprehension levels of questioning from Bloom's Taxonomy to activate background knowledge and ensure student understanding. Moreover, with the use of higher levels of questions such as application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, Judy moved her students beyond literal levels of comprehension to deeper awareness and understanding of the as it related to students' lives. More specifically, Judy posed a variety of questions to examine collaborative learning and foster critical thinking as it related to the literature and life lessons learned beyond the text.

Questions to foster collaborative literacy learners. Judy purposefully selected several books specifically related to the theme of working together to read and discuss with her students. Judy examined the role of collaboration in the literature by posing a variety of questions to her students ranging from literal identification of characters who demonstrated the ability to be a good team player to examining ways of being a better teammate (see FIGURE 4.3). Judy introduced students to books where the characters demonstrated frustration when they struggled to achieve in sports, gave up periodically, and strove to find ways to encourage peers rather than yell at them or laugh at them when they made a mistake. Judy explored stories where the characters had to persevere to overcome adversity whether it was related to physical ability, mental ability, or emotional distress. For instance, Judy engaged the students in discussion about the story *Salt in His Shoes* (Jordan & Jordan, 2000), where Michael Jordan had to persevere to overcome his short height as a hindrance to his ability to play basketball when he was young. Michael Jordan had to persevere and overcome getting teased by another boy about his height and his talent to be a successful ball player.

Are they good teammates?

Who was a good team player in the book?

How is the Dream Team as teammates?

Were his teammates good sports?

What do you think about who was a good team player?

Do you think Froggy was a good team player?

What do you think about them laughing at Froggy?

How did Mia's brother help her be a better team player?

Do you think they are behaving like a team?

Who did we read about last week that didn't give up?

Name someone we studied who held onto their dreams.

Who had perseverance?

Do you think Mark in the story, Salt in His Shoes was a bully?

What was he doing that was a bully?

Why did he treat him like that?

Was anyone a bully in this book?

Did it remind you of any other books where they got picked on because they thought he wasn't a good team player?

FIGURE 4.3. Questions to Examine Collaboration in Literature

This mental and emotional roadblock was a common thread for several characters in other books read and discussed. Judy was able to continue to develop students' examination of power relationships in other texts related to prejudice, bullying, and the lack of teamwork by extending the questions beyond Michael Jordan's experience with bullying.

In the transcript below, Judy's questions fostered connections to other texts where the characters persevered to overcome adversity.

Judy: Do you think Marc in the story Salt in His Shoes was a bully?

All: Yes.

Judy: What was he doing that was a bully? Why did he treat him like

           that?

Student: Because he thought he was bad at playing because he was too

           short.

Judy: Did it remind you of any other books where they got picked on

           because they thought he wasn't a good player?

Several: Mia Hamm.

Bobby: Michael's Golden Rules.

Student: And um, Ms Malarkey was a good team player.

Judy: Who had perseverance?

Matthew: Jackie Robinson.

Bobby: And the person who brought the guy with the brown skin [the

           manager].

Terrance: I think people… Pee Wee Reese had a lot of courage and

           perseverance to stand up for him.

Judy fostered one level of questioning and discussion through examination of

collaboration and teamwork in the literature. In addition to the examination of

collaboration in the text, Judy extended the discussion beyond the text to explore life

lessons learned from the literature as it related to students' lives both in and out of school.

Through the theme of teamwork, these books and the discussion Judy fostered through

her questioning reinforced students' abilities to work together.

From day one of the study, Judy asked students to sit in a circle on the carpet to

highlight the importance of looking at each other during the discussion after reading. By

looking at each other and interacting directly, the teacher believed that this discussion format would elicit more peer response and develop students' communication skills. This was a new arrangement and required some transition time. On the first day of the whole group discussion, Judy used questioning to elicit student thinking and discussion about ways to extend collaboration beyond the text and into the classroom. The first part of the transcript showed how Judy used questioning to connect the events in the text to students' difficulty with moving into the outside circle for discussion on day one.

Judy: This should be easier for us to get in our squares. How can we use what we learned from Mia's book to help us? I know some friends wanted to move because they wanted to sit next to friends. It makes me think of the book. Do any of you have a connection to the book?

Miranda: I have a connection about the book. She wants to win and other people in our class want to sit somewhere else like next to their friends.

Judy: Yes, they are like Mia when she wants to win and they really want to sit there.

Once students settled in the circle arrangement for discussion, Judy continued the conversation by explicitly highlighting ways that students demonstrated good teamwork. She then continued by asking students to consider ways they can apply the lessons learned from the literature about teamwork to their classroom setting. Through the use of open ended questions, Judy created a climate that valued the voice of each student as a contributing member to the classroom.

Judy: I think we have some good team players in our classroom. I

             noticed how some people let other people have turns. And friends

             who are participating is being a good team player too.

Judy: Go ahead Miranda.

Miranda: By being a player and not quitting.

[later in the same discussion…]

Judy: So let's think about how we can use teamwork in our classroom.

             What can we do to have teamwork in our class?

Jordan: I think that if there is something like when we look in the resource

             room to find something missing. We all look and if someone else

             finds it and you really… and…

Judy: I like where you are going Jordan keep going…

Jordan: If someone else finds it and you really wanted to find it you don't

             have to get angry. Say 'I was supposed to find it.'

Judy: Like if someone turned off the lights and if someone else ran over

             there first and turned off the lights. That person probably won't be

             a good team player. How would you respond to that?

Miranda: The teacher asked me to turn off the lights.

Judy: So you can say that to them nicely. Some people who might not be

             a good team player might say… 'no the teacher said I can do it!!!'

             That reminds me of Mia saying 'I quit.' Let's think… how could

             you help a friend if they wanted to quit?

Lauren: You could say um, that um, you loved soccer for a long time so
            don't quit.

Judy: What if we have a friend that is trying to read a word?

Erin: You could say sound it out and you could probably figure it out.

The above discussion demonstrated students' abilities to work cooperatively and encourage their peers. Part of the ability to work together involved students taking turns. On day two of the collaborative discussions, students showed improvement in their abilities to get in the outside discussion circle quickly and quietly. However, when students were invited to share their thinking, many students spoke all at once. Before continuing the conversation, Judy stopped to address students' behavior as noted in the transcript of the whole group discussion below.

Judy: Something to figure out… we did a super job getting in our circle
            but I noticed everyone had something to say at once. How can we
            figure out who goes first and what would be a good way to work it
            out?

Student: We can sit in a circle.

Jessica: We can start with here and go like that and like that [pointing
            around the circle].

Judy: But what if you really have a connection and you are sitting on the
            other side. I don't know. What do you guys think?

Addison: I am thinking that maybe like I let Lauren talk so maybe like
            Lauren start talking then I did then Jessica did then all at the same
            time … I'm thinking that maybe since that happened maybe if

someone starts talking and another does and another does and they

talk at the same time… let the first person go and the second and

the third.

Tony: We can't talk at the same time.

Judy: What if you start talking at the same time?

Addison: You just go from maybe let someone go and then we'll just try it

all again.

Judy's use of questioning invited the voices of students in the problem solving

process. Her open ended questions encouraged student involvement and participation as

valued members of the classroom community. This conversation was important in

fostering students' understanding of working together to be respectful and inclusive with

their peers.

The following conversation suggested that students took the lessons learned from

the whole group discussion of teamwork and applied it to their abilities to work together

during center time.

Excerpt of Reflective Memo 10.13.11

Upon completion of the small group discussion, a couple of the boys from the

group went to their choice center located next to where I was sitting. They were

working together to build a tower when the following conversation took place

between the two students:

Student A: Quitters shouldn't quit.

Student B: We work as a team.

Student A: We use each other's ideas.

Student B: Just like we learned in class.

Questions to foster critical literacy learners. Judy elicited student understanding and deeper thinking by posing a variety of questions during reading and discussion. Judy incorporated a range of questions to help students move from collaborative literacy learners to critical literacy learners. First, Judy asked an array of questions to engage students as readers and ensure student comprehension of the text. Next, inferential and critical questions assisted students with moving beyond surface level of the text to develop empathy, explore issues of fairness (race, gender, bullying), question the author's intent, and take action for social justice. Through the deconstruction of the text, Judy helped her students apply lessons learned in the literature to their lives and issues in the larger world context.

When reading and discussing the books *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990) and *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993), Judy engaged students in exploring the issues of equality and fairness as it related to race. Asking questions, Judy helped students notice clues in the text to build their awareness of the topics of acceptance and fairness. For example, Judy asked basic closed questions such as, "Does it look like they were happy to have [Jackie Robinson] on the team? Were things fair to them? Could [Jackie Robinson] yell back at them? Does that look like a camp that you would like to go to? Does it look like you can leave whenever you want to? Do you think they can be mad that they are there at that camp and can't go back to their home and school just because they are Japanese?" These questions fostered students' awareness of the racial tensions during segregation as well as when the Japanese Americans were placed in internment camps after World War II. The use of more open ended questions elicited increased student

response and comprehension of the text and world events. The following response demonstrated Jordan's emergent level of understanding of the color barrier that created racial chasms in society.

Judy: What barrier do you think Jackie Robinson broke?

Bobby: The outfield.

Jordan: It was the fence that split people up. Those who had dark skin had to go somewhere else than those with light skin.

The discussion of race relations continued during the reading of the book *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993). Judy fostered student understanding of the text and encouraged students to interrogate the text and the historical events depicted in the literature by posing a range of open ended questions. Students were afforded with an equal opportunity to participate in the discussion as active co-constructors of knowledge as a result of these open ended questions. In the following excerpt of discussion transcript, student responses demonstrated their understanding of the emotions that could come about as a result of being taken away from your home against your will, as was the case for the Japanese Americans in the book *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993).

Judy: Why do you think the brother is being mean to the dad?

Jessica: Maybe he's American.

Judy: Well the Americans were being mean to the people from Japan by putting them in places not in their homes. Teddy is also Japanese and he is in that camp with them.

Jessica: Maybe he's mad because he is in there.

[later in the same discussion…]

Judy: Why do you think he's mad when the guy is looking at him?

Lauren: He's mad about that is he is staring at him being that everyone is being mean to him and shouting mean words.

Judy: Do you think they can be mad that they are there at that camp and can't go back to their home and school just because they are Japanese?

Erin: All these people are staring at him and you should go and they embarrassed him and he wants to go but that guy is still staring at him and he can't concentrate.

Jordan: I was thinking because he is soldier and can see over the field and if he looks away, he maybe run away and he's getting mad that he is staring at him the whole time and he can't run away. He doesn't like the kids and [inaudible].

This discussion suggests that students empathized with the characters on an emotional level and considered what kind of action they could take to solve their problem. Judy incorporated follow up questions to elicit deeper responses from her students when she asked them what the author's intent was for writing the book *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993). Rather than using words like power holders and oppressors, Judy asked the students, "Who was mean in this book?" While Bobby successfully answered the question in terms of the context of the text, Terrance's insightful response revealed a critical level of understanding of the text and powerful dominant groups.

Judy: What do you think the author was trying to tell us about this book or teach us?

Bobby: Teach you not to be mean to people.

Judy: Who was mean in this book?

Bobby: The audience and the other players when he was at the camp and the people at school.

Terrance: America. Us. America.

Judy: How was America mean?

Terrance: We put them in the camp.

Students demonstrated understanding of the moral as it related to the book and to the larger world context. Later in the same discussion, Judy asked students to consider the way in which the young Japanese American child was treated both in the internment camp and at home. Through her questioning, Judy extended the conversation to focus on ways in which people are treated unfairly for being different and what action could be taken to foster equality.

Judy: They were being nice because he hit it. Some people were saying that they wouldn't be nice if he didn't hit it. Tony what do you think?

Matthew: The other kids were mean to him because no one wanted to sit with him.

Judy: Yes because he was Japanese and the way he looked. How do you think he felt?

All: Sad.

Judy: What would you do to help him if you saw someone who was sitting alone?

Cory: I would sit with him.

Erin: Me too!

Terrance: I would too!

Jessica: Me too!

Jordan: Yea!

Judy: What if he or she looked different?

Terrance: I would still sit with him.

Student: Yea me too!

Judy: It doesn't matter what you look like, does it?

Tony: No!

Judy: What could you teach someone about this story?

Lauren: If they were because um he um had everyone yelling mean words

              at him and they were all being mean to him because they knew he

              was nice and he was always nice and he had to felt sad.

Judy: I think it was ok for him to be mad because it wasn't fair. What

              does that mean?

Miranda: I think it means that no fair that you have that and I don't.

Erin: If they get to have ice cream and you don't have ice cream but

              your mom said if you really want ice cream mom said no.

Karen: That reminds me of the Sneeches we read last year. Remember

              how some of them had stars and some of them didn't. That was

              unfair that the ones who had stars got stuff and others didn't.

Terrance: It wasn't fair because they were put in a camp because they were

              Japanese.

Judy: Yes that was very unfair. What if someone said you have blue eyes

              you have to go over here and can't live in your house anymore?

When Judy posed this last question, students erupted in conversation about how

that would be unfair to be treated differently based on your eye color. By posing a topic

Judy's students could better relate to, they seemed to internalize the conversation and

related it to their own lives. According to Judy, "I think it is really important especially in

K-1 because really now is the time when they form their ideas about things. Now is the

time when they are making those decisions for themselves. Not just what they are

learning at home but they make their own decisions about what they believe about things.

We can have a big influence getting them to understand those things about fairness. I am

surprised because kids can handle a lot deeper topics than some people may think."

Judy's use of questioning facilitated the discussion and highlighted important points to

deepen students' comprehension.

As Judy mentioned in her post interview, young learners were able to comprehend

complex topics such as racism, prejudice, and inequality. In particular, for a

predominantly homogenous population, with the majority of students being from the

dominant culture, it was necessary to help students empathize and consider alternative

perspectives and situations.

I think I did use the word racism, I brought it up. I think it is definitely something

that they are capable of talking about and I think it is something they can

understand although if they have not been prejudiced against, you have to help

them figure out a way to see what the problem is from another perspective. To put

yourself in those shoes is a challenge for those kids at that age to see that. But I

think they are capable of making those kinds of steps... We did say a little of why

do you think the author wrote these books. I am thinking of the Jackie Robinson

book and the book about the Japanese internment camps. We talked about do you

think this is ok? Why do you think they wrote this? What can we learn from this?

We didn't do it a lot but the kids could definitely respond to it and it is something

they can understand…

FIGURE 4.4: Excerpt from Judy's interview

Judy successfully posed a variety of questions to encourage students to examine

issues of inequity beyond race. These questions assisted students with the examination of

gender norms and stereotypes in the literature and in the larger world context. When

reading and discussing the book *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972), Judy wanted her

students to examine the deeper social stereotypes and norms suggested in the book. By

asking the following questions, Judy was able to encourage students to examine

alternative perspectives and potential reasons behind the characters' actions.

Judy: [Reading: How would you like a basketball? His father said. But
            William wanted a doll.] Why do you think the dad wants to buy
            him a basketball?

Erin: Maybe if the neighbors see him playing with a doll and his dad
            doesn't want them to tease people tease him and say 'sissy sissy
            sissy.'

Judy: So he's trying from keeping him embarrassed and not hurt his

             feelings.

Lauren: Maybe the girl really wanted a basketball and he could swap it.

Judy: That would be fun. You could tell the story that way. Maybe that

             will happen but if not that would be a fun way to tell the story.

             Like the girl we read about in the book with the baseball.

Liam: For him to learn how to play basketball.

Judy: [Reading: And his father brought home a smooth round basketball

             and climbed up a ladder and attached a net to the garage so it went

             through the net. He practiced a lot.] Why do you think William is

             playing with the basketball?

Bobby: Because he likes it and his dad spent money for it.

Judy: Is it ok that he likes basketball even if he wants a doll?

Bobby: Yeah!

Judy: Do you think he still wants a doll?

All: [adamantly] Yeah!

Jessica: Maybe his dad made him play basketball.

Judy: [Reading: He got good at it but it had nothing to do with the doll.

             William still wanted one.] You are right he still wanted a doll.

             Although he was pretty good at basketball. I think he was having

             fun though. [Reading: His father brought him an electric train…]

             Why do you think his dad is buying him a train?

Bobby: For he can change his mind. Then he wouldn't want a doll anymore. But I know he's going to want a doll and his dad is going to keep buying him stuff.

Judy: Good predictions.

[Miranda, Erin, and Lauren and others silently agree with sign language.]

Judy: Dad doesn't sound like he wants him to have a doll.

[Lots of voices]

Matthew: He must have a lot of money!

Judy: [Reading: the tiny train threaded around the tracks…but…]

All: [Reading: He still wanted a doll.]

Judy: [Reading: He wanted a doll to hug and cradle and take to the park. One day his grandma came to visit.]

[Audible gasp]

Judy: I hear some lightbulbs go off. What do you think Shelley?

Shelley: I think the grandma is probably going to buy her I mean him a doll.

[Many students agree with sign language to say, 'me too.']

Judy: Why do you think grandma would do that? A lot of you are saying me too me too.

Jessica: Grandmas are so nice.

Judy: Grandmas do things that take care of you.

Lauren: My grandma comes and takes care of me when my mom and dad are out.

Judy: [Reading: William showed her how he could throw the ball through the net, the electric train…] So he is sharing his things with her. I am sure he is proud of that. [Reading: They went for a walk together and William said but I really want…]

All: [Reading: Is a doll.]

Judy: [Reading: Wonderful said his grandmother.] What did other people say when he wanted a doll? Did daddy get him his doll?

All: No!

Judy: What did his dad get him?

All: Basketball and train set.

Judy: What did his brother say when he wanted a doll? Maybe someone who hasn't talked.

Addison: He said mean things.

Judy: What did the neighbor say when he found out he wanted a doll?

Miranda: Sissy!

Judy: What did grandma say?

Bobby: Great!

Judy: How do you think William felt?

[Many voices]

Student: Surprised!

Student: Happy!

Terrance: Astonished!

Judy: What does astonished mean?

Terrance: Surprised!

Gabe: Excuse me... I was thinking his grandma already had a doll and she is going to wrap it up and give it as a present.

Judy: That is a smart idea. You are doing so much predicting. I think William must be feeling pretty yucky and probably feels like there is something wrong with him wanting a doll. [Reading: She went to the store and chose a baby doll… William loved it right away.]

Judy: I wonder what William's dad will think.

Jessica: He's going to be really mad.

Student: He'll get in trouble.

Sean: He will be confused because her got him a doll.

Erin: His dad didn't get him a doll because he didn't want people to say mean things to him.

Judy: Do you think people would say mean things to him if he had a doll?

Shelley: Nooo!

Several Students: Yes!

Judy: Sometimes people say things, like Katy Casey the girl who wanted to play baseball and people said mean things like girls can't play baseball. You might break a nail. So you think dad might be worried. Let's see. [Reading: His father was upset.]

Erin and several other students: [Audible gasp]

As the above whole group discussion shows, the students in Judy's class began to examine and question gender norms and stereotypes. Although William's father insisted that William have more masculine related toys such as a basketball or a train, Judy's students believed that William was entitled to play with a doll.

Judy's questions propelled student thinking to examine such gender stereotypes. For example, when she asked, "Why do you think the dad wants to buy him a basketball?" Bobby replied that he did so in an effort to protect William from getting teased. Bobby's comment suggested that while William's father did not accept William's desire for a doll, people in general would not accept it and would therefore taunt William as a result. Later, when asked why they thought the father bought William a train, Bobby responded that William's dad was attempting to change his mind from wanting a doll. Bobby's comments implied that not only did William's father disapprove, but he also wanted William to change his interests to be more socially acceptable. Jessica and another student stated that William's father will be mad that grandma bought him a doll and that he will get in trouble as a result. Judy's questioning assisted students to look at the role of William's father as it pertained to the perpetration of gender stereotypes and norms in the book *William's Doll*. When asked what the author, Charlotte Zolotow's message was, one of Judy's students responded by saying, "to learn that things are no boy stuff or girl stuff but that they can be both." Ironically, this was the same student who did not want to read *Dream Big Little Pig* (Yamaguchi, 2011) because it was a 'girly' book. Perhaps, students in Judy's class have become more open minded and acceptable of alternative perspectives by reading and discussing the theme of gender norms.

William's Doll (Zolotow, 1972) addressed the issue of gender norms and pointed out that bullying is prevalent in situations in which social norms are not followed. For instance, when the neighbors discovered that William wanted a doll, they called him names such as "sissy".

The topic of bullying came up in several other books Judy read and discussed with her students. Judy addressed the topic of bullying in the literature by asking students questions to encourage them to build empathy towards the character being bullied and to consider characters' positions of power. The following small group discussion demonstrated how the teacher's questions led students to empathize with the character Sassy from the book, *Dancing in the Wings* (Allen, 2000).

Small Group Discussion Transcript 11.2.11

Judy:	[Reading: My heart seemed to stand still. For once I had nothing to say. I couldn't hide the tears… I ran to the parking lot.] What do you think about those girls saying those things?
William:	She feels s-a-d.
Tony and Erin:	S-a-d.
William:	We've been talking about judging and they are judging her because she is tall.
Judy:	And because of her feet.
Erin:	Really really s-a-d!
Judy:	Even though their skin is the same color and they are all girls and there are some boys dancing, she is taller and they are picking on

her because she is different. Remember how we talked about bullies. Do you think they are bullies?

All:	Uh huh!
William:	Everyone is different.
Miranda:	They are almost as tall as the teacher.
William:	Everyone is the world is different.
Judy:	I think it is good everyone is different. It would be boring if we weren't.

Small Group Discussion Transcript 11.2.11

Judy:	Yea but she couldn't be on the stage because she's too tall. How do you think she feels?
All:	Sad.
Matthew:	Kind of happy and kind of sad…
Judy:	Do you think she feels happy because she is dancing? But I think she is sad because she is left out. [Reading: I couldn't hide the tears… I ran to the parking lot.] So how do you think that made her feel?
All:	Sad.
All:	Very sad.
Judy:	What do you think?
Jessica:	Makes her feel like kind of sad.
Liam:	Sad.
Matthew:	Most sad.

