

MULTIPLE VOICES IN A SECONDARY ENGLISH CURRICULUM

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study, featuring one American high school English department, analyzed why a secondary school chose certain literature for its English curriculum. The featured school had experienced a significant demographic change and had failed to meet AYP for 7 years. This study examined why the school continued to use many of the same materials it had used for 15 years and the impact the recent emphasis on reading instruction had on the literature program and the teachers. The study also considered the impact that the teachers' background, the English department's history, and the collective memory of English education in the United States all had on the selections. Additionally, this study investigated the ways in which the pressure to meet NCLB standards influenced the literature selection process.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Langston Hughes in his poem “Theme for English B” first published in 1951 described the tension that an African American student felt when he turned in a paper to a White teacher. The student in the poem acknowledged that his White teacher had changed the way he wrote and that what he wrote would change his instructor as well. Did the instructor understand how much he or she had been changed by this interaction? Did the instructor know how much he or she had changed the student?

So will my page be colored that I write? / Being I, it will not be White. / But it will be/ a part of you, instructor. / You are White--/ yet a part of me, as I am a part of you. / That's American. / Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me. / Nor do I often want to be a part of you. / But we are, that's true! / As I learn from you, / I guess you learn from me--/ although you're older--and White--/ and somewhat more free. / This is my page for English B. (Rampersad & Roessel, 2001, p. 410)

In many ways, Hughes could be describing the tension in a 21st-century English literature curriculum that White teachers develop and students of color study. In the poem, Hughes acknowledges the difference between the White teacher and the African American student in the same way that those tensions permeate some English curricula today. Previously and presently, the racial make-up of a school's faculty has often influenced the construction of literature programs. In my experience, teachers wanted to reach all students and meet their needs, but sometimes administrators and faculty members did not know how to do that, and sometimes they did not know that they needed to make changes to accommodate the needs of non-White students. Both as an English teacher and a researcher, I am concerned with how secondary school English departments, faced with the issues surrounding changing demographics and the

needs of students of color, modify their literature curriculum. As Luke (2004) confirms, schools need to focus on the needs of their culturally diverse population to create meaningful instruction for their students in light of changing demographics. Expanding on that research, this study focuses on how one school, whose student body had changed from predominantly White to over 60% Latino and African American, was in the process of reworking its literature curriculum in an attempt to meet the needs of its newly diverse student population.

As I approached this subject in my research, one of my concerns was the material that students were reading. When I think back over my 37-year career as an English teacher and my time as a high school student, I am surprised by and concerned at how little I see changing in the actual materials that teachers use in the classroom. English education is a conservative profession. Although researchers have called for changes in curricula and pedagogy, too often teachers have not made those changes part of their classroom practice and schools have not promoted those changes (Hillocks, 2009; Luke, 2004). As a researcher, I am interested in the motivations teachers have for using the same materials as well as those motivations that compel them to make changes.

Another concern I had as I came to this project was the impact of teachers' blindness to the overwhelming presence of White perspectives in many literature curricula. Many White teachers assume that their White view of American culture is preferred by everyone and present their view with little or no recognition of the fact that other voices exist within American culture (Darder, 1997; Steele, 2003). This privileged point of view is often damaging to both White and non-White students (Appleman, 2010). As the United States rapidly becomes more diverse (Nhan & McGill, 2012), White students need to understand other perspectives (Appleman, 2010). At the same time, non-White students need to have their points of view reflected in the

English curriculum so they experience acceptance and affirmation in the classroom and in the school community (Appleman, 2010). In considering the factors that made a school retain certain materials or find new ones, I considered the influence of historical perspectives on those decisions. I was interested in how the history of English education shaped those White perspectives dominating the English curriculum as well as how that history gave schools and teachers permission to modify perspectives in literature curricula.

This study also grew out of my need to understand how an English department made curriculum decisions. I wanted to comprehend the decision-making process in a high school. As a teacher, I have served on curriculum committees both at the district and department level, but I was so involved in making decisions that did not always reflect on the process itself. I also recognize that moving into the 21st century, English departments and their curricula need to change so that all students receive instruction that prepares them for work or further academic study (Luke, 2004; Yagelski, 2005). I was interested in how a school made literature choices. I wanted to know what factors a department considered as it reevaluated the choices it had previously made and how it decided to choose new materials.

Significance of This Research Project

Many students today face difficulty reading the required texts in English classes (Luke, 1998). That problem has resulted partially from student disinterest in academic reading (Alvermann, 2004; Elkins & Luke, 1999) the abundance of new technologies that constitute alternative forms of reading (Alvermann & Heron, 2001), schools' fixation on conventional methods to approach literacy (Elkins & Luke, 1999), and a limited sense of what constitutes appropriate materials for English classes (Applebee, 1993). Since many students have reading problems, it is important to discern why schools continue to use the same texts and then to

evaluate whether or not those choices serve the needs of the community as well as the students (Skerrett, 2010).

All students in the United States need to succeed in English. NCLB has asked schools to consider the achievement of all students, not just those who are White (Meier, 2004). Since the implementation of this program, schools have had to report the yearly progress of all of their students. The poor achievement of African Americans and Latinos documented in these reports has forced schools to focus on the needs of these students and attempt to change curricula to address the causes of the poor achievement.

This study thus considers how one school in a suburban community with rapidly growing population of African American and Latino students and White faculty modified its literature curriculum to raise the achievement levels of its diverse student body. It can serve as an example for other schools facing similar problems. Understanding the problems that one school faced as it made changes to its literature curriculum can aid other schools as they face similar situations. By understanding the underlying attitudes of the faculty and the beliefs they held about the literature curriculum, the practices used by the school at the center of this study became more transparent. All schools have different problems, but the analysis of one school can serve as a model for understanding the process of change.

The Design of the Project

In considering how a school made changes to its literature curriculum, I hypothesized that the history of English education and in particular the history of teaching literature in the United States had significant impact on the literature curriculum in secondary schools. To understand the possible historical impact, I researched the history of teaching literature in the United States and developed a chronology of its major trends and highlighted the key ideas that continue to

influence literature curricula today. In developing this history, I noted the changes in student demographics and their impact on literature curricula as well as the impact of the secondary literary canon, various political ideas, and the continuing desire to serve the needs of students.

To understand how historical trends in history could impact a school in its development of a literature curriculum, I chose a secondary school that had a minority population that had grown significantly over the decade before this study. I wanted to understand what literature the faculty chose, how it made its selections, and whether there had been any significant changes in the curriculum as the faculty considered the demographic changes in the school community. I noted how historical ideas impacted the selection process, how significant their influence was, and whether the faculty was willing to consider curriculum ideas that deviated from the historical ideas about curriculum the faculty had been using in their work. I also noted what other influences impacted the school's literature program.

In researching elements of literature curricula, I noted the growing trend for the inclusion of reading instruction in literature curricula. With many secondary students facing reading deficiencies (Appleman, 2010; Tatum, 2005), some schools have been including reading instruction as a part of the literature curriculum. Traditionally, secondary English programs had focused on literature and did not include reading instruction except in remedial programs (Applebee, 1993). Along with historical ideas, I wanted to know how this trend impacted the school in my study and how the faculty responded to this change.

The demographics of schools across the country are changing. Historically, schools have had literature curricula that focused on the needs of White students, and teachers have often assumed that the White curriculum served the needs of all students (Darder, 1997). Researchers

such as Tatum (2005) and Darder (1997) have criticized secondary school curricula for a disregard for Latino and African American students' needs. They believe that the old curricular frameworks do not serve the needs of minority students. This researcher focuses on how teachers who have taught a curriculum that has served a White community and its values now must adjust to meet the needs of Latino and African American students who have become the majority of the students in Carlisle High School, the site of this study.

My Background and Its Possible Impact on the Research

I have taught English, speech, and drama for 37 years, 27 years in public schools in the Chicago suburban area and 10 years in private schools across the country. In those different experiences, I have served as a teacher, staff developer, and department chair. In all of my experiences, I have always been a classroom teacher and consider it my most important work. I know that my sympathies lie with teachers, and that perspective may blind me from understanding all of the issues present in a school. However, my background gives me an insider's perspective in the workings of a school and its politics and provides me with the dual perspective of teacher and researcher.

My last full-time teaching assignment was at a school whose student body was 45% African American, 10% Latino, and 45% White. I taught AP English Literature and Composition to clustered senior African American and Latino students along with Whites as well as sophomore developmental reading to almost exclusively African American and Latino students. Because of that experience, I have been concerned with how to make the prescribed literature more appealing and more understandable to all of my students. As a White teacher, my students of color helped me change my attitudes and understanding of the canon and its White viewpoint. I bring that experience to this study.

Technology too has changed dramatically in the time that I have been teaching. When I started teaching in the 1970s, we used ditto machines not photocopiers, typewriters not computers, 16mm films not DVDs, and letters not email. I recorded my grades in ink in a grade book that the administration archived in the school vault for 10 years instead of the electronic grade book with an outside server that archives the grades. Search engines have replaced the *Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature*. With a credit card and an e-reader, my students and I now have access to most literature in minutes instead of waiting 5-10 days for mail delivery of books. I recognize the value of technology in the classroom and many new forms of literature that have developed through technology. I am awkward with technology and have had to overcome my fear of using different media such as blogs, microblogs, and computer games in my classroom. Despite my initial fear and awkwardness, I now believe that these different media are literature, and students need to study them so that they can reflect on their impact. This viewpoint has also influenced how I evaluated the literature curriculum in this study.

Furthermore, there have been modifications in the social norms and mores of the students I have taught. What is considered inappropriate and unacceptable in a classroom has changed. Thirty years ago the departments in the schools in which I taught refused to consider books with profane or suggestive language. In the last 8 years, I have been permitted to teach Ian McEwan's *Atonement* even though its lewd language is a dominant symbol in the book. Another change has been the acceptance of different lifestyles. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* with its lesbian love scene is now standard in the curriculum of the schools in which I taught. There also is more sensitivity to racial and ethnic stereotypes in literature. *Huckleberry Finn* was a staple of the junior curriculum when I started teaching in the 1970s, but today the racially charged language in the text has caused my school to drop it as a required text. In talking with

colleagues in other schools, some had made these kinds of changes at their schools, but others had not. I understand how difficult these changes can be for teachers since I have experienced the need to make them. I worry that some schools and some teachers have become stuck in the past and reject change. That attitude influenced how I constructed this study.

In doing this research project at a school that was new to me, I was unfamiliar with the facility, but I was comfortable with the role of an English teacher in a secondary school. I understood the politics of money in a district as well as the policies surrounding state standards and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). My insider's perspective helped me talk with teachers about what they were teaching and why they made certain decisions. I knew nothing about Carlisle High School, the site of this study, except what I had read on its website before I came to the school. The particulars of this school and the faculty's experience there were totally new to me. I am aware that my sympathies for teachers and their workload could color my understanding of their work. I acknowledge my passion for literature and belief in its importance in shaping the thinking of students. I believe that students stand at the center of effective curriculum, and student needs should drive its construction. These viewpoints have colored my research and possibly blinded me to some perspectives.

Research Questions

Schools change textbooks, adopt new novels, and discard other pieces of literature. By focusing on one school, I investigated the factors that influence the teachers and ultimately the school's choice of literature. What students read and discuss influence how they see themselves and the world in which they live (Luke, 2004). Students interact with assigned literature and see themselves in it. The literature a school chooses shapes the cultural experiences of the students and helps to create their response to the world in which they live (Skerrett, 2010).

In this study, I follow Connerton's idea of collective memory. Connerton (1989) believed that there is a collective memory of past ideas and norms in a culture. As people change their points of view, they consider the structure of past ideas in order to find ways to formulate new ideas. "The absolutely new is inconceivable. It is not just that it is difficult to begin with a wholly new start, that too many old loyalties and habits inhibit the substitution of a novel enterprise for an old and established one" (p. 6). In looking at the historical patterns that comprise the history of English education, this study assesses whether there was a desire to stay within the boundaries that these old concepts have created or if there were some ways in which there was a transformation of the culture and its points of view.

