

Sabbatical Report

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During my Sabbatical Leave in Fall, 2017, I pursued work on my current study of the practice of close reading in K-3 classrooms and what benefit and challenges teachers see in the practice. Close reading is one educational standard for K-12 students in reading and writing that have been adopted in California and many other states as part of the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association, 2010). According to the first reading standard, students are expected to “read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it.... [and] to cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.” Since the adoption of CCSS in the past five years, research is just beginning to appear that shows what close reading looks and sounds like, and what its benefits and challenges are, especially in elementary classrooms (e.g., Minnery & Smith, 2018). This study aims to contribute to that emergent knowledge base and to critically examine the impact of close reading practices on the language and literacy education of young children.

During my Sabbatical Leave, I engaged in four activities

1. Read extensively on the subject of close reading, its origins, its implementation in the Common Core Standards, prescriptions proposed in publications for teachers (e.g., Fisher & Frey, 2010), critiques of the standards (e.g., Aukerman & Schuldt, 2016), and the few empirical studies of close reading in the early grades (e.g., Minnery & Smith, 2018; Santori & Belfatti, 2016).
2. Developed a theoretical framework for looking at close reading. Close reading is a cultural practice that is embedded in historically-situated language arts and school activities and ideologies (Beach & Phnney, 1997). What is counted as important to attend to in close reading varies across developmental, cultural and historical contexts (Purves, 1993). In addition, children will bring their own goals and resistances to institutionalized reading practices (Sipe & McGuire, 2006).
3. Analyzed responses to teachers’ comments about close reading from face-to-face interviews and email surveys. Identified common and idiosyncratic materials, practices and goals.
4. Worked on contacting additional teachers to be involved in focus groups and observations during the next school year.

The IRB application for the study has been extended through May, 2019 so additional data can be collected during the coming year. Also, I have partnered with Susan Campbell, Associate Professor of Education with a specialty in social studies education, in the collection and analysis of data. This partnership will add the perspective of reading and writing across content areas.

References

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