Jessica: Sad and mad at them.

Lauren: …and she starts crying.

Small Group Discussion Transcript 11.3.11

Judy: Why was she dancing in the wings?

Erin: Remember when she said I have to stay back stage because she is

                   tall and because the boys can't pick her up.

Judy: So she just had to watch. How do you think that made her feel?

All: Sad!

Bobby: Sad and left out.

Kaitlyn: Maybe angry.

Polly: Maybe if there was a boy who was bigger he could pick her up and

                   she would feel happy or better.

Judy asked a range of additional questions to promote critical thinking (see

FIGURE 4.5). Judy engaged students in the application of events and situations in the

text by encouraging them to make connections by asking a range of questions such as:

Did this book remind you of anything? Has that happened to anyone before? Does that

remind you of anything else we read? Did it remind you of a time you had to persevere?

Does anyone have any connections to home, or community, school, or world? According

to Judy, the specific use of questions to elicit connections helped students engage in this

type of thinking. She stated, "When we made an effort to say, "What does that remind

you of in your life," they were saying personal things they noticed in their life." These

questions led to increased student connections.

What advice do you have for…?

What could they have done differently?

How does this book show the issue of fairness?

What do you think the author was trying to tell us or teach us about the book?

Why do you think the illustrator did that?

How could you teach someone about this story?

If you see someone doing the wrong thing… what would you do?

FIGURE 4.5. Sample Critical Literacy Questions Posed by the Teacher

The teacher influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners through the establishment and facilitation of a physical and psychological space that supports free democratic speaking. The teacher incorporated a range of think alouds, including connections, wonderings, and explanations in additional to posing a range of questions. The discussion and teacher modeling encouraged students to examine important social and historical issues such as teamwork and discrimination. The teacher's think alouds and the open space for discussion fostered students' critical thinking and engagement with complex issues in the text. The next section will explore the second finding revealed through the analysis of the data.

Second Finding: The Literature Influenced Students as Collaborative and Critical

Literacy Learners

The literature influenced students in the following ways: collaboration, examination of issues of equality as it pertained to race, gender, and bullying. First, I will describe how the literature influenced students as collaborative literacy learners. Next, I will illustrate how the literature influenced students as critical literacy learners.

The Literature Influenced Students as Collaborative Literacy Learners

Students were familiar with the book, *Froggy Played Soccer* (London, 1999). This book is part of a series that is popular with young readers. In the story, the main character Froggy accidentally caught the soccer ball with his hands which is against the rules of the game. As a result, his team laughed at him and left him feeling sad. Judy's students empathized with Froggy and discussed the fact that everyone makes mistakes and his team should not have laughed at him. For example, Kaitlyn stated, "But that's ok. Everyone makes mistakes… even my mom." Erin added, "A not team player was when the other team… laughed at his mistake and it's ok if you make mistakes. People laughed at his mistake. It makes me embarrassed." Kaitlyn replied, "But he tried hard to make the ball go in."

Other students also commented on this event in the text as well. Terrance suggested that "everyday of your life you make mistakes." He continued, "The Dream Team wasn't a good sport. They laughed and were really really mean to Froggy when he used his hands." Gabe stated that when "Froggy touched the ball and his friends laughed, that was not a good sport." In another book club discussion, Lauren discussed the fact that Froggy was a good team player because he didn't get mad when he made mistakes."

These comments demonstrated students' understanding of the theme of the book. Students suggested that the author wanted to teach the reader about teamwork and "not to laugh at your friends when you make a mistake." Students understood the lesson in the book, empathized, and made connections to their own lives. When Froggy's friends laughed at him, Bobby commented, "That makes me sad. He was embarrassed." Jordan continued, "They were not good teammates." Kaitlyn replied, "I hate embarrassment." Kaitlyn explained, "One time I accidentally did that to my friend. One time she is my

neighbor and we were on my friend's trampoline. She fell and I started laughing. Then I

felt bad for her. We shouldn't laugh at people. She's only five and I am almost seven."

Judy's students made connections with the events in the text as it related to their own

lives, helping them to learn valuable life lessons about collaboration from the literature.

Erin: When I play tennis, I know the right steps but sometimes I make

             mistakes and I accidentally turn all the way around.

Bobby: I make mistakes a lot. I felt a little good because I tried my best.

Lauren: I think that one time in my soccer with Polly, I was trying to kick

             the ball on my feet and I kicked it into the goal and someone

             blocked the goal and took it away. But it was someone from my

             team. I turned around and shoot it in the other goal.

Liam: It happened one time on William's team playing. My brother,

             William. He shot the wrong goal because he stealed the ball. That

             happened on Adam's team one time.

Lauren: One time at soccer, Polly was talking to me when they were saying

             which goal to kick and Polly kicked it into the wrong goal.

Students examined the importance of encouraging others in addition to having

fun while engaging in sports. When discussing *Winners Never Quit* (Hamm, 2004),

Jessica stated that she "would keep saying nice things about [Mia]" if she kept saying

she'd quit. In response to Froggy's mistake in the book *Froggy Plays Soccer* (London,

1999) students suggested that they would treat Froggy differently if they were on his

team. For instance, Lauren stated, "I would come over to him and say that it's ok. If you

get it then try not to use your hands. Try to pass it to me and I will get a goal." Tony

added, "I'd tell him we'd get it next time." Students pointed out ways that the characters showed encouragement in other books as well. Jordan shared how the characters in *Michael's Golden Rules* (Jordan & Jordan, 2007) were a good team because they said things like, "Good hit and good swing." Matthew shared that they cheered for the character when he hit the ball in Baseball Saved Us and students also chanted "Wilma! Wilma! Wilma!" to cheer on Wilma Rudolph in the book *Wilma Unlimited* (Krull, 1996) when she overcame major adversity to win the Olympic 100 meter dash. Beyond the text, students made connections to times when someone encouraged them in their lives. For example, Erin shared how her mom cheered for her when she rode a bike, her sister encouraged her to play the piano, and her friends at school cheered for her on the monkey bars. Jordan shared how his neighbor comes to his games to cheer for him. Bobby stated that his parents encourage him to read. In addition, Jessica added that her sister helps her read and write and taught her to tell time. Each of these instances demonstrated ways that Judy's students made connections to the text and life lessons related to teamwork and working together.

Students demonstrated their understanding of collaboration through the use of literature as a springboard for discussion. In addition to the conversations mentioned above, students engaged in discussion about ways to exhibit teamwork by working together, sharing, and helping others. Judy's class discussed the importance of working together as a team as it related to the literature read, and ways they work as a team in their own lives. Students demonstrated teamwork by taking turns to engage in whole group discussion, book club, and working together to sound out words to read and write. For instance, Erin stated, "When we put our hand out and talk about books and we sit

together it is like teamwork." Liam explained that by participating in book clubs, "you are always together and are a team." Bobby explained, "We are part of a team, too. Everything is connected." This statement suggested that students see themselves as a connected unit and class community.

The literature read and discussed fostered additional examples of what it meant to work together as a team and a class. Gabe made several connections to the importance of sharing as a form of teamwork. Specifically Gabe described how he shared a stuffed animal with a friend and when he donated a Scooby Doo toy to his old neighbor. Other students made connections to teamwork as helping others. When asked what it means to be a good sport Miranda replied, "to be helpful." Students suggested a myriad of ways they work as a teammate to be helpful.

Lauren:	This one is when I pick up all the trash in the community. It is being helpful and I worked hard to pick it up.
Erin:	People are helping each other at school… and I help my dad get the mail.
Kaitlyn:	I help my mom and dad pack when they go out of town. This is our class sitting in the circle.
Polly:	I was playing soccer with my sister and we were playing with my dad and he passed it to me and my sister tripped and I gave her a hand. This is me helping my mom get the trash out and this is me helping [the school's custodial staff] getting the trash out.
Erin:	By taking the trash out and pick up litter.

Students applied valuable lessons including working together to share, help others, and treat others kindly to their own lives in and out of the classroom.

The topic of perseverance was another main theme in the literature read and discussed in Judy's classroom. Judy's students defined perseverance as "standing up for yourself," "it takes courage," and "a goal you are trying to do." Throughout the study students highlighted ways a variety of characters across books demonstrated perseverance, as well connections to their own lives. First, Mia Hamm showed perseverance in the book *Winners Never Quit* (Hamm, 2004). As Lauren mentioned, "They got together by Mia never quits and she at the end how they were a good team and they got along because she never quitted whether she got a goal at the end." Michael Jordan had perseverance in the book *Salt in His Shoes* (Jordan & Jordan, 2000). "He followed his dream of being a really good basketball player." According to Gabe, "Michael Jordan followed his dreams and was a good sport." Students also thought Althea Gibson was a person who was a good sport. Polly explained that Althea "was brave when she did it." Erin suggested, "When she said she wanted to be someone she wanted to get better at it and the other people were good and she wanted to be good at it." The book *Wilma Unlimited* (Krull, 1996) also depicted a character that persevered to overcome challenges in her life. The story described Wilma Rudolph's triumph to walk again and eventually win three gold medals in the Olympics after being crippled from polio as a young child. Kaitlyn explained that "I think she was brave when she tried to walk without her brace." The fictitious character of Sassy from the book *Dancing in the Wings* (Allen, 2000) also had to work hard to follow her dreams of becoming a successful dancer. Judy's students suggested that the author's purpose of this book was to teach the

reader to "try our hardest," "try our best," "have perseverance," and "have courage." According to Erin, "She had a lot of courage because she tried and tried and tried." Miranda stated that she "like the part when she followed her dreams and tried and tried." The main character in the book *Dream Big Little Pig* (Yamaguchi, 2011) also illustrated working hard to persevere. In this book, the main character never gave up even when others discouraged her.

Polly: Her dream was to be a star.

Matthew: To be an ice skater star.

Gabe: That is her dream. She loves skating.

Jordan: She is chasing a dream.

Student: Like Michael's Golden Rules.

Erin: Chasing a dream that Michael Jordan be bigger and to play
            basketball better and be tall.

Students were able to make similar connections to their own lives by discussing the various ways characters illustrated perseverance. For instance, Kaitlyn described her connection to *Dream Big Little Pig*. "My connection is when I started to learn how to swim and I could only swim in two feet of water and now I can swim in five or six. It took courage for me. I started with a life jacket but I don't wear it anymore. She had courage. Courage is forcing yourself to do something. She forced herself to try different things. I had to have courage at school because it was the first time meeting my teacher. I didn't know her and I had courage." Students also connected to the theme of perseverance through examples such as word study at school, learning to ride a bike, learning to dance, playing soccer, playing tennis, and playing video games. In the

following figures, examples of students' written connections are illustrated related to the

books read and discussed in class.

Wilma Unlimited		I am working hard to try to play tennis in a match. You have to work hard to play tennis against big kids.
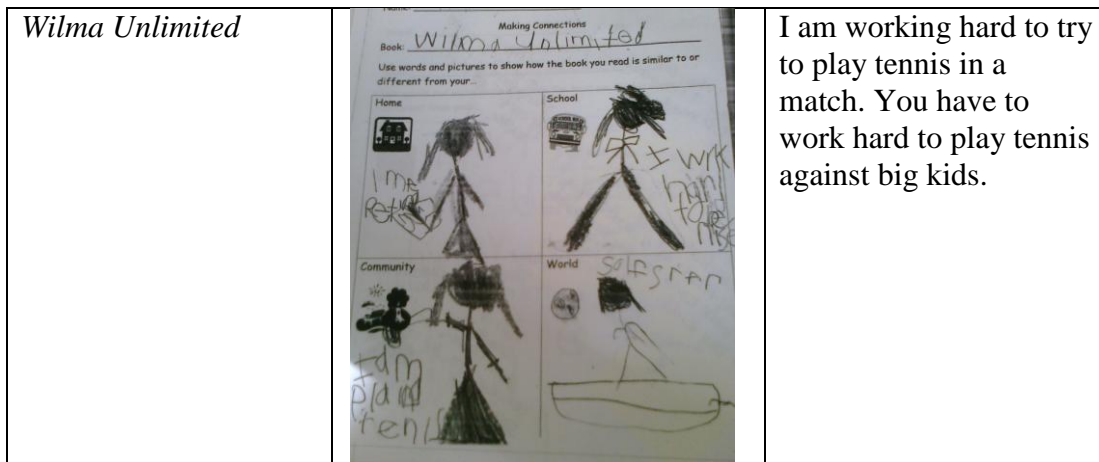
FIGURE 4.6. Kaitlyn's connections

Salt in His Shoes		I tried my ripstick and I keep falling off but I rode it. It is blue and you step on it and you wiggle. At school, once I was playing basketball and I was the only one who wasn't shoot a goal but I did. I tried basketball and I did not give up. I couldn't get a goal but then I did! I never gave up! When I first got to basketball, I couldn't score a goal but I did!
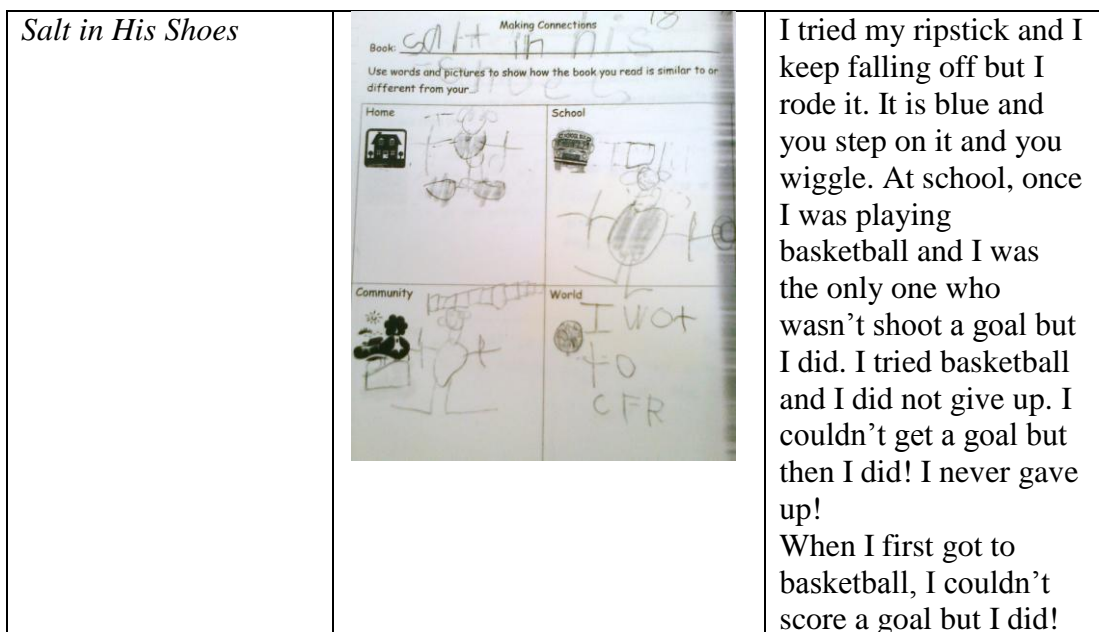
FIGURE 4.7. Cory's connections

| *Winners Never Quit* | | I am playing Mario Kart. I am trying to get first place. |
| *Salt in His Shoes* | | I completed a video game and it was hard. There was this hard level with a boulder that you have to jump on but it stays up because you are trying to do it twice. And the second one is longer so you have more chainsaws and lava than the second one. I did it yesterday! |

FIGURE 4.8. Terrance's connections

The Literature Influenced Students as Critical Literacy Learners

A variety of discussion topics and student connections were elicited from the literature. In addition to influencing students as collaborative literacy learners, students also engaged in discussions of topics related to equality. More specifically, the literature influenced students as critical literacy learners as they examined issues such as race, gender, and bullying. Many students were engaged in reading and discussing the book *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990). This story depicted life in America in a different time period with which Judy's students were familiar. The book described the challenges Jackie Robinson faced when he broke the color barrier in baseball during segregation.

The students discussed the racial inequities that existed during that time and made connections to Martin Luther King Jr.

Matthew: The dark skinned can't go in the church. They have to sleep in the car.

Gabe: It reminded me of when we talked about that too when they did that when Martin Luther King Jr. was alive. They had dark skin and light skin apart.

Judy: Segregation. Yes. Great points!

Sean: I think Jackie Robinson had courage. The guys were signing the sheet and he was still being a team player.

Erin: When they couldn't go to hotels and when the black people were sad and the guy was friends with the black person [Pee Wee Reese], he had a lot of courage to go over to him.

Liam: The people were like [Liam demonstrates an audible gasp] because the white person was holding to the black person [Liam demonstrates a hug].

[later in the discussion]

Judy: Who had perseverance?

Matthew: Jackie Robinson.

Bobby: And the person who brought the guy with the brown skin [referring to Branch Rickey the Dodger's manager].

Terrance: I think Pee Wee Reese had a lot of courage and perseverance to stand up for him.

Matthew: The people yelled at Jackie Robinson. The other team want him to be on the other team.

Judy: When Jackie Robinson broke the barrier, Satchel Paige came back and played in his forties because he couldn't play before and once Jackie Robinson broke the barrier, he could.

Gabe: The story reminded me of Martin Luther King Jr. because they said all those mean stuff to him and killing him. Like Martin Luther King Jr. when they shot him.

This conversation illustrated the development of students' understanding of racial inequities as a result of reading and discussing the book *Teammates*. According to Sean, "Teammates was my favorite because it was nice. He had dark skin. His teammate was a good sport and was nice and not get mad if people are being mean." Nate stated, "Teammates was my favorite book because it teaches people to be way more nicer. Pee Wee Reese had a friend who was black and the other people didn't like it because they weren't supposed to be friends. The white people weren't supposed to be friends with the black people. We broke the barrier now. He changed the world. Pee Wee Reese showed us that black people are allowed to play with white people in baseball and in life." Students also discussed the topic of breaking the color barrier came after reading *Nothing but Trouble: The Story of Althea Gibson* (Stauffacher, 2007). This book described how Althea Gibson broke the color barrier as the first African American woman in tennis when everyone except for one person seemed to doubt her. Although Althea was a good tennis player, she was not viewed as an equal. Polly made this connection, as was evident in her comment, "I thought that she was good at sports. All the time she got a lot of

awards… they wouldn't let her with dark skin. She couldn't play there for sports." Later in the discussion, Judy explained that modern day tennis pros, Serena and Venus Williams, would not be able to play tennis today if it was not for Althea Gibson breaking the color barrier. The following conversation about segregation ensued as it related to the text and to the students' world today:

Judy: What do you think I mean by a color barrier?

Jordan: It's like a fence. It breaks the barrier from brown skin so Polly or Erin wouldn't be here if she didn't break the barrier.

Judy: So you are saying it is a thing that kept them apart because of their skin color? Was it a real thing?

Jordan: It is like a fence in their minds.

Addison: Like the same as Jordan. If some people had to sit in the back of the bus and some had to sit in the front because of their skin color. And if all of your seats were taken you'd have to stand up. It wasn't fair.

Erin: And they had to go to different restaurants and the brown people couldn't go in the restaurant and the white people could and it wasn't fair to the brown people to have to stay in their cars.

Jordan's comment suggested his awareness of the fact that two of his peers today would not have been accepted as a result of the color of their skin. Judy's students continued the discussion of fairness throughout the reading and discussion of other literature. For instance, when reading *Wilma Unlimited* (Krull, 1996), students discussed the challenges Wilma faced trying to find a medical care provider who treated African

Americans. As a result, Wilma's family had to travel great distances to find medical treatment. The racism that Wilma Rudolph faced reminded students of other examples of inequities. According to Erin, "I like Wilma Rudolph. I know she had courage because she broke her leg and had a brace... Her family had courage when they went to the doctors because their seats were taken and they had to stand up. They had to go in the back because their skin was brown. That is unfair." Moreover, in reading and discussing the book *Baseball Saved Us*, students examined racism against Japanese Americans. The conversation about fairness began in the literal sense, in terms of instances of a lack of fairness that students could relate to. However, Terrance seemed to grasp the notion of inequity as it related to racism in the book *Baseball Saved Us*.

Judy: It wasn't fair. What does that mean?

Miranda: I think it means no fair that you have that and I don't.

Erin: If they get to have ice cream and you don't have ice cream but your mom said if you really want ice cream and mom said no.

Karen: That reminds me of the Sneeches we read last year. Remember how some of them had stars and some didn't. That was unfair that the ones who had stars got stuff and others didn't.

Terrance: It wasn't fair because they were put in a camp because they were Japanese.

Judy: Yes that was very unfair. What if someone said you have blue eyes. You have to go over here and can't live in your house anymore.

[Students erupted in comments such as "that's not fair" and "I wouldn't like that."]

Later Terrance stated that *Baseball Saved Us* was his favorite book. Terrance explained that the author's purpose for writing the book was "to teach us that if they want to come somewhere, let them come. Anybody. Because if they are from a different country we should be nice." The literature influenced students to consider the ways in which fairness extended beyond their own experiences. Furthermore, students were critical literacy learners by examining issues of injustice and how that related to the world around them. Bobby's written connection demonstrates the topic of inequality (see FIGURE 4.9).