This qualitative research project provides an evaluation of what influenced the English department at Carlisle High School as it chose its literature for its curriculum. To complete this evaluation, I spent 8 weeks conducting interviews with various teachers and administrators involved in making curriculum decisions at that high school. I also spent time watching classes, reading different curriculum documents, informally talking with the English faculty in their English workroom as well as attending a school play, reading the school newspaper, and attending senior research presentations. All of these activities helped me understand the culture in the school and helped to submerge me into Carlisle's school culture so I could begin to understand what was important to the school and the English faculty.

To understand the literature curriculum at Carlisle, I first had to know what materials the school used and what materials it had available. Then I needed to have a way to assess what motivated those choices. Finally, I wanted to understand if administrators and faculty members had changed any of their ideas about the school, the students in the community, the materials

they used, or the teacher's role as the school reconstructed its literature curriculum. I considered the following research questions as I conducted my research at Carlisle:

1. What literature did the teachers use? Why did the faculty choose it?
2. How were decisions made about what literature the teachers used and at what levels? What were the criteria for choosing a literary text?
3. What was the pattern of change, if any, in the curriculum? How could its dynamics be described?

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The history of secondary English instruction has continued to impact how schools make literature choices for their language arts curriculum (Applebee, 1993). Forces from the past in English education impact what we do in the present as well as the future. Having an understanding of these past influences can help those in English education better understand present concerns (Thomas, 2011). The following is an explanation of some of the trends in the history of secondary English literature instruction. I have chosen to classify these trends by decades, but often they extend over greater time periods.

The 1890s into the Turn of the 20th Century

Secondary English instruction in the United States had its roots in the 1894 Committee of Ten and the National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements (Applebee, 1974; Graff, 2007). These groups established the first standard of English instruction for secondary students. Students were to study prose and narrative poetry in equal parts for 5 periods per week for 4 years. Because students needed this depth of instruction to get into college, it was to become the first requirement of high school English. In 1894 the National Conference of Uniform Entrance Requirements created a list of required literature, and those texts became the foundation of the English courses in secondary schools in the United States through the turn of the 20th century (Applebee, 1974; Hook, 1979). Included on this list were three works of Shakespeare, *Ivanhoe*, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Later works by Addison, Burke, Austen, Macaulay, Thackeray, Dickens, Eliot, Byron, Irving, Hawthorne, Emerson, and Bryant were added to the list (Hook, 1979). Although there was some reading, grammar, speaking, and

listening instruction along with writing, the basis of secondary English classes was the study of literature rather than language or rhetoric. These other areas became subordinate to the study of literature (Applebee, 1993).

Choosing which students the curriculum favored was an issue for schools at that time. The canon advocated by the National Conference of Uniform Entrance Requirements gave authority to the 5% of students who went on to college (Hook, 1979). These requirements had an underlying assumption that the needs of these students were the most important ones to be met. In 1910 Henry Pritchett, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, suggested that secondary schools had two different tasks. One was the preparation of the students for citizenship in a democracy and the other was preparing that minority of students who intended to attend college. He saw those needs as being in conflict with each other (Hook, 1979). Many students not going to college could not read the college entrance literature, and some public high schools resented the influence of the College Entrance Board. G. Stanley Hall, psychologist, published *Adolescence*, a widely read book, that divided child growth into stages and explained that some children would never develop the capacity to do the most sophisticated work required in high school (Hook, 1979). Many educators began to question whether all students should study the same curriculum. In 1911, in an attempt to resolve the issue of control over the literature curriculum, different English teacher associations called for a change in college entrance requirement to general questions that demonstrated the ability to read and write rather than acquisition of information about certain pieces of literature. Out of that conflict came the formation of the National Council of Teachers of English with James Hosisic as its first leader (Hook, 1979).

Early Influence of NCTE

In 1911, a group of English educators formed the National Council of Teachers of English. The express purpose of this group was to be a voice for different local groups of teachers. The impetus for the formation of the group came from a concern that colleges and their entrance examinations were attempting to control the curriculum in high schools. The group advocated abolishing required texts for the entrance exams and replacing them with a written composition and questions on poetry and prose passages from undesignated literature (Hook, 1979). At that time the use of achievement and IQ tests had begun to be used to sort and separate students (Reese, 2005). There was a commonly held belief that students' differences resulted from innate differences and that there should be separate curricula for those who were deemed more talented (Cuban, 2006; Reese, 2005). From these beliefs began the practice of leveling courses and separating students because of perceived intellectual differences.

As secondary education grew in numbers at the turn of the 20th century, there were conflicting views about its purpose. Some thought that the goal of obtaining a high school diploma was entrance to college. Others thought that high school should be a finishing place for education. Students could receive a strong academic background that would prepare them for college, but there would also be tracks for students who wanted manual training courses that would prepare them for work (Reese, 2005). Social class, the family's needs, and different immigrants' views on the value of education influenced the growth of high schools and pressured school boards (Reese, 2005) to broaden the scope of high school to include a diverse curriculum to meet the needs of many different students.

In these early years of secondary English, outside testing and evaluation and the canon became important instructional issues. Cuban (2006) in his study of how teachers conduct their

classes saw these issues divided between teachers who were concerned with the goals that they set, the teacher-centered group, and those who were concerned with the needs of students, the student-centered group. That division was clear in the NCTE's objection to the Committee of Ten recommendations. The NCTE wanted a curriculum that met the needs of all the students whereas the Committee of Ten believed the needs of the privileged students going to college should be met, and the needs of the rest would be met with exposure to some if not all of the materials the college-bound students needed (Hooks, 1979). The difference in perspectives between the NCTE's point of view and the Committee of Ten's point of view illustrated the differences found in reformers of that day. Both of these groups believed that schools would bring social progress and human development. They differed in what they believed a good society entailed. While one side believed in the needs of establishing social justice for the diverse student body that had been populating the schools and the role these institutions could play in that, the other believed that helping the privileged was an investment in the development of the culture and its common good (Reese, 2005). Those different perspectives have continued into the 21st century.

Influence of WWI

World War I brought a concern for patriotism and Americanism to American schools. The reformers of this age viewed school as a place in which democratic principles should be fostered (Reese, 2005). Schools began to include more American literature in their English curricula, and many started to devote at least one year to the study of American literature (Applebee, 1974). This change in texts reflected a need for the country to see itself as a leader and establish democratic principles in school curricula. At this same time, there was a demographic shift from a rural to a more urban population. By 1920, more Americans lived in

areas classified as urban (over 2500 people) than in rural areas. Many of these people were immigrants from central and southern Europe. These people's cultural background made the country's citizens fearful that they would not assimilate into their perception of what the United States should be (Reese, 2005). Teaching American literature with the intent of teaching American values was a goal of this curriculum (Applebee, 1974). In 1923, Macmillan presented the *Modern Reader Series* that included many American authors (Hook, 1979). Teachers also began to question which American authors to use in their classrooms, but NCTE through its *English Journal* provided direction and soon Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, Cather, Wharton, Dreiser, and Lewis had become staples in the classroom (Hook, 1979).

Summary. The political interests of the United States were playing an important role in the development of the English curriculum. The literary canon had now expanded in both its purpose and content. English classes were now a part of the developing American spirit. Studying American literature was a way of reshaping the thinking of the immigrants so that they would assimilate into the American culture. There was an implication that new Americans from eastern and southern Europe needed to change their ways to fit in. The literature was to shape the identity of students. Not only were English classrooms a political force that shaped students' thinking, they were an economic force. Understanding these already delineated American ways became necessary to have access to money and power in this culture. To accomplish these political goals, the American people were willing to spend significant money for public education to perpetuate American ideals (Reese, 2005).

1920s and 1930s

During the 1920s and through the 1930s, there was an expanded interest in student needs in American schools. Pedagogy at this time included differentiated instruction as well as leveled

courses since not all students wanted to study college preparatory materials. Schools began to focus on child development and the interests of the child. That trend paralleled reductions in teaching staff because of the Depression and the increase in teacher load to as many as 40-50 and even 60 students in some instances per English class. There was not enough money to support individualized instruction in most schools (Reese, 2005).

Most of the literature in the classroom continued to be college preparatory materials (Hook, 1979) even though most students did not go to college (Reese, 2005). Those who could not handle that work read parts of it and had more grammar instruction. During this time, NCTE was concerned about the quality and quantity of writing instruction in the large classes (Hooks, 1979). Implied in Hooks' (1979) description of the time was how little concern there was for the less able students. The materials were selected based on the needs of the college-bound students, and schools fit the needs of other students around that curriculum.

The *Cardinal Principle of Secondary School*, a US government publication from 1918, stated that high school goals should include student health, basic literacy, vocational training, civic training, use of leisure time, and moral training. These principles continued to influence the secondary curriculum into the 1930s and beyond (Reese, 2005). In 1935, NCTE published *An Experience Curriculum in English*. Its purpose was to begin a standardization of secondary English curricula. It advocated unit planning with objectives that were both academic and social in nature. It noted that elementary schools should do most of the reading instruction, and secondary school should focus on literature although it did note that secondary schools needed to teach more sophisticated reading skills. Speech, reading, literature, writing, and grammar all had their own sections. Reading would be a strong focus in the elementary schools, and literature and speech were primary components in the secondary curriculum. There was an emphasis on

silent reading, and the pamphlet did not recommend the use of oral reading in the upper elementary and secondary schools. It reported that over 70% of schools used some sort of academic tracking usually in three tiers. This pamphlet was still being published and distributed in the 1960s (Hook, 1979).

Summary. This report demonstrated the importance of tracking and standardization at that time. It established the focus on literature in secondary school and separated other areas such as writing, speech, reading and grammar from literature. These other areas then became subordinate in importance in secondary English classrooms. The linear progression of thinking advocated in this report, the emphasis on literature, and the leveling of students based on perceived ability became embedded into the system.

1940s and 1950s

During World War II and afterwards, the role of politics in the English curriculum took focus (Applebee, 1993). NCTE's executive council presented a report stating that the study of English during wartime was crucial. Because English instruction helped students understand the purpose of the war, it promoted national unity and helped students make personal adjustments to the situation (Hook, 1979). After the war, there was a growing fear of Communism in the United States. Through the efforts of the Committee on Un-American Activities, teachers were required to take a loyalty oath, and there were concerns about what literature was appropriate since the literature was to maintain democratic ideals (Reese, 2005).

During the 1940s and into the 1950s, how to teach the literature and in particular in how to teach students to read the literature effectively was the focus of English classes (Applebee, 1974). In colleges New Criticism, a foundation for research, evolved to give professional respectability to English studies. It developed as an appreciation of the aesthetics of literature

and as a separate research area distinct from that of philosophy, politics, and history (Graff, 2007). Eventually, the term New Criticism came to mean “the practice of explicating texts in a vacuum” (Graff, 2007, p. 146). With this approach, the politics of the pieces studied could be deemphasized. For secondary teachers, teaching New Criticism became the practice of instructing students to find depth in the text with no external sources to change or influence the meaning. It was a way of turning away from any political involvement a text might have and focus only on the individual’s reaction to the text (Ohmann, 1996).

Today, New Criticism still influences the analysis of literature in secondary English classes. From my experience, much of the AP curriculum is based on the interpretation of text with no reference to outside meanings because it requires students to do an in-depth analysis of the text in terms of its aesthetic structure. The meaning comes from the text (VonBlum, 2009). Because the number of students taking AP exams is one way the media has used to evaluate the quality of high schools, English departments continue to emphasize a close reading of texts with an analysis of stylistic devices and figurative language.

1960s and 1970s

In the post-Sputnik Age of the early 1960s, English became an essential academic discipline (Applebee, Langer & Nachowitz, 2010). The study of literature would come from the characteristics of the discipline with a specific body of information and its own internal logic. The study of English had an external structure determined by the academic discipline, not the interests and needs of students or the school communities. Such a shift gave English status and the federal government gave funding for the study of English (Applebee et. al., 2010). This program, Project English, helped realign the curriculum around three areas: language, literature, and composition.

During the late 1960s and into the 1970s, the emphasis on English as an academic discipline yielded to programs that were more child-centered. During this time, English curricula emphasized personal response to literature (Applebee et. al., 2010). Curricula emphasized the interrelationship of literature, writing and discussion. Role-playing and drama along with the emphasis on group discussion became parts of the English pedagogy.

