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# Elementary Students' Literacy Opportunities in an Age of Accountability and Standards: Implications for Teacher Educators

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# Elementary students' literacy opportunities in an age of accountability and standards: Implications for teacher educators

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Elementary students' opportunities during literacy lessons varied across teachers.
- Some teachers' lessons included little to no reading during literacy lessons.
- Many factors, e.g., standards, testing, student need, influenced decision-making.
- All lessons that substantially addressed state standards used authentic text.
- Teacher educators can help pre- and inservice teachers grapple with these factors.

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## ABSTRACT

Adopting a place-based stance to better prepare teacher candidates for local schools, researchers investigated elementary students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking opportunities. Observations included two literacy lessons of 14 preservice and inservice teachers and analysis identified instructional influences, including best practices (e.g., differentiated instruction), standards, and standardized assessments. Findings indicated students' opportunities varied from little to no reading during literacy lessons to rich, authentic opportunities to read meaningful texts. Little writing was evident, only some lessons substantively supported state standards, and many speaking and listening opportunities occurred at the lowest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Implications for teacher educators are discussed.

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2nd grade, whole group lesson, writing about reading: *We are just going to work on making a turnaround sentence... The question says, "Why isn't the company selling juice?" We are not going to answer it right now... I want to make a turnaround sentence from this question. Read the question again, what words do you think we might be able to use from this question to begin our answer? "The company isn't selling juice because..."*

2nd grade, whole group, read aloud: *Who has the power? Who has the most power over what happens to the rainforest? Of all of the characters in this story, who has the most power [over] what happens to the rainforest?*

We open this article with two quotes from elementary-grade literacy lesson transcripts to illustrate the differences in students' opportunities to read, write, think, and talk about text in our geographic region. In the first lesson, students listened to an audio

recording of an informational text from a commercial reading program, answered the publisher's literal-level comprehension questions, and wrote a "turnaround" sentence in which they used part of the question in the response. The teacher stated the purpose of the lesson: for students "to be able to go back into a book that they had just read, and show information in that book to support their answer." The text was chosen because it was "part of the program," a district-mandated reading curriculum. In the second lesson, students listened to *The Great Kapok Tree* (Cherry, 1990) read by the teacher and participated in a discussion in which the teacher engaged students in considering the importance of the rainforest to animals and humans. This teacher's stated purpose of the lesson was to "focus on asking questions throughout the reading, checking for understanding, really making sure that some of the messages that the animals were conveying were really getting through to the students."

These differences in literacy experiences across classrooms persist despite the standards and accountability movement that seeks to minimize variability and ensure access to equal

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educational opportunities. In a review of the research on test-based accountability, [Carlson \(2018\)](#) noted that studies investigating the effects of testing and accountability associated with No Child Left Behind, a U.S. education policy, on student learning are inconclusive, especially in regard to reading. Although there is some evidence that accountability policies increase test scores “in the subjects for which schools are held accountable,” it is not clear that these increases reflect “actual learning gains” (p. 21–22). Improvements in test scores can “reflect greater familiarity with the testing process,” and/or “greater emphasis on test preparation” (p. 22). Furthermore, the multiple-choice format of the tests led to “one particular type of... reading instruction, a type ...often criticized for failing to promote creative thinking, a deep understanding of the content, and a true love of learning” (p. 24).

On the effect of the Common Core Standards—knowledge and performance standards adopted by most of the U.S. in 2010, [Loveless \(2018\)](#) argued that there are “inherent weaknesses in standards-based reform” due to the “obstacles that standards face in the transition from statement of ambitious learning goals...to the student learning that takes place in schools” (p. 107). It is very challenging to draw conclusions about the effects of the widespread adoption of standards because “efforts to isolate the effects of standards have been sparse” (p. 114). Similarly, [Lee and Wu \(2017\)](#) noted that Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are performance standards that have not yet translated into performance outcomes. Nevertheless, the standards and associated high-stakes assessment of those standards are highly influential factors impacting the work of teachers and teacher educators in our state. This is the context within which we frame our study.

Although this particular study took place in the United States, concerns about the impact of compulsory testing are shared by educators in many other parts of the U.S. and across the world. [Gorur \(2016\)](#) noted the increasing influence of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the world-wide test used to provide comparative data on math, science, and reading performance, on policy and curriculum. Similar to the impact of No Child Left Behind and the CCSS within the U.S., Gorur argued that PISA results have led to the “development and use of national assessments and evaluation systems” (p. 606), educational standards to exert control over what is taught, and narrowing of the curriculum to tested skills—all in pursuit of higher test rankings. [Gorur and Wu \(2015\)](#) pointed out that the PISA average performance score is not representative of the country as a whole, because it fails to account for differences across the country (i.e., urban areas of Australia were proficient while rural areas with more indigenous populations were not) and overall test completion rate (i.e., only a few regions in China participated, not the whole country). Therefore, “the leap from ‘data’ to ‘policy’ is a treacherous one” ([Gorur & Wu, 2015](#), p. 648). [Gillis, Polesel, and Wu \(2016\)](#) identified many places (e.g., Australia, Taiwan, Ireland, New Zealand, and Hong Kong) where the PISA literacy data have been used to justify specific policy choices by misinterpreting data or overgeneralizing. For example, Australian civic leaders suggested increasing class sizes to look like higher performing Asian nations that scored higher without accounting for variations between Asian and Western educational norms, such as the supplemental instruction outside the school day common in Taiwan and Korea ([Gillis et al., 2016](#)).