Bobby: I am doing be nice. Some people in the story weren't nice… like the baseball people.	
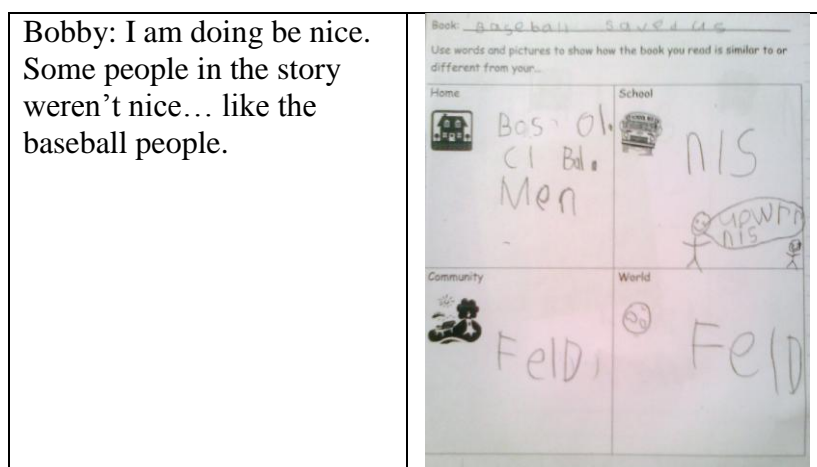
FIGURE 4.9. Bobby's Connection

The literature influenced students as critical literacy learners through reading and dialogue related to gender norms and stereotypes in addition to the examination of racial inequality. When Judy first introduced the book, *Dream Big Little Pig* (Yamaguchi, 2011), she was met with resistance from some of the male students. Upon introduction of the text, a few students sighed while others explicitly stated, "It is girlish because it looks like it is about a girl pig." William reacted with a look of disapproval followed by a

drawn out, "Oh no! I'm not reading this book!" Cory agreed, "Me neither!" When probed about this reaction, some of the girls in the group responded by saying, "It's a ballerina pig. They don't like them… girly stuff." In another book club group discussion, Matthew exclaimed, "Boys don't wear tutus. They can't! They can't! They can't!" Students had similar reactions when Judy introduced *Dancing in the Wings* (Allen, 2000) to her small group book clubs. Cory exclaimed, "Oh no! Not that one! Not ballet!" Bobby's initial reaction was, "That looks like a girl book." Bobby's comment about supermodels when reading *Dream Big Little Pig* illustrated another example of the gender divide. According to Bobby, "[supermodels] is mostly what girls do. They dress up and try to look fabulous." When asked what they knew about charm school as referenced in the book *Players in Pigtails* (Corey, 2003), William replied, "Ladies do it." These comments and reactions suggested students' knowledge of established gender norms. Through the reading and discussion of these two books in addition to *Players in Pigtails* (Corey, 2003) and *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972), students moved from acceptance of gender norms to challenging them and developing a sense of gender equality.

During the reading of *Dream Big Little Pig* (Yamaguchi, 2011) two male peers responded to Matthew's comment that "boys don't wear tutus, " suggesting that it is acceptable for boys to be dancers. First Liam stated, "My mom told me boys have to be strong to be dancers." Next Terrance explained, "Some football players they do ballet. And can I tell you something? At the Steelers game, this guy did a ballet move to score a touchdown!" Another group discussed the role of males in dance when reading *Dancing in the Wings* (Allen, 2000). According to Gabe, "Boys have to pick up the girls and lift them in the air." Bobby stated, "I saw cheerleaders and boys helping them." While these

comments continued to suggest gender roles, it appeared that students were more accepting of males in traditionally female dominated roles.

Polly noticed the use of color in the illustrations during the reading and discussion of *Dream Big Little Pig* (Yamaguchi, 2011). "She's wearing pink and purple." At first, when Judy asked students if boys could wear pink and purple, many of these firmly replied, "No!" However, Terrance spoke up and stated, "Yes, because I wore purple before." When reading *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972), Erin commented, "My brother likes pink" and Tony stated, "I wear purple. Purple is awesome!" These comments suggested that students challenged gender stereotypes and their social acceptability. After reading the aforementioned books, Judy introduced the book *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972) in the whole group setting. Then she asked the same question: "Can boys were pink?" This time students unanimously agreed. Judy asked a series of similar questions and most students believed that girls were capable of doing traditionally relegated boy activities such as playing with cars and boys could engage in domestic tasks like cooking. However, when she asked if boys should play with dolls, several of Judy's male students firmly disagreed and others looked to their peers to determine how to respond.

After reading *William's Doll*, students illustrated the importance of treating each other with respect, even if someone likes dolls or toys allocated as "girl toys" or "boy toys." They discussed unfair gender stereotypes and made connections to the book. During the whole group discussion, students enthusiastically engaged in sharing connections and ways in which they or someone they knew challenged gender norms. Once students began sharing, there was a flutter of disclosure of their own connections. The following conversation took place during discussion of the text *William's Doll*:

Jessica: My friend Jarrod has a doll and he doesn't care because he likes the doll and he thinks it's cool and he likes to dress it up like a boy.

Shelley: My friend Mikey is going to get a doll.

Lauren: My neighbor he once asked me if I wanted to play Cinderella and he played Cinderella too.

Addison: I'm saying like in the book I like to play with cars and we have a whole box of trains at home. But we don't take them out often.

Judy: People used to think that those are boy toys.

Kaitlyn: My friend Tracy likes all kinds of sports and her favorite is baseball.

Terrance: I'll let Shelley go first.

Shelley: When I was a kid I loved superheroes and a lot of people think superheroes are just for boys.

Judy: Good point. I was thinking about Star Wars.

Student: I love Star Wars.

Terrance: That my sister likes Legos.

Erin: I like Legos.

Jennifer: My brother, he likes to play with girls.

Judy: Boys in here like to play with girls too.

Sean: I still play with Thomas trains and my sister plays with me.

Addison: I like Star Wars a lot.

Student: I like it too!

Student: Me too!

Addison: I can't stop watching it because it is my favorite show.

Jordan: My cousin Lilly likes to play with me with superheroes and rescue heroes and a lot of that stuff. We like to play with dump trucks and…

Judy: When my son was little, he wanted a doll house for Christmas and that is what Santa brought him. We had some friends though said I can't believe you let Santa bring him a dollhouse. Boys don't play with doll houses.

Tony: Yes they can.

Judy: Some of our friends thought it was wrong.

Jennifer: Some people think that Dora is for babies but it really isn't.

Lauren: I like Dr. Who and it is a grown up show.

Judy: Yes as long as it is ok with your parents and you like it.

Lauren: My baby cousin we have to watch Dora all of the time and I still even like Dora.

Student: I like Dora too!

Student: Me too!

Liam: My friend Steph likes boy stuff.

Karen: I was thinking of my son whose sister loves Lil Pet Shop and he really likes to play with that too.

Lauren: My next door neighbor loves Lil Pet Shop and when he comes over he always asks if I want to play.

Tony: My sister still sleeps with a baby doll and some people say that is

               like a baby.

Terrance: I still sleep with a blanket.

Students: Me too!

Bobby: I still sleep with my blanket.

This conversation and students' written connections (see FIGURE 4.10),

illustrated how students challenged their initial perceptions about gender norms as a

result of reading and discussing the book, *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972).

Book: William's Doll Use words and pictures to show how the book you read is similar to or different from your... **Home** One time I siaed I like Cars Then my fiend Siaed your **School** be Nies to Evre Wen **Community** Sumer Riley with Sumthing **World** Dot Tel Sumone Wul to	Jessica: I like cars and my friend across the street said, "no cars are for boys and you don't need to have cars."

FIGURE 4.10. Connections to *William's Doll*

	Lauren: On the playground, someone said tire swings aren't for girls. They think only boys like to be dizzy and girls could get hurt.
	Cole: I still like Lil Pet Shop from my cousin's house because they are animals and I like animals. This is the doll house from kindergarten and I like to play with it.
	Lauren: My sister said dolls aren't for boys. On the playground, someone said tire swings aren't for girls. Only boys can get dizzy and girls can get hurt. I heard that a long time ago only boys could vote.

FIGURE 4.10. Cont'd

	Erin: I like Legos. Some people think it is a boy thing. I like Bayblades. I love soccer. I like baseball.
	Kaitlyn: My brother likes gymnastics. People on the monkey bars think it is for boys. I still snuggle with my stuffed animal dog.
	Terrance: I still sleep with my blanket at home. The world is caring.

FIGURE 4.10. Cont'd

| | Gabe: I wanted to play Lil Pet Shop with Claire but I did and her brother laughed at me. This is her brother in a different story. This is flag football. She is a girl and this is a boy and it says, girls can't play flag football. I think that is mean because anyone can play it. They have to sign up and pay for it though. He is jumping up and down because he is excited he is getting a doll. |
| | Shelley: I had a Spiderman cake and a lot of people think it is just for boys. Sometimes people are really mean to other people. |

FIGURE 4.10. Cont'd

Students deepened their understanding that everyone has different likes and dislikes and should be treated equally and respectfully. After reading *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972), students, including males, seemed to be more accepting of boys who played with traditionally female oriented toys such as dolls. For instance, Bobby admitted that he played dolls with the girls who live across the street from him. During a later reading and discussion of a book with a similar theme, students seemed more open to acceptance of variation from gender norms. Judy explained, "We read also a book…in our art unit called Max, I think that is what it is called. It is about a boy who takes ballet lessons and he is like a little baseball player and his sister takes ballet and he decides he

wants to take ballet. The kids were so open to it and it seemed like it wasn't a new idea since it is something we talked about already." William also had a changed attitude about the ability of females later in a discussion about gender equality when reading the book *Players in Pigtails*.

In the story *Players in Pigtails*, the main character, Katy, who loved baseball, tried out for the team every spring, but was turned away each time. Judy's students clearly noted that this was due to her gender. As Tony said, "It's because she's a girl." Bobby also commented, "I think they mean that girls can't play baseball." Jessica stated, "Girls can play baseball!" The following conversation shows the awareness of the lack of gender equity:

Judy:	How does this book show the issue of fairness?
Erin:	People weren't allowed to do things.
Wiliam:	Katy Casey couldn't play baseball.
Miranda:	It wasn't fairness for her the first time [when they weren't allowed to play].
Tony:	I was surprised she hit a grand slam because they kept saying girls aren't good at it.
Judy:	Can girls be as good as boys?
William:	Of course!
Erin:	She can't do girly things good.
Judy:	Do you think the boys thought it was ok for the girls?
Miranda:	No because that is why they didn't let them before.

Armed with this awareness of the lack of equality for women, students also examined how action could be taken to foster change. Students thought that the phrase, "girls were good for baseball" from the book *Players in Pigtails* meant that they were good because "they are different." The students considered the author's intent and message in writing this book.

Judy:	What is the author's message to us?
Jordan:	Because they were saying that back then all of the boys had to leave so baseball they didn't think girls could play a lot of sports. They wanted to say that girls can play sports.
Polly:	It reminds me of Mia Hamm. I think the book was good because girls can do anything!
Addison:	… it was about girls not being in sports. That girls can play sports. Not just boys. The girls got to play.

As Polly stated, "Girls can do anything!" These books have influenced students to examine and challenge gender stereotypes. During a discussion of how women played baseball in the story *Players in Pigtails* (Corey, 2003), Tony commented, "And now some girls are in the Army." Lauren replied, "They can even be football players. My sister plays flag football." Judy continued reading, "They were playing just as good as the boys" when Erin remarked, "or maybe better!" Erin's comment suggested that she has challenged the gender stereotypes that males are better at sports. As this conversation continued, several female students remarked about how they also played sports, suggesting that it is acceptable for girls. Furthermore, Bobby made a deeper connection to some of the themes from literature previously discussed. When asked why he liked the

book *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972) Bobby stated, "The doll one. It is mostly about courage. We weren't learning about sports as much. We were really learning about courage and teamwork. It took courage for him not to get mad in *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972). It took courage to not get mad when people said he couldn't have a doll." Judy's students developed a deeper understanding of the text as well as the social issues represented by the literature. Students fostered their abilities as critical literacy learners by peeling back the layers of meaning as it related to the text, society, and their lives.

Students also developed critical literacy skills through the exploration of the issue of power relationships as it related to bullying in the literature. During the first week of the study, Judy read the book *Michael's Golden Rule* (Jordan & Jordan, 2007). Students discussed which characters were good teammates and who did not act like a team player. Bobby suggested that one of the characters was not a team player because "he wanted to be the hero" and did not want the other character Jonathan, to play because he was not playing well. Immediately, Jessica responded, "It's like being a bully. They bully you around and make fun of you. Push you. Kick you." Lauren continued, "Say mean words…" Liam added, "Also, punch you." Gabe replied, "They say dum-dum." In a later conversation, Judy's students continued to describe bullies.

Matthew:	She's a bully, right Jessica?
Jessica:	It's a mean person.
Liam:	They punch them and pick on them.
Sean:	They're mean to people and they pick on them.
Polly:	They pick on them.

Lauren explained that the character of Marc in the story *Michael's Golden Rules* was a bully "because he thought [Jonathan] was bad at playing because he was too short." The power relationships between the characters and their actions in this book and the other texts fostered student connections and discussion of the concept of bullying and the way we treat others. It was evident that at the young age of six and seven, these children had prior knowledge and experiences with being bullied.

When students examined who was being bullied in the literature, the themes of difference and lack of acceptance were revealed. In the book *Dancing in the Wings* (Allen, 2000), students claimed that Sassy was treated differently because "She's the biggest one" and "She is a lot taller than the other girls." Sassy was excluded because of her size and was left to dance in the wings.

Jennifer: She said I have to stay back stage because she is tall and because the boys can't pick her up.

Judy: So she just had to watch. How do you think that made her feel?

All: Sad!

Bobby: Sad and left out.

Kaitlyn: Maybe angry.

Polly: Maybe if there was a boy who was bigger he could pick her up and she would feel happy or better.

Miranda: She don't get to do what they are doing.

Erin: That is why she is s-a-d [spelled out the word]. She is the tallest.

While the character of Sassy was ostracized for being different, she used her difference as a strength to stand out and be noticed. She was true to herself and did not

conform to norms by wearing the required black leotard. Instead, Sassy wore a bright

yellow leotard to be noticed. As William stated, "She already made her mark by not

wearing yellow. And maybe if she doesn't go to the back." Miranda replied, "Everyone

wanted to wear black… was supposed to wear black and she weared yellow."

Unfortunately, the other dancers were still mean to Sassy. The student connected

emotionally with the way Sassy was treated by responding that they felt sad for her. As

Matthew pointed out, even her brother teased and bullied her as well. The following

conversation transpired about acceptance of others in one of the book club discussions:

Judy:	What do you think about those girls saying those things?
William:	She feels s-a-d [spelled out sad].
Erin and Tony:	S-a-d [spelled out sad].
William:	We've been talking about judging and they are judging her because she is tall.
Judy:	And because of her feet.
Erin:	Really really s-a-d.
Judy:	Even though their skin is the same color and they are all girls… she is taller and they are picking on her because she is different. Remember how we talked about bullies? Do you think they are bullies?
All:	Uh huh!
William:	Everyone is different. Everyone in the world is different.
Judy:	I think it is good everyone is different. It would be boring if we weren't.

William suggested the Sassy was treated poorly because the other dancers judged her as being different. Lauren also discussed this concept during an informal conversation we had during independent work. When I asked her why she thought people were mean to others, she replied, "They are shy sometimes. Or they think by your voice or how you look that you look weird and aren't a friend." Lauren's comment demonstrated her perception of how people are judged on surface level features. Students also discussed how jealously played a role in the negative treatment of Sassy because "she can jump so high." Students felt strongly about the way Sassy was treated and knew that was wrong. As Cole noted, "…when two girls weren't being nice. I didn't like that part because they were bullies. When they were talking Molly and Mona were mean to her about how you can't do this and no way. She could do it. She was the one who won!" Cole's reaction suggested that the negative comments towards Sassy were wrong and unnecessary. Students extended the conversation to examine how they would handle the situation if they were in Sassy's shoes. According to Polly, "If there was a girl in our class that was named Molly and the other girl and they were bullying us and they said that to other people and we heard that, that would make our heart sad…. If someone else, they weren't doing it to me but were doing it to Jennifer, I would say don't do that to her because that makes us sad. Don't be mean to her because it makes me and her sad."

The topic of bullying was prevalent in several of the books read and discussed in Judy's class. Students remarked that the theme of teasing and bullying was present in the following literature: *Players in Pigtails, Teammates, William's Doll, Michael's Golden Rules, Miss Malarkey* and *Baseball Saved Us*. Judy pointed out while reading *Baseball Saved Us* that "they are kind of picking on him just like the kids did at school. They are

kind of bullying him." Students continued by examining how the young Japanese American boy was treated poorly because of being different and how they would react if they witnessed this occurring.

Sean: …The guys weren't really being nice at him at the school. No one was sitting beside him and no one would talk to him.

Judy: Yes, because the way he looked.

Sean: Yea the way he looked and because they were Japanese.

Matthew: The other kids were mean to him because no one wanted to sit with him.

Judy: What would you do to help him if you saw someone who was sitting alone?

Cory: I would sit with him.

Erin: Me too!

Terrance: I would too!

Jordan: Yeah!

Judy: What if he or she looked different?

Terrance: I would still sit with him.

Students: Yeah! Me too!

Judy: It doesn't matter what you look like, does it?

Tony: No!

This conversation among Judy's class, as well as Polly's aforementioned comments about the girls in dance class, demonstrated the significance of standing up for someone being bullied. Students applied the topic of bullying from the literature to their

own lives during discussion, as well as in their reader response written connections. The topic of being teased and bullied was something students related to in their lives at home, at school, and in the community. FIGURES 4.11-4.18 include students written connections to the topic of bullying.

| | Lauren: The first one is my sisters and we are not getting along up here but here we are getting along. |

FIGURE 4.11. Connections to *Winners Never Quit*

| | Bobby: This is what I have first at my house. We play kickball with my friends. Sometimes everyone is nice but sometimes my neighbor, there are three boys and the one is eleven and the other brother fight so they don't want to be on a team. That is why they fight sometimes. They have two brothers and the youngest brother and the second biggest brother argue. I don't want to get into it so they don't blame it on me. |

FIGURE 4.12. Connections to *You're a Good Sport Miss Malarkey*
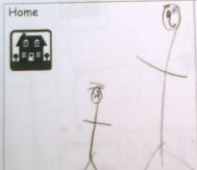
	Kaitlyn: One time when I didn't know how to ride a two wheeler, but my brother is good at riding a two wheeler because he can jump. He was teasing me because I could only ride it down the street.
	Jordan: At home sometimes my brother teases me. It makes me sad.
	William: This is at the park and my sister called me a loser. I just ignored it.

FIGURE 4.13. Connections to *Salt in His Shoes*

	Jordan: Last night my brother wasn't being nice to me. My brother is kind of a bully to me. This is a bully and an arrow pointing to the bully.
	Tony: Someone pushed me at the park.
	Jessica: My sister is a bully because we sometimes fight a lot and sometimes we hit each other. We fight over stuff like dolls and the stuff I got for my birthday. Some people bully me on the playground and I just ignore them. I tell the teacher sometimes. Sometimes they get in trouble for being mean. They push me down the slide. They push me on the ground.

FIGURE 4.14. Connections to *Wilma Unlimited*

	Matthew: At my old house, my sister pushed me down the stairs and hurt my head.
	Jordan: This is Gabe. He is getting bullied by that guy at school. His name is Alex from the class in second grade. They were on the playground. He was teasing Gabe. Gabe told me. If I was there I would standing up for him.
	Kaitlyn: I got bullied by my sister. I got bullied by my friend. And I got bullied by my coach. They just yelled… my sister yelled at me because she was mad at me.

FIGURE 4.15. Connections to *Teammates*

Liam: A kid shoved me into a fence. A kid punched me in the face. We were near the slide. He had to go to the principal's office. He let no girls and me go and he said 'no.' I said, 'you have to!' He said, 'no.' Then the third time I said that, he punched me right in the face. I was trying to tell him to go down the slide because I was trying to go up it and he made a funny face. I went down the slide and told the teacher when he did that.

FIGURE 4.15. Cont'd

Jordan: I was looking out for Gabe at recess. This guy bullied him and he told me and we looked at him. He showed us which one it was.

Jennifer: They won't let me play. At the park, there was another class and they don't want to be friends with me.

FIGURE 4.16. Connections to *Baseball Saved Us*
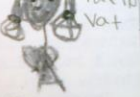
	Jennifer: They said, 'I don't want to play with you.' It says 'I care.' I did people caring in the world. They care about the world and other people.
	Liam: A kid punched me in the face. He wouldn't let me down the slide. I said I was going to tell the teacher and he stopped. He put his feet up and wouldn't let me down. I saw him at carpool yesterday. He is little… like up to here [points to his chest].

FIGURE 4.17. Connections to *William's Doll*

	Bobby: This story made me think about sometimes when my brother be's mean to me like when they were calling her trouble.

FIGURE 4.18. Connections to *Nothing but Trouble: The Story of Althea Gibson*
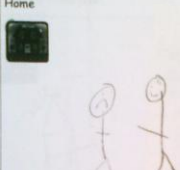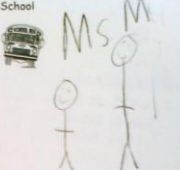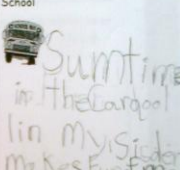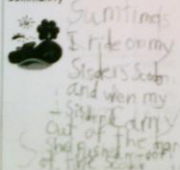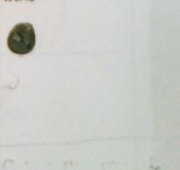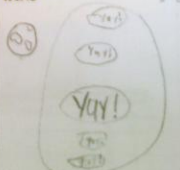
Book: Nothing But Trouble. Use words and pictures to show how the book you read is similar to or different from your... Home / School (Ms M) / Community / World	Jordan: My brother was mean to me at home and sometimes he teases me like that little kid.
Book: Nothing But Trouble. Use words and pictures to show how the book you read is similar to or different from your... Home (My Sister chers on me on Wii.) / School (Sumtime in the Cargool lin my sister makes fun of me.) / Community (Sumtimes I ride on my sisters scooter and wen my... out of the door...) / World	Jessica: Sometimes I ride on my sister's scooter and when my sister came out of the door she pushed me off the scooter. It was her scooter and she didn't want me on it. I told my mom. For school sometimes in carpool line my sister makes fun of me. Sometimes she grabs my backpack and I get mad at her and we fight and say bad words to her. I say sorry.
Making Connections. Book: Nothing But Trouble. Use words and pictures to show how the book you read is similar to or different from your... Home / School (YAY!) / Community / World (YAY!)	William: My sister calls me a loser. I tell my mom.