In the mid and late 1960s, the United States experienced political events that eventually changed the school curricula. The federal government's commitment to Civil Rights deepened after the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1965. The Supreme Court's decisions throughout the 1950s started the desegregation process in schools that grew more widespread in the 1960s and 1970s (Reese, 2005). There were strong challenges to American principles as the nation experienced the assassination of its president, three major civil right leaders, and a presidential candidate. Further complicating this time was the involvement of US troops in Vietnam. There were factions among English teachers who demanded that English classes address these issues (Hook, 1979). In 1969, Richard Ohmann (1996) in an address to the MLA conference convinced the group to go on record denouncing the Vietnam War, opposing punishment of student demonstrators, and creating a commission on the status of women. Although this action focused on college students, it also affected secondary schools. Protest politics and reaction to them came into the classroom.

There was also a call for a change in the way schools studied canonical texts and an expressed desire to include more female writers. For secondary schools, the canon is a group of literary works that are widely studied and respected, and books that gain that status have authority in the community and help shape the thinking of students. Marginalized groups such as feminists attempted to influence the content of the canon. Evidence of the desire to include more

female voices in the English curriculum came from such publications as the NCTE's *Response to Sexism and Sexism and Language in 1976-1977* (Hook, 1979). Multicultural points of view in literature also started with Latino and later queer fiction. Graff (2007) expressed a concern about how college programs included these groups:

If history runs true to form once more, then we can expect literary theory to be defused not by being repressed but by being accepted and quietly assimilated or relegated to the margin where it ceases to be a bother. (p. 249)

What Graff (2007) said about college English programs in many ways was true of secondary English programs as well. Some high schools experimented with electives instead of the traditional grade level courses, and the content of these often contained some popular literature. In reality however, there was a continuation of the canon as perpetuated by the use of textbooks and an add-on program of extra novels (Applebee, 1993). The addition of books that expanded the literary canon did not give status to those new books. The norm continued to be the study of traditional texts with some additional texts that became auxiliary to the canon but not fully included in its structure. The auxiliary texts often changed and did not have a position of prominence or authority in the curriculum (Graff, 2007).

1980s and 1990s

In the 1980s, the federal government and the Department of Education became concerned with the quality of secondary education in the United States. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence published *A Nation at Risk* questioning the quality of secondary education in the United States. In the late 1980s, William Bennett, Secretary of Education, raised concerns about low-test scores and the lack of standards that he and other leaders saw as the problem with US schools. At that time, the report highlighted underachievement among African American and Latino students. The conservative tradition in English called for a return to “the canon” and an

increase in grammar instruction. Communities were questioning the progressive movement of the 1960s and 1970s. During this time, the major purpose of secondary education continued to be the preparation of students for college. Politicians saw the canon along with the five-paragraph themes and extensive grammar instruction as the best way to improve student achievement and make American students competitive with the higher achieving students of other industrial nations (Reese, 2005).

Also during this time, NCTE did not offer focused leadership in the development of literature programs. The advocates of cultural literacy promoted the need for students to know lists of materials and ideas while others advocated studying literature from a wide variety of literary traditions that would include more female writers and works from a range of ethnic, racial and cultural groups (Applebee et. al., 2010). The differences in focus of the two groups created vagueness in purpose and approach to literature.

During the 1990s, schools increased their awareness of the role of language for students who did not use Standard English. American classrooms had been insensitive to what learning to code shift did to the identity of students (Perry, 2003). Some teachers, in efforts to be sensitive to the needs of African American and Latino students, modified their teaching practice to include explicit instruction in expectations. Some underachieving students needed to understand the classroom expectations and behavior before they could be successful in school (Delpit, 1995). The cultural needs of students came into conflict with those asking for cultural literacy (Reese, 2005). Involved in part of that conflict was the Black English Vernacular debate and the role that Standard English dominance played in the classroom (Perry, 2003).

NCTE had advocated the use of multicultural literature in the 1970s, and by the early 1990s, most literature anthologies used in secondary schools contained literature from many

different racial and ethnic groups; however, the literature was not fully integrated into the textbooks. Instead the anthologies featured sections of literature labeled African American Literature or Asian Literature or Hispanic American Literature. In some anthologies, American literature included literature from North and South America, not just the United States (Stotsky, 1995). How to move multicultural literature from an incidental experience for students to an integral part of the literature curriculum became a focus for the Research and Development Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature (Applebee et. al., 2010).

During this time frame, the standards movement attempted to address the needs of underachieving students as well as consider the curriculum that Bennett and others considered important to making US students competitive (Reese, 2005). This movement made the canon and its historical authority in teaching literature the center of the English curriculum, but it insisted that all students have access to these materials and have an understanding of how to interpret them so that all students would have equal access to cultural norms and higher education (Applebee et. al., 2010; Reese, 2005). In the late 1980s and into the 1990s the standards movement began to influence the shape and content of English secondary curricula. NCTE created *Standards for the English Language Arts* (1996) to delineate NCTE's position on standards and their place in the study of English. In July of 1996, Illinois approved its first set of English Language Arts Standards based on the 1985 State Goals of Learning ("Illinois State Board", 1996). I use Illinois State Standards in this history since an Illinois school was the subject of this study, but in the history of English education, all states created a set of their own standards (Reese, 2005). Illinois state standards were a list of goals and outcomes in contrast to NCTE's goals that were more philosophical and general in nature (Applebee et. al., 2010).

The standards movement offered schools ways to articulate what they believed their students should be able to know and do (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). State and federal governments along with school districts developed standards that codified what they thought students should know and be able to do. Teachers and curriculum developers used district and state standards to design lessons in a linear pattern (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). One issue with this kind of curriculum design was that it only stated minimum standards (Meier, 2000). Too often those standards only reflected the common practices of the schools with little or no analysis of what might be wrong with the school's curriculum (Meier, 2000).

Summary. During these two decades, the federal and state governments focused their attention on deficiencies in secondary education. In an attempt to improve secondary education, states developed standards for all public schools. Advocates of cultural literacy promoted the use of canonical literature. At the same time, growing concern for student achievement highlighted poor minority student achievement. Textbooks began to include multicultural literature, but often it was in an auxiliary role rather than integrated into the study of literature. At the end of the century, the federal government had started to play a significant role in curriculum planning, and that role would increase in the turn of the 21st century.

2000 to Present

The standards movement continued into the 21st century. Through the years the standards have been updated and modified. In 2011 the New Illinois State Learning Standards Incorporating the Common Core were adopted and will be fully implemented in the 2013-14 school year ("Illinois State Board," 2011). These standards include College Readiness Standards that include expectations for secondary schools to prepare all students for college. NCTE's website provides extensive curriculum and professional development materials that include

concrete suggestions and materials to expand the use of standards in the classroom (Applebee et. al., 2010).

At the beginning of the 21st century, the federal government wanted greater accountability for student learning than the use of standards provided. The federal government mandated the evaluation of schools when Congress passed NCLB in 2001, and President Bush signed it into law in January of 2002 (Wood, 2004). NCLB and the standardized testing that resulted from its implementation defined secondary education in the early part of the 21st century. Some of NCLB's provisions included the mandating of yearly state assessments that measured what students had learned in reading. The State of Illinois chose to use the PSAE at the secondary school level as the state-mandated test. The law required states to make the results of these tests available to the public, and the scores were to be disaggregated by race and gender to demonstrate the progress the schools were making to close the achievement gap between White students and students of color. The law set achievement goals for these groups. If schools failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), they could suffer funding penalties or school reorganization or state takeover (Wood, 2004).

NCLB made the standardized test the central assessment tool for the quality of student work (Meier, 2004). Limiting schools success measures to one tool lowered student progress rather than increasing it. In Illinois, many public high schools focused their attention on how to get students to do well on the PSAE. The focus in English classes for underachieving students, many of whom were Latino and African American, switched from literature-focused curricula with the focus on thinking skills to curricula that emphasized ways to pass the standardized tests. There was also anecdotal evidence that there was more leveling of students that resulted in racially segregated classes. In those segregated classes, instruction often was aimed at the lowest

level of skills and information (Wood, 2004). The intention of NCLB was to close the achievement gap between White and minority students, but in practice it continued to foster low achievement (Meier, 2004).

When schools focused on improving test scores rather than on improving student learning, the schools often failed in that mission (Au & Valencia, 2010). Schools and programs that were successful focused on developing critical thinking skills in their students (Au & Valencia, 2010; Jimenez, 2004; Tatum, 2005). In schools with such goals, the quality of instruction improved and students slowly developed the skills to perform well on tests, but more importantly they developed depth of thinking and academic maturity (Au & Valencia, 2010).

During this time, some English departments started to restructure how they were teaching literature. Reading and math scores were central to NCLB and its evaluation of schools. Some English departments changed the focus of their programs from literature interpretation to reading instruction (Appleman, 2010). Some programs embedded reading instruction into the full curriculum and chose to focus on certain skills in all areas with English being one of the programs (Tatum, 2005). Effective programs identified what their individual schools needed and structured instruction to meet the needs of the schools (Au & Valencia, 2010). Schools across the nation were searching for ways to improve student instruction.

In the early 21st century, there was also a divide between what the state and federal governments wanted English programs to do and what college and university programs in English education advocated as effective curriculum (Luke, 2004). State standards expected schools and teachers to affirm the traditional cultural goals while colleges and universities had been challenging these standards and suggesting ways to redefine them (Applebee et. al., 2011).

Colleges had been challenging the effectiveness of NCLB while schools had to meet its standards or risk losing funding or being taken over by the state.

From the 1990s into the 21st century, university programs called for changes in the canon to include more multicultural literature in secondary English (Luke, 1998). Those visions were not always transferring into the practice of the schools. Researchers were suggesting ways to redefine the literature curriculum to include technology such as text messages, blogs, and email along with film, television and websites to stimulate interest in literacy (Alvermann, 2001).

The cultures of the schools were filled with teachers of multiple philosophical visions of what literacy could be (Luke, 2004). The young teachers did not receive support for their different ideas on how literature instruction could change. Young teachers who had exposure to these researchers' ideas became overwhelmed as they started their careers at schools and adapted to school communities by reverting to the old standards of the schools rather continuing with the new ideas they had learned in university programs. These new teachers reverted to the past practices of the schools because they wanted to keep their jobs and because their support systems at the schools advocated older ideas of literature study (Yagelski, 2005). The experienced teachers had different backgrounds and visions for their classes. These diverse points of view have come together in many schools and the submission of some points of view have been causing tensions in the schools even if one point of view asserts its dominance (Luke, 2004).

The challenge to literacy programs in the beginning of the 21st century was to find ways to use NCLB and its mandates in ways that deepened student learning rather than limiting it. Researchers such as Luke and Elkins (2002) and Au and Valencia (2010) have suggested that schools go beyond single tests to evaluate their literacy programs. Instead schools need to find ways to use the test data to find information about reading issues, but the overall literacy plan for

schools should be about critical thinking and increasing depth of understanding when students read (Au & Valencia, 2010; Tatum, 2005). Effective English programs incorporate reading instruction with such activities as vocabulary study and fluency practice into English classes (Appleman, 2010; Tatum, 2005). Students should study challenging literature that will train them to think deeply. In that way, they could connect the reading skills they learned in class to the materials that they studied.

Another challenge to secondary literacy programs and English curricula was the perception that literature programs could not also be reading programs. Many students needed explicit reading instruction and that instruction could be part of the literature program. Appleman (2010) summarized the research on reading that literature teachers could use in their classes. She included these key ideas that effective English classes should incorporate from reading research. First, she suggested that teachers make cognitive reading strategies visible to students. Students should be aware that strategies exist, have names for different ones, and practice how to use them. Second, teachers should use metacognitive activities such as think-aloud protocols to help students process what they should be doing and to make the teacher aware of the students' processing. Third, students should read a variety of materials some of which reflect their interests and outside reading experiences and some that push the students into new areas of awareness. Students should recognize reading as a social action that exists within other social acts. Finally, teachers should choose literature that reflects the diversity of the students as well as the culture. When reading different pieces, students should understand whose voice is represented in the piece. The challenge for schools and researchers is to facilitate awareness of this research and help teachers use it in their classrooms (Jimenez, 2004).