For some time, a growing group of international researchers and educators have been concerned that accountability and standards interfere with meeting students’ needs in literacy instruction (e.g., United States, [Buly & Valencia, 2002](#); Great Britain and Australia, [Ellis & Simpson, 2020](#); [International Literacy Association, 2017](#); Thailand, [Lounkaew, 2013](#); Iceland, [Sigþórsson, 2020](#)), the development of higher order thinking (e.g., [Nehring, Charner-Laird, &](#)

[Szczesniul, 2017](#)), and motivating and engaging students (e.g., [Guthrie et al., 2004](#)). Despite widespread and consistent consensus on effective literacy and general teaching practices based on studies of expert teaching (e.g., [Allington, 2002](#); [Darling-Hammond, 2016](#)) and the development of standards for teachers about “what they should know and be able to do” ([Darling-Hammond, 2016](#), p. 86), observations of classrooms sometimes yield disappointing results ([Kuriloff, Jordan, Sutherland, & Ponnock, 2019](#); [Lazar, 2018](#); [Nehring et al., 2017](#); [Pomerantz & Condie, 2017](#)). Teachers may be particularly challenged and constrained by scripted, commercial reading programs ([Aukerman & Chambers Schuldt, 2017](#); [Pomerantz & Condie, 2017](#)), by the demands of an urban school setting ([Kuriloff et al., 2019](#)), and by the pressure to prepare students for tests upon which the teachers may be evaluated ([Condie, 2014](#)). [Nehring et al. \(2017\)](#) examined instruction in nine secondary schools and reported:

Although we’ve known for decades, based on research, that classrooms tend to focus on lower-level cognitive skills, we were shocked that this pattern remains so strong, even in schools considered among the very best. Even in the more promising schools in our sample, most teachers taught the same three skills: application, recall, and (sometimes) analysis. But we also discovered that a significant minority of excellent teachers taught nearly the full range of skills and that their classes spanned subjects, grade levels, and academic tracks. We believe the system can learn a great deal from what these teachers do in their classrooms every day (p. 38–39).

It is imperative that we, as teacher educators, understand the actual, local context of teaching and provide our teacher candidates with the tools to see, understand, and critique effective and ineffective practices and recognize, advocate for, and enact effective ones. At our institution, most graduates stay and teach in the region. Although we spend considerable time in elementary schools, we began this study to more deliberately and systematically identify what literacy instruction looks like at the local level, how the standards are interpreted by schools and classroom teachers, the specific challenges involved in implementing effective practices around mandated structures and curricula, and how to position our teacher candidates to be most successful in teaching literacy to elementary students in our region.

## 1. Context

We teach in Massachusetts (MA) in the Northeastern United States at a public university, founded in 1854 as a teaching school. Our state consistently ranks very high on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which tests reading and math in fourth and eighth grade; however, the 2017 exam results demonstrated that achievement gaps persist, as in most of the United States. According to 2017 NAEP results, nearly two-thirds of MA Asian and white fourth graders scored proficient or higher, while only one-third of MA Black and Latino fourth graders achieved the same level of achievement ([Vaznis, 2018](#)).

Like most states, the main accountability for teaching students is assessment at the state level. Massachusetts publishes school report cards ranking schools publicly from 1 (high) – 5 (low) in its effort to hold schools accountable for providing an equitable education. The rankings are based on the standardized state test, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). The most recent iteration of school accountability measures evaluates teachers and schools based on MCAS performance but also considers factors such as graduation rates, progress of English learners, and the number of students taking advanced courses ([Schoenberg,](#)

2018). Students are tested on the state standards annually beginning in third grade, and passing scores are a requirement for high school graduation. All districts, schools, and teachers are required to demonstrate how specific student populations are improving toward proficiency on the standards, which becomes part of their school and district report card. Teachers are evaluated via multiple measures, including their students' performance on classroom, district, and state assessments.

Massachusetts has also adopted a revised version of the *Common Core State Standards (2010a)*, which define what students are expected to know and be able to do. The state standards are considered highly rigorous, and school-level implementation of these standards was rated high by school administrators on a 2009–2015 NAEP survey—3.86 on a 4.0 scale (Lee & Wu, 2017). While the standards focus on what is most essential, they do not describe all that can or should be taught. The latest Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education policy brief about curriculum states: "Curriculum choices are local decisions, and districts, schools, and teachers adopt and use a wide variety of curriculum materials" (Polikoff & Campbell, 2018, p. 1). Teacher autonomy varies across districts and schools as to the teachers' use and freedom to adapt curricular materials.

Given this context and the research findings about accountability policies and standards described in the introduction, we were interested in examining the kinds of literacy opportunities students experience in our region's classrooms, and if and how teaching in a high-stakes testing environment could be consistent with best practices. Thus, the purposes of this study were to 1) explore how teaching in support of state standards is enacted in local elementary classrooms and the resulting opportunities for students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking; 2) identify practices of effective literacy teachers working within the current accountability context to both meet standards and students' needs; and 3) use the data to inform our own teaching in literacy teacher preparation courses. The specific questions guiding this qualitative research study were 1) What were elementary students' opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and speaking during literacy lessons? and 2) How, and in what ways, are students' experiences informed by effective teaching practices and the state standards?

## 2. Theoretical perspective

Teacher candidates sometimes experience dissonance between what they learn in teacher preparation and what they see and do in field settings and/or in their initial years of classroom teaching (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Craig, 2018; Lazar, 2018; Massey, 2006; Pierce & Pomerantz, 2006; Pomerantz & Condie, 2017). Place-based education (Jennings, Swidler, & Koliba, 2005; Smith, 2002; Smith & Sobel, 2010), although typically applied to PreK-12 classroom settings, offers a perspective from which to consider teacher preparation with the goal of overcoming the theory/practice divide, to understand the local and to use that knowledge to gain insight into national and international issues. Place-based education enhances learning opportunities; in our case, a place-based theoretical perspective can help understand parameters and constraints as well as the opportunities to train teacher candidates to leverage best practices and excel in the region—in our "place." Applying this perspective to teacher preparation means investigating the local to connect what we do in teacher education to what actually happens in neighborhood classrooms and using that context to engage in problem-solving and change-making with pre-service and in-service teachers. Smith (2002) stated, "Teachers and students turn to phenomena immediately around them as the foundation for curriculum development" (p. 593). As teacher educators we can examine local phenomena to inform our own curriculum. Place-

based education theory with its emphasis on local contexts provides a springboard for considering questions that affect the wider community (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008) or, in our case, education issues affecting teachers in Massachusetts and their students, as well as the broader landscape of education as it is increasingly impacted by accountability (Ellis & Simpson, 2020). As Ellis and Simpson (2020) stated, "A renewed focus on restrained curricula with teacher quality measured through success in imparting autonomous literacy skills has emerged" in several countries, including the U.S. and Australia (p. 5), largely due to the emphases on standardized assessment measures.