FIGURE 4.18. Cont'd

The topic of bulling was prevalent in discussions across much of the literature as illustrated in the student connections in FIGURE 4.11-4.18. One particularly notable conversation occurred when Liam shared his emotional experience about being bullied.

After reading the book *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990), Liam successfully made a meaningful connection between the literature and his own personal experience for the first time. Prior to reading the book *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990), the majority of Liam's connections were literal such as "I play sports in a field too." Liam explained how he was excluded and bullied as a result of living in a different neighborhood, similar to the way Jackie Robinson was treated differently for being an African American in an all white baseball league.

> Liam: But well this kid that was at a party we were doing something that they just said you don't live here and you can't go in the tennis courts and I was in there and I live in [a different neighborhood]. The kid went to me and holded me to the fence and made me cry [Liam starts crying].
>
> Judy: They were bullies. That is scary.
>
> Liam: My brother ran up to my dad and told my dad and the kid also shoved me to the fence and made me do this [shows how his face was pressed to the fence] to the fence.
>
> Gabe: Did they tell anything to the kid to stop bullying you?
>
> Liam: My dad said, "Keep your hands to yourself."
>
> Judy: I think about a book our principal has for the middle school called, The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander. What do you think that means… bystander?
>
> Sean: It means I think if you are being mean to someone that you don't know.

Judy: That is what a bully might do even if it is someone you know.

                Think of Liam's story, he was bullied. If someone was watching,

                they would be the bystander and not going to get help.

Liam: My dad was there and my brother did that.

In the above example, Liam demonstrated the reality of bullying in the lives of these students. Judy's class represents a privileged white middle-class population who most likely has not experienced racism in their lives. Yet through reading and discussion of literature, they were able to connect to other ways they have been ostracized. Furthermore, Judy's students examined ways they could foster change by taking action against power relationships and inequities such as bullying. For instance, when reading the book *Wilma Unlimited* (Krull, 1996), students engaged in the following discussion about what to do if they witnessed someone teasing Wilma for being different.

Jessica: They teased her. She had a brace.

Bobby: That is mean.

Jennifer: I would walk away and take a deep breath.

Jessica: If she was my friend, I'd stick up for her.

Jennifer: I would say, 'please don't say that.'

Bobby: If kids were bothering her, I'd get a grown up so I don't get bullied

                either. I saw a commercial on bullying.

Liam: Yeah, they said, 'stick up!'

Gabe: It was 'Stop bullying. Stick up!'

Jessica: I'd stick up for her.

In the above dialogue, Bobby mentioned the importance of adult intervention as a strategy to deal with bullies. This strategy also described when students discussed the book *Dancing in the Wings* (Allen, 2000). Additionally, students connected the similarities in the way the main character in *Dream Big Little Pig* (Yamaguchi, 2011) was treated with the way Jackie Robinson was treated in the book *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990).

Terrance: If you don't want to be a good sport, don't be mean to people. In the book we read about the baseball people about African Americans and the White people should be together.

Jordan: We should stand up…

Terrance: Stand up for yourself and for everyone of your friends.

Cole: Don't judge a book by it's cover.

Terrance: Even if they aren't your friends.

Kaitlyn: If someone needed help, I would help them.

Gabe: To the rescue!

Terrance: That takes up a lot of courage to talk to a bully!

Jennifer: This girl she was playing with someone and this guy he was down syndrome and someone said 'hey, you look different' and he said, 'you look ugly!' So he got angry and I saw them. I said, 'you aren't supposed to do that to people.'

Students in Judy's class not only developed an awareness of issues of inequity in the literature, but also successfully made connections to their own lives, and extended the conversations to critically explore ways to take a stand against bullying and judging

others. When asked about issues related to equity and fairness, Sean explained that
Teammates (Golenback, 1990) taught him to "be nice to your friends and always stick up
for them."

The use of literature as a springboard for discussion influenced students as
collaborative and critical literacy learners. Students created a space for taking action on
important social issues through the examination and discussion of topics in the literature
related to teamwork, equality, and fairness. The books Judy read and discussed with her
students offered different perspectives and helped students become more informed
critical readers. The next section will illustrate the third finding revealed through the
analysis of the data.

Third Finding: Peer Interaction Influenced Students as Collaborative and Critical Literacy

Learners

Thus far, I have described how the teacher and the literature influenced students
as collaborative and critical literacy learners. In this section, I will demonstrate how peer
interaction influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners. First, I will
explain how Jordan's connections to the literature engaged his peers in building
awareness of global inequality, specifically about the Lost Boys from South Sudan.
Furthermore, Jordan's peers became interested in helping one former Lost Boy's non-
profit organization to build a school in South Sudan after hearing about Jordan's
involvement with the charity. Next, I will share how two groups used writing to teach
others about bullying and standing up for each other after hearing about students'
personal encounters with being bullied. Lastly, I will share how students developed a

sense of collaboration as a result of working together to discuss the literature and use writing to advocate for social justice.

Jordan's Connections Influenced His Peers

On the first day of the study, Judy's class engaged in a discussion after reading the book *Winners Never Quit* (2004, year). The conversation focused on the importance of working together to be team players. In the story, the main character quits when she was unsuccessful at scoring goals in soccer. Her teammates taught her that winning and losing is not as important as working hard as a team and never giving up. After the discussion, students returned to their seats where they worked on their individual written connections to the text. The story reminded Jordan of his friend Kubo, a former Lost Boy from South Sudan. Jordan's connection demonstrated the perseverance Kubo needed to flee the brutal war in his country (see FIGURE 4.19). Jordan explained that Kubo's village was attacked when he was eight years old forcing him to run away. Judy believed it would be powerful for Jordan to share his connection with the rest of the class, since many of the other students had little to no background knowledge about the Lost Boys or a general awareness of the turmoil and instability in many foreign lands. On the following day, Jordan agreed to share his connection:

Jordan:	We found a friend that was from Sudan. They didn't have much food and they only got to have food once a day and we are going to help them make more money so they can have a school there like what we have.
Judy:	The friend you have is working hard to make a school there.

Jordan: They had to swim through a river with crocodiles in it. And through a desert with lions in it. And they wanted to get to America safely. Who did that is called the Lost Boys and we know one of them. And he works at my dad's work and he's a nice friend to us.

Judy: So you thought of him when you read the story because he worked hard like Mia Hamm.

Jordan: Mmm hmmm.

Later, when reading the book *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993), Jordan participated in the whole group discussion, once again making a comparison to the Lost Boys of Sudan and their struggles. This was an appropriate connection since Judy explained how the Japanese were forced to leave their homes and live in internment camps where they did not have the luxury of bathrooms in many of the barracks. Jordan shared that people in Sudan struggled as well because they have little food and water is often scarce.

Jordan: At Sudan, they don't have much food so they can only have like one lunch a day or one if you choose dinner you wouldn't have any other in the day.

Matthew: No snack!

Jordan: You choose one. Snack or lunch. If you choose breakfast, that is it!

After Jordan shared several of his connections with his peers (see FIGURE 4.19), they were left with questions and wanting to know more about Kubo. Jordan arranged for Kubo to visit the classroom as a guest speaker. During his visit, Kubo explained how his

country was split apart due to the constant fighting. He also emphasized that there was no school in his village which made it very difficult for the children to learn and become successful later in life. Kubo explained how the lack of power, money, and resources to build schools for the people of his village made it challenging for them to get an education. As a result, he works as an ambassador for his village and raises awareness and money here in his new home of the United States to help build a school. He gave each student a pamphlet with information about his organization that is working to raise money to build a school there. Judy's students had many questions for Kubo. In particular, when reading the pamphlet, William wanted to know more about who the Lost Boys are. This is Kubo's response:

> That is a good question [smiling]. They were the young people, I am one of them who when we left our village because of the war we were little and we lost our parents our moms and dads in the war. Some of them were killed. And we had to leave the village. When we came to refugee camp… a refugee is someone who ran away from his village to run away from war and find a safe place. We went to that camp when we were young. So they called us Lost Boys because we were lost from our moms and dads. I am a former Lost Boy. I am now found.

The experience of having Kubo come and talk with the class, in addition to hearing about him from their fellow classmate, helped foster a sense of critical awareness of global inequities. Judy's students were exposed to a new perspective and experience, one very different from their own lives. Many students were interested in learning about Kubo and his efforts to build a school in South Sudan interested many of the students.

When it came time to choose a topic to write about, Jordan and several of his peers

elected to use their voices to teach others about Kubo and his organization.

	Kubo is from Sudan and he had to swim across a pond with alligators and run through a desert with lions and woods with tigers and bears. He wanted to get to America safely but they didn't have cars or water so they wanted more food and they only get to have food once a day. He got here and was carrying a stick around and came to our house carrying a stick and said, 'is there any lions here?' And he speaks Sudan so it's hard to understand him but now he speaks English and he works with my dad. He survived a lot. There is a group called the Lost Boys and that was him I think. Beans is what they eat and they didn't want to waste food so they saved it.
	Kubo had to wait and be patient because he had to look where he passed to get to America. At our church, Kubo is at our church. We do these things where we have pictures up there of Sudan and there is a foundation now.

FIGURE 4.19. Jordan's connections

Making Connections Book: Teammates Use words and pictures to show how the book you read is similar to or different from your... Home / School / Community / World	This is the Lost Boys. This is Kubo. They are running away from that country and I think they were little. They just ranned away because they didn't want to get hurt. They wanted to stay alive and not go there because he was having a war.
Book: Baseball saved Use words and pictures to show how the book you read is similar to or different from your... Home / School / Community / World	This is Sudan. They only get one thing a day and their houses are made out of sticks and mud. We can make a thing for Sudan. I have a bucket for Sudan you can put in our classroom and if any parents come and if they want to put something in for Sudan they can. We can put pictures up of Sudan, goats, and houses. We can put them up at the door. It's pretty much a desert with rattlesnakes.

FIGURE 4.19. Cont'd

Once students formed their collaborative writing groups, they worked collectively

to brainstorm ideas, organization of content, and responsibilities for each of the group

members. Jordan's group agreed on the topic of helping Kubo raise money for a school in

South Sudan. Each group member first recorded their own ideas within their daybooks

and then discussed how to put it all together.

Shelley: We are going to put our own ideas down first and then put it

            together.

Liam: I am writing about Kubo.

Shelley: And I am writing about the school.

Liam: When Jordan comes back he can be with me and Cory can be with Shelley.

[The following day…]

Shelley: I am going to write about the school. Like I wrote, 'the school is going to be big.'

Liam: I am writing about Mr. Kubo. I want to say one thing I writed. He was a Lost Boy from Africa and Sudan.

This group worked together to negotiate individual roles and responsibilities in the group. However, when some of the group became off-task and acted silly, Jordan and Shelley refocused the group.

Jordan: I don't want to be silly right now. We don't have time for that.

Shelley: How about we all work together?

Jordan: Why don't we all work together on this whole book? It is just one little group.

Shelley: That is what we are planning to do.

Jordan: I'll do this part [pointing to a page].

Shelley: Yeah Cory is back. I am going to work on the page with the jar to raise money.   You can do a sign.

Liam: I will tell people one dollar for the lemonade.

In addition to each contributing to the writing project and keeping the group on task, this group also influenced each other as they organized their collective ideas to construct their book. The students decided on a title, a cover design, and organized their

pages in a sequential and meaningful way with some support from Miss Karen the

teacher's assistant.

Karen:	Let's look at your daybook and see where you are at and see where your partners are.
Liam:	Kubo was a Lost Boy. He had to run away from his family because of the war.
Karen:	Ok so you have part of the beginning. He was a Lost Boy…
Liam:	There is him running away.
Karen:	Who has the part that might make sense after this?
Jordan:	Kubo could be right there. Did you think we should draw him really small to make it look far away?
Cory:	Kubo can make a school out of cement blocks. The name is Raising South Sudan.
Jordan:	That should be the name of the book and the name of the school. It could be like that.
Liam:	Kubo had to run away because of war.
Jordan:	The people in Sudan need to get food and they need to be close to water. They need a school and it's all about raising money for Sudan. We should do 'Helping Kubo.'

Jordan's writing group established a title for their writing as a result of their

discussion. The role of social influences was instrumental in decision making as writers

as well as in deepening students' awareness and knowledge of global inequities. Students

were passionate about such a meaningful cause and were engaged in the learning

experience as a result.

Students Use Their Writing to Teach Others about Bullying

Two other collaborative writing groups who each wrote about bullying served as

further examples of peer interaction as influential in fostering collaborative and critical

literacy learners was observed with. The first group, composed of all boys, knew from the

start that they wanted to write about courage but they had some difficulty at first

narrowing down their topic. During the student interviews, several of the group members

explained that after much discussion, they finally agreed on Sean's idea of bullying.

> Bobby: Sean told us about it. We were struggling at first. We were talking
>
>   and talking the first day. The next day we were talking about
>
>   different things like sports. I was talking about bats. Sean came up
>
>   with the idea of writing about it…We did a vote mostly to see who
>
>   wanted to do it. It was four to zero.
>
> Tony: All we did is like we were thinking of ideas and Sean got one and
>
>   all of us agreed. It was a good idea because there was enough
>
>   people in it [to act it out].

Sean explained to the group about a time he had to have courage when a student

from another class pushed him off the ladder on the playground to get to the slide first.

Sean's idea was immediately accepted by his peers and became the basis for their

writing. The group decided to write and act out a play. This group worked together to

plan, write and reenact Sean's experience. Students began by planning the play in their

daybooks (see FIGURE 4.20). Bobby explained, "At first we kind of did double places.

We did it in our daybook. Then the next one we just acted it out. Then we did a little more in our daybook. Tony did the part when he was climbing up the blue thing [the ladder]. I did when he got pushed off." Next they worked together to share ideas as they negotiated roles in the play.

Terrance: I am writing what is going to happen and the lines.

Tony: I got pushed off the ladder.

Sean: 'Whoa. Hey! That wasn't really nice,' it says. They you come in [to Tony].

Bobby: I say, 'Are you ok?' And then he helps him up.

Terrance: I will say his name.

Students in this collaborative writing group worked together to agree on Sean's idea, negotiate the content of the play as well as individual roles, and eventually play a part in the performance for their classmates and teachers. Students developed as critical literacy learners as they learned to recognize power relationships and develop compassion for others. Students used their writing to teach others to take a stand for social justice.

That wasn't very nice.
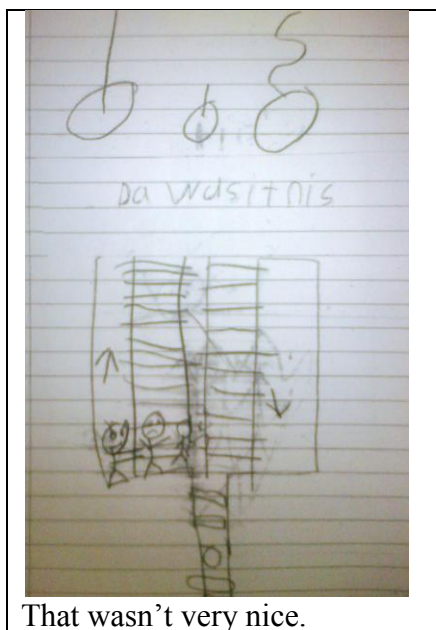
FIGURE 4.20. Excerpt from Bobby's Daybook

Another collaborative writing group chose to use the topic of bullying based on students' experience. They chose to write a play to teach others about how to stand up to a bully. Like Sean's group, these students also began by brainstorming ideas in their individual daybooks. Addison shared her idea based on an incident that involved both physical and emotional bullying.

Addison: I wrote something down that really has happened in another class. Some people haven't been being really nice to the girls in our class and this is what it says… 'Crystal has been mean to me and lots of the girls in our class.' It's true! She won't let me get on the teeter tauter. One time she pushed Lauren off the swing. And one time she pulled her off the monkey bars and she threw Lauren to the ground.

Jessica: She slapped me in the face.

Jennifer:	Yeah when I was on the monkey bars she said, "Oh, you're really not good!"
Addison:	She smacked Jessica in the face and punched Lauren in the throat.

This conversation influenced the girls as they negotiated a topic and purpose for their collaborative writing project. While this group had more difficultly agreeing on the actual story line of the play, the group did agree on the roles they would each play and knew that they wanted to teach others how to handle a bully as a result of Addison's initial idea. Through conversations about the possible setting, characters, and events in the play, the group finally decided to write their play about sticking up for a friend who is bullied based on Jessica's suggestion.

Jessica:	She can say she stepped on her foot because she doesn't like Vampire Fairies and she doesn't want to play with her.
Addison:	I have to make sure their lines are good after each one. I don't know because it is Polly's decision. I'm the narrator and I'm not in the play.
Jessica:	Polly stepped on Jennifer's foot because she wanted to because she doesn't want to play with us and wants to be mean. I say, 'that's not very nice. I am sticking up for my friend.'
Polly:	I don't like Vampire Fairies.
Jessica:	Do you want to be our friend?
Polly:	Yes.
Addison:	That's not the end.
Jennifer:	Let's lean on each other and sing.

The girls incorporated Jennifer's suggestion to sing the song "Lean on Me" in unison at the conclusion of their play. The students constructed a meaningful production to teach their peers about a real-world social issue that many of them have experienced through the social nature of the group discussion and writing process. As Gabe stated in his interview with me, "[the bully play] teaches you to have courage because if someone is bullying you they want you to have courage and not let them bully you. It feels good if you are standing up for yourself and your friends stand up for you and you stand up for them. I heard about it in the bully play and it taught me about some stuff like to stand up for friends if they get hurt like if a bully is being mean like to Sean in the other play." Gabe's words demonstrated the influence his peers' writing and performance had on him as a critical literacy learner.

Students Develop a Sense of Collaboration

Collaborative and critical literacy learning was fostered in Judy's classroom by having the opportunity to interact with peers. Students reported that they liked being able to share their thinking and hear the ideas of their peers while discussing books with their classmates. "I get bored when I don't have anyone reading with me. I felt happy because I had my friends to read with me and talk with me." Students also suggested that having the opportunity to engage in collaborative writing experiences was more engaging than working individually. "I like working together and you have your work and your friends' work. If you work alone, you don't have anyone to work with. You get bored of your own work." When interviewed at the end of the study, Judy's students discussed the value of social interaction as it pertained to support and assistance.

Kaitlyn: "When I write by myself, it is tricky because no one helps me to sound out the words. A few people in my group helped me sound out words."

Shelley: "They helped. They did a lot of pages. It feeled good inside to work with my friends. By writing and trying to sound out words and it is kind of difficult and it was nice to have friends."

Cory: "I like my friends. They helped me a little bit and I helped them. I like coloring and I colored. I did writing too. Everyone in my group write and colored."

Tony: "I totally liked it. It is harder by myself and I wouldn't think of anything. They are nice."

Students also described how the experience of working with their peers not only helped them individually, but fostered a sense of teamwork and collaboration to work collectively as a group.

Jordan: "I like it because we always get along. We don't have anything and I do something and we think it is really good. And Liam says something and we think it's really good and we should do it. We always know what to color because we already writed it down. And so we didn't have to say, 'what are we supposed to color?' If you forget, your friend might know and he will just tell you instead of forgetting what I was going to write and never putting it in."

| Lauren: | "I liked it because I learned how to help people. We had to help each other by working together and telling them about what we learned. It can get done faster." |
| Gabe: | "I learned you should have teamwork with each other and help people and get together like people who know someone and you know it and you can all go together and do something like writing and teamwork." |

Students developed their abilities to listen to one another, respect each others' ideas, and work as a team through the collaborative nature of the small group writing experience. Students demonstrated teamwork in the classroom by working in collaborative writing groups which, can be extended to collaboration in the home, the community, and in the world. It was challenging for many students to make connections to the larger world beyond their own lives. Students were able to develop a more global understanding of the issues of equality after hearing about Jordan's connections pertaining to the Lost Boys and Kubo's village in South Sudan. As Karen stated in her interview, "It is important that students have a way to understand their own thinking and sometimes to change their own thinking as a result of working collaboratively." This demonstrated how peer interaction influenced students' decisions and thinking as collaborative and critical literacy learners. Students' motivation, engagement, and writing process were enhanced by the opportunity to interact in a social nature. The fourth finding revealed through the analysis of the data will be described in the next section.

Fourth Finding: Students Engaged in Meaningful Writing for an Authentic Purpose and

Audience in a Digital Space

Students engaged in meaningful writing experiences to advocate for issues of

social justice. First, students brainstormed and then selected topics they were interested in

and passionate about. Students were grouped based on similar interests where they then

worked as collaborative groups to determine authentic purposes and audiences for their

writing. The use of Voicethreads provided students with a digital space to publish their

writing for a wider audience.

Self-selection of Topics

After spending several weeks engaged in collaborative and critical discussion of

literature, the teacher encouraged students to consider topics they would be interested in

writing about related to some of the themes that arose from their conversations. Students

chose their topics, genres, and responsibilities within the collaborative writing group to

make the writing process more meaningful to them. Using her own digital writing as a

model, Judy demonstrated her passion and interest in helping one particular non-profit

organization called Project LEAP.

> Judy: Now something important for me to write about was Guatemala. I went to a
>
> school in Guatemala and the kids there didn't have paper and things at their
>
> school. There is a group of teachers working to help that school. I made a video
>
> about what it was like to go to that school. It was five years ago. But the first year
>
> we went to that school I made a slide show and at the end I told people
>
> information I learned when I was in Guatemala. I used the slide show as a way to

teach people and to share with people, look this is what is going on in Guatemala. Instead of writing a book, I wrote a slide show.