Summary. NCLB was the centerpiece of the early 21st century school curricula. Schools had to respond to its demands since their funding was tied to students' test scores. Although researchers and school personnel objected to the overuse of standardized tests, testing did bring about an awareness and response to the underachievement of many students. Since NCLB's enactment, some schools have attempted to structure secondary English curricula around test preparation, but these programs for the most part have provided inadequate preparation since students lacked critical thinking and the use of sophisticated literature in many of these attempts. Researchers have encouraged schools to use the tests to identify areas of study for their curricula and to embed reading instruction into the teaching of literature.

Conclusion

The review of the history of secondary English suggests that English education has had four voices dominating its history: concern for good literature/the canon, concern for the students and their needs, concern for the political perspective of the literature, and concern for the cultural perspective of the literature. Emerging over the past 118 years (Applebee et. al., 2011), these voices have overlapped, but separating them into these four categories offers a method of observing these ideas and identifying the ways that they continue to influence literature selection today. In the first part of the 20th century, concern for the canon and concern for students became solidified in the goals of English education in the United States. With WWI the voice of political concern loudly emerged. At the same time, there were many waves of new immigrant groups who produced a strong cultural voice in American society and literature. From the 1920s through WWII, these voices continued to grow and change. From the middle of the 20th century to the century's end, these voices sought to dominate each other. Some changes to the literature curriculum came from a position of authority and power and claimed a role in the

canon. Others became a part of a marginalized or outsider literature program that did not have the status of the established canon.

Concern for the canon had its roots in the development of English as a separate subject. When the Committee of Ten established that students needed to have knowledge of certain pieces of English literature for admission to prestigious universities, these pieces of literature became the center of secondary curricula. In the early 20th century, more American literature was added to the literary canon. The focus on American and British literature continued until after WWII. In the 1960s and 1970s more popular literature competed for a place in the English curriculum. In the 1980s there was a resurgence of interest in the traditional canon with the voice of William Bennett advocating a focus on classical rather than popular literature. The standards movement of the 1990s into the present solidified the classical canon and its merits. In the 21st century, reading instruction has merged with literature instruction, and the literature used in classes has begun to include modern and multicultural materials as well as literature from social media and computer games.

Concern for the student had its roots in the founding of the NCTE. The NCTE's founders worried that the needs of students not attending college and universities were not being served in secondary English classes. They proposed ways to alter the curriculum to meet the needs of all students, not just the needs of those continuing to college. This concern paralleled the increase in students continuing to high school and considering it as a finishing place for education rather than eighth grade (Reese, 2005). There was a continuing conflict between those who believed that secondary English should cater to the needs of those going to college while offering non-college bound students less rigorous work with the same materials and those who believed that the needs of all students should be at the center of the curriculum and materials should be

tailored to the needs of all students. These forces volleyed back and forth with first and then the other taking precedence in the thinking of the time. The 1920s saw the return of the canon with a focus on American literature, and the 1930s saw a focus on the child with the progressive movement led by followers of Dewey. The 1950s saw a focus on the canon and the concern for high standards with the US arms race with the Soviet Union, and then the 1960s and 1970s saw a focus on the child and the open classroom movement. The 1980s into the 1990s saw a focus on the canon led by Bennett and others in the federal government concerned with the United States' poor reading and math scores as compared to other industrialized nations. The 1990s and the present century had the federal government along with states establishing standards to structure uniform school curricula. At the same time, there had been concern for the needs of the different cultures of students and the impact these had on student achievement. The standards reflected the norms of the dominant culture and attempted to make transparent to marginalized groups what those standards were and how to reach them. In the 21st century, NCLB insisted that schools address the needs of underachieving students, especially students of color.

World War I brought political interests into the English curriculum in American schools. A focus on American literature grew out of a desire to encourage patriotism and an understanding of the United States' role in the war. After WWII, there was great concern for the spread of Communism in this country. Schools started to use the techniques of New Criticism since the politics of the text could be left unexamined. In the 1980s, Secretary of Education Bell and his successor Bennett called for a canonical literature curriculum and pushed to establish standards of excellence in education. President Bush with No Child Left Behind and President Obama with a modified form of that program have pushed the United States to offer quality

education to all students. Teachers with the assistance of researchers have been searching for ways to implement programs that meet the needs of diverse student populations.

Concern for cultural interests influencing literature first started with the large numbers of immigrants coming into the country at the turn of the previous century. Studying English was a way of merging the identities of children from foreign countries with the dominant culture. There was also a desire to define the United States culture through British and United States literature especially before World War II. In the last half of the 20th century and into the 21st century, there was a growing sensitivity to the impact that students' cultures had on their identity and their understanding of text. The desire to define the United States culture through its Anglo-Saxon heritage had been meeting with resistance from those who wanted respect for the identity and culture of all students. These separate visions of the United States and its culture have been influencing literature selections.

These four voices have emerged out of the 118-year history of secondary English education in the United States. They overlap in influence and concerns. None of these voices have had absolute control at one time since the trends overlapped each other and pushed against each other. These different voices have been interacting in school cultures and creating conflict as the schools have attempted to determine their literature programs. Thus, how one school listened and responded to these different voices is the focus of this research.

Application of These Historical Voices to Research at Carlisle

These historical voices provided a framework to uncover what affected Carlisle High School as it determined its literature curriculum. I sought to understand how the faculty's beliefs about the canon impacted the school's choices. I also wanted to determine if there were ways that students' needs played a role in the curriculum decisions. These teacher-centered and

student-centered voices had been in conflict as the history of English secondary education developed, and I wanted to uncover any potential conflicts at Carlisle resulting from this historical conflict. Historically, cultural and political issues had played a role in the history of English education. The cultural points of view that have prominence in a curriculum have been evolving over the past 30 years. With the changing population at Carlisle, I was interested in how the school dealt with that issue. Given that the politics of NCLB have influenced public schools for the past decade, I wanted to understand the pressures that politically charged issue had placed upon Carlisle. These historical voices described in this review provided a framework to understand Carlisle's decisions, but they might not be the only voices working at Carlisle. I use these voices to offer a structure for uncovering other voices also at work in the development of that school's English curriculum. Since the staff had a broad age range, it was possible that some of them continued to believe the perspective that they had studied when they were in college and carried those ideas into the classroom today.

These historical voices offered a framework to understand patterns of change at the school. Through this framework, I sought to identify ways in which the school had changed its perspective and understanding of the role of literature in the curriculum as well as determine if Carlisle were continuing to listen to older trends in the history of English. I also wanted to know how the school blended ideas from the past with current ideas or if it did so at all. The historical structure offered a frame of reference for evaluating possible changes. By separating historical currents into four different and continuous voices, I was able to analyze the different influences across time rather than simply looking at time frames of change.

Chapter Three

Methodology

In this qualitative study, I investigated some of the issues that surrounded one school's English curriculum as the school's English department attempted to understand its changing student body and to address the problems those changes produced. I wanted to understand how the school's English department made decisions about its literature curriculum. My purpose was to tell the story of the school's English department as it made decisions about what literature to teach. Educational researcher Elliot Eisner (1998) said:

Schools also have moods, and they too display scenes of high drama that those who make policy and who seek to improve practice should know. The means through which such knowledge is made possible are the enlightened eyes—the scene is seen—and the ability to craft text so that what the observer has experienced can be shared by those who were not there. (p. 30)

Following Eisner's dictates, I gathered information about the actions of one school concerning its literature curriculum and put them together to tell the story of the English department. My purpose was to explain the issues that department faced while modifying its literature program and in so doing to discuss some of the issues that this school with a changing population faced as it tried to figure out why its students were not succeeding and what it could do to change their performance.

I observed one English department for 8 weeks and immersed myself in the culture of that department. My focus was to understand only one aspect of this group, their literature selection process. Out of my understanding of the community and culture of this group came this qualitative study. I used research techniques that included interviewing members of the community both formally and informally, gathering artifacts about the curriculum, and I sought to find connections among them as well as disconnections in an effort to understand not only

what materials the English faculty used but what influenced those choices. Additionally, I was interested in how the history of that department as well as the personal histories of the faculty and administrators influenced the construction of the school's literature curriculum.

For understanding what influenced the construction of a literature curriculum, a qualitative study best served the purpose for this project. In no other kind of study could I have sought meaning in the actions of others, the validity of which comes from the emergence of themes from the various kinds of data (Eisner, 1998). These themes emerged as the data overlapped and eventually created a tapestry of images and ideas that merged to tell the story. My work here has been to uncover the themes that wove the images of this English department's condition.

Criteria for Choosing a School for this Study

Since this study was concerned with how one high school's English literature program dealt with demographic changes in relationship to its literature curriculum, I sought a suburban school with a growing minority population. Many suburban school districts that had been predominately White now have significant Latino and African American populations (Nhan & McGill, 2012). I was interested in finding a school that had experienced such a demographic change to study the impact of that change on literature selection. I was interested in how the school defined those changes and created a curriculum to address the new issues the students faced. Luke and Elkins (2002) in discussing the focus of literacy research as editors of *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* said:

Our view is that the single biggest challenge is understanding the new forms of life pathways that youth are taking from and through communities, schools, and workplaces . . . indeed as Francis Kazemek's contributions on literacy, age, and generation remind us, towards sustainable, ethical adult lives. (p. 671)

As an English teacher, I believe that the study of literature affects students' understanding of the world in which they live and can help them find ways "toward sustainable, ethical adult lives." Therefore, as a researcher, I was interested in how a suburban school adapted to the "new life pathways that youth are taking" and if those changes had the potential to lead students into preparation for life in the 21st century. I was interested in what pathways the school had identified, if any, and how the school had found ways to facilitate student learning as they met the changes of the 21st century. I was also interested in understanding if the school and faculty were ignoring these changes or rejecting them. Finally, I wanted a school with an English department of more than 12 members so there would be some diversity of ideas.

I made a list of 10 school districts that met these criteria and sent inquiry letters to department chairs and curriculum directors of each school. Eventually, three schools offered me the opportunity to do research in their buildings. Two were close to my home, but they had to withdraw their offers because of changing political situations in their schools. One district had some financial problems and had to release all non-tenured faculty so that school withdrew its offer. The second released its department chair and withdrew its offer to me. The third, Carlisle High School, met my criteria and accepted my proposal. Since Carlisle was much farther from my home, I was less familiar with the community. Because I lacked knowledge of the community, I came to it with fewer preconceptions than I would have had the study been conducted at the other two schools. Carlisle High School was more than forty miles from a major metropolitan city giving it fewer urban characteristics.

Description of Carlisle High School (a Pseudonym)

Carlisle High School was one of three high schools in a K-12 school district in the outlying suburbs of Chicago. There were 28 schools in the district that encompassed eight

different suburbs. Homes in the district ranged in price from \$35,000 to the \$600,000s. The school district experienced enormous growth in the late 1950s and early 1960s and again in the late 1990s. At one time, there were four high schools. In 1983, Morgan (a pseudonym) and Riverwood (a pseudonym) High Schools merged together to create Carlisle High School. Morgan's building was newer so it was the site of the new high school. The older Riverwood became one of Carlisle's feeder junior high schools. The new Carlisle High School was able to absorb the population swell in the 1990s into the new century as a new housing boom pushed population numbers up.

Carlisle High School had experienced a significant shift in its demographics. At the time of this study, the student body was 7% African American, 45% Latino and 48% White according to its state report card. Over 51% of the school was classified as low income. In the past 15 years, the Latino population had more than doubled in this high school according to the associate principal yet the faculty had remained almost all White. Much of the African American population came from the subsidized housing project that was built in the late 1990s. That 7% had remained stable since the building of that project. The English faculty had been all White until the new division head who was of Dominican ancestry came to the school 2 years ago. He was the only administrator at Carlisle who was not White.

Carlisle fit my demographic interests for this study because its problems were similar to those that, from conversations with colleagues, many districts in the area had been facing. In discussions with my colleagues, I heard them talk about how their schools had not been able to understand the problems that had come with the demographic changes in the make-up of their student populations. Adam, the associate principal at Carlisle, described the changes in Carlisle's school community: "So we knew that the community has changed dramatically. We

went from maybe 25% the number of students who were Hispanic 10-13 years ago to almost 50% our student population being Hispanic now.” He then described the staff:

So we have a teaching core that’s almost entirely White, almost entirely middle or upper middle class. The majority of them remember what this place was like before the influx of non-White students and before the influx of students of poverty and before the community has changed to the extent that more kids who previously were not living in impoverished households now suddenly are. I don’t know that our faculty and staff have figured out how to deal with that yet. They have not been able to change their expectations of students and student learning.