## 3. Research perspectives

### 3.1. What are the best practices for teaching elementary literacy?

Like most teacher educators, our goal is to help our prospective teachers engage in validated, best practices for teaching literacy. Our interpretation of best practices is anchored in research, and, like all perspectives, in our own experiences. Our perspectives are informed by practices that have been described in detail, and confirmed by empirical research across multiple decades (e.g., Allington, 2002; Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011; Fountas & Pinnell, 2018; Hall, 2013; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002). This research on best practices for teaching literacy has created a foundation of core principles: (1) knowing learners and teaching diagnostically; (2) engaging students in authentic literacy experiences; and (3) the integration of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The core principles are supported by specific instructional practices that increase students' literacy achievement. We present these core principles and a brief synthesis of the best practice literature below.

### 3.2. Knowing students and teaching diagnostically

Across many studies and reviews, researchers and teachers agree that effective teachers "adapt the learning environment, materials, and methods to particular situations and students" (Marinak, Malloy, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2015, p. 28). In a synthesis of education research from the fields of psychology, sociology, linguistics, and literature, Ellis and Smith (2017) created *The Strathclyde Three Domain Model* to represent the multi-faceted knowledge teachers must acquire for each of their students. As applied to literacy, the domains of knowledge include: cognitive knowledge and skills (e.g. student's decoding and comprehension strategies), cultural and social capital (e.g., student's activities outside of school, pop culture knowledge), and personal and social identity (e.g., student's self-efficacy as a reader and writer, student's awareness of others' perceptions of their own reading ability). Ellis and Smith posited that teachers must understand and assess students' strengths and needs across all of the domains in order to be fully responsive and effective in teaching individual students, a view also held by other researchers (e.g., Fountas & Pinnell, 2018).

At the heart of exemplary teaching is the premise that assessment should inform instruction that is tailored to children's needs (Afflerbach, 2002). As Valencia and Buly (2004) described, the value of assessment is not from the data itself but "comes from teachers having a deep understanding of reading processes and instruction, thinking diagnostically, and using the information on an ongoing basis to inform instruction" (p.143).

### 3.3. Authentic literacy opportunities

Regarding authenticity, students learn better when the reasons for reading and writing are authentic rather than for school-only,

decontextualized purposes (Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007). Authentic literacy opportunities “replicate or reflect reading and writing activities that occur in the lives of people outside of a learn-to-read-and-write context and purpose” (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006, p. 346) and often taken an inquiry-approach to learning (Cleovoulou & Beach, 2019). Duke et al. (2006) provided a three-level authenticity rating scale. Level 1 authenticity suggests the purpose of the text or the task was school-based and did not replicate reading or writing that exists outside of school. Texts and tasks designated as Level 2 include school-based assignments used to practice authentic reading, writing, or thinking. Level 3 authenticity includes the most authentic texts and tasks that allow students opportunities to read texts that occur in the real world for authentic purposes, often some type of natural inquiry. In a two-year study with second and third graders, Purcell-Gates et al. (2007) asked if the degree of authenticity of literacy texts and activities had an impact on children’s ability to read and write informational and procedural texts in science. The degree of authenticity was evaluated for the texts and tasks used in each activity. Results indicated the degree of authenticity was closely related to student growth. More authentic reading and writing tasks led to better reading and writing of informational and procedural texts in science.

### 3.4. Integration of reading, writing, listening, and speaking

An important aspect of authentic literacy opportunities is students’ opportunities to read, write, listen, and speak in integrated and meaningful ways. These modalities complement and reinforce learning in the other forms. For example, as children write in a specific genre (e.g., how-to descriptions), they gain more knowledge of how genres work, how authors make decisions relevant to their purposes and audiences, and then apply this knowledge to their reading (Duke et al., 2011). As another example, a grade 2 standard requires that students “Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe” (Common Core State Standards, 2010b). The focus on author’s craft in Reading can transfer into Writing instruction as student-authors become more deliberate in their writing decisions and more aware of their own ability to “answer, explain, or describe.” Writing becomes a vehicle for students to demonstrate what they have learned about the content and the genre in reading, and reading discussions provide an opportunity for students to share their understanding of writing and author’s craft (Duke et al., 2011; Elbow, 2004; Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Ippolito, Condie, Dobbs, & Charner-Laird, 2017).

### 3.5. Best literacy practices

Allington’s (2002) research on best practices in literacy instruction applied many of the core principles outlined above to observations of classrooms and further delineated the specific practices that support the core principles. For over a decade, Allington (2002) and colleagues studied elementary teachers who were consistently known for helping students achieve high levels of literacy, based on standardized tests and other proficiency measures. In all of these classrooms, teachers interacted and worked with students in distinctive ways that contributed to students’ reading and writing growth. Allington described these characteristics as the Six T’s, namely Time, Texts, Tasks, Teaching Actions, Talk, and Testing.

In these exemplary classrooms, effective elementary teachers allotted *Time*; children read longer, for more of the instructional day than in other classrooms. In addition, students engaged in real reading and writing *Tasks*, reflecting the importance of authentic

literacy opportunities (Duke et al., 2006; Purcell-Gates et al., 2007). Effective teachers engaged students in longer assignments, integrated content and provided opportunities for choice. Similar to recent suggestions by Fountas and Pinnell (2018), Allington described effective teachers’ large quantities of *Texts* available to students who were then encouraged and supported in reading texts at their instructional and independent reading levels, matching text selection to learners’ reading needs.

According to Allington’s research, effective *Teaching* included explicit instruction and demonstration of literacy strategies, taught with scaffolded opportunities to practice before independently working on their own, a finding also recently supported by recommendations from Fountas and Pinnell (2018).

As Allington explained, *Talk* was purposeful, focused on problem-posing and problem-solving and was generally more conversational than interrogational. Research by Taylor (2000, 2002) and more recently by Nehring et al. (2017) confirmed the need to engage students in higher order thinking tasks to develop more critical literacy. *Testing*, the last of the Six T’s, adopted an “effort-and-improvement grading scheme” that emphasized progress more than achievement (p. 746). The effective elementary teachers described by Allington spent minimal time on test-taking or test preparation, a practice also advocated by the leading literacy organizations (e.g., International Literacy Association, 2017). The research perspectives outlined above inform our teaching and this study’s research methodology.

## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Participants

Data were collected from two related studies (Condie, 2014; Pomerantz & Condie, 2017). Teacher participants were recruited from local schools. Five teacher-participants were recommended by district leaders and nine were former students of the researchers, either in their student teaching practicum or within two years of graduation. The MA elementary license includes grades 1–6, and all 14 participants taught within these grade levels at their respective schools and were women (Tables 1 and 2). Some participants taught at the same school. They represent a range of teaching experience, from novice to experienced teachers. Every teacher-participant had primary responsibility for the lessons we observed, was required to link their instruction to the MA state standards, and could describe the pedagogical reasoning that influenced their decisions.

Nine participants taught in suburban schools with predominantly white, middle-class students, and five taught multilingual learners in diverse, urban, low-income schools. At the time of our study, all participants’ schools earned a “Level 1” (highest designation) or a “Level 2” accountability rating as determined by the state assessment system. Two teachers taught in a Level 1 school, but taught in a Level 4 district, a designation resulting from another

**Table 1**  
Teacher-participants by grade level.

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number of participants	2	4	3	3	0	2

**Table 2**  
Teacher-participants by number of years teaching.

Grade Level Taught	< 1 year	1-5 years	>5 years
Number of Participants	8	2	4

school's Level 4 status in the same district. This particular district mandated aggressive test accountability measures across all of its schools, specifically monthly, "formative" test preparation assessments (i.e., ANet) to determine students' preparation for the state standardized test.

## 5. Data sources and collection

Data sources included video and audio recordings of lessons, teacher interviews, and student texts.

### 5.1. Lesson video and audio recordings

Two teacher-selected lessons were observed for a total data set of 28 literacy lesson observations. The only parameter for the observation was that the lesson included students reading text. All observations were video and audio recorded; audio files were transcribed verbatim.

### 5.2. Semi-structured and Stimulated Recall interviews

Following each observation, teachers participated in semi-structured interviews about the content of their lesson and their instructional decisions before and during the lesson. Interviews occurred on the same day as the observation (in all but one case) to avoid the threat to validity caused by "memory decay" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 85).

Each interview also included Stimulated Recall methodology, wherein participants think aloud "illustrat[ing] thought processes" that are otherwise unobservable (Gass, 2001, p. 222). Segments of the video recording, selected by the researcher or the participant, served as stimuli. Most think aloud responses began, "At this point, I was thinking..." The interviews were also audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

## 6. Data analysis procedures

We coded each lesson collaboratively with several research lenses. Any discrepancies were calibrated and resolved before the next stage of analysis. We coded for the first research question by identifying students' opportunities to read, write, listen, and speak and then applied Allington's (2002) designations—the 6 T's—to students' literacy opportunities. The *Teaching Actions* category was incorporated into the *Task* analysis. *Test* was not analyzed since no observed lessons involved testing, and *Time* was not coded. We coded *Text* and *Talk* by participants and what were they doing (See Appendix). Further analysis of *Text* and *Task* applied Duke et al.'s (2006) authenticity rating scales described earlier.

We categorized *Talk* into three groups: (1) talking about the content, such as the topic of an informational text or the character or theme of a fiction text; (2) talking about reading skills (e.g., predicting); (3) or talk that was not related to the content of the text or reading skills. The next level of *Talk* analysis applied the revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) to evaluate the complexity of student participation.

Initial analysis for the second research question regarding effective teaching practices and state standards included (1) determining which state curriculum standards, if any, were evident, and (2) determining the degree to which the lessons supported the standards. A separate analysis related to standards included identifying the *Purpose* of the lesson (Condie, 2014; Guthrie, Anderson, Alao, & Rinehart, 1999). *Purpose* was identified by the teacher's statements in the interviews as well as the stated purpose (if any) to students during the observation and was differentiated as a literacy purpose and/or a content purpose.

Literacy purposes included skills and strategies, such as highlighting important information, identifying text features, and problem-solving unknown words. The content purpose included the topic for informational texts or the analysis of plot, character, themes, or author's craft for fiction texts.

## 7. Findings

We are careful to note that only snapshots of the total classroom instruction were seen in these observations. Elementary students certainly have more literacy experiences in the school day than were observed, but the findings provide insight into the kinds of literacy opportunities elementary school students have in the course of their school day, the ways teachers allot time and re-sources for literacy instruction, and how teachers interpret mandates and best practices, as well as teach state standards.

Importantly, the 14 teachers in this study were dedicated professionals who clearly enjoyed their chosen profession. Each participant reported spending many hours in preparation outside of school selecting texts and planning engaging activities. And, every teacher-participant experienced the same teaching demands, albeit some of the in-service teachers expressed more concerns with standardized testing demands and implications.

In the next section, we present the findings related to our first research question: 1) What were elementary students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening about in literacy lessons?

### 7.1. Students' opportunities: reading

Connected text was read or heard by students in 24 of the 28 observed lessons. Interestingly, four of the observed lessons still did not include reading connected text, though the observation parameters required a lesson with text. Three of these "text-less" lessons focused on identifying and finding text features in informational books (e.g., headings or Table of Contents) and one was about punctuation. In essence, texts were present in these four literacy lessons, but were unread.

In the lessons where students read connected text, texts included leveled books, commercial reading program selections (including whole group read aloud texts and small group reading books identified as above grade level, at grade level, and below grade level), trade books (e.g., *The Great Kapok Tree*), or internet articles adapted for students. Two lessons included students listening to a text from the commercial reading series that were too advanced for many students to read independently. Importantly, because text was read does not indicate the quality of the time students spent reading. For example, in one 30-min lesson, the teacher activated background knowledge and reviewed vocabulary for a text about sharks for the majority of the lesson (27 min out of 30); the students then read for 3 min before recess.

#### 7.1.1. Level 1 Authenticity

In examining students' reading opportunities, we assessed the authenticity of the text or texts used in the lesson and how the text(s) was used by the students (i.e., the task). As described earlier, we framed our thinking about authenticity using Duke et al.'s (2006) levels of authenticity. Table 3 provides the findings around authenticity of the *Text* and *Task* with an example. In the 24 lessons where text was read by students, four lessons used texts coded as Level 1 authenticity, for school-only purposes, including short passages followed by test preparation or comprehension questions and a fictional text, called *Gollywompus*, written for a commercial reading series to practice reading plural nouns. (We inferred the purpose of the *Gollywompus* text and task by the accompanying worksheet students completed. The text itself had minimal plot.)