After viewing Judy's digital story about the partnership and efforts to help the school in Guatemala, the class discussed why she chose to write about that particular topic. Students agreed that Judy wrote about Guatemala because it was significant to her. Next, students began to consider topics that they deemed important and wanted to write about and share with an authentic audience using a Web 2.0 application called Voicethread (see FIGURE 4.21).

Several students discussed the ideas of being kind to others, having courage, and bullying. One group decided to write a play to teach others to stand up to bullies. Sean explained that he wanted to write a play about having courage when he got bullied because "it really happened when I got pushed off the ladder. They are both true things that happened." Writing about a real event made the writing experience more engaging and more meaningful for Sean and his peers. Gabe decided to write a comic book about superheroes demonstrating courage. He explained that "it felt good to write it because it was cool to write that because I like superheroes, machines, and movies about superheroes and robbers like Batman." Students were more motivated to write and had an increased sense of personal investment in their writing when they chose a topic, whether based on a real-world or a fictitious story, and a genre that interested them.
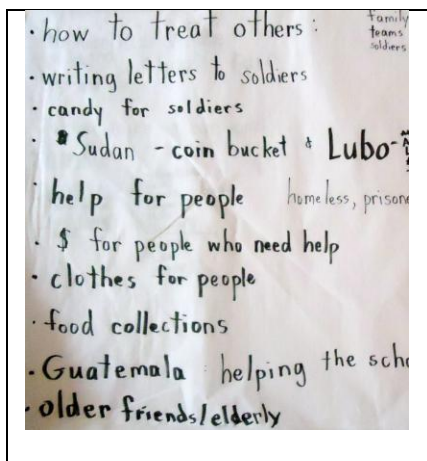
FIGURE 4.21. Brainstormed Topics Anchor Chart

As a result of his own personal interest, Jordan elected to write about Kubo and the Lost Boys of Sudan to inform others about Kubo's efforts to build a school in South Sudan. Several of his peers decided to join him to write about that topic. Shelley, for example, explained that she wanted to work with Jordan because it was a good idea to get involved and raise money. She shared her own connection to another example of a way to raise money for a good cause. Shelley explained, "I remembered about Danny's birthday and he was raising money for a water pipe for another country called Ethiopia. I want to raise money at school and at a party. He actually got money from the people who came." Shelley's experience outside of school seemed to resonate with her and she was excited to get involved with Jordan's cause of interest. Miranda and several of her peers felt moved by Judy's digital movie about Guatemala and decided to write about making a difference by helping the school and the people of Guatemala.

Authentic Writing Purpose

Students gained a greater sense of ownership and engagement in their writing processes by having an authentic purpose. Judy reviewed the various reasons authors write, including purposes such as writing for expression, to remember, to share

experiences, to communicate, and to teach others. Next, Judy engaged students in a discussion about the authors' purposes for the books they read and discussed over the course of the study. Then she used her own writing to scaffold the learning experience for her students. Judy explained how she wanted to teach others about the lack of resources and educational opportunity for the people in Guatemala by modeling her own writing purpose with her digital movie about Guatemala. She used her photographs and the inclusion of factual information to build an awareness of the level of inequity in Guatemala. For example, Judy shared the following facts: "In Guatemala, 46% of the population can't read. Most schools can't afford books. 500 sheets of paper are provided for a whole year. Most students come to school hungry and leave hungry." Furthermore, Judy explained how she provided information about ways to get involved and help with the cause. When asked why they thought Judy shared her writing with them students responded:

Liam: For us to think to help them more.

Miranda: To show us what Guatemala is like.

Addison: To know what Guatemala is like.

Miranda: We can make a big difference and donate things to the schools.

Bobby: Be nice to people and make friends.

Lauren: To help them give them food so they can be healthy.

Jordan: Give them paper.

Students' comments revealed their understanding of the author's purpose. Specifically, students understood Judy's purpose for writing about Guatemala. Judy provided students with a variety of examples of text and examination of author's purpose.

In particular, Judy also shared an article that was published in a magazine to inform the readers about the work Mr. Kubo was doing to help build a school in his village in South Sudan. Students then considered ways to use their own writing to inform others about the topics that mattered to them. The groups writing to advocate for support for schools in South Sudan and Guatemala decided that they wanted to inform others and raise money for the organizations. When I asked the Sudan group about their purpose for writing, they overwhelmingly agreed that they wanted to help raise money to build a school.

Shelley: To help people in Sudan. By helping them to raise money and get a school. Right now they go to school under a tree.

Liam: Because I knew I should help South Sudan for it to be quicker for the persons to go into the school because they go under a tree for a school… For people to help Sudan for it to be quicker and better for the school to be built.

Cory: I thought about it and we can get money and it will be fun. That's not fun and under the tree and if it is raining. Rain can come through the trees.

Jordan: They need food and water. They need weapons because they don't have weapons. They don't have bullets, a gun, a plane or anything. They need to have a country like us. They should have cars and everything we have… like money and schools… It makes everyone think about poor people that don't have anything. They don't have anything and you can give people more food and water.

The Guatemala group also decided to use their writing to raise money to help the kids in Guatemala have food, clothes, and educational supplies for school. Students developed an awareness of the lack of equity for the people of Guatemala from Judy's slideshow. As Miranda stated, "They don't have enough money and they don't have enough food for everyone." Students negotiated the content of their book keeping the purpose of their writing in mind.

William: Lauren, what are you drawing?

Lauren: Someone that is sad because he goes to a Guatemala school.

Miranda: This person doesn't have any more money.

Erin: Some schools in Guatemala don't have books.

William: They don't have any money.

Lauren: Some schools don't have any paper.

William: I am writing all of my ideas on this page. We can have a water stand, a coffee stand, a hot chocolate stand…

Students felt it was important to also include similarities between themselves and the children in Guatemala in addition to informing the reader about the lack of equity in Guatemala. In doing so, a deficit view was avoided (see FIGURE 4.22). Furthermore, students focused on the need to take action to foster change in Guatemala by raising money. Judy informed her students, "You can write to make a difference." While working on their writing, Miranda commented, "I think I have a good idea, some people can bring money in a piggy bank and we can start donating money and then we can tell them about the children." On another occasion, William stated that writing about Guatemala was "a worthy cause." Miranda's and William's comments suggested the

authentic purpose behind their writing and their interest in heeding Judy's advice to make a difference. Students were motivated and driven as they collaborated to construct their book about Guatemala. Their purposes for writing were clear as was evident in their comments from the post-interviews I conducted:

Lauren: We are writing about Guatemala so we can help and spend money and give them stuff they don't have… They can learn better because they [the reader] can look at our book and try to spend more money.

Kaitlyn: Guatemala doesn't have that much stuff. So I decided to do Guatemala. I thought Guatemala was a cool place… We could teach them about Guatemala. They can learn that they don't have that much stuff and once they see it they can think maybe I can donate things for Guatemala.

Erin: I like talking about Guatemala. It is really fun. We can help their school and give them lots and lots of money. They don't have a lot of things.

Miranda: So people can learn how it is like and donate.

William: Helping people by raising money so they can go to sixth grade not just only first, second, third, fourth, and fifth. They have to pay $1000.

The students demonstrated a clear purpose for their writing as was evident in the above comments. In particular, William seemed to connect to this idea when Judy explained that most of the children in Guatemala do not attend school past sixth grade

due to a lack of funding. During the discussion he responded, "I made a connection when you said some people just go to sixth grade. They need more in their future and more time to work and have fun in school. So they need an extra year." This also came up during his interview as part of his purpose for writing.

Finding Ways to Help Guatemala	She taught us about Guatemala.	We all have families.
We all like to read.	We all like animals.	We all have hearts.
We all like musical instruments.	But…	Some Guatemala schools need paper.

FIGURE 4.22. Finding Ways to Help Guatemala Book

Some Guatemala schools need books.	Some Guatemala schools need musical instruments.	Some Guatemala schools need jump ropes.
We can help!	Donate money.	Give money.
Help a student.	Send books.	

FIGURE 4.22. Cont'd

Students developed as collaborative and critical literacy learners by engaging in shared writing for an authentic purpose. Students not only recognized the similarities and differences between themselves and the children in Guatemala, but they began to critically question these inequities. Lauren illustrated her perceptions of the cause for the discrepancies during her post interview.

Lauren: I got interested [in Guatemala] because I just thought it was a good idea because… I wanted to help them and be nice to them. Because they don't have lots of things but it is like the world treats them in

a bad way but they are really nice. They are not like me and that is

why the world treats them that way.

Lauren's comment that "they are not like me and that is why the world treats them that

way" illustrated the ability of young learners to engage in deeper levels of thinking about

the way things are in the world around them. As a member of the privileged middle class,

Lauren became aware of the opportunities afforded to her that are not obtainable for

others due to the imbalance of wealth and power in the world.

The subject of inequitable power relationships was also manifested in students'

discussions and collaborative writing about the topic of bullying. The groups who wrote

plays about being bullied wanted to provide suggestions for dealing with bulling. Sean's

group wrote a play about the time he got pushed of the ladder on the playground by

another student (see FIGURE 4.23). According to the group members, they described the

purpose of their writing and performance as follows:

Bobby: You can learn about courage is to step up. If someone is being

            bullied you can step up and tell them that it is not very nice what

            you are doing to that kid.

Sean: So no one will push off or get hurt and that no one will push

            anyone off when they are in their way and when someone pushed

            them off and they get off, make sure you come up and you stick up

            for them to go up again and that you be nice to them and you never

            push someone off anything ever even if it is your cousin.

Tony: Don't bully someone. Don't push someone because they will get

            hurt.

Terrance: Pushed off the ladder, the plot.
[Sean climbs the ladder made from butcher paper and Terrance pushes him off.]
Sean: That wasn't really nice.
[Terrance laughs.]
Bobby: I will help you up.
Tony: Are you ok? What happened?
Sean: I got pushed off the ladder.
Tony: [Helps Sean back up.] Let's go back up!
Bobby: This was about being pushed off the ladder and getting back up. Courage is about getting back up when you get pushed down. It was about courage.

FIGURE 4.23. Courage Play Script

Another group decided to write a play to teach others about bullying (see FIGURE 4.24). Addison, Polly, Jennifer and Jessica wrote a play about the social nature of children as they negotiated boundaries for friendship and acceptance. In their play, Polly played the bully and stepped on Jennifer's foot because she did not like what she was playing. Ashley was the bystander who stepped in and stood up for her friend, Jennifer. The play concluded with the girls finding a way to include the bully and offer their friendship. In the end, the girls sang the song "Lean on Me" arm in arm to demonstrate the importance of acceptance and friendship. When asked about their decision to write and perform this play, the girls explained their purpose as a way to teach the readers about bullying.

Addison: [I can teach others] not to be a bully. That bullies can do different things like they can push people and tell people what to do.

Polly: [I chose this topic] because I would never like anyone to bully me so I did that for my writing.

Jennifer: [I chose this topic because] I think it was a good thing and everything would teach them a lesson if they get bullied. Like

someone in our class. They can say, 'can you be my friend' and if

they keep bullying you, you can learn a lesson. I think it was really

important to me because if I get bullied or someone else gets

bullied I can do what I did in the play and say, 'will you be my

friend?' and not be bullied next time. If you don't know what to do

if you get bullied you can learn a lesson from our play.

Jennifer, in particular, seemed to be most affected by this writing experience and clearly demonstrated an understanding of author's purpose and the influence writing can have on its readers. According to Jennifer, "If you got bullied and someone treated you mean, you don't have to follow them. You can read a book about bullying and you can learn a lesson from that and you can put it in your backpack and when you get bullied you can read the book and you could say, 'don't do that to me' or 'don't be a bully' or 'please be more nicer'. The people who do books probably got bullied and they are showing their lessons to us and when we make a book we can send it to people and they can learn our lesson." Jennifer suggested the role of literature as influential on the reader to take a stand against bullying. Furthermore, her latter comment was particularly striking as it illustrated Jennifer's insight that authors gather ideas from their own experiences. It also conveyed her awareness that bullying is a real-world problem and happens to many people, including authors.

The New Friends

Addison [narrator]: Once upon a time, there lived two friends that were playing outside.
Jessica: Do you want to play Vampire Fairies?
Jennifer: Yes, I do want to play Vampire Fairies!
Jessica: Ok, let's go play!
Addison: Dun, Dun, Dun… until the bully comes in.

FIGURE 4.24. Bully Play Script

> Polly: Hi! What *are* you doing?
> Jennifer: I am playing Vampire Fairies with my friend.
> Polly: Well, what are you doing with your fairies?
> Jessica: I'm a fairy and she's a fairy.
> Polly: I think we should play something else. You should both play what I want to play or I won't be your friend!
> Addison: Polly is being a bully to them. There are different kinds of bullies. Some bullies push people and some bullies tell people what to do.
> Jessica: That's not very nice. I'm sticking up for me and my friend!
> Polly: Well, I don't like Vampire Fairies! I'm not going to be your friend if you don't play what I want to play.
> Jennifer: Polly, I really want to be your friend. Could you play Vampire Fairies and next time we'll play what you want to play?
> Polly: Ok, can we be friends now?
> All: YES!
> Jennifer: Next time, don't be a bully! Ok?
> Polly: Ok.
> All: [Sing the song "Lean on Me."]

FIGURE 4.24. Cont'd

Students established an authentic reason for writing and were engaged in this writing project as a result. According to Judy, "once the momentum got started, it got exciting and lots of fun." She continued, "I was surprised at how excited they got and how enthusiastic they were. It is cool to feel that energy and when the kids are into it. They are always surprising me with their comments and how every now and then someone would say something that would blow me away. It is so much more meaningful and deeper than you think they are capable of. You don't realize they are making that connection and thinking that deeply. They were so excited. Just yesterday making signs, it was the minute they were finishing snack so they could go back to working on their signs (see FIGURE 4.25). They were really excited. I think having an authentic purpose makes a big difference." Students' interests in helping others, building relationships, and advocating for a sense of equity and justice in their own lives as well as in the larger world around them were fostered by having meaningful purposes for writing.

FIGURE 4.25. Student Created Signs

Authentic Audience

The notion of writing for an authentic audience was another essential aspect to engaging students in the writing process. As Judy stated in the aforementioned excerpt of interview transcript, students were excited to make signs to bring awareness to their writing for social justice projects. Students employed signs as a type of real-world writing to inform others about their efforts to raise money for the non-profit organizations they chose to write about. Students came up with the idea of posting signs arose in a class discussion about ways to bring awareness to the change collection effort that they implemented to raise money. Students discussed the importance of the placement of the change jar at the school's front desk along with clear labels including text and photographs to inform people about the purpose of the change jar. This conversation continued into writing workshop, where the following collaborative writing group examined the use of signs beyond the four walls of the school.

> Liam: I have an idea like put out a chair outside of your home and put a sign that says help Sudan because they don't have a good school and there is someone named Kubo who is trying to help them.
>
> Jordan: They don't even have a school.

Shelley: We need signs to ask for help to make a school and put big sings to see from far away and hold them up like this [demonstrated with her arms]. Then they can actually read it.

Jordan: I've seen that in magazines.

Shelley: I have seen people do that.

Liam: My mom works at a store where she sells clothes and a lot of people come there and we can put signs there to tell people.

Shelley: In my dance class, we can put it there.

It is clear from the above discussion that students understood the value of informing an authentic audience to increase awareness and support for their chosen cause. In another discussion, this group negotiated the importance of having an appropriate audience for their writing beyond the teacher.

Liam: We should give this to not Kubo because someone needs to help Kubo's group.

Shelley: He is making this school so he knows about it!

Liam: So we have to let other people know about it.

All: Yeah!

Liam: He knows about it. We are trying to get people to help us and help Mr. Kubo. See what I am saying?

Shelley: We need to give it to people who really want to give.

Liam: My mom!

Shelley: We are going to need to get copies of this.

Karen: What are you guys doing?

Shelley: They think we should give the stuff to the teacher but I think we

should give it to someone else.

Karen: We are going to put it on the computer with you guys reading it

and then send it to a whole bunch of people so they can look at it.

Shelley: Then they can help us and Mr. Kubo…

This conversation indicated students' abilities to discern between appropriate audiences for their writing. Wanting to use their writing to advocate support for Kubo's charity, students carefully considered which readers would be most likely to help. As Liam suggested, Kubo was already involved in the cause so it was necessary to consider a wider audience. Shelley also proposed that an audience beyond the teacher was needed to elicit support that could make a difference.

During interviews, I asked students to tell me who their intended audience was for their social justice writing projects. Several students stated that their writing was intended for their teacher, their classmates, and their parents. Others responded with a broad range of anticipated readers including "a lot of people," "everyone around the world," and "even people from Sudan and Guatemala will read it because they are interested in how to help." Students explained that "other people can learn about Guatemala" and "we could teach them about Guatemala and they could teach others" by writing for a wide audience. It was evident that students saw a need to build awareness of their topics for social justice by informing a wide range of people. Since this study was conducted in the fall, Judy's students were excited about the upcoming holidays. Erin even remarked that "Santa would like [our writing]. I want money for Christmas so I can give it to Guatemala." Erin's comment demonstrated students' intrinsic motivation for real-world

writing and making a difference in the world around them. Students were inspired to make a difference in the lives of others by writing for an authentic purpose and audience.

The groups that chose to write about bullying also indicated the importance of sharing their work with an authentic audience. Since both groups chose to write a play, they elected to perform it for their classmates. The content of the play was particularly relevant to children as an audience since bullying is something that often occurs at school. However, Jennifer highlighted the need for an audience without age restriction. She explained that the audience for their play was "people who get bullied. My class. Even the teachers. Not only kids can get bullied but grown-ups can too." Jennifer discussed the value of writing for an authentic audience. She explained that writing can be shared with others as a way to teach them ways to deal with bullies.

> When you write about it you can show people your notebook and you can act out the play and read it to your friends or your family… you could take it out when you get bullied and so you don't get bullied anymore and just walk away… they are mean and annoying and if… someone get bullied you can give it to them (the book) so they don't get bullied again. You can tell people read this book so you won't get bullied. You won't get bullied if you read this book… since you will learn a lesson. It is important not to get bullied by people who can be older or smaller than you. They can both be mean to you. Even people who are smaller than you can be a bully. If someone gets bullied, you can get your notebook and run to those people who needs help and say read this book and then you would play with them so would be happier so they won't worry about when they got

bullied and be your friend and if they get bullied again you can stand up for them or give them a book to borrow or keep.

Although Kaitlyn was not part of the group that wrote about bullying, she benefited from her peers' writing and performance about bullying. During her post interview, she explained that she learned about how to treat people and the importance of helping friends if they get hurt. She also described the importance of taking action to advocate for social justice. According to Kaitlyn, "If someone is getting bullied, you need to stand up for them and tell the bully that isn't nice." Based on her comments, it was apparent that the bully groups achieved their purpose by impacting an authentic audience with their writing.

Publication in a Digital Space

Judy's students used Voicethread, a Web 2.0 application to publish their writing on the Internet and reach a wider audience beyond the four walls of the classroom. Judy uploaded the individual pages of the collaborative writing groups' published books. Next she helped students record their voices to read the pages of text they constructed. Students' writing was made available for an unlimited number of viewers when they were posted on Voicethread. Judy shared, "If I tell them people from the whole world can see their Voice thread, they get excited. This week they asked if they would see it even in the North Pole!" Judy's students were excited about the opportunity to publish their writing on the Internet for a wide audience. According to Cole, "A million people who have computers and iPads can see it." Several students commented about more people being able to see their writing including their immediate families as well as families who live far away. Cory was excited for his grandparents who live in California to be able to

see his work. As he stated, "I am going to tell them to look for it on the Internet." Bobby

also commented on the ease of sharing with people across the miles through the use of

the Internet. "I wish you could do it on my mom's phone. When I go to Tennessee

tomorrow all of my cousins are there and my nana and papa are there. You can send it to

my dad's phone because it can take videos." Several of the families were excited to hear

about students' work being published in digital spaces. Miranda's family lives in Mexico

and rarely gets to see her. They were eager to hear her reading her own writing on the

published Voicethread. Additionally, during her interview, Judy noted that Miranda, who

typically had difficulties with speech, was quite clear on her Voicethread. One of the

features of Voicethread includes the ability to rerecord voices until ultimately satisfied.

Miranda was able to improve her reading by having the opportunity for repeated

readings. She was more eager to read and increased her level of participation. According

to Judy, "I could tell she felt so confident. It is exciting for different people to get to read

it."

Like Miranda, other students felt a sense of pride and confidence as writers.

Students not quite proficient with grapheme-phoneme correspondence were able to

participate in meaningful construction of language and composition by recording their

voices. Additionally, students viewed the opportunity to publish their writing on the

internet as a way to celebrate their hard work and inspire others. Gabe explained that he

wanted "people to see it and think it is a good book I wrote. Then everyone will get to see

my good work and it will make them want to make their own and they can put it on

YouTube and more and more and get more good work on YouTube." Jennifer explained

that being on the Internet is like being on television. According to Sean, "I'd like to be

seen on the Internet. I would wonder how much people would see it and how much people would love it and how much people would learn to be nice to each other and not be mean to people." Sean's statement suggested that impacting others through their writing was a powerful factor in this process in addition to the individual development and satisfaction as writers.

Using Voicethread, readers have the ability for readers to respond and leave feedback for the student authors. According to Judy, "The other point is that people can comment on it. I want to make it so people can find us and make it public so people from all around the world can connect to our work." Various people posted a range of comments on students' published Voicethreads. Examples of comments included compliments, questions, and statements of inspiration and interest to get involved with their social justice efforts.

"You have motivated me to help Guatemala! I will donate books to the students!"

"You have really put a lot of thought into this project! I am inspired!"

"What are some ways you can raise money?"

"I love this idea! Everybody needs good books!"

"I love that you all are making a difference in the world! You have inspired me to help Guatemala!"