This administrator wanted the faculty to change their understanding of student learning. I was interested in hearing the voices of the faculty to know what they wanted and how they perceived Carlisle’s English program. All schools are unique, but understanding how Carlisle was handling its changes could offer some perspective to other schools as they face similar issues.

Data Collection

I spent 2 days per week for 8 weeks in Carlisle High School. The data for this study came from five sources: interviews with Carlisle staff members and a retired department chair, written curriculum materials that were either printed or on a school website, copies of the literature studied and reading instruction materials, lesson plans from five teachers, and classroom observations. Additionally I attended one school play, two English department meetings, and the senior research project presentations.

Interviews. The four male and six female teachers who agreed to be interviewed for the study were purposefully chosen to represent a range of genders, races, ages, and years of experience. There was only one person of color in the English department, the Dominican division head whom I interviewed. Two of the teachers had fewer than 10 years of experience, two teachers had between 11 and 24 years of experience, and both administrators fell into that category. The other three teachers had 25 years of experience or more. Later I interviewed the retired chair who was much older and had over 40 years of teaching experience. These multiple perspectives gave depth to the understanding of the workings of this department.

I used structured interviews with the same questions for each participant. I interviewed six English teachers, one reading teacher, the English division head, a retired English chair, and the associate principal in charge of curriculum. Eisner (1998) described the interviewing process: “We need to listen to what people have to say about their activities, their feelings, their lives” (p. 183). With his instructions as a guide, I focused the teacher interviews on what they taught, the materials they used, their visions for the department, and their personal backgrounds. The six English teachers received the same questions for both the introductory interview and the follow up interview. (See Appendix.) The only exception was the additional follow-up questions to the teachers who had attended Carlisle as students or who had close personal ties with the school in addition to teaching there. The reading teacher received an abbreviated set of questions because she could see me for only 30 minutes. The administrator interviews focused on their vision of the literature program and on the ways that program served the needs of students. Both administrators had the same set of questions with a few variances based on their respective positions in the school. (See Appendix.) I interviewed the participants in their own workspace so they would feel comfortable and so I could observe how they had defined their

workspace. Each original interview lasted 40-60 minutes with the exception of the reading teacher, as noted above, with whom I met only once for 30 minutes. I interviewed six of the teachers a second time for 40 minutes again in classrooms or offices. I had a few follow-up questions for the administrators and a few teachers that I asked when I saw them informally. I met the retired department chair at a local restaurant of her choosing and spoke with her for 60 minutes. I asked each person to participate in this project, and each had the option to refuse my request and stop at any time he or she desired to do so. As I transcribed the interviews, I assigned each staff member a pseudonym that I used in this study. The following chart lists pertinent data about each of the interview subjects.

Table 1*Teachers and Administrators in the Study*

Name/ pseudonym	Position	Tracks Taught	Years Experience	Years at Carlisle	Additional Responsibilities	Educational Background
Adam	Associate Principal, curriculum	-	9	3	-	BA MA
Alice	12th English, Journalism	Advanced Honors	19	14	Newspaper sponsor	BA
Barbara	10th, 12th English, Acting	Advanced Honors AP	27	11	Play director, Language Arts SAC representative	BA MA PhD
Doug	11th, 12th English	Advanced Honors	36	34	Cross-country and track coach	BA MA
Grace	Retired English Chair	-	42	30	-	BA MA
Heather	9th, 10th English	General Honors	4	4	Freshman English team leader	BA MA
Kate	11th, 12th English	Prep/General Advanced AP	5	5	Junior English team leader	BA MAT
Marcus	10th, 11th English, Debate, history	General Advanced AP	19	12	Debate coach	BA MA
Paulette	Reading	Prep	25	25	-	BA MA
Rick	English Division Head	-	14	8	-	BA MA

The interviews provided the greatest amount of information for this study. Eisner (1998) in his discussion of interviews noted that “it was surprising how much people are willing to say to those whom they believe are really willing to listen” (p. 183). I was amazed at what this faculty revealed to me about their feelings, hopes, concerns and ideas about the Carlisle English

department. I audiotaped all of the formal interviews and then transcribed them the evening of the interview or sent them to a professional to transcribe in the next few days. During the interview, I also took notes of my impressions, questions, and thoughts as I was speaking with each person. In the evening, I reread my notes and added more thoughts and impressions. I printed the text of each interview on a different color. The color-coding of the printed interviews helped me organize the information as I pulled pages from different interviews to read and compare ideas. In a few cases, I informally met with teachers when I needed clarification of various points they had made. In one case, Marcus sent me a clarifying email explaining his ideas about the importance of literature in his life.

Observations and curriculum artifacts. Gathering the written curriculum material was a simple process. Rick, the division head, gave me a copy of the department's curriculum guide. In it were the district's general course outline, the list of required or suggested literature for each grade level and each track if there were differences at the grade level, decisions from the Language Arts SAC (Subject Area Committee), and the Protected Novels List. Also there were a few sample lessons. On the website, I found grade level goals structured around the Illinois State standards. Most of the materials in the printed curriculum guide were on the website. The reading teacher Paulette gave me materials for SIM (Strategic Instruction Model from the University of Kansas), the reading program the school used in 9th grade, including a copy of the hand-outs the teachers used for the reading program, a booklet with the questions, the program guide, and the materials the school had created to record scores. Heather, a 9th grade teacher, gave me copies of the reading questions that she was generating for other freshman novels based on the SIM program.

Finding the actual materials the teachers used in class was more problematic. To sort out all of these different components of what literature the teachers actually used, I copied the table of contents from each textbook and asked each teacher to check what literature they used from those books and to indicate for what tracks they used them. Since the books were already assigned to grade levels, I did not have them mark grade levels unless they were different from the assigned ones. Additionally, there was The Protected Novels List, the literature outside of the textbooks. Those lists, divided by grade level, contained novels, plays, and sets of short stories, essays, and poems that the high school owned. The teachers checked what books they used on those lists and noted if they used them at a different grade level. Finally, they gave me a list of any other materials they used that were not contained on any of these lists or in the textbook. From these lists, I obtained part of the literature they taught. The interviews then gave me more materials that they had not recorded on any other list. Five of the seven teachers made some additions to these lists during their interviews.

I requested a lesson plan from the 16 English teachers on the staff. Later I asked teachers to give me materials they were using for one week since I thought a lesson plan might involve additional work for them. They could either email it to me or put it in a bin in the English Office. Five teachers returned lessons or gave me materials they were currently using in class. I sorted them by grade level and filed them with grade-level curriculum materials. Since all were from interviewees, I also filed another copy of the lesson plan in the interviewee's file.

I spent 16 days over a period of 8 weeks at Carlisle. I started in October and left in December. Since the school used block scheduling, the sophomore, junior, and senior classes completed the year's work by winter break and classes with new students started in January. Freshman classes met every other day for the full year. During those 8 weeks, I interviewed

staff, observed a class for each teacher I interviewed except the reading specialist. I attended two department meetings, one 9th-grade planning session, the senior research presentations, and the fall play. I also spent time in the English workroom talking with staff, and I walked throughout the school looking at displays and listening to students as they moved through the halls or hung out in different classrooms at lunch. After each day I was at Carlisle, I wrote down my observations. These were informal notes that included my impressions and thoughts about what I saw and did that day.

Limitations of the study. In this study, I did not interview Carlisle's principal or the district curriculum director. In talking with Adam, the associate principal for curriculum and instruction, he indicated that the principal had deferred curriculum decisions to him, the associate principal. However interviewing the principal could have offered more perspective on the issues of low test scores and the school's plan to address the needs of struggling students. Also interviewing the district curriculum director could have offered more understanding of the English curriculum and the ways Carlisle's needs fit into the full curriculum.

Data Analysis

I structured the data analysis around the research questions. I started the process of coding the interviews after I had completed three of them. The codes grew out of my daily notes and the history of English education. I was interested in what concepts and ideas influenced the department. I was interested in what ideas from English education influenced the faculty as well as how personal history influenced what they did. My job at this point was to uncover their goals, their thoughts, their concerns, and their understanding of the work they were doing in the English department. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) described the role of the researcher as one in

which a person defined and focused the inquiry process by the relationship that the researcher developed with the subjects because the researcher both witnessed the work of the subject and interpreted it. The act of giving meaning to the research started with my coding of the information and then finding themes within it. I returned to the process of finding themes many times after the coding process. New themes emerged as I put ideas together in different ways as I redesigned and reconfigured the information.

Question 1: Literature selection. In Question One, I was seeking to understand both what materials Carlisle used as well as what materials they had available to them. I wanted to understand the limitations the department had in choosing literature as well as what limitations the department and faculty placed on the ways they chose the literature. In this process, I wanted to answer the following questions: What literature did Carlisle have available to them? What criteria did they use in selecting the literature? Why did they select certain pieces?

In understanding what materials Carlisle had available to them, I used the book lists from the curriculum that the division had given me as well as the table of contents from the textbooks that the school used. The teachers had marked a photocopy of the table of contents from each textbook with what works they used for what track and they marked the Protected Novels List with what materials they used. Later I marked these lists with what were required materials for each level. From those materials along with the interviews from the teachers, I was able to assemble what the teachers actually used in their classes.

In sorting all of the information about the Carlisle literature program, I organized all of these materials by grade level with subgroups for each ability level. I noted any department or district required material and noted if the teachers used it or not. I also had a file for each interviewee. I highlighted all of the interview material that dealt with literature selection and

coded that material with “grade level designations,” “deviations from the district or department curriculum,” “subversive acts by teachers,” “district requirements,” “department requirements,” “teacher fear,” “age of teachers,” “teacher background,” and “lock-step structure.” I created a set of notes that led to the themes that were emerging out of these materials. These themes included “ambiguous expectations,” “circumventing the assigned materials,” and “traditional nature of the choices.” From this information, I then began to understand the literature requirements at Carlisle and why the school had chosen certain literature. Later when I returned to these materials after completing the interviews, I noted other themes such as “sameness of materials 15 years before,” “insensitivity to African Americans,” “the underuse of the new textbook,” and “reasons for no Latino literature.” I also noted the tension between the administration and its desire for a lockstep curriculum and the teachers’ desire for control. Out of that tension came the theme of “teacher rebellion and subversion.” Finally I coded materials by “1990s materials,” “2000+ materials,” and “before 1990 materials.”

In assessing what criteria the English department used in selecting the literature and why the department chose certain literature, the themes from the coding led me to consider the teacher concerns about using Latino literature. I also noted the absence of discussing any concern for student needs in all of the interviews. Issues of age of the staff and experience also came from the research. With greater attention to the data, I noted that differences could have come from tenure status, not necessarily age. The tension between the division head’s agenda and the teachers’ agenda became apparent. The teachers’ strong adherence to the old department chair’s ideas was important. Contrasting the old chair’s ideas to the new division head’s led me to considering issues of leadership style and knowledge of current research.

Question 2: The decision-making process. In considering the decision-making process, I asked the following questions: How were decisions made about what literature teachers used and at what levels? What were the criteria for choosing a text? What motivated those decisions? There were three levels to understand: the district level, the department level, and the teacher level. To understand the district level and its decision process, I interviewed the assistant principal in charge of curriculum and instruction and Barbara, the department representative to the district Subject Area Committee (SAC). I also interviewed Rick, the English division head, but much of his focus was on the changes he was bringing to the department. I also reviewed the district and department materials on the website. There were a few units of work for each grade level that SAC had developed and that were on the district and department websites for teachers. The interviews with the assistant principal in charge of curriculum, the division head, and Barbara clarified the district standards. I also reviewed the curriculum materials online. I coded the information from each of the interviews by grade level (9th, 10th, 11th and 12th) and district expectations. Other codes included “influence of canon,” “political influences,” “cultural influences,” and “student needs.” I used these codes since they reflected the historical trends common in English education. I also noted any differences among the three levels that came out in the interviews and coded them as well. Those codes included “deviations by grade 9 or 10 or 11 or 12,” “exceptions to the district curriculum,” and “exceptions to the department curriculum.” Themes that emerged from this work included “strong adherence to past work,” “resistance to change,” “resistance to Latino interests,” “centrality of certain pieces of literature,” “impact of testing,” and “separation among ages of staff.” As I revisited this material, I noted other themes surrounding leadership issues such as “narrow understanding of reading

instruction,” “belief in data-driven instruction,” “freedom to choose materials,” and “rigidity of freshman choices.”