**Table 3**  
Degree of authenticity of texts.

Degree of Authenticity (Duke et al., 2006)	1—School-based assignment for school-based reason	2—School-based assignments to practice authentic writing and thinking	3—Reading opportunities that occur in the real world for authentic reasons.
Text (Some lessons used multiple texts.)	4 lessons	18 lessons	9 lessons
Example Task	Short test-preparation passages 19 lessons	Leveled books used for guided reading 3 lessons	Painting of famous person 6 lessons
Example	Answering multiple-choice questions after reading a short passage	Literature circle discussion roles	Reading like an historian

Although relatively few texts were actually written for school-only purposes, the tasks themselves were more likely to be used for school-based reasons, identified in 19 of the 28 different lessons (68%). In one case, the whole class was taught how to create and fill in a KWL chart (i.e., What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I Learned) before and while reading a text. Students then worked in four small groups to read a leveled text and complete their chart on their text's topic. The text topics were chosen "because there were enough books at each level." By the end of the lesson, three of the four groups had read only a few lines of text, and one group had not read at all.

In another lesson, students used an informational text to go on a text feature treasure hunt (but did not read the text). On closer analysis of the Level 1 tasks, the three lessons that focused on text features of informational text fell into this "school-only" category. The Massachusetts English Language Arts Standard (MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017) for grade 2 says: "Know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently" (p.44). The text feature treasure hunt emphasized the *efficient* identification of features, but included no meaningful or sustained reading. Instead, these lessons focused on identifying or using text features *as the task*, but none connected text features to their purpose in the text, to why authors included them, to the efficacy of specific features, or to supplement comprehension. In these lessons with Level 1 authenticity, the teacher's school-based purpose, specifically rudimentary identification of text features, outweighed reading the text at all.

### 7.1.2. Level 2 Authenticity

At Level 2 authenticity, texts and tasks practiced authentic reading, writing, or thinking with school-based assignments. For example, in the 18 lessons where the texts were school-based, many of the lessons used a leveled book, such as those used for guided reading—as a tool to match text difficulty to a child's reading level. As students hear themselves read successfully and discuss the content of the leveled book, they are mimicking real-world reading and talking about text.

An example of a Level 2 task was a literature circle role sheet (Daniels, 1994). Students received a role (i.e., story summarizer, word wizard, artist, question creator), then prepared for and shared their part with their small group. This format provided students with an opportunity to participate in book group discussions, like many adults engage in, albeit with school-like parts to ensure participation. Importantly, these Level 2 texts and tasks included students reading connected text for more extended periods of time, an obvious difference from those tasks labeled as Level 1.

### 7.1.3. Level 3 Authenticity

The most authentic opportunities, Level 3 authenticity, included students reading texts that occur in the real world for authentic purposes and were found in nine observed lessons. In one

observation, students were shown a painting of Paul Revere and asked to analyze the portrait to think like an historian and gather clues about the time period, identity of the person, and context of the primary source. Although the task was a school-based activity, this reading of the "text" (in this case, the portrait) engaged students in Disciplinary Literacy (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) and practicing authentic reading and thinking.

Related to *Tasks*, six observed lessons included activities and experiences that were at this highest level of authenticity. These lessons engaged students in meaningful discussions of texts—opportunities to speak, agree/disagree, and add on to others' comments. In a sixth-grade lesson, students watched a video about the impact of drugs by the director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Before reading an article describing the alarming effects of inhalants that concluded with a tragic story of a teenager's overdose death, the sixth-grade teacher reminded students how to highlight important information to locate quickly during their discussion. She then visited each group deliberately "eavesdropping" and observing to be sure they understood how drugs were impacting the brain, if the students were strategically highlighting, and how students were processing the sad ending of the article. The text was authentic, accessible for the sixth graders, and read by readers outside of school. The annotation strategy is one readers use in and out of school to inform discussions in education and work contexts.

### 7.2. Students' opportunities: writing

In the observed elementary classroom lessons, 17 of the 28 lessons (61%) included writing while 11 included no writing component at all (39%). To note, we specifically asked to see a lesson where students read text in the observation; we did not ask to see writing. Since reading and writing are mutually reinforcing (Condie & Ippolito, 2016), we also analyzed the writing opportunities related to their authenticity (Table 4). No lessons were coded a Level 3, authentic writing opportunity. Seven lessons were coded Level 2, school-based assignments that practiced authentic writing and thinking used outside of school. Examples included writing for literature circle role sheets, recording inferences on sticky notes during reading to be shared in a group discussion, completing an anticipatory guide related to the content of the text, and writing a persuasive letter to a character in the story. A persuasive letter is an authentic writing genre used by writers outside of school, yet the audience for the students' letter (the character in the story) lessened the degree of authenticity.

Ten of the 17 lessons (59%) with writing were coded Level 1, school-based writing assignments to fulfill school-only purposes. Writing about reading, writing a recipe to be a good friend, completing a text feature worksheet, and writing turnaround sentences are examples of the types of writing opportunities students encountered in these lessons. Four of these ten writing experiences were rooted in test preparation. The short passages followed by short-answer, multiple-choice questions were rather

**Table 4**  
Degree of authenticity of writing opportunities.

Degree of Authenticity (Duke et al., 2006)	1—School-based assignment for school-based reason	2—School-based assignments to practice authentic writing and thinking	3—Writing opportunities that occur in the real world for authentic reasons
# of lessons	10 lessons	7 lessons	0 lessons
Representative Example	Test preparation exercises	Writing inferences on sticky notes during reading	

obvious replicas of test preparation texts. The turnaround sentences were preparatory for constructed response questions like those found on standardized assessments. In the lesson described in the opening vignettes, students changed the question, “Why isn’t the company selling juice?” into “The company isn’t selling juice because...” These turnaround sentences were not only inauthentic and school-based, they were solely for test-based purposes.

### 7.3. Students’ opportunities: speaking and listening

In every observed lesson in this study, students had an opportunity to speak and listen. Half of the lessons (14, 50%) included opportunities for students to answer open-ended questions for more extended talk and discussion. Further analysis investigated what students were talking about in all the lessons, as well as the quality of the talk. First, we categorized the talk into three categories—talking about the content, as in the topic of the informational text or the character or theme of a fiction text, reading skills, or neither the content or reading skills (See Table 5).