Feedback and comments from an authentic audience beyond the teacher showed students that their writing carries meaning and purpose. Judy explained, "It makes a difference to have an audience and a reason to write." This difference is evident when students identified themselves as writers. As Jessica noted, "We are publishing it so people can read it! We're authors!" Students' understanding of the writing process and

their view of themselves as writers was enhanced by their engagement in meaningful real-world writing experiences with authentic purposes and wide audiences. Student writing was motivated by the use of the Internet as a space to publish their work. Students successfully worked together in their collaborative writing groups to plan, draft, revise, edit and publish their writing. Students demonstrated their abilities to participate democratically in their own learning process, and to use their voices to make a difference in the world around them. Students' efforts culminated in the publication of their writing for an authentic purpose and wide audience using the Internet. As Karen stated, "learning does not end when the book discussion is over." Instead, "writing for social justice added another layer of depth to the students' learning." Students moved beyond their individual connections to collaboratively extend their responses and advocate for social justice through the written word and their powerful voices. The final finding revealed through the data analysis process will be described in the next section.

Fifth Finding: Participants Take Action to Make a Difference

Judy's students enthusiastically engaged in their writing for social justice projects after participating in collaborative and critical discussion of literature. Students were motivated and passionate about their work from the initial brainstorming stages through publication for a wide audience using Voicethread. As a result of their vested interest in their topics, students sought to move beyond merely writing to make a difference for their causes by taking action. During writing workshop, students engaged in several conversations about possible ways to raise money. In the discussion below, the students in the Guatemala group considered potential ideas to obtain funds to support the non-profit organization.

William: We can help people by donating money.

Karen: How would you get the money?

William: Send email.

Jordan: Like you did.

William: We could have a lemonade stand.

Erin: Give toys.

Karen: Maybe we can do something at our school.

Lauren: We could since we… could buy like lemonade stuff and we could all have one job. I wonder what people like to eat at school.

Liam: My brother Abe in middle school sometimes they ask for donations for things. We could donate stuff.

Jordan: I had an idea for a coin jar.

Liam: I like a coin jar.

Miranda: A different idea… we could show what it is like to be in Guatemala.

Jordan: We should give up some toys like that we don't like any more or give it to Guatemala or Sudan.

Erin: I was going to say that.

Liam: We could sell golf balls and my brother found lots of golf balls and we washed them.

Shelley: Maybe a stand with a sign that says raise money for Sudan. We need a big sign.

Jordan: We could give them good soil so they have stuff to plant in and have good food. And collect blankets.

After a great deal of discussion about making a difference through the collection of donations or by facilitating a lemonade stand to raise money, students decided to ask permission to place coin jars at the school's front desk. They also requested authorization to put a coin jar at the middle, the high school, and the department of Reading and Elementary Education at UNCC, where I am pursuing my doctorate as well. In a shared writing experience, students informed the school's director about their social justice projects and asked for consent to collect donations for their selected causes (see FIGURE 4.26).

Dear Ms. Jane,

We want to put a change jar in the front of the school. We want to raise money for schools in Guatemala and South Sudan. They need schools and we want them to have a school like ours. We met someone who used to be a Lost Boy and he is trying to build schools. His name is Mr. Kubo and he came to our classroom. Our teacher went to Guatemala. She told us schools need supplies. We want to help South Sudan and Guatemala.

Love,

Ms. M's First Graders

FIGURE 4.26. Shared Writing Letter to School Director

The school's director enthusiastically agreed to support students' efforts to raise money to help build a school in South Sudan and to assist with needed supplies and materials in Guatemala. Jordan brought in his own coin jar that he made at home to share

with his peers. Then they collected empty water jugs, labeled them, and placed them at

the school's front desk along with the signs they created (see FIGURE 4.27). Over the

period of two weeks, students raised more than three hundred dollars and decided that

they would split the donations evenly between the two organizations. With approximately

one hundred and fifty dollars for each non-profit organization, students' fund raising will

provide roughly 80 cement blocks for the structure of the school building in South Sudan

and countless supplies, including books written in Spanish, games, and instructional

materials for the school in Guatemala.
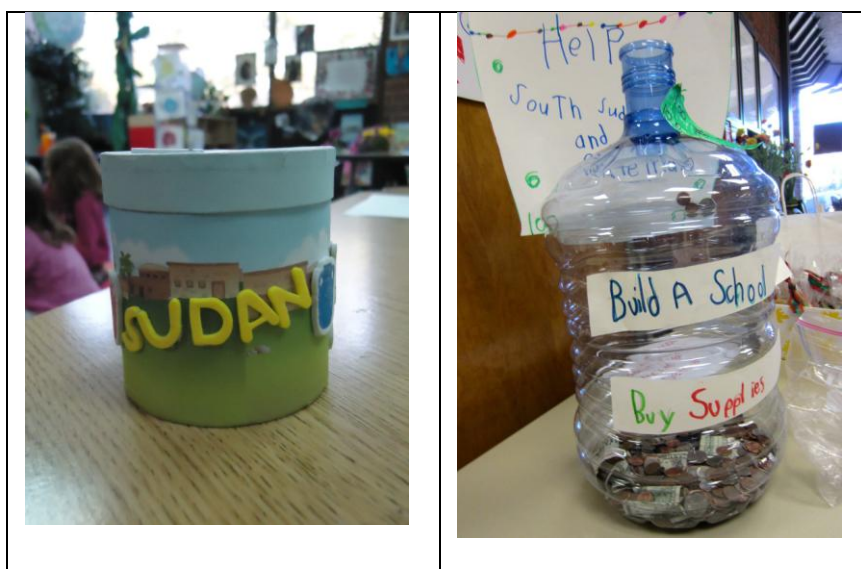
FIGURE 4.27. Coin Jars

Students became agents of change through their direct efforts to raise money for

South Sudan and Guatemala. In addition, Judy's students influenced continued

fundraising efforts on the part of Karen, the teacher assistant. Karen became inspired by

the students' desire to make a difference and decided to use her own writing to inform

others of the work her students were doing and request their support as well (see

FIGURE 4.28). Karen emailed all of her friends and family to solicit pledge money to

raise awareness for South Sudan by sponsoring her for a week-long refugee style diet.

Karen pledged to eat only beans and rice, vegetables, and hot tea for the week of

Thanksgiving. She described her writing process to the students, including describing her

brainstorming, drafting, revision, and publishing process via email. She shared the

content of her email with the students and enthusiastically explained that she immediately

received responses from her friends and family offering to help by donating money.

Karen had numerous pledges of support and requests to spread the information about the

students' efforts and the non-profit group's mission through social networking sites like

Facebook. In total, Karen raised over seven hundred dollars for the South Sudan non-

profit organization. That sum of donations equated to thirty cement blocks for the

structural foundation of the school in South Sudan. As Karen stated, "These are tangibles

that the students are beginning to grasp. I loved being a part of their learning and also my

own learning throughout this critical literacy experience."

November 6, 2011

Dear family and friends,

I'm writing to ask for your support. To raise awareness and funds for education in rural
South Sudan, I am going to eat a "refugee" type diet of rice/bread and beans for the week
before Thanksgiving. Will you pledge financial support for my endeavor? Thank you so
much for considering the following!

Here's the background information: For the last 4 weeks, my first grade class has been
fortunate to have a doctoral student conducting her critical literacy dissertation research
with us. We have been reading, discussing, and making connections to books that deal
with themes of fairness, perseverance, bullying, segregation, sportsmanship, and sports
heroes that have broken through gender and racial barriers.

FIGURE 4.28. Karen's Email Requesting Support for South Sudan

During the next two weeks, the students will meet in groups to develop critical literacy writing projects. The topics are bullying, courage, and schools in Guatemala and Sudan. Their final work will be accessible to the public through a forum such as Voicethread.

My take: I decided that if my students are doing their public writing projects, then I should also take on a project.

My project: One of our students has a family friend, who is a former Lost Boy from South Sudan. He is raising money for a school in his home village through an organization called Mothering Across Continents.

I would like to help make his dream a reality. That is why I have decided to eat meals that will be similar (although more dependable, and with an added vegetable) to food as a refugee in Kenya. That is why I am asking you for support.

How can you help?
You can send a check for $5, $10, or whatever you feel comfortable with, made out to me and I will submit a total amount to Mothering Across Continents/Raising South Sudan. You can donate directly to Mothering Across Continents/Raising South Sudan, and let me know of your donation.

For more information:
http://www.motheringacrosscontinents.org/Raising_Sudan.html
http://www.charlottemagazine.com/Charlotte-Magazine/June-2011/Long-Road-Home/
http://digital.turn-page.com/issue/33393 (this is a great article from Wake Forest magazine, pages 24-31)

THANK YOU!

FIGURE 4.28. Cont'd

While the students influenced Karen to get more involved in helping efforts to raise money for the school in South Sudan, the students inspired Judy to take action to foster change as well. However, Judy chose to advocate for the school in Guatemala since she had previous affiliation with the group who went to Guatemala to work with the school there five years ago. Judy was struck by the fact that many of the children in Guatemala did not attend school past sixth grade. She explained the negative implications

of this to her students. She stated, "So if you were starting middle school, they might say it would be too expensive and you can't go to school anymore. You wouldn't go to high school. You wouldn't go to middle school and forget thinking about college." Judy wanted students to comprehend the seriousness of a lack of education. She told the story of one young girl, Adriana, who was in her last year of school in Guatemala. Judy explained that Adriana's family could not afford to send her to school after sixth grade. Furthermore, her father died several years ago and her mother worked twenty-four hours a day in a children's home. Adriana enjoyed baseball and reading in her free time. She also aspired to attend University and become a teacher. After considering the efforts her own students made to take action for social justice, Judy decided to sponsor Adriana to assist with the necessary funds that would allow her to attend additional schooling beyond sixth grade.

Lastly, students avoided a deficit perspective of the children in Guatemala, and instead, viewed them as children no different than themselves, other than the unjust division of equity. Judy shared a conversation students had during writing workshop one morning. "It's been funny because today we were writing a note to Joy and they said we want them to have a school just like ours. Then they said we want them to have a different government there. We want them to have a different country, a better country. They were like we need to give them a better country. Bobby said can we go on a field trip to their school... I thought about since they were so wanting to actually be the person to do it, it wasn't enough to write about it. When he said let's go on a field trip, I thought that was pretty cool." These comments suggested students' level of critical consciousness of the inequity that persists in other places of the world and the need to foster change

beyond writing to take action to improve the situation for the people of Guatemala and South Sudan. As Judy mentioned in her interview, "I know now that kids that are six and seven can be engaged in already seeing how they can make a difference. It is important to show them how they already have power and can make a difference.   They are seeing how they can make a difference already at their age. That was something I learned that their words have power already."

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The preceding findings of my research study reveal what happened when first graders engage in collaborative literacy, critical literacy, and writing for social justice in a digital space. Five major themes emerged from the data in this qualitative case study: (1) The teacher influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners; (2) The literature influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners; (3) Peer interaction influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners; (4) Students engaged in meaningful writing for an authentic purpose and audience in a digital space; and (5) Participants take action to make a difference. In the final chapter of my dissertation, I revisit the findings through a discussion of the conclusions, implications, and benefits of this research. Recommendations for instructional practice and additional research will be addressed as well.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first and second chapters identified a need to study an alternative approach to traditional scripted instruction. In particular, this study examined the use of collaborative and critical literacy with first graders to discuss a range of social issues using children's literature as a springboard. Chapter three described the methodology employed in this study. Chapter four focused on the findings that emerged from the data. The final chapter draws conclusions based on findings, formulates implications, and discusses contributions to the field. Additionally, recommendations for future research will be explored.

The primary goal of this study was to understand what happens when first graders engage in collaborative and critical literacy. I explored the use of children's literature as a springboard for discussion and examination of issues such as teamwork, acceptance, perseverance, and fairness (Kissel, Hathaway, & Wood, 2010; Wood, Roser, & Martinez, 2001). Students explored important life lessons in the text and related them to their own lives, situations at school, home, and in the world around them. In addition, this study sought to discover how students use digital writing to advocate for social justice. The research questions that guided this study include: (1) In what ways does the teacher incorporate collaborative and critical literacy approaches in her classroom? (2) What happens when first graders engage in collaborative and critical literacy? (3) In what ways do students use digital writing to advocate for issues of social justice? and (4) In what

ways does the use of a collaborative literacy approach affect students' views of collaboration both in and out of the classroom?

In an era of high stakes accountability, the use of a one-size-fits-all scripted approach to reading instruction is prevalent in many schools (Allington, 2002; Duncan-Owens, 2009). Furthermore, since the release of the National Reading Panel Report (2000), much emphasis has focused on the need for explicit phonics instruction in the primary grades. While there is certainly a need for this type of instruction, little room has been afforded for deep comprehension and thoughtful discussion of text (Taberski, 2011). Traditional scripted approaches do not encourage social interaction, critical thinking, or exploration of sociopolitical issues (Hargood, 2008). In addition, the teacher remains as the holder of knowledge and the dispenser of information (Freire, 2000). Therefore, there is a need for an alternative student-centered approach that fosters meaningful interaction with text through critical reading, collaborative discussion, and writing for an authentic audience to advocate for social justice.

While there has been an increase in research in the area of critical literacy (Comber & Nixon, 2011; Comber & Simpson, 2001; Luke & Freebody, 1997), little research has been conducted at the primary level (Hargood, 2008; Vasquez, 2004, 2010). Some resistance has occurred due to teachers' lack of comfort exposing young students to topics that may be harmful to their innocence (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998) and a fear of resisting the status quo (McDaniel, 2004). Therefore, many teachers would rather maintain the status quo and omit complex sociopolitical topics from the classroom context (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2000). Yet, it is essential for young students to learn to examine diverse perspectives and issues to avoid perpetration of stereotypes and bias.

According to McDaniel (2004), students need to be encouraged to read from a critical

stance from a young age to prevent the indoctrination of dominant ideology.

As a result, I investigated what happened when one first grade classroom engaged

in collaborative and critical literacy and writing for social justice. I employed a

qualitative case study approach to gather the necessary data for this study. Data collection

over a period of six weeks included observations, interviews of participants, and student

work samples. An analysis of data revealed the following five findings: (1) The teacher

influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners. (2) The literature

influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners. (3) Peer interaction

influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners. (4) Students engaged in

meaningful writing for an authentic purpose and audience in a digital space. (5)

Participants take action to make a difference. The five findings provide a comprehensive

framework for this study. Therefore, it is necessary to revisit the four research questions

that guided this research. In the following sections, the findings will be discussed in

relation to each research question (see TABLE 5.1).

TABLE 5.1. Research Questions and Findings

Research Questions	Findings
In what ways does the teacher incorporate collaborative and critical literacy approaches in her classroom?	(1) The teacher influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners.
What happens when first graders engage in collaborative and critical literacy?	(1) The teacher influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners. (2) The literature influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners. (3) Peer interaction influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners.
In what ways do students use digital writing to advocate for issues of social justice?	(4) Students engaged in meaningful writing for an authentic purpose and audience in a digital space. (5) Participants take action to make a difference.

TABLE 5.1. Cont'd.

In what ways does the use of a collaborative literacy approach affect students' views of collaboration both in and out of the classroom?	(3) Peer interaction influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners. (4) Students engaged in meaningful writing for an authentic purpose and audience in a digital space. (5) Participants take action to make a difference.

In what ways does the teacher incorporate collaborative and critical literacy approaches

in her classroom?

The teacher employed a variety of methods to engage her students in a

collaborative and critical literacy approach to learning. First, the teacher established a

classroom community that fostered the inclusion of student voices as co-constructors of

knowledge. She did this by establishing a classroom community where students

participated as equal contributors to discussions instead of teacher-led discussions. This

type of environment created a risk-free space where students were encouraged to engage

in social learning. This peer interaction influenced students as collaborative and critical

literacy learners. Next, the teacher used a range of think aloud techniques to model

collaborative and critical literacy practices for her students. Lastly, through the thoughtful

selection of literature, the teacher fostered a collaborative and critical approach to literacy

learning with her students.

It is important that the teacher creates a space that values students' voices and

views students as equal contributing members of the classroom community to move

beyond a teacher-centered classroom and the banking method of instruction where

teachers merely "deposit knowledge" in students (Freire, 2000). One way Judy, the

teacher in this study, established this collaborative atmosphere was through the use of the

discussion circle for collaborative and critical literacy discussions. In this setting, Judy positioned herself as an equal by sitting on the carpet among her students. She also encouraged students to openly participate in the discussion without the need to raise hands and obtain permission to speak from the teacher. Students learned to become attentive to their peers, patient with taking turns to speak, and respectful of their peers' views and ideas. In this space, students felt comfortable exploring a range of social issues such as global inequities and bullying.

This type of environment created a risk-free space where students were encouraged to engage in social learning. This peer interaction influenced students as collaborative and critical literacy learners. As Judy's students interacted with their peers, understanding and knowledge was co-constructed through whole group and small group discussions, as well as informal conversations during independent work time and writing workshop. Children were exposed to a variety of ideas and perspectives as a result of the social nature of the classroom environment. Vygotsky's social learning theory (1978) explains how meaning can be negotiated through social interaction. This theory posits that literacy is not an isolated skill, but instead is developed through the social, historical, and cultural nuances of the classroom setting.

One student in Judy's class influenced his peers as a result of sharing his personal connections to the themes in the literature during class discussions. Jordan shared his family's connection to a former Lost Boy from South Sudan. Jordan taught his fellow classmates about the Lost Boys, their challenging journey to freedom, and one former Lost Boy's efforts to give back to his former village in South Sudan through a non-profit organization. Kubo, the former Lost Boy, shared his story with Judy's class as a guest

speaker. Through Kubo's presentation and Jordan's connections, the children developed an awareness of some of the global inequities that exist around the world, specifically in South Sudan. The examination of inequities and power relationships is one aspect of critical literacy that came about as a result of social influences.

The role of the social nature of the classroom on students as collaborative and critical literacy learners was also demonstrated when some of the students made connections to power relationships as it pertained to bullying. Jessica initially noted examples of bullying in the literature read and discussed in class. Bullying remains a key issue in society and specifically in the field of education today. This was found to be consistent with conversations in Judy's first grade classroom. Several students successfully illustrated instances of bullying in the literature. Others like Liam, shared personal connections to experiencing bullying. Liam tearfully described a time he was both physically and emotionally assaulted because he did not belong to a particular neighborhood. During their writing for social justice projects, two groups decided to write plays to teach others about bullying and what to do if victimized in a bullying situation. Collaborative writing groups negotiated the genre, the content, and each participant's role in the performance. Ideas for the subject of the plays came about as students discussed possible topics. Both Sean and Addison shared their own experiences with bullying and each group elected to write about their peers' experiences. While Sean's group retold his experience with a moral lesson, Addison's group wrote a social narrative play to depict how new characters experienced bullying and how they handled the situation. A clear moral also concluded this play. Students used writing, oral language, and physical action to teach others about their real-world experiences with

bullying. The importance of these experiences is highlighted by Buhs, Ladd, & Herald's study (2006) who found that kindergarteners who are least accepted by their peers were most likely to be treated poorly by their peers later on. By engaging in collaborative and critical discussions and teaching others about the importance of acceptance, being kind to others, and taking a stand, Judy's students can develop their social skills and decrease the possibility of victimization.

This study found that students were engaged, motivated, and the quality of their writing improved as a result of participating in the social learning context of the classroom. Students reflected on the opportunity to interact with their peers during literature discussions and writing. The students provided positive feedback about learning in a supportive environment with peer interaction. Specifically, the findings suggest that students appreciated having assistance with the writing process, both in the composition of ideas as well as with letter-grapheme correspondence during the construction of written text. Others stated that they were more engaged in the learning process as a result of being able to work with their classmates. Through these collaborative experiences, students developed the ability to work together as a team. Furthermore, students described ways they collaborated beyond the four walls of the classroom. By creating an environment where their voices and opinions were valued, students realized the power they have even as young literacy learners to take action against some of the inequities that exist in their lives and the world around them. Students' development as collaborative and critical literacy learners was enhanced as a result of the teacher fostering an environment conducive to social interaction.

Next, the teacher used a range of think aloud techniques to model collaborative and critical literacy practices for her students. Before expecting first graders to engage in collaborative and critical literacy discussions, it was necessary for Judy to first demonstrate this type of metacognition and critical thinking. Consequently, Judy employed a variety of think aloud strategies before, during and after reading. In an effort to foster similar thinking with her students, Judy shared her connections and wonderings about the text. She also provided clarification and elaboration to help students deepen their understanding about complex social issues in the texts. Judy also incorporated both open and closed questions to engage students in the discussion and critical thought process.

Using Pearson and Gallagher's Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (1983), the teacher modeled her own thought process as she critically examined the literature. The gradual release model is an effective way to guide students through an instructional framework leading to critical thinking and deeper understanding. Through teacher scaffolding, students were exposed to critical thinking and a range of connections, wonderings, and questioning. By making text-to-self connections and text-to-world connections, Judy demonstrated how events and issues in the text can be applied to real life experiences. This facilitated a similar cognitive process for students as they engaged in collaborative and critical discussions where they made their own connections and wonderings about the text. Students also elaborated on comments in an effort to extend the conversation and deepen learning.

Lastly, through the thoughtful selection of literature, the teacher fostered a collaborative and critical approach to literacy learning with her students. According to

Harste (2000), a careful selection of literature can foster critical conversations in the

classroom. Specifically, certain books lend themselves to the examination of power

relationships and the impact on individual's lives. While Judy selected text related to

sports to align with an instructional unit, she selected specific literature to focus on issues

of difference as it related to race, gender, and power relationships such as bullying. The

following selection criteria developed by Harste (2000) provided Judy and me with a

framework for the inclusion of critical literacy text for her sports unit. When choosing

text for critical literacy exploration, one or more of the following criteria should be

considered: (1) explicit exploration of the notion of difference, (2) voice is given to the

traditionally marginalized other, (3) demonstration action for social justice, (4) explore

dominant systems that position people, and (5) challenge the idea of otherness (Harste,

2000). The texts selected and incorporated into this study met each of the criteria.