The interviews with the teachers helped me determine how they decided what to teach. I was interested in what motivated their choices and asked them questions that dealt with their interest in the cultural backgrounds of their students, their politics, their personal interests, and background. The interviews also offered a perspective on the freedom that the teachers had in deciding what to teach and their attitudes toward that freedom. The interviews with the two administrators offered their perspectives on that freedom and the responsibilities of the school for the underachieving population at the school. I highlighted the portions that dealt with literature selection and then coded them with “adherence to the canon,” “political interest,” “cultural interest,” “racial interest,” “teacher attitudes toward race/Latinos,” and “teacher personal interests and needs.” I noted that the choice of materials grew out of the teachers’ past experience with the literature and the individual teacher’s needs. The personal needs of the teachers combined with the historical influences. What emerged as themes were the omissions such as the “lack of continuity and agreement among the staff,” “the resistance to any structuring of the curriculum,” and “curricular needs centered on Anglo-Saxon values.” Later I added these themes: “reading instruction beyond freshman year,” “desire for content structure like AP,” and “leadership only around testing.”

Finally, I looked at the teacher decisions and how they actually arrived at what they did in their classrooms. I coded the materials for the separate grade levels. In reading what the teachers said about each grade level and looking at lesson plans, I was able to code that material with “political interests,” “cultural interests,” “adherence to the canon,” “teachers’ personal needs,” and “interests in their students.” Both agreement and conflict created pressure points in

the curriculum decisions. The following themes emerged from this data: “community not making decisions together,” “little teacher evaluation in terms of student achievement,” “resistance to demands of new administrative structure,” “resentment around changing protocols and expectations,” “subversive movement to resist changes,” and “continued use of old literature and lessons.” In analyzing the data, I was searching for ways those changing protocols and expectations influenced the teachers’ decision regarding literature.

Question 3: Patterns of change in the curriculum. In assessing any patterns of change, I used the following questions: What was the pattern of change, if any, in the curriculum? How could its dynamics be described? I wanted to understand if there had been any changes in attitude, action or the potential for change. I also needed to assess the direction of that change. I wanted to assess what motivated the changes or the lack of change that I had found. As I looked for possible patterns of change, I contrasted the themes that emerged from the data to the history of this English literature program. For this analysis, I coded the interview with the former English department chair, Grace, and looked at the themes that emerged from that interview and the themes that had come out of faculty interviews and my interview with the two administrators. Those themes included “hierarchy of teachers with experience and status,” “sameness of structure and literature,” “impact of AP literature lists,” “impact of NCLB,” “freedom to choose literature for each class,” “impact of district testing,” and “impact of money.” Later after I had reviewed the history of English education, I focused on the 1980s to the present and the trends in those times. What emerged from that review were the themes: “respect for former chair’s ideas,” “desire for staff respect,” “manipulation of younger staff,” “fear of change,” and “resentment toward division head.” Those themes helped me understand the nature of change

and its superficial nature. There were changes in protocols and activities, but there were no substantive or attitudinal changes.

Conclusion

Carlisle was an excellent site for this study because it had experienced significant demographic changes in the past 15 years and was concerned about the impact of these changes. When I requested this study, the district office originally limited my time at the school to 3 weeks. The assistant principal and the division head let the teachers determine what times worked best for them and did not pressure me to leave until I had gathered the data that I needed. The school was generous with its time, and I had enough to complete this study.

The interviews offered information to give me multiple perspectives on Carlisle's literature program. Among the staff, I had representatives from different age groups and different levels of experience. There also was a range of teachers who agreed with the changes the school was making as well as those who did not. The wide range of faculty experience and perspective gave me many different points of view to analyze and interpret. Interviewing just over one third of the English faculty gave me a representative picture of the department. I had access to older teachers and even one retired teacher who explained the past practices at the school. I also had teachers describing what changes they were experiencing and their comfort with them. I often was amazed at how forthright they were in discussing the issues at Carlisle.

My observations at the school gave me an understanding of the tone of the school and its workings. Interviewing the teachers in their classrooms and observing one class per teacher helped me visualize what they did and why they did it. The lessons that they gave me gave me provided another picture of their work. I was able to verify that what they said was also what they did. Also the lessons gave me a deeper understanding of what they valued and how they

passed that onto their students. The district curriculum materials were very general and became meaningful to me only when teachers discussed how they used them or did not use them in their work. My observations and the curriculum artifacts were a way of verifying and deepening the insights gleaned from the interviews.

Using historical voices to analyze the data offered me a way to understand the literature curriculum and its influences. The interviews yielded thoughtful and forthright comments from the participants. I was able to get a comprehensive understanding of the literature curriculum and the reasons for the different choices of literature as well as identify some of the conflicting forces that operated as the school made those choices. The four historical voices (canon centered, political centered, cultural centered, and student centered) offered a framework to analyze the data. I was also able to understand how some current ideas regarding literature instruction influenced the school. I had effective data and an analytical framework that worked well for this study.

Chapter Four

Findings

The first time I came to Carlisle High School I left a four-lane road and entered a residential section of town. For two blocks, the small square houses repeated themselves one after another differing only with the color of the siding or the number of cars in the driveway. On two of the houses in that row were yellow signs that read “AUCTION” and a date. The school was an insert in the patchwork pattern of homes from the 1950s. I drove up a lane that separated the school from the community and parked on a hill that looked down upon many of the houses in the neighborhood. Upon entering the 1960s school building, my first impression of Carlisle was how clean and friendly the building was. From the moment I checked in at the visitor’s station, I noted how courteous and caring the staff and students were. The security officer at the check-in station called the division head to notify him I was coming. The officer also flagged down a student to help me find my way through the building. As I came back again and again over an 8-week period, students held the door for me, asked if I knew where I was going, and often said hello. The hallways and bathrooms were immaculate. I never saw graffiti, and I saw no altercations in the hallways. There was very little litter in the hallways even at the end of the day, and there were no students loitering in the hallways or bathrooms. Instead there were full waste barrels throughout the school.

I passed by classes filled with 20-45 students who were quiet and gave the appearance that they were attentive. According to the English division head, the reading classes and the general English classes were made up of 24 or, if possible, fewer students. Many of the other English classes approached 40 students in number and some of these even had up to 43 students. Since the school used block scheduling, teachers only taught three classes per day. In one school

year, teachers could see over 200 students since classes were condensed into 18 weeks and teachers taught six total classes, three completed in a half year.

Among the faculty, there was a focused atmosphere of hard work and discipline. In the 8 weeks that I visited Carlisle, I spent part of my time in the English workroom. Rarely did I see the teachers relaxing or talking. Instead I saw them conferencing with students, grading, or planning in small curriculum groups. Only once did I hear them talking about weekend plans at the end of the day on Friday. These conditions remained constant throughout all of my visits.

One of my first interviews was with Adam, the associate principal for curriculum and instruction. When I entered his office, I noticed all of the charts and graphs on his desk, on the computer, and on the bulletin boards around the room. Many of them plotted the achievement level of the school for the past 15 years. I asked him about the changes that he was studying. He explained:

We [the faculty] have talked at great length over the last couple of years about this Pandora's box that we have opened. Depending on the day, sometimes we call it a chasm, sometimes an abyss. This is our 7th year of not having met AYP [Adequate Yearly Progress]. Some days I don't know what to make of it. We knew that we weren't meeting the needs of a significant number of kids.

Before coming to Carlisle, he had worked as a principal for a charter school whose mission was dropout retrieval. Carlisle, like his last job, asked him to understand the complexity of student underachievement and to find ways to lead the staff to help students achieve academically.

Adam described some of the staff's past ideas about the underachieving populations at Carlisle:

There wasn't a systemic or systematic approach to figuring out what was the problem and what could be done about it. Conventional wisdom said our problem is our kids that can't speak English, and we have an ESL program so they need to pull themselves up by the bootstrap. If they can't figure out how to read and write or learn our language, then that is their problem. We really can't do anything more for the problem. I think that is how they have thought.

In reality this Hispanic population is growing here, but they are not new immigrants. So this conventional wisdom I mentioned, this thought that it is really the problem of the Hispanics, is not the case.

Adam explained that he needed to change the misconceptions that the staff and community had about the causes of poor student performance. He articulated his goal for the faculty, especially the English Department staff, since they dealt with reading and writing issues:

We have a teaching core that is almost entirely White, almost entirely middle or upper middle class. The majority of them remember what this place was like before the influx of non-White students and before the influx of students of poverty and before the community had changed to the extent that more kids who previously weren't living in impoverished households now suddenly are.

I don't know that our faculty and staff have figured out how to deal with that yet. They have not been able to change their expectations of students and student learning.

Adam presented the issues that he believed were limiting the progress at Carlisle. He explained that he had come to Carlisle to find ways to impact the low achievement of many of school's students. What impressed me about Adam was his deep concern for the students at Carlisle. Before being appointed associate principal for curriculum and instruction, he had worked as Freshman Team Coordinator, a job in which he facilitated ways to help underachieving freshman find success in high school. He had worked with the freshman families as well as the teachers and students. When I saw him in his office, the names and achievement numbers of Carlisle surrounded him. He talked to me about these students and their families. He had a deep concern for their progress and frustration that there was still so much underachievement. Adam's deep concern for the achievement of the students was a prominent image as I turned my attention to the literature program and its modifications to meet the needs of all the students at Carlisle and especially the underachieving ones.

The Literature Program at Carlisle

In understanding the literature curriculum at Carlisle, it was necessary to know what materials the school had available to it, who decided what literature the department used, and what process they used in choosing literature materials. Since Carlisle was one high school among three in the district, there was an overarching district curriculum in addition to Carlisle's application of that curriculum at the department level. The district plan included the board-approved materials that all the schools could use. The Carlisle departmental plan created the specific program from those materials.

The district program. The district literature program provided the framework that all schools in the district used to tailor its literature curriculum according to its needs. Adam, Rick (the English division head), and Barbara (an English teacher) all explained different aspects of the district program. Two years before this study, the English Subject Area Committee (SAC) had chosen new themes for the different high school grade levels and new textbooks to correspond to those themes. Barbara was Carlisle's representative to the SAC, and she explained the committee's choices that the school board later confirmed.

Table 2 is a summary of the district English curriculum. These books were available to all schools in the district. The Protected Novels List was a grade-by-grade set of books that could be used in addition to the grade-level textbook. The teachers could choose literature from the textbook and literature from the Protected Novels List to use in their classroom. Barbara explained that SAC had chosen these textbooks because each matched the theme that the committee had chosen for that grade level. The committee broke down the literature selections by grade level and theme on the Protected Novels List so that the teachers would not choose books that others had taught at a different grade level. In the following chart, I categorized the

books on the Protected Novels List by ethnic and racial groups rather than present them as grade level lists that the school used. The schools and the curriculum committee could move the books from one grade level to another with permission from the English Subject Area Committee (the district planning committee comprised of teachers and administrators from all of the schools).

Table 2

District Literature Program

Textbooks

- Grade 9: *Holt Elements of Literature Third Course* (theme: Introduction to High School)
Grade 10: *Holt Elements of World Literature* (theme: World Literature)
Grade 11: *Holt Elements of Literature Fifth Course* (theme: American Literature)
Grade 12: *McDougal/ Little The Language of British Literature* (theme: British Literature)

Protected Novels List (reconfigured by racial and ethnic groups rather than by grade levels)

White American Literature:

**A Day No Pigs Would Die; The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; Alas, Babylon; Angle of Repose; Animal Dreams; Arsenic and Old Lace; *As I Lay Dying; The Awakening; Bean Trees; Billy Budd; The Catcher in the Rye; The Chosen; The Crucible; The Crying of Lot 49; Death of a Salesman; Fahrenheit 451; The Grapes of Wrath; Great Tales and Poems of Poe; The Hot Zone; In Cold Blood; Inherit the Wind; *Into the Wild; Journey of the Sparrows; The Jungle; Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time; The Lovely Bones; The Martian Chronicles; Moby Dick; My Antonia; The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail; *Of Mice and Men; The Old Man and the Sea; One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest; The Pearl; A Perfect Snow; The Red Badge of Courage; The Scarlet Letter; The Shawshank Redemption; *The Secret Life of Bees; A Separate Peace; Sister Carrie; Slaughterhouse Five; The Sound and the Fury; A Tidewater Morning; The Things They Carried; *To Kill a Mockingbird; The Tortilla Curtain*

Table 2 (cont.)