In the 28 observed lessons, 12 lessons (43%) included talking about the content, specifically rainforests, nutrition, friendship, character motivation, and segregation. In ten lessons (36%) students had opportunities to talk about reading skills, like text features, punctuation, “turn around sentences,” cause and effect, or decoding strategies. Six lessons (21%) included talk unrelated to the content of the text. As an example of this last category, the teacher read the short fiction passage from the commercial reading program, *Gollywompus*, and asked a few questions about the vocabulary. Students then completed a worksheet on plural nouns. Students did talk, but the talk was not focused on topical content, themes, or skills.

We also looked at the quality of talk students engaged in during these observed lessons (Table 6). Using the revised version of Bloom’s Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), most of the talk, in 17 of the observed lessons (61%), was at the lowest level, *Remembering*. Questions included: “Who came at the end?” “What is a quilt?” “What is a glossary?” Eight of the observed lessons (29%) included a combination of talk at the *Remembering* level and at the next level, *Understanding*. Two lessons (7%) included talk primarily

at the *Understanding* level. Questions included: “What was the most helpful clue to figure out the riddle?” “Who has the most power over what happens to the rainforest?” These questions were text-based and required inferential thinking. Only one lesson (4%) included talk at the *Applying* level. In this lesson students implemented their literature circle roles in small discussion groups. No lesson included talk at the higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy: *Analyzing*, *Evaluating*, or *Creating*.

In summary, within 28 observed literacy lessons, students did have opportunities to read, write, listen, and speak, but the quality of the experiences and the authenticity of the text and task varied widely across the lessons that students experienced, sometimes even within the same school.

### 7.4. Integration of effective teaching practices and standards

The following section presents findings related to the second research question: How, and in what ways, were the students’ literacy opportunities informed by effective teaching practices and the state standards? We specifically analyzed the teacher’s stated purpose and answers to the question about how they prepared for their lesson and how they chose the text. We also read the lesson transcripts and coded them whenever a standard was explicitly named and reread the transcripts multiple times if a standard was not specifically stated looking for any inferred standards.

#### 7.4.1. Lesson preparation

In the interviews, teachers reported basing their lessons on one or more factors: observations of students (10 lessons, 36%), classroom-based assessment (5 lessons, 18%), state standards (10 lessons, 36%), standardized testing (6 lessons, 21%), and commercial reading program sequences (6 lessons, 21%); additionally, one teacher based her lesson on what she thought the observer wanted to see. As reported by the teachers, less than 50% of the lessons were planned with students’ needs in mind (12 lessons, 43%) and even fewer were planned based on students’ interests or motivation (9 lessons, 32%). In one example where neither effective teaching practices or standards were incorporated into planning decisions, the fourth-grade teacher explained, “I’ve noticed [texts

**Table 5**  
Evaluating topic of students’ talking opportunities.

Topic of Talk	Content of Text	Reading Skills	Neither Content nor Reading Skills
Number of Lessons	12 lessons (43%)	10 lessons (36%)	6 lessons (21%)
Representative Example	Nonfiction text: rainforests Fiction text: Character motivation	Nonfiction text: text features Fiction text: chunking words to decode	Plural nouns

**Table 6**  
Evaluating talk opportunities along Bloom’s continuum.

Bloom’s Taxonomy	Remembering	Both Remembering and Understanding	Understanding	Applying	Analyzing	Evaluating	Creating
Number of Lessons	17	8	2	1	0	0	0
Representative Example	Who came at the end?		What was the most helpful clue to figure out the riddle?	Discussion in literature circle role			



on ANet, the test preparation bi-monthly exams,] are starting to use footnotes in 4th grade, where instead of having this [vocabulary] box, they would have a number 1." She described choosing a text to teach students how to use footnotes fearing that her students would "just keep reading, not realizing what this word means and not even understanding that 'some of [the] text features are going to be a footnote that's going to explain to me what this word means.'" This teacher had clearly considered what to teach her students related to the features of the texts on assessments. Test preparation was a significant part of her curriculum. She taught in a school district that imposed a testing curriculum and mandated a frequent assessment schedule, but she extended test preparation requirements into her daily lessons, seeking additional opportunities to prepare students for these assessments.

#### 7.4.2. Integration of standards

The analysis of the data for adherence to the state standards revealed that three lessons were not visibly connected to standards (11%, See Table 7 for examples.), 12 were superficially connected (43%), and 13 were substantively connected (46%). In one lesson without a clear connection to a standard, students read the "below grade level" text from a commercial reading program in "popcorn" style, reading as little as a sentence aloud before calling on another reader to continue. Questions were posed from the teacher's edition of the commercial reading curriculum; little focus was on the accuracy of the answers or defending answers with text-based evidence (which could have led to a connection to a Reading standard).

In a lesson substantively connected to a standard, a first-grade teacher read the beginning of *Martin's Big Words* (Rappaport, 2001) about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., then posed questions related to segregation and made connections to books read previously about other heroes of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. This lesson supported multiple first-grade standards, including identifying similarities between two texts on related topics and understanding reasons for celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Notably, none of the commercial reading program lessons substantively supported learning a standard (two did not support any identifiable standard), nor did they include sustained independent reading or met students' needs. In short, within the observed lessons, the integration of standards in the literacy instruction varied in frequency and substance.

#### 7.4.3. Intersection of authenticity and standards

Nine of the 28 lessons (32%) had ratings of 2 or 3 for authenticity of text and task and substantively addressed state standards. In these lessons we observed evidence of effective teaching practices (authenticity, higher level thinking questions, attention to students' interests and motivation, a clear purpose for teaching connected to needs and/or curriculum) and substantive connections to standards. These lessons included the previously mentioned literature circle in which students completed "jobs" prior to the discussion and shared what they prepared with the teacher facilitating and promoting speaking/listening skills, as well as a read-aloud and discussion about *The Great Kapok Tree* (Cherry, 1990) and why rainforests need to be preserved. Notably, all lessons that substantively addressed state standards used authentic text.

#### 7.4.4. Differences between and among participants

Interestingly, there were no patterns in the data related to years of teaching experience. Some of the observed lessons most aligned with the best literacy practices were taught by the most novice teachers. Some of the student teachers provided lessons that were both based on student needs and standards. Some of the most experienced teachers implemented lessons straight from a commercial reading program without challenging the assumption that the program was a good resource. Additionally, the curriculum policies in schools where multiple teachers taught were interpreted by teachers in substantially different ways. For example, the first-grade lesson about segregation using authentic literature and the second-grade *Gollywompus* text from the commercial reading program occurred within the same school.