Through the use of these books for collaborative and critical discussions, students

developed an awareness and acceptance of difference, instead of the conformity model

common in traditional literacy instruction.

Judy created a safe environment where students actively participated in

collaborative and critical discussions by creating a classroom community that welcomed

the voices of students as co-constructors of meaning. Within this space, Judy

successfully fostered a collaborative and critical approach to literacy learning with her

students through the use of teacher modeling and think alouds in addition to the

intentional selection of literature.

What happens when first graders engage in collaborative and critical literacy?

Judy's students were influenced by the literature and peer interaction when they engaged in collaborative and critical literacy learning. Students participated in collaborative and critical discussions using children's literature as a springboard. The literature influenced students in a variety of ways. First, students actively engaged in collaborative discussion about a wide range of text related to the theme of teamwork. Students examined the ways in which the characters in the books effectively and sometimes ineffectively worked together. Similar to the assertions made by Wood, Roser, and Martinez (2001), students also extended the conversations to examine how important life lessons can be learned from the text. Specifically, students explored the need for teamwork in the classroom and in their lives beyond the four walls of school.

The importance of teamwork was discussed when reading books such as *Winners Never Quit* (Hamm, 2004), *You're a Good Sport Ms. Malarkey* (Finchler & O'Malley, 2002), and *Froggy Plays Soccer* (London, 1999). Students emotionally connected with the characters and events in the text. For example, when Froggy's teammates laughed at him for catching the soccer ball with his hands, students reacted with expressions of sadness and embarrassment for Froggy. Going beyond literal levels of comprehension, students engaged in deeper examination and application of life lessons through consideration of the author's purpose. For instance, students explained that the author's intent for the book, *Froggy Plays Soccer* (London, 1999) was to teach readers to be considerate of the way in which they treat others and to work together as a team. In addition to the discussion of events in the text and the author's purpose, students made connections to the text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). These

connections fostered deeper understanding of the themes in the literature as it related to students' lives and the world around them. The findings of my study supported the claims made by Wood, Roser, and Martinez, (2001) that collaborative literacy fosters the development of the skills and knowledge essential for students to make meaningful contributions to the classroom, at home, and in society as a whole. Students' social skills, abilities to accept others, and awareness of the need for cooperation were enhanced through the important life lessons learned through the literature and collaborative discussions.

Findings revealed that students participated in collaborative literacy discussions and viewed themselves as contributing members of a classroom community that fosters teamwork and acceptance of others. This finding is essential considering the ability to collaborate, communicate, and co-construct knowledge are paramount twenty-first century skills as noted by The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2007). Furthermore, Kissel, Hathaway, and Wood (2010) suggest that discussions related to the theme of collaboration can lead to addressing larger societal issues such as homelessness, racism, oppression, "fitting in," and tolerance. The findings of this study proved to corroborate this assertion. Specifically, students critically examined and discussed books that examined deeper societal issues, such as the imbalance of power in bullying situations, racism, and sexism.

The ability to collaborate with and accept others is crucial as it relates to the issue of bullying, a problem that continues to persist as a problem in elementary schools today, as suggested by Stanford University Medical Center (2007). Judy's classroom was no exception. As the findings of this study revealed, the topic of bullying arose during

discussion of the literature. Students were keenly aware of the imbalance of power

relationships between characters in the various texts read and discussed in class. As noted

by Hazel (2010) and Schoen and Schoen (2010), bullying represents the imbalance of

power between the bully and the victim. Students pointed out ways in which characters in

the text were victimized as a result of being different or not conforming to the status quo.

For example, students noted in the book *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972), that William

was called a 'sissy' due to his desire to own a doll. In the story *Dancing in the Wings*

(Allen, 2000), students pointed out that Sassy was ostracized for being much taller than

the other children and for having large, clumsy feet. Students were aware of and

recognized these situations across numerous texts they read and discussed.

Furthermore, students made connections to their own experiences related to

events in the text. As mentioned previously, Liam shared his experience of being bullied

for living in a different community. Sean described being pushed off the ladder on the

playground by a student from another class. In Heffernan and Lewison's study (2003),

third graders created social narratives to call attention to the daily issues students faced at

school. Similar to Heffernan and Lewison's study (2003), many students wrote about

being bullied. For instance, Sean's collaborative writing group co-constructed a play to

describe Sean's victimization on the playground. As evident in both discussions and

student writing, it was not enough to merely accept the power relationships in the

bullying situations. Instead, students critically navigated various perspectives and

examined ways to take action to stand up for the victim. In the play about Sean getting

pushed off the ladder, students determined that it was important to have a moral at the

conclusion. Therefore, they collectively decided to demonstrate how Sean's peer came to

his side when he needed assistance. They also explained that it takes courage to get back up after you get pushed off the ladder. However, with the support of a friend, students can develop a sense of belonging (Siris & Osterman, 2004) and bullying can be prevented when a positive classroom community is fostered (Buhs, Ladd, & Herald, 2006). Through examining texts and sharing their life experiences within the classroom community future bullying could be prevented. Buhs, Ladd, and Herald (2006) also noted that acceptance as early as kindergarten is critical in avoiding maltreatment later on. Several students mentioned learning important life lessons from the bully plays performed by their peers. Specifically, they described the importance of taking a stand against bullying and the need to intervene by standing up to the bully, helping the victim, or getting assistance from an adult. These actions demonstrate the influence peer interaction had on students as collaborative and critical literacy learners.

In addition to the topic of bullying, Judy's students explored issues of racism and sexism in the literature. The findings of this research study corroborated the assertions made by Luke and Freebody's Four Resource Model (1990, 1999), suggesting the need for students to move beyond simply decoding and comprehending text at literal levels to include reading with a critical lens. As noted by Comber (1998) and Comber, Thompson, and Wells (2001), critical literacy includes the navigation of power relationships and perspectives in a range of literature. Judy's students successfully embarked upon their journey as critical literacy learners by recognizing and examining the topics of racism and sexism in the literature. After reading a variety of texts and engaging in discussion about topics related to equality, fairness, teamwork, perseverance, and social norms, students became more aware of power relationships and social barriers that exist in their

lives and in the world around them. For instance, when reading the book *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990), students discussed the way Jackie Robinson was discriminated against due to his skin color. They also examined how his teammate took a stand to accept Jackie Robinson, thus helping him to break the color barrier in baseball. Students also explored how Althea Gibson broke the color barrier in tennis when reading *Nothing but Trouble: The Story of Althea Gibson* (Stauffacher, 2007). Students demonstrated their understanding of issues of inequality as it pertained to discrimination in the texts read and discussed in class. The issue of fairness was a common theme among these collaborative and critical discussions. For instance, when students discussed the book *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993) they challenged the way the young boy was treated due to his race. Many students found it unfair that William could not play with the toy of his choice regardless of gender norms in the book *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972). Although the participants in this study most likely have not experienced discrimination or inequity in their own lives, most students were able to make connections to other instances when they experienced something unfair. Furthermore, students developed an awareness of inequities in a historical context as well as current examples of global inequity.

Unlike the findings from the study conducted by Wollman-Bonilla (1998), the children in this study were able to engage in conversations pertaining to serious sociopolitical topics. In contrast to the teachers in McDaniel's study (2004) who resisted critical literacy because it disrupted the status quo, Judy encouraged her students to examine alternative perspectives and challenge the status quo. Her students developed a sense of empathy for others and intolerance for inequity and maltreatment of others through active participation in these critical discussions. As noted by McDaniel (2004), it

is important that students read from a critical stance beginning at a young age to avoid the indoctrination of dominant ideology.

Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys (2002) noted four dimensions of critical literacy. These dimensions include: (1) disrupting the commonplace, (2) considering multiple perspectives, (3) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (4) taking action to foster change. Findings from this study suggest that Judy's students engaged in each of these dimensions in varying ways. First, students explored the literature with a critical lens as mentioned in the aforementioned section. Secondly, students were influenced by their peers to engage in collaborative and critical literacy practices. Jordan helped students develop a global awareness of inequities and power relations by sharing his connections to his friend Kubo, a former Lost Boy from South Sudan. Through the examination of inequities between the people of South Sudan in comparison with students' own lives, students were able to develop an awareness of their own power and privilege, thus disrupting the commonplace. They began to consider the experiences of Kubo, the Lost Boy who experienced much adversity in an effort to obtain his freedom. Students focused on the sociopolitical issues of injustice as it pertained to the war in Sudan, the lack of equity in wealth, resources to fulfill basic needs such as food and water, and the lack of educational opportunities. Thereafter, they vowed to take a stand and help the people of South Sudan.   As a result of exposure to this new knowledge, several students were determined to take action to foster change and address the inequities that they deemed as unfair. For example, students collaborated with Jordan to write and publish a book on the Internet using Voicethread as a way to advocate for social justice. By using a digital space, students were able to inform a wider audience about the need to help South Sudan

and how to get involved with the donation of money to the foundation working to build a school for the children in South Sudan. Students humanized the issue of inequality by giving a face and a story to one of the Lost Boys from South Sudan. This helped students develop an emotional connection to the topic and deepen their understanding of multiple points of view. This study found the power of social influences was substantial in engaging students in collaborative and critical reading, discussion, and writing.

As Grattan (1997) noted, students were more engaged, developed more meaningful responses, and maintained stronger connections across texts as a result of literature discussions. The collaborative nature of the discussions and writing process deepened students' understanding and influenced their thinking in new ways. This study supports the claims of Vasquez (2010) and Wood, Soares, and Watson (2006), that critical literacy increases students' critical and social consciousness and way of viewing the world. Judy's students considered current global problems as discussed in class, such as the lack of equity for the people in South Sudan and Guatemala. Findings from this study demonstrated young students' abilities to engage in transformation by confronting issues of inequity and taking action for social justice (Freire, 2000). This evidence suggests that even young learners have the ability to show understanding, empathy, and transformative thinking through critical conversations and writing for social justice.

In what ways do students use digital writing to advocate for issues of social justice?

Students engaged in meaningful collaborative writing experiences to advocate for issues of social justice using Voicethread, a Web 2.0 Application. Students determined topics based on issues about which they were interested and felt passionate. The democratic setting of Judy's classroom allowed students to engage in writing about

subjects they cared about (Bomer & Bomer, 2001). The topics derived from collaborative and critical literacy discussions of literature and connections to the literature. Each collaborative writing was created based on a shared interest in a topic. Students gathered to discuss and agree upon an authentic purpose and audience for their writing. For example, Jordan's decided to write an informational piece about the Lost Boys of South Sudan and one non-profit organization's efforts to build a school there. Another group elected to write an informational piece about Guatemala. In addition to focusing on the need to advocate for support to help Guatemala, this group also incorporated similarities between themselves and the children of Guatemala, which is of great significance. As a result, students avoided a deficit view of Guatemala as a result. Two additional groups created dramatic plays about the topic of bullying. Both plays included a bully, a victim, and bystanders. While the settings of each play differed and the context of the bullying varied, both plays included a moral to address ways to support victims of bullying. For instance, Sean's group intentionally determined the importance of showing the audience how Sean's peers helped him up when he was pushed off the ladder. Jessica's group focused on the importance of standing up to a bully using words. In addition, after standing up for their friend who was bullied, this group examined the importance of inclusion by inviting the bully to be a part of their social circle. The play concluded with the girls singing the song 'Lean on Me' arm in arm. Each of these groups collaborated to determine an agreed upon topic, content, purpose and audience for their writing.

Having a genuine purpose and broad audience for students' digitalized writing projects increased students engagement and motivation in the social justice projects (Brunvand & Byrd, 2011; Smith & Dobson, 2009). It was easier for students to share

their writing and communicate with a wider audience, essentially people from around the world, by utilizing the Internet. Modes of student communication and possibilities for twenty-first century dissemination of information were demonstrated by the use of Voicethread as a digital space to publish students' writing (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2007). Collaborative literacy, critical literacy, and writing for social justice created opportunities for students to foster social change and make a difference in their lives and the world around them (Vasquez, 2004). Furthermore, this kind of work helped Judy's students develop a better understanding of themselves and the world in which they live in.

Cambourne (2001) suggests the need for students to be actively engaged in the writing process. The students in Judy's classroom enthusiastically participated as democratic citizens working to promote social action through their writing. Students used the writing process to reconstruct social issues related to power and privilege to portray a more equitable way of viewing the world. Students successfully included voices of individuals and groups who are traditionally left out (Jones, 2006) through their digital writing for social justice projects. In this study, writing workshop became the vehicle for students to reconstruct the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Students further developed as collaborative and critical literacy learners through these experiences.

Students used their digital writing to tell the stories of marginalized groups and individuals to raise awareness of issues of inequity and to foster action for change. In this sense, students used their writing as praxis for social transformation and promoted social change for a better world (Bomer & Bomer, 2001; Freire, 2000). As noted by Bomer and Bomer (2001), it is the stories of the disenfranchised groups that will provoke change.

Working as active citizens towards social change immersed students in writing as life

work as opposed to desk work (Calkins, 1991). As a result, students developed a sense of

ownership of their writing and interest in pursuing action beyond writing to establish a

fundraiser for South Sudan and Guatemala.

Students' involvement in their writing for social justice projects far exceeded my

expectations. I was surprised to see how motivated students were to engage in the writing

process. Having a genuine purpose and an authentic audience made this experience more

meaningful for students. As noted by Routman (2000), having an opportunity to write

about what matters can have a dramatic effect on student writing, as was the case in this

study.

In what ways does the use of a collaborative literacy approach affect students' views of

collaboration both in and out of the classroom?

According to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2007), the ability to

collaborate is a skill paramount to success in the twenty-first century. Students

developed their views of collaboration as a result of participating in collaborative literacy

practices in the classroom. Several factors influenced their development. First, the teacher

fostered a classroom environment that valued collaboration. The importance of working

together both in and out of the classroom was fostered by the use of physical space,

selection of literature, and the teacher's guidance. Each day, Judy joined the students in a

circle on the carpet for collaborative and critical literacy discussions. The intentional

decision to sit in a circle formation where students could easily see one another and the

teacher created a space for students to participate and equally contribute to the

discussions. This arrangement valued students as holders of knowledge and active

participants in their learning (Freire, 2000). Students enhanced their own social skills such as listening, taking turns, and respecting the perspectives and ideas of others while exploring important topics such as teamwork, acceptance, and fairness through collaborative discussions using literature as a springboard.

Students were influenced as collaborators by the teacher's careful selection of literature that demonstrated characters working together. Discussion of themes such as cooperation in these books deepened students' understanding of the need to collaborate and get along in the context of the literature as well as through application to their own lives both in and out of the classroom. As noted by Wood, Roser, and Martinez (2001), the collaborative nature of the discussion reinforced the idea of working together. Through social interaction, students enhanced their comprehension and improved their abilities to work with others. Similar to the work of Vygotsky (1978), this approach to literacy instruction revealed that literacy learning is a social practice.

Similar to assertions made by Wood, Roser, and Martinez (2001), the teacher in this study planned, fostered, and nurtured collaborative discussions through modeling and reinforcement of her own thinking, behaviors, and expectations for her students. Unlike the use of a scripted approach to reading, collaborative literacy allowed the teacher to choose appropriate literature and foster open-ended discussion with her students. Traditional scripted approaches to reading instruction limit student interaction and focus on teacher-led whole group instruction and independent practice of skills.

In addition to collaborative discussion of literature, students worked in collaborative writing groups to determine a focus, negotiate content, and construct written and digital text. The ability to collaborate was crucial to students' abilities to

envision and create their writing for social justice projects in digital spaces. Students stated that they enjoyed working with their peers as it provided a level of support and made the learning experience more engaging and fun.

The use of technology is an essential twenty first century skill both in and out of school. In an increasingly digital world, technology is a part of these digital natives' lives (Presky, 2001). Therefore, students collaborated in digital spaces through the Web 2.0 Application known as Voicethread. Students used Voicethread as a way to use digital modes of writing to advocate for their selected causes of interest. The interactive nature of Voicethread allowed students to connect and communicate with a wide audience through reading and writing in a digital space. Voicethread provided writers with the valuable opportunity to tell their story in their own voice and for readers to connect by leaving feedback. Students were able to collaborate with others to take action to foster change by using digital writing to advocate for social justice. Students successfully conducted a fund raising campaign to collect donations for their non-profit organizations. Students were amazed at how quickly small amounts of pocket change added up to several hundred dollars with the collective effort of a wide audience. Students worked together with their peers and others to make a difference by raising money for schools in South Sudan and Guatemala.

Other collaborative writing groups worked together to write and act out plays about bullying. Students contributed ideas, helped each other with the written construction of text, and negotiated roles and lines in the plays. Students collaborated throughout the writing process and used their published writing to teach others about the importance of collaboration. The issue of bullying is prevalent in schools and society at

large. The moral message of students' plays reinforced the importance of working together and acceptance of others. For instance, the students' purposes for writing were to teach the audience to stand up to bullies and help the victims. As Siris and Osterman (2004) noted, the likelihood of victimization can be reduced with the development of relationships. The intentional decisions of student writers demonstrated their beliefs that collaboration and acceptance of others is an essential part of making the world a better place.

Implications for the Practice

Teachers and teacher educators can be learned from Judy's classroom for teachers and teacher educators. The findings of this study help us understand the role of collaborative and critical literacy approaches in early childhood classroom settings. Additionally, we explored how digital writing can help students advocate for issues of social justice with a wide audience. Critical literacy will remain controversial for those who maintain the status quo and fulfill top-down agendas. As a result, the need for research that examines collaborative and critical literacy particularly with young learners is apparent. This study supports the argument that young learners are capable of engaging in critical literacy practices (Leland, Harste, & Huber, 2005; Vasquez, 2004). This research can have important implications for today's educators. The results reveal that young children can successfully engage in collaborative and critical literacy learning. Specifically, through student-centered collaborative and critical discussions of literature and collaborative writing to advocate for social justice, young students can have a voice to take on complex social issues and work collectively to deepen their understanding. Development of collaborative and critical literacy curriculum challenges students to

examine assumptions and expand their awareness of differences, inequalities, and issues of fairness in their lives and the lives of others in a global context. This curriculum supports students in their journey to be more socially aware, inform others, and take action to contribute to a more just world.

This study has important implications for teachers and literacy instruction. It demonstrates the power of an approach to literacy instruction that fosters students as equal contributing members of the classroom, deepens students' comprehension, and helps students view the use of literacy practices as transformative. Traditional scripted programs encourage rote regurgitation and replication of information deemed necessary by the teacher and the publishers, yet place little emphasis on comprehension and students' voices and thoughts can be silenced (Comber & Nichols, 2004; Durkin, 1981; Jordan, 2005; Shannon, 2007; Leland, Harste, & Huber, 2005). Furthermore, much of the practice of literacy using these programs involves isolated skill and drill in the form of fill-in-the-blank and comprehension questions completed independently. Students are thus rendered as disengaged passive participants in literacy learning by traditional practices driven by scripts and fill-in-the-blanks (Shannon, 2007). Therefore, scripted programs may have negative effects on young learners' abilities to develop as collaborators, critical thinkers, and active democratic citizens (Comber & Nichols, 2004).

The teacher's decision to move from a teacher-centered discussion and direct instructional approach to a collaborative and critical approach to literacy instruction invited students as holders of knowledge to contribute and participate in active learning. Since scripted instruction does not take into account students' knowledge, experiences, and input, it limits interaction with text in deeper more meaningful ways. By

incorporating an open-ended forum for student discussion and interaction with text, the teacher created an environment that fostered the co-construction of knowledge and deeper comprehension of text. Furthermore, the children became more attuned to issues of power and privilege when they engaged in collaborative and critical discussions of the literature.

The teacher played a significant role in shaping students as collaborative and critical literacy learners. As the data revealed, Judy's implementation of the use of authentic children's literature, think alouds, open-ended discussion, and meaningful writing experiences provided students with the important awareness of a range of social issues and the power their young voices and action can have on using literacy to create a better world (Bomer & Bomer, 2001). The use of scripted reading programs would have limited the teacher's abilities to select appropriate literature, foster an open-ended discussion, and engage students in writing to advocate for social justice. Judy engaged her students in collaborative and critical literacy, which led to deeper comprehension and empowerment to take action to make changes in the world through teacher modeling, social interaction and writing for authentic purposes and audiences. Teachers who incorporate these alternative approaches to scripted instruction help students move beyond functional understandings of literacy to deeper critical literacy experiences. These authentic opportunities to engage as collaborative and critical literacy learners allow students to collectively make connections between issues of power and privilege in the literature and in society. With increased awareness, students can reflect on systems of injustice and ways the status quo is maintained or challenged (Lewison, Leland & Harste, 2008). This critical approach helps students challenge stereotypes, engage in

transformative learning, and take action for a better world. Critical literacy fosters

lifelong learning and a democratic way of life.

<center>Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development</center>

There is a need for the inclusion of alternative approaches to teaching reading

beyond scripted instruction to include critical literacy in teacher preparation programs

and professional development sessions. According to McNair (2002), some teachers

completely exclude critical literacy instructional approaches in their classrooms.

Specifically, there appears to be a lack of awareness or knowledge about the use of

critical approaches to instruction. As Judy contended before the onset of this study, she

was unfamiliar with the instructional approach of critical literacy. She was familiar with

writing for social justice, but viewed it as something appropriate only for older students.

Other teachers have some familiarity with the notion of critical literacy, but lack an

understanding of how it can be implemented in the classroom. Yet, there is another

group of teachers who do not understand the necessity of critical literacy in the

curriculum. Many view it as one more thing added to an already full curriculum.

Furthermore, in an age of high-stakes assessments and teacher accountability, many

teachers are encouraged to prepare students for standardized testing and are often

required to follow scripted programs to ensure uniformity. Lastly, other teachers find the

topic of critical literacy as controversial and disagree with its place in the classroom,

particularly in the early years.