Minority American Literature:

*Beloved; Black Boy; Ceremony; The Color Purple; The House on Mango Street; I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings; The Joy Luck Club; Kindred; *The Kite Runner; A Lesson Before Dying; Of Beetles and Angels; Native Son; A Raisin in the Sun; Woman Warrior*

British and Irish Literature:

*1984; Animal Farm; Alive; And Then There Were None; The Barretts of Wimpole Street; Brave New World; The Canterbury Tales; The Curious Incident of Dog in the Night Time; David Copperfield; Emma; Frankenstein; Great Expectations; Jane Eyre; Kim; Lord of the Flies; A Man for All Seasons; The Mayor of Casterbridge; *A Midsummer Night's Dream; Much Ado About Nothing; Oedipus Rex; The Picture of Dorian Gray; Pride and Prejudice; Pygmalion; *Romeo and Juliet; Shakespeare's Plays and Poems; Silas Marner; A Tale of Two Cities; The Taming of the Shrew; Tess of the D'Urbervilles; To the Lighthouse; Tom Jones; The Vicar of Wakefield; Wuthering Heights*

European Literature:

All Quiet on the Western Front; Antigone; Candide; Cyrano De Bergerac; A Doll's House; Medea; The Metamorphosis

Other Literature:

*100 Years of Solitude; Cry the Beloved Country; The Handmaid's Tale; The Inheritance of Loss; Like Water for Chocolate; The Miracle of Water; *Things Fall Apart*

* required reading at Carlisle

The textbooks contained a broad range of materials. The freshman textbook focused on understanding basic literary elements such as analyzing plot, setting, characterization, and theme. There were sections on understanding the narrator's voices as well as separating main ideas from

supporting details. The literary selections represented a wide range of cultures including major works by American authors from White, African American, Mexican-American, and American Indian backgrounds and some British, French, Indian, Greek, Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese authors. The sophomore text with the theme “World Literature” followed a chronological development that included this progression: Ancient Middle Eastern literature; Greek and Roman literature; Literature of India, China, and Japan; Literature of Africa and the Middle East; European Literature from the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment; European Literature in the 19th Century; and Modern World Literature including selections from South and Central America, Africa, Asia, Europe, Great Britain, and the United States. The junior text focused on American Literature. It contained a chronological development of US literature with inserts of literature from Canada, Central and South America. It also had comparison pieces with literature from other world cultures. The senior text on British Literature followed a chronological development of British literature starting with the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods and ending with current time. There were some contrasting sections in the later time periods that included literature from other cultures. Pieces from now former British colonies appeared in the different time periods. All four textbooks included a wide range of genres including poetry, short stories, essays, memoirs, and plays as well as excerpts from novels. In the freshman text, there was a section on computer games as literature.

All of the textbooks provided questions after the reading selections that led the students to analyze the literature based on its content, style, and history. The teachers’ guides offered additional information about the literature as well as suggesting activities for the classes to do as they studied it. In addition, there were suggested writing activities that focused on close reading of text similar to New Criticism analysis as well as Reader Response. For an example of an

activity that demands close reading of the text that is similar to the analysis typical of New Criticism, the teacher's edition (Beers & Lee, 2007) suggests that students studying Chapter 1 of Genesis do a close reading of the text and note the impact of the repetition of the phrases "And God said. . .and it is so" and "God saw that it was good." This example follows the pattern of activities for other pieces of literature in the textbook that require the student to analyze the impact of some stylistic device the author has employed and to comment on its impact on the reader's view of the literature. For many of the literary texts in the Holt textbooks, there are Reader Response assignments called "Quickwrite" that ask the student to recall something from their life and relate it to the literature. One of these activities was for the students to write down their feelings of envy, read Maupassant's "The Necklace," and then based on their experiences explain if the story portrayed envy accurately.

As an English teacher, what impressed me were the range of cultures represented in all of the textbooks and the range of reading ability of the selections. The choice of textbooks reflected the historical reliance on close literary analysis as the way to access a text. In all the textbooks, there was a full range of genres. There were short pieces and longer ones. All had age-appropriate content and language. There were also pieces that had simpler language but complex ideas. The general students could access these materials with some help, and these materials had the capacity to challenge their thinking. My one concern was that the textbooks had significantly more literature from Western culture, but there were limited selections from other regions.

The Protected Novels List, a list that the district schools had used since the 1980s was composed mainly of the works by White male writers. The senior section had 31 books and only 1 non-White author from India and 6 female authors. The junior list had 13 non-White authors

and 9 female writers. The sophomore list had 2 African and Asian authors but no Latinos or African Americans and only 2 women. The freshman list had only 1 non-White author and 3 women. Out of the whole list of 101 books, there were only 22 that were published after 1970. Considering that the majority of the population at Carlisle was Latino, I would have expected that the school would have included some new literature from Central and South American authors as well as some Latino and Caribbean authors. Carlisle had added literature to this list in the past 5 years, but none of those pieces were from authors from those groups.

The literature on the list had many limitations. My first concern was that the literature choices did not show sensitivity to the cultural needs of the struggling students. *The House on Mango Street* was the only choice that had Latino characters. Many of the commonly used books had African American characters seen through a White character's perspective (e.g. *The Secret Life of Bees* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*). The plots in those books dealt with Whites attempting to understand the racial problems that African Americans faced. The only book by a contemporary African American author, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, was for AP English classes only. Another cultural consideration was how effectively these texts allowed the students to reflect on meaningful social experiences in adolescent lives. Allowing this kind of reflection often encourages reluctant readers to engage in reading (Alvermann & Heron, 2001). There were novels and plays on The Protected Novels List that provide that kind of opportunity, but the best sources was the textbooks that have many short, appealing selections directed at adolescent issues. A second issue was the age appropriateness of some of the selections. One of the pieces that was required for general freshman was a young adult book, *A Day No Pigs Would Die*. This book whose protagonist is a 13-year old boy has a target audience of upper elementary or junior high students, not high school. Additionally, its story had little complexity. A third issue was

the age of the books. The students often needed to understand the historical framework of the piece for it to make sense or possibly have relevance to them. White men wrote most of the books more than 40 years ago. A fourth issue was the narrow understanding of what constituted literature. This literature curriculum did not bridge the gap between student literacy practices and the literature they study in class.

The department program. Carlisle had the opportunity to modify and tailor the district expectations to meet the needs of its population. Adam described the directives he gave the English Department as they began to restructure its program 2 years ago:

We are all comfortable with doing what we need to do for our kids. There is a desire in the district for the three high school buildings to be the same, but they can't be. Fifty-one percent of our kids are on free and reduced lunch, 12% of the kids in the other two buildings are. Forty-five percent of our kids are White, 95% of the kids in the other two buildings are White. We are just a different building.

Adam had given Rick and the English department the freedom to shape Carlisle's English curriculum to meet its needs. The following is a description of the literature curriculum that the English faculty had been working to create in the two years before this study. The department considered the freshman program complete, and at the time of this study, the school was addressing the structure of the sophomore program. I based my findings on my interviews with Rick and six English teachers.

The teachers met in grade-level teams every other Monday morning for 85 minutes in meetings called Monday Late Starts, and the students had shortened classes and a late start. I observed two Monday Late Start Meetings. In talking with Rick and English teachers, Barbara and Heather, I learned what they had done in these meetings in the past. The year before I was at Carlisle, the teachers had met in grade-level groups called Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and in department meetings to decide what literature to use as common texts for all

students as well as the required texts for each track and grade level. The department had already finished planning the freshman year and had made some decisions for the other three grade levels. The year of this study the full faculty meetings were focusing on the sophomore course with the purpose of planning its curriculum. At the same time, the PLCs were planning teaching units for the courses they taught to address the needs of struggling readers and writers. Usually, the Monday Late Start divided the 85 minutes equally between these two activities.

Table 3 shows Carlisle's literature program that will continue to change as the teachers further solidify the curriculum for grades 10, 11, and 12. Freshman year most teachers did not use the new textbook unless they used some of the essays found in it. Some sophomore teachers used the Greek and Ancient World Literature units in the new 10th grade textbook, but many depended on old textbooks and Greek mythology anthologies that the school also owned. Junior year teachers used the new textbook for *The Crucible* and the Harlem Renaissance Unit if they taught them. The senior teachers did not use the new textbook except for the Shakespeare unit. Instead they used older textbooks and materials from the Protected Novels List.

Table 3*Carlisle English Department Literature Program*

Grade	Required Text/Unit	Commonly Taught Text/Unit
9th	Quarter One: Essay (Honors/Advanced) SIM Reading Program (General) Quarter Two: <i>Animal Farm</i> (Honors) <i>The Secret Life of Bees</i> (Advanced) <i>A Day No Pig Would Die</i> (General) Quarter Three: <i>To Kill Mockingbird</i> (All Levels) Quarter Four: <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (All Levels)	
10th	Greek Mythology <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> (All levels) <i>Things Fall Apart</i> (Honors) <i>The Kite Runner</i> (Honor/Advanced) <i>Of Beetles and Angels</i> (Advanced/General)	Greek Literature: <i>Antigone</i> <i>Medea</i> <i>Oedipus Rex</i>
11th	<i>Of Mice and Men</i> (All Levels) <i>Into the Wild</i> (All Levels) AP Language and Composition (College Board Approved)	Early American Literature <i>The Crucible</i> Transcendentalism Unit Harlem Renaissance Unit Novel Unit (Choose One): <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> <i>Black Boy</i> <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> <i>The Great Gatsby</i> <i>The House on Mango Street</i> <i>Native Son</i>
12th	Shakespeare (Choose One): <i>Hamlet</i> <i>Henry V</i> <i>Macbeth</i> <i>Othello</i> Essay Unit AP Literature and Composition (College Board Approval)	The Canterbury Tales <i>Beowulf</i> Novel Unit: <i>1984</i> <i>Brave New World</i> <i>Fahrenheit 451</i>

As I consider the literature that Carlisle students were studying, I wondered how a Mexican-American girl who spoke English and Spanish and who had been labeled as a poor reader would feel walking into an English class everyday to study this curriculum. First of all, had she been labeled a “poor reader,” that label would have the power to limit her ability to read (Alvermann, 2001). When she first came to class, academic reading probably had not been important to her. The program had no interventions that suggested ways to interest students like this hypothetical Mexican-American girl in academic reading. The program assumed that the student lacked reading skills. There would be no ways to uncover what non-academic reading skills she might have possessed so she could build on them (Appleman, 2010; Maher, 2001). Instead Carlisle had one quarter of pre-packaged reading instruction with short passages written at different grade levels that were designed to help students like this hypothetical Mexican-American girl to gain skills to test at a higher reading level. The reading curriculum did not require them to read anything other than these reading exercises nor was there any discussion of these readings or any written assignments.

As I reviewed the list of literature for all 4 years, I found little that would appeal to her culturally, but she might find the universal themes in the books interesting. Some of the books dealt with issues that teens faced. Books like *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Secret Life of Bees*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *The Crucible* have major teenage characters and address the issues of growing up. Except for *The Secret Life of Bees*, *The Kite Runner*, *Of Beetles and Angels*, and *Into the Wild*, all of the books were more than 50 years old. All were set outside the world of Carlisle’s students. None were about my hypothetical student’s Mexican culture or heritage. Most had elegant prose with multiple layers of meanings with images from Anglo-Saxon and other European cultures.

There were no pieces of literature that reflected other kinds of reading except school reading. Blogs, other social media, email, computer games, magazines, and text messages had no place in the reading program or literature list. There was no contemporary young adult literature. Fantasy, teen romance, and graphic novels had no place on that list. There was no place for this hypothetical student to reveal what she read independently because none of the pieces on the list resembled what she might have been reading outside of class.

If I were a Mexican-American girl entering a general freshman reading class at Carlisle, I would feel confined in a world that was not my own. There was nothing in that literature that would make me comfortable encountering it as such a student. I would feel demeaned because of my lack of academic reading skills and angry that none of my skills gave me any status in that class. I might do the work, but none of my energy or spirit would become a part of it.

In contrast, if I were a White, middle class student, I would not realize that the literature I was studying kept me boxed in the world of my community's ideas. There would be no chance for me to understand the global community beyond my world (Luke, 2004). The kinds of reading that truly would engage me such as texting friends, communicating on a social network, or reading blogs would have no place in school. School would be a place that I tolerated before I went back to things that mattered to me.

The texts on this list limited the world of all Carlisle students to a narrow focus on Anglo-Saxon and European ideals and concepts. Although there is a journey to Afghanistan in *The Kite Runner* and a journey from Ethiopia to Sudan in *Of Beetles and Angels*, both books return the characters to the US. None of the texts on the list would help the students leave the world they know. None of the choices would bridge the unknown between the many cultures in the school and the world beyond (Brown, 2007). There was a narrow, carefully defined space in

those texts that the teachers know well, and they welcome the students into the confines of that world.

Summary. Adam had encouraged the English department to reshape the district curriculum to fit the needs of Carlisle. He worried that the teachers had not understood the community as it had changed. The Anglocentric curriculum demonstrated that the teachers did not grasp the needs of the new populations in the school, but also they did not understand the needs of the White students in the global community. There was no place for the literature that technology had brought into US culture in the past 30 years. As I looked over the Carlisle selections, I noted that most of them were books I had studied in high school, and I wondered if they were the same books that the faculty had studied as well.

The Decision-Making Process

The faculty and administration had many literature choices from which to choose. Adam, Carlisle's curriculum director, had released the department from the district structure. The teachers could choose any available materials that they believed would work. Given that freedom, what motivated the faculty to choose certain texts? What in the school made the faculty make certain choices? What in the teachers' experiences influenced their choices? What in the history of the department influenced their decisions?

At the time of this study, Carlisle was making many changes in its curriculum and administrative staff. Two years previous to this study, Carlisle replaced the English chair with an English division head. According to Grace, the former chair at Carlisle, the English chair had no oversight of teachers and their performance. Only the associate principal and the principal had that responsibility. The chair organized the teaching schedule and ordered books. Also that person facilitated the creation of new curriculum and assisted new teachers as they eased into the

community. The chair taught the same teaching load as the teachers and received a stipend for that position. In contrast to the English chair, the new division head directly supervised the teachers, evaluated their progress, and did not teach. According to Adam, this person was also responsible for the creation of new curriculum that would meet the needs of the low-achieving students, and this person would supervise the staff to facilitate its implementation. Rick, a Dominican-American, filled that position two years before this study after he had completed an administrative internship at a neighboring district. Carlisle was his first job as a division head.

Carlisle's two new administrators, Rick and Adam, had the responsibility of shaping a curriculum to meet the needs of a changing population at Carlisle and to meet the increasing demands that NCLB had put upon the school since it had been failing to meet AYP for the past 7 years. As Carlisle had begun to craft changes in its literature curriculum, many factors influenced that process. The first involved the pressure that the administration had been placing on the teachers.

Administrative pressure. The first factor influencing the school was administrative pressure on the faculty. The division head, Rick, had been instrumental in starting the process of restructuring the English curriculum. In his own words, he described what he wanted in the program and his motives in structuring the program a certain way:

Rick: Let's talk about the core for a minute, freshman through junior year. I think the ultimate structure or the ultimate goal is to increase the complexity of literature from freshman year to senior year. Freshman year, I think that happens pretty tightly so they are reading short non-fiction pieces to start off, and then they are moving into a shorter novel with pretty straightforward language. Moving into the third term everyone's doing the same thing, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and fourth term is *Romeo and Juliet*. When I came here, people taught any of those whenever they wanted, and the non-fiction component did not exist.

We did some restructuring of that curriculum so that it did increase in complexity, and we asked teachers what they thought was the most complex, and they said *Romeo and Juliet*, then *To Kill a Mockingbird* so we put them in that order and

added the straight-forward shorter novels and the non-fiction pieces in the beginning of the year. Moving into sophomore year, it is a whole lot of ancient material so it does increase in complexity, *The Odyssey*, *Medea*, those sorts of things. It is definitely more challenging, more complex, more figurative.

Later in my conversation with Rick, I asked him about the big concepts that he wanted the to incorporate into the curriculum. The following was our discussion:

Elizabeth: Were there big concepts that each level was trying to get at with literature?

Rick: No, there wasn't.

Elizabeth: Is there now?

Rick: Yes, which is good. When Adam and I and the other division heads came, we would use the acronym CRS for College Readiness Standards. There was a glazed look on people's eyes. They had never heard that term.

The state was still using at that point the Illinois State Standards from 1997 and then they had more recently adopted the Illinois Assessment Framework. Even that isn't exactly what is on the ACT. So when we started here and started using that terminology and started talking to people about College Readiness Standards, it was a bit of an awakening because they hadn't really dug down into those.

Right now it is far more clearly articulated what is the expectation and what they need to know when they are done. When you are teaching English literature, you need to be think about main ideas, supporting detail, cause and effect, comparative relationships, conclusions, generalization, meaning of words. This framework was not what most teachers thought about or taught. Instead it was more about lit crit and stuff that you and I did in our college.

Elizabeth: So really if I am hearing you right, it sounds like you are getting into reading instruction.

Rick: Exactly.

Elizabeth: And that really is more the focus rather than a breakdown of literature as an artistic piece.

Rick: Exactly. Some of the work we have done around that would really be annotating and doing close readings of text, doing reading journals. Really working with students to be able to go back to the texts to say this is what the text says so this now is what I am drawing as a conclusion based on this and then in addition to that.

Rick's focus was on reading and test preparation. He pushed the teachers to choose material that they knew and that the school owned. He was not concerned with the works as literature. He was interested in using the literature to teach reading fundamentals. He saw reading as a set of skills to learn. He did not express an understand of reading as a complicated process that required many ways of addressing the reading issues with the students and involving them in the process (Luke, 1998).

He spoke of the "increasing complexity of the work." He did not talk about what he wanted the students to understand from these pieces of literature. He chose a linear progression of difficulty of materials. He did not talk about ways to engage the students in the process of reading (Moje, 2000). He wanted the classroom instruction to prepare the students for the PSAE. In doing that kind of work, he implied that he wanted quantifiable goals and results. He was not interested in literature and its art. He was not interested in the reading process. He wanted higher reading test scores.

Adam, the associate principal for curriculum and instruction and Rick's supervisor, noted that as Rick had implemented these changes, "there were two camps." He also noted "that department is in some ways so much farther behind all the rest of the departments in terms of coming together as a unit, as a group, in terms of embracing a common vision." As Rick had implemented changes in the curriculum including standardizing the literature for each grade level, requiring some texts for 3 of the 4 years, and relying on standardized test data to evaluate the student performance, many of the teachers had resisted.

Barbara talked about how she selected books when I asked her about the process:

Mostly I pick books that I love and I get around it somehow. It is becoming problematical outside of AP because there is a movement from above to put people in lockstep and have everybody teaching the same thing at the same time

which I am highly resistant to. So far I have been able to just go my own way. I don't know how much longer I will be able to do that.

She continued to choose her own materials, teach on her own timeline, and focus on literary analysis as a way to teach reading skills. She believed:

Students should be given agency to discover what they need to discover in what they are reading as opposed to my imposing on them what they should get out of what they read. Giving them experiences and challenges and allowing them the opportunity to rise to those challenges rather than giving them worksheets they fill out that satisfies the standards.

Barbara was openly opposing Rick and his methods. She was tenured, taught AP, senior advanced, and acting. These were not classes that Rick was monitoring closely at the time of this study.

Marcus also talked about his resistance to the changes that were being made. He commented on the process:

I think it is going to be a lot more top down or I think Rick wants it to be that way. I am not sure where those directives are coming from, but there is definitely a shift to having us do the same thing so that when Napoleon comes he can check on what we are doing.

Now part of it is that I don't do what I am supposed to do. That is very honest. The department sort of teases me about it. Imagine that. Nobody is bothering me yet. I think it is coming. It is not here yet. We will see how long this goes.

He openly opposed the changes. He did not teach some of the required books. He taught debate, general sophomores, and AP. Like Barbara, he taught many classes that did not have the curriculum that Rick had pushed to change.

Alice also did not support the testing in the upper grades, and she was concerned about the pressure that it placed on the staff.

I am horrified at the amount of work that is piled on the freshman teachers. We are burning them out. I see teachers come in here [the English Office] and they are not happy to walk in here. You can just see the stress on their faces and she is not even a new teacher. I mean this happens all the time. I don't remember a time when there was so much stress and people breaking down and having to go

to somebody, talk them down from the ledge, that sort of thing. Certainly, I have my moments too. It is the pressures of a curriculum that pedagogically many of us do not agree with. I think it is malpractice. . . . There has been an effort to silence all of us and frankly we are at a point now where we were trying to be heard.

Rick was meeting with significant opposition from tenured teachers. The freshman team composed of non-tenured teachers did not oppose the changes that Rick had initiated. In the freshman PLCs I observed and in my interview with Heather, a freshman teacher, I heard no dissension. The objections came from the tenured staff although the tenured faculty was not directly involved in the changes that Rick had proposed. The tenured teachers I interviewed were concerned with the structuring of the curriculum and the lack of control they would have if they taught in the 9th grade program. They did not want those kinds of changes in the other grade levels. The concerns that Rick had for uniformity of the curriculum came in conflict with the fear that Alice, Barbara, and Marcus expressed about making these kinds of changes. This disagreement created a tense atmosphere in the department.

Students' poor reading levels. Another factor influencing the literature that Carlisle chose was the students' poor reading scores. To remedy the problem, Rick introduced a reading program that the freshman teachers used for one quarter of instruction in an effort to raise the incoming freshmen's reading scores from as low as 3rd grade to at least 7th grade as measured on a standardized test. He also wanted the teachers at other grade levels to focus more on reading and less on literary analysis.

For general freshman, the SIM (Strategic Institute Model) from the University of Kansas had become the key element in Carlisle's quest to raise reading scores. Heather, the freshman team leader, explained the significance of this program. First, she gave me a perspective on what the needs of the freshman teachers were as they confronted the low-achieving students. As a

young teacher with no reading instruction background, she described how she felt when she learned she would teach four sections of general freshman English the year of this study:

Last year when they told me I would have four sections of generals and that a great deal of them would be coming in at the second, third, or fourth grade reading level, I said that I do not know how to teach kids how to read. I need tools. So they—really Paulette [the reading specialist]—got me hooked up with the Strategic Institute Model and told me that they were rolling it out to the classes.

I was trained over the summer. It was a 3-day long training session, and the other teachers were not available so we decided that I would be the guinea pig and that I would try it out first term since I was trained in it.

Heather explained how she changed her teaching materials to use the SIM model:

Before there was always a before-reading activity like an anticipation guide with every set of chapters so there are 13 chapters so we would do two chapters per day. So there is a before-reading activity like an anticipatory set, and during reading activity like ask questions while they read or to make predictions while they read or to make connections while they read and then after reading, there were just questions about the reading. For me they will still be doing the before reading. During reading will be all SIM aligned and post reading will all be SIM aligned.

Truthfully with these students, I could care less what we read, but the fact that we can read is the end goal. For me it is very skills based, and we use the literature to get at the skills.

Heather also explained the differences between teaching honors and general classes since she had both levels:

It is totally different. They [honors] are given outside reading. There are no parallel texts. We don't have a before reading, during reading, and after reading handout. They keep reading logs so while it is skills-based, we are using the literature to get at the literature instead of using the literature to get at the skills. They don't need to know if this is a factual question or clarifying question. Those skills are already embedded in them. It is very independent. For them they would rather me give them a unit, give