## 8. Discussion and implications

Our study set out to explore two research questions in order to better inform our preparation of future elementary teachers: 1) What were elementary students' reading, writing, and speaking about in literacy lessons? and 2) How, and in what ways, were the students' literacy experiences informed by effective teaching practices and the state standards? The insights from and implications of the findings are presented in the following section. Of course, any generalizations from the findings are limited by the small sample size and the local context. We wanted to know how to better prepare our preservice teachers for our regional schools. Since many educators—nationally and internationally—share questions and concerns about how the current accountability context in the United States and other countries affects literacy teaching and learning opportunities (e.g., Ellis & Simpson, 2020; Nehring et al., 2017), this study offers one possible model and methodology to explore those opportunities and the implications for teacher education within any local context.

Twenty years ago, Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy (2000) wrote, "[A] nagging question for us is what teacher educators should do to promote [teacher] learning" (p. 723). This question is still relevant today because an "inquiry stance" on "practice" in teacher education promotes continuous review, research, and improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2016, p. 89). Our study provides insights for teacher educators to enhance best practices and provides recommendations to improve elementary students' literacy experiences and (at times) challenge current practices.

### 8.1. Revaluing reading time

The commercial reading programs, in particular, led to students listening in whole group settings rather than reading independently, due to the one-size-fits-all nature of the texts and some students' difficulty reading or comprehending the texts. To quote Allington from 1977: "If they don't read much, how they ever gonna get good?" (p. 57). Students need experiences engaged in "high success reading" (Allington, 2002, p. 743); regardless of ability level, reading texts that are not too challenging can improve children's reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2018). Clearly, as teacher educators we must emphasize to our teacher candidates the importance of providing daily opportunities for students to read and problem-solve independently.

**Table 7**

Lesson connectedness to standards.

Connection	Not clearly connected	Superficially connected	Substantively connected
Lessons	3 lessons	12 lessons	13 lessons
Example	Popcorn reading with questions from the commercial reading program	Text feature treasure hunt	Discussion of drug abuse and prevention

## 8.2. Authenticity of texts and tasks

One pervasive theme in the findings is that students need more time to actually read authentic text for authentic purposes. We are alarmed that only 32% of the observed lessons involved reading authentic text and only 21% engaged students in authentic tasks; no student in the observed lessons engaged in authentic writing. Literacy skills, such as learning about the features of informational text, or strategies, such as predicting, were often over-emphasized, which may suggest to young readers that the content of the text is irrelevant, a concern researchers have held for decades (e.g., Dymock, 1993). For example, in our study a small group of fourth-grade students met with their teacher to read an instructional level text about sharks. In the interview, the teacher's stated purpose was to practice prediction as a reading strategy. She explained: "I don't really care, frankly, if they know anything about sharks. I mean that would be ideal. But if they know these [reading] strategies, they can apply them to any informational texts." She later acknowledged that a student had made an inaccurate prediction with faulty text evidence and explained,

I don't want to negate his effort in making a prediction. Whether [his prediction] was true or not in general, is not the point. [...] I just want them to be thinking about the question that was asked and being able to predict, which is a really good strategy that readers need to have.

We argue that more important than the act of predicting itself is determining if predictions are based on *relevant* and *important* clues in the text and must be logical and defensible based on trustworthy text evidence. The teacher's attempts to honor students' emergent thinking were noble but misleading. Practicing reading strategies at the expense of comprehension, the overall goal of reading, is sending the wrong message to students and is, at best, inauthentic and misguided.

On the other hand, an interesting "trademark" of the sixth-grade students' experience reading the drug abuse text was how explicitly the teacher specified the text sources to students. To introduce one text, she explained to students, "I have taken all this information from a government website, and it deals with teens and how to talk to them about drugs." The teacher explained in her interview why she was so intent on describing the source of the content:

I want them to know where we are getting our source from. If they are getting their source from somewhere else, I want to know where they are getting their source from. I think Wikipedia has some really great aspects to it, but it also has some really negative aspects to it. Where you get your information is important.

Implicit in her source introduction and this explanation is an understanding of the importance of validating the information we read and her desire to model for students where to seek trustworthy sources of information. This focus is possible with authentic texts and a moot point with school-based texts. *Teacher candidates in preparation courses need to analyze and evaluate the authenticity of texts and tasks observed in field experiences. Authenticity can also be one of the assessment criteria used to evaluate their own lessons' texts and tasks.*

## 8.3. Content, skills, and thinking

As mentioned earlier, Nehring et al. (2017) observed in 22 secondary schools and noted "an instructional focus on application,

recall, and, occasionally, analysis" (p. 40). Our findings in elementary school classrooms were similar with much of the talk and tasks focused on *Remembering* and *Understanding*, the lowest levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Nehring et al. (2017) wrote: "In some classes, teachers presented students with complex content. However, the tasks assigned to students did not require complex thought. Although the content was complex, the tasks were simple, mostly requiring no deeper skills than recall or application" (p. 40). In the seven classes where Nehring et al. observed "deeper learning," they noted that skill instruction was integrated with disciplinary knowledge and content (p. 41). In our study, the most effective lessons observed also integrated skills with content, such as the integration of highlighting (the literacy strategy) into the drug abuse content, part of the health curriculum. Supporting other researchers (Cleovoulou & Beach, 2019; Nehring et al., 2017), we agree: *teacher candidates need repeated opportunities to apply higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy in their instruction. Additionally, the integration of content with skills clearly requires emphasis; teacher candidates must practice integrating content with literacy goals and literacy strategies into content learning.*

## 8.4. Reading/writing connection

Research has consistently shown the correlation between reading and writing and the similarities in their knowledge and processes (Elbow, 2004; Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). The lack of writing as a complement to reading was stark in these observed lessons. Although this integration may have happened at other times of the day, it was still concerning to identify this pattern across the 28 observed lessons. Writing becomes a vehicle for students to demonstrate what they have learned about the content and the genre. Writing about what they have read is a first step for students, but not the last. *Teacher candidates can be challenged to go beyond "writing about reading" in their literacy lessons and to make authentic connections between the reading and writing processes.*