While some teachers lack an awareness of the need for critical literacy approaches

in the classroom, others lack an understanding and acceptance of the approach. Previous

research suggests the hesitance of some teachers to incorporate critical literacy

instruction in their classrooms. Leland, Harste, Ociepka, and Vasquez (1999), McNair (2002), and Wollman-Bonilla (1998) found that some teachers believe that young children are not capable of engaging in critical literacy approaches. Swindler Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, & Powers-Costello (2011) suggest that many teachers consider a colorblind approach as more desirable because they believe the topic of racism is too complex for young, innocent children to comprehend. Some teachers in Wollman-Bonilla's study (1998) stated that they did not want to expose young children to class related issues, such as the ideas in the book Voices in the Park (Browne, 1998).

Based on the findings of Swindler Boutte (2002), no evidence suggests the above claims that young minds will be negatively influenced as a result of engaging in critical literacy. The findings of this study support the claims made by Swindler Boutte (2002). The data from this research revealed that young learners have the ability to engage as collaborative and critical literacy learners to be reflective, transformative, and take action to make a positive difference in their lives and the world around them. By facilitating critical deconstruction and reconstruction of text and real world social issues, the foundation has been created for continued development as more literate, compassionate, and socially active citizens and participants in democracy.

When critical literacy and writing for social justice are excluded from the classroom, children are denied exposure to meaningful discussion and examination of real world social issues. Without the use of a critical lens to reading the word and the world (Freire, 2000), we run the risk of maintaining inequities and stereotypes that plague society and the larger world context. Therefore, there is a need for the development and support of teacher knowledge and practice in the areas of critical literacy and writing for

social justice in the classroom. We must consider how we prepare pre-service teachers for their work with an increasingly diverse student population.

It is necessary for teachers to have the ability to take on a critical stance themselves to teach students to engage as critical literacy learners. In her study of pre-service teacher attitudes towards children in an urban high-poverty community, Lazar (2007) provided pre-service teachers' with opportunities to enhance their understanding of issues of race, class, culture, and teaching using a diversity-oriented approach to literacy education courses. Kidd, Sanchez, and Thorp (2008) contend that teacher education programs need to prepare teachers' culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices beyond isolated conversations in individual courses. They suggest the use of materials such as course readings, critical reflections that promote further discussion, and diverse internship opportunities. Opportunities for pre-service teachers, such as the aforementioned, can help to develop their abilities to be critically reflective teachers and increase the likelihood they will foster their own critically literate classroom.

There is a need for ongoing professional development in the area of critical literacy for teachers currently in the field. In the initial stages of this study, Judy admitted that she had limited knowledge about collaborative and critical literacy approaches. She stated, "So, like critical literacy, what do you mean?" After engaging as a participant in this research study, Judy seemed to lack confidence in teaching using a critical lens. In her interview, she expressed the need to enhance her teaching abilities in this area and the desire to increase the use of critical literacy in her classroom. She stated, "I feel like I didn't do as good of a job of saying why do you think the author wrote this and looking at

that. I wish I had done a better job of that and of saying whose voice was left out and stuff like that. I feel like we didn't address that as much." However, transcripts revealed that Judy did in fact include many critical literacy questions during discussions. She demonstrated a deeper understanding of the key tenants of critical literacy, including the examination of perspective, author's intent, and reading between the lines. Judy, among other teachers, would benefit from ongoing professional development to extend their knowledge of critical literacy, develop instructional strategies, and improve their confidence in incorporating it in the classroom with a range of learners. Further efforts to assist teachers to develop as critical readers of text and to frame literacy development within social contexts of the classroom should be explored.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data analysis and findings for this study were not intended to be generalizable. Instead, this study was designed to better understand the way one first grade classroom engaged in collaborative and critical literacy practices. This study is limited by the fact that only one group of first grade children was included. Nonetheless, this study contributed to the field by providing a description of what happens when one first grade classroom engaged in collaborative and critical literacy learning. This study also demonstrates how young learners can use their voices through writing in digital spaces to advocate for issues of social justice.

This study contributed to corpus of research in the area of critical literacy and writing for social justice for authentic audiences in digital spaces. Yet, there is a need for additional studies to determine how students of varying ages, backgrounds, and socioeconomic status levels engage in collaborative and critical literacy learning. I

suggest the need for future research in the following areas. First, there is a need to go beyond Judy's classroom to examine other teachers who implement similar instructional approaches to collaborative and critical literacy. Taking into account observations conducted in Judy's classroom, I wonder if her teaching style and philosophy are unique to her classroom or if this type of teaching takes place elsewhere. New information may be gleaned by studying instructional techniques and the role of the teacher in influencing how students develop as collaborative and critical literacy learners. Essentially, the following question would be explored in other classrooms: In what ways does the teacher implement collaborative and critical literacy approaches with her students?

Secondly, it would be beneficial to conduct this study in a range of settings including students from diverse backgrounds and demographics. Since Judy's class represents a mostly homogenous population of students from middle to upper class backgrounds, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study with a more diverse population of students. The following research questions would merit further exploration. What happens when students from urban schools engage in collaborative and critical literacy approaches? How do students' backgrounds and experiences influence them as collaborative and critical literacy learners? These questions should be explored in classrooms representing diverse populations and socioeconomic status levels.

This study revealed valuable information pertaining to the impact of collaborative and critical literacy approaches in conjunction with writing for social justice in digital spaces with first graders. However, it must be considered within the context of Judy's classroom at Smith Road Community School. The examination of the aforementioned

questions would also be beneficial in a range of classrooms from multiple grade levels including primary, intermediate, middle and secondary.

Summary

In conclusion, development of collaborative and critical readers in the twenty-first century cannot be accomplished solely with prescriptive programs that leave little space for the voices and active participation of young learners. The use of scripted programs stifles teachers' abilities to select suitable literature, foster open-ended collaborative and critical dialogue, and provide authentic opportunities for writing in digital spaces to advocate for social justice. Through this study, I have illustrated what collaborative and critical literacy and digital writing for social justice looks like in one first grade classroom. In doing so, I hope this study offers possibilities for a twenty-first century literacy curriculum that fosters critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Engaging in this research study has afforded me the opportunity to explore how young children develop as collaborative and critical literacy learners who share their voices in a digital space to create a more just society. Through the inclusion of this collaborative and critical approach to literacy instruction in the curriculum, teachers can help transition young children into knowledgeable, capable, and productive citizens who shape the world into a more just and equitable place.

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APPENDIX A: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Allen, D. (2000). *Dancing in the wings*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.
Sassy dreamed of dancing on the Milky Way but her long legs and arms seemed to get in the way. Her brother and others always teased her and made her feel upset about the way she looked. Her uncle, Redd, told her to look at her long legs and arms as a gift, not as a disadvantage. Tryouts came for a summer dance festival in Washington D.C. and two girls were giggling and speaking unkindly about Sassy's chance of being selected for the festival. Sassy ignored their snickering and was able to complete the exercises. Sassy may have been ungraceful, but was able to surpass the teasing as was asked to join the summer dance festival where she became a beautiful dancer.

Corey, S. (2003). *Players in pigtails*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
In the 1940's, girls across America were going crazy for a game called baseball. When all the players were called to war, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League was created. One determined girl, Katie Casey, made her way into the big-league and was able to create great friendships with other girls of the same interest.

Finchler, J. & O'Malley, K. (2002). *You're a good sport, Miss Malarkey*. New York, NY: Walker & Company.
Youngstown Elementary School has just started a soccer league and struggled to find a coach that the kids could understand. Miss Malarkey soon became the school's soccer coach and was real nice to the students, even though many of them have never played soccer before. As the season went on, Youngstown did not win very many games and the parents were getting upset and yelling a lot at the players, coach and referee, and even thought that the coach was not helping their child learn the sport. Miss Malarkey noticed that the yelling happened a little too much and made the rule that parents aren't allowed to yell or cheer, they could only clap politely. Miss Malarkey wanted everyone to remember to have fun while they played.

Golenbock, P. (1990). *Teammates*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Publishers.

Teammates tells the story of Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in baseball during segregation in the 1940s. Golenbock describes discrimination that occurred during that time specifically denoting the vast differences between the major leagues and the Negro leagues of baseball. He further exemplifies the stark divide by the fans' negative reactions to Jackie Robinson joining the major leagues in 1947. However, the courage of Brooklyn Dodgers' manager, Branch Rickey and Jackie's teammate, Pee Wee Reece to take a stand against discrimination symbolized the end of the color line in baseball and began a new friendship.

Hamm, M. (2004). *Winners never quit!* New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Growing up, Mia loved to play soccer, she loved when she scored goals and there was cheering. But sometimes, Mia wasn't able to score making there no goals and no cheering. This frustrated Mia to the point where she decided to quit. The next day, she tried again. Still not goals and no cheering. Instead of quitting this day, Mia decided to keep playing. She realized that her playing soccer was more important than winning or losing and that winners never quit!

Jordan, D. (2007). Michael's golden rules. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

There's "a lot more to a game than winning or losing.... It's all about how you play the game," Uncle Jack tells young Michael and his friend, Jonathan as they walk home after losing a Little League game. Uncle Jack also shares his ten golden rules to the boys. These golden rules come into action during the last game of the season. Even though the boys' team loses again, they are able to think positively thanks to Uncle Jack.

Jordan, D. & Jordan, R. (2003). *Salt in his shoes: Michael Jordan in pursuit of a dream.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Always wanting to play ball with the bigger kids and tired of being teased by the biggest kid on the court, small, shrimpy Michael was convinced the only way to solve the problem was to grow taller himself. Putting salt in his shoes and saying a prayer every night was the advice of his mama, but it was his daddy who said, "Being taller may help

you play a little better, but not as much as practice, determination, and giving your best will. Those are the things that make you a real winner." Michael did not grow to be the tallest player on the court, but he sure was one of the best!

Krull, K. (1996). *Wilma unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph became the world's fastest woman*. San Diego, CA: Voyager Books.

Wilma Rudolph was diagnosed with polio as a child and had a paralyzed leg in result of her sickness. She attended doctor visits weekly where she practiced exercises to make her paralyzed leg stronger. Wilma continued to practice these exercises on her own because she didn't want to keep sitting out on the sidelines at recess which made her impatient. One day, Wilma decided to take her brace off and focused on breathing as she walked down the aisle at church. To everyone's astonishment, Wilma was walking! She soon played basketball in high school and took her team to the state championship. From here, Wilma was recruited to Tennessee State University where she ran track and field. Wilma made it to the 1960's Olympics and won three gold medals. With Wilma's dedication, she went from the sickliest child in Clarksville, TN to the fastest woman in the world.

London, J. (1999). *Froggy Plays Soccer*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Froggy has joined the Dream Team and it was the day of their first soccer game. He was ready for the game. Unfortunately, Froggy was so excited that he forgot the rule and caught the soccer ball with his hands to prevent the other team from scoring. He is embarrassed at his mistake and his friends laugh at him.

Mochizuki, K. (1993). *Baseball saved us*. New York, NY: Lee & Low Books Inc.

During World War II, Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps in the middle of American deserts in fear of who might be loyal to Japan. Life at Camp was hard not only for the boy and his family, but for all of the Japanese Americans there. The boy and his father began to build a baseball field to help get everyone's mind off of the hard times. Soon enough, the whole camp was pitching in to help, all while the guard in the tower watched. The boy continued to struggle with baseball as his did before Camp and was still picked on by his teammates. His father encouraged him to try harder, and he did,

eventually making a homerun and winning the game for his team. When the war was done, the boy and his family returned home and the boy realizes that no other kids at school want to talk to him or be his friend. He learns to not let what others say and think about him get in the way of being the great baseball player that he is.

Stauffacher, S. (2007). *Nothing but trouble: The story of Althea Gibson*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Althea Gibson was a tomboy that caused trouble on the streets of Harlem but Buddy Walker saw the potential in her. Buddy introduced Althea to the sport of lawn tennis and was able to get her private lessons at the ritziest tennis club in town. Althea continued to show her tomboy bad manners and everyone talked of her being "nothing but trouble". As time went on, Althea wanted to slug her opponent as she started losing her match. Buddy helped her realize that she could take her anger and aggression out on the ball instead. Tennis changed Althea and Althea soon changed tennis becoming the first African American to win the Wimbledon Cup, which is considered the highest honor in tennis thanks to Buddy believing in her.

Zolotow, C. (1972). *William's doll*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

William wanted a doll to take care of day and night so he could practice being a father like his own dad. His brother and neighbor teased him for wanting such a toy. His father bought him other toys to play with like a boy should. William played with these toys a lot, but still wanted a doll to care for. When his grandmother came in town, he showed her his toys and how well he played with them, but confessed to her that he still wanted a doll but he gets teased and given other toys. His grandmother bought him a doll so he could care for it all day and night so he could be a great father like his own dad is.

Yamaguchi, K. (2011). *Dream Big Little Pig*. Naperville, IL: Source Books Jaberwocky.

Poppy dreams of being a star. She attempts a variety of endeavors including dancing, modeling, and singing but is rejected due to a lack of talent and ability. With her friends and family to support her, Poppy is determined to find her niche. Eventually, Poppy tries ice skating and realizes she has found her given talent. Due to her perseverance and

encouragement from loved ones, Poppy's dream comes true and she becomes a famous figure skater.

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH PHASES

Digital collaborative literacy, critical literacy, and social justice: Phases

Phase I – Planning May-September	Initial work with teacher to develop an instructional framework, research timeline, and list of children's literature
Phase II – Data Collection October-November	Initial student and teacher interviews Ongoing observation of whole group literacy instruction and discussions Ongoing observation of small group guided reading/book club discussions Ongoing student interviews Collection of student work samples
Phase III – Follow Up November	Follow up interviews

APPENDIX C: PHASE II RESEARCH TIMELINE

Digital collaborative literacy, critical literacy, and social justice: Phase II Timeline

Theme	Literature	Data Produced
Week 1 - Teamwork	You're a Good Sport Ms. Malarkey Winners Never Quit Michael's Golden Rule Froggy Plays Soccer	Observation of whole group discussions Observation of small group discussions Student work samples
Week 2 – Perseverance, Acceptance & Fairness	Salt in His Shoes Wilma Unlimited Teammates Dream Big Little Pig	Observation of whole group discussions Observation of small group discussions Student work samples
Week 3 - Perseverance, Acceptance, & Fairness	Baseball Saved Us William's Doll Players in Pigtails	Observation of whole group discussions Observation of small group discussions Student work samples
Week 4 – Perseverance, Acceptance, & Fairness	Nothing But Trouble: The Story of Althea Gibson Dancing in the Wings	Observation of whole group discussions Observation of small group discussions Student work samples
Week 5 & 6 – Writing for Social Justice	n/a	Observations Interviews Student work samples

APPENDIX D: PHASE II INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Digital collaborative literacy, critical literacy, and social justice: Phase II Instructional

Framework

Week 1 – 4: *Collaborative and Critical Literacy* – Students will engage in collaborative and critical reading of sports themed books through whole group interactive read aloud as well as small group book clubs.

Before, During & After Reading - The teacher will challenge students to think critically and challenge the text by asking questions such as:

- What is this text about? How do we know?
- What does this text remind you about?
- How is this text similar or different than things occurring in your life at school, at home, in the community, as well as in the world?
- How does this story show working together or getting along?
- How does this story discuss the issues of teamwork, acceptance, perseverance or fairness?
- How can the reader use this information to promote fairness and justice?
- How would the story be different if the setting were in a different location (such as…)?
- How would this story be different if the main character was a girl/boy? Was of a different race? Or class?
- Whose voices are included/missing?
- Who benefits from this text?
- What other perspective could be considered?
- What do you think is the author's intention for writing this story?
- What do the images, words, or language suggest? What does the author want you to think?

- If you were to rewrite this story, how would it be different?

Student Response - Making Connections: For both whole group and small group discussions, students will make connections to what they have read by responding in writing in their daybooks. Students may make connections or disconnections to their personal experiences, home lives, situations at school, in the community, as well as in the world around them. A glue-in framework will be provided for each student (see Appendix E).

Book Club Discussion Exit Slip – After meeting with their small group to discuss literature, students will complete a book club discussion exit slip to evaluate how well the group worked together and what they can do to improve the discussion next time (see Appendix F).

Week 5 – 6: Writing to Advocate for Social Justice

Students will choose a theme they feel passionate about. It may be an issue directly related to the text, something occurring at school, at home, in the community or in the larger world around them. They will collaboratively create a Voicethread to inform, persuade or entertain the reader about the topic. Types of writing may include a rewritten version of a story from a different perspective, a social narrative depicting issues of importance using fictional characters, informational text to inform the reader of the social issue, or a persuasive text to foster change about a particular topic.

APPENDIX E: MAKING CONNECTIONS TEMPLATE

Name: _____ Date: _____

Making Connections

Book: _____

Use words and pictures to show how the book you read is similar

to or different from your…

Home	School
Community	World

APPENDIX F: BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION EXIT SLIP

Book Club Discussion Exit Slip

Name: _____   Date: _____

1. How was your discussion?

☺   😐   ☹

Good   Could Improve   Not Good

2. Did everyone have a chance to talk?

Yes   No

3. Did everyone talk about the book?

Yes   No

4. Use words or pictures to share how the discussion could be

    better.

APPENDIX G: TEACHER PRE-INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Adapted from Spradley (1979)

Goal of the Study

I want to understand how discussion about literature can deepen students' awareness and understanding of social issues such as getting along, working together, acceptance, perseverance, and justice.

Type of Question	What happens when students use children's literature as a springboard for collaborative discussion about social issues?	What happens when a teacher uses a critical literacy approach to enhance her students' understanding of social issues?	In what ways do students use digital writing to advocate for issues of social justice?
Grand Tour	Describe what student discussion looks like in your classroom.	Tell me about a typical literacy lesson in your classroom.	Describe what writing looks like in your classroom.
Specific Grand Tour	Tell me about a recent conversation your students had about a book they read dealing with issues such as getting along and working together.	Tell me about a recent conversation your students had about a book they read dealing with issues such as acceptance, perseverance, and social justice.	Describe ways in which your students use writing to deal with social issues and advocate for social justice.
Mini Tour	What happens when you use literature to	What happens when you use literature to	What happens when you use literature to

	engage your students in discussion about social issues such as getting along and working together?	engage your students in discussion about social issues such as acceptance, perseverance, and justice?	engage your students in writing for social justice?
Example	What are examples of some topics that arose in discussions about getting along and working together?	What are examples of some topics that arose in discussions about acceptance, perseverance, and justice using literature as a springboard?	What are some examples of topics and areas of interest that students write about to advocate for social justice? Can you give me an example of ways you incorporate technology in your classroom?
Experience	Describe your experience with engaging your students in discussion about social issues such as getting along and working together.	Describe your experience with engaging your students in discussion about social issues such as acceptance, perseverance, and justice.	Please describe how you incorporate 21st century skills such as digital writing in your classroom.
Opinion	How do you feel about engaging first graders in meaningful learning about social issues such as getting	How do you feel about first graders engaging in meaningful learning about social issues	What is your opinion about using digital spaces such as Wikis and Voicethread for writing?

	along and working together through collaborative discussion?	such as acceptance, perseverance, and justice through critical discussion for social justice?	
Knowledge	What do you know about the use of collaborative literacy as an approach to meaningful learning that you did not know before?	What have you learned about critical literacy that you did not know before?	What do you know about the use of writing for social justice as an approach to meaningful learning that you did not know before?

APPENDIX H: TEACHER POST-INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Adapted from Spradley (1979)

Describe what student discussion typically looks like in your classroom. Has it changed with this unit? If so, how has it changed?

Collaborative Literacy

How do you feel about engaging first graders in collaborative discussion about social issues such as getting along and working together?

Describe a typical collaborative literacy lesson in your classroom during this unit.

What are examples of some topics that arose in discussions about getting along and working together?

Tell me about a recent conversation your students had about a book they read dealing with issues such as getting along and working together.

Describe your experience with engaging your students in discussion about social issues such as getting along and working together.

How do you think collaborative literacy affects students' views of collaboration in the classroom, home, community and the world?

What do you know about the use of collaborative literacy as an approach to meaningful learning that you did not know before?

Critical Literacy

How do you feel about engaging first graders in *critical* discussion about social issues such as acceptance, perseverance and fairness?

Describe a typical *critical* literacy lesson in your classroom during this unit.

What are examples of some topics that arose in discussions about acceptance, perseverance, and justice using literature as a springboard?

Tell me about a recent conversation your students had about a book they read dealing with issues such as acceptance, perseverance and fairness.

Describe your experience with engaging your students in discussion about social issues such as acceptance, perseverance and fairness.

How do you think critical literacy affects students' views of acceptance, perseverance and fairness in the classroom, home, community and the world?

What have you learned about critical literacy that you did not know before?

Writing

Describe what writing looks like in your classroom during this unit of study.

Describe ways in which your students use writing to deal with social issues and advocate for social justice.

Please describe how you incorporate 21st century skills such as digital writing in your classroom.

What is your opinion about using digital spaces such as Wikis and Voicethread for writing?

What do you know about the use of writing for social justice as an approach to meaningful learning that you did not know before?

APPENDIX I: STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Explain Goal of the Study

I want to learn about how books can help children learn about things like getting along, working together, accepting others, fairness, and never giving up even when things seem hard.

Interview Questions

What was your favorite sports book? Why?

What do you think the author's message is? Why did he/she write this book?

How does this book teach us about working together, acceptance, or fairness?

How does this book remind you of something happening at home at school or in the community or world around us?

Tell me about your writing for social justice project.

     Why did you choose this topic?

     What is your purpose for writing?

     Who is your intended audience?

How do you feel about putting your writing on the internet using voice thread for other people to see?

How can you use your writing to teach others?

How do you feel about being able to work with your classmates to write? What did you learn about getting along with others? What did you learn about fairness and acceptance from this project?