## 8.5. Influence of state standards

Interestingly, implementation of state standards varied considerably across lessons with some lessons not addressing standards or addressing them superficially, while others substantively supported standards. Although publishers have translated standards into commercial programs, the observed lessons based on commercial programs did not substantively support standards. It is true that we only saw snapshots of overall teaching, but the trends in these observed lessons have raised some alarms. Some of the teachers were required to administer and analyze monthly, "formative" test preparation assessments (e.g., ANet) to better prepare students for standardized tests. As a result, testing had become their curriculum, and passing standardized tests had become the symbol of student learning and effective teaching. When changes are made to instruction as a result of high stakes testing outcomes, the instruction shifts from complex performance toward isolated skills—the context of tests (International Literacy Association, 2017; Lipson & Wixson, 2003). This focus on isolated test preparation skills was illustrated in the previously mentioned example of the teacher's use of the text with footnotes, a deliberate choice to expose her students to a potential test format. In this study, some of these students' literacy opportunities were defined by the high stakes related to standardized test scores and this overwhelmed or superseded other pedagogical decisions, more so than student needs, standards, or content goals, leading to an "impoverished view of literacy" (National Council of Teachers of English, 2009). *Learning how to teach testing as a genre as a fraction of wide-ranging texts and curricula can help preservice teachers*

learn what makes the testing genre unique without becoming the driving force behind all literacy opportunities.

Duffy (2014) suggested the Common Core State Standards could “be implemented while still promoting teachers’ professional autonomy, differentiated instruction and the engagement of students in sensible and worthwhile literacy tasks” (p. viii). Standards, as guides, provide the *what*, not the *how* to teach students. In short, we are surprised at the apparently minor influence of the standards on the observed literacy lessons. *Teacher candidates need to carefully unpack standards in order to understand what it really means to design teaching in support of standards in the context of meaningful learning.*

This research project investigated students’ reading, writing, listening, and speaking opportunities in local classrooms to inform our own teacher education programming. As mentioned at the beginning, most teacher candidates attending our university’s programs stay in the region. The findings highlight aspects of teaching and learning that have always been part of teacher preparation at our institution but need greater emphasis given our local context, specifically:

- Elementary students need time for reading connected, accessible text.
- More deliberate planning and implementation of authentic tasks and texts benefit students.
- Lesson planning should include an emphasis on higher order thinking in tasks and discussions.
- Literacy instruction can and should be standards-based, while still incorporating best literacy practices.
- Integrating reading, writing, listening, speaking, and content instruction can lead to more authentic literacy experiences.
- Test preparation can be approached and taught (within reasonable boundaries) as a genre, but should not supersede teaching to students’ needs and interests or standards-based instruction.

Furthermore, our research findings highlight the importance of teacher decision-making in regard to elementary students’ literacy opportunities. Lessons based on commercial reading programs adopted by schools to allegedly minimize differences among classrooms and/or provide resources for teachers (and thereby minimize the impact of individual teacher decision-making) were the basis of the most inauthentic literacy experiences and the fewest opportunities for students to read and to meet standards. This finding is not surprising in the context of the many studies illustrating the limitations of commercial reading programs (e.g., Dewitz & Jones, 2012); what is surprising is the continuing presence of such programs in schools, despite the research. This finding underscores concerns about teacher agency and professional learning expressed by educators across multiple geographic regions, such as the U.S., Thailand, Europe, Australia, South Africa, Hong Kong, and Singapore, subjected to the increasing emphases on test accountability and compliance (e.g., Gillis et al., 2016; Hallinger & Ko, 2015; Klenowski, 2011; Loh & Hu, 2014, Loh & Hu, 2019; Long, Graven, Sayed, & Glampen, 2017): When standardization is emphasized, teachers may experience

“deprofessionalization” (Gorur, 2016, p. 609) and the “test regime... may well undermine the agentic stance of teachers...” (Sigbörsson, 2020, p. 131). *Therefore, inviting teacher candidates to critique such programs must be included in teacher preparation.* By applying place-based education theory to our work as teacher educators in our region, we are better able to adapt our own instruction to meet the real needs of our future teachers and their students and to support them in developing the professional agency required to teach effectively in this era of standardization and accountability.

## 9. Final thoughts

Our data, like much education research, was observational and included teacher interviews. We focused on what was happening to students. A further question is: how do students perceive their literacy opportunities? Future research could include student interviews to provide greater insight into the student experience. For example, recent research on reading motivation found that young students’ perceived engagement (e.g., on-task-ness) in reading interventions was, at times, markedly different than the teachers’ perception of their engagement (Erickson, 2019). We know that student engagement is an indicator of motivation, and motivation impacts reading achievement and the efficacy of instruction (e.g., Morgan & Fuchs, 2007; Schiefele, Stutz, & Schaffner, 2016). An appearance of engagement does not equate to a student’s enjoying the literacy instruction or feeling motivated to learn, a finding that can only be revealed from student interview data (Erickson, Condie, & Wharton-McDonald, 2020; Erickson, 2019). The more we hear student voices, the more we, as teachers and researchers, can provide instruction that best meets their needs, is motivating, and leads to gains in literacy achievement. We must never forget that at the heart of students’ literacy opportunities is the students, and we would do well to understand more of their experience from listening to their voices.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no competing interests. All authors have approved the final article.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Cami Condie:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing, Visualization, Funding acquisition.  
**Francesca Pomerantz:** Conceptualization, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing, Visualization.

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## Appendix

## Questions Guiding Data Analysis.

Category	Second Round of Analysis	Third Round of Analysis
Text	Who read the text? What was the nature of the text?	What was the degree of authenticity of the text? (rating scale) What was the degree of authenticity in how the text was used? (At times this overlapped with the Task analysis.) (rating scale)
Task	What were the reading, writing, listening, and speaking opportunities for students?	What was the degree of authenticity of the student's task? (rating scale)
Talk	Who controlled the dialogue? What were the listening and speaking opportunities for students? What was the content of the talking?	What level of Bloom's thinking was demonstrated in the talk (i.e., <i>Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating</i> )
Lesson Purpose	What was the literacy learning goal? What was the content learning goal?	n/a
Standards	What standards were evident as instructional goals of this lesson?	To what extent did lessons lead to student proficiency of the standards (substantially, superficially, or not evident)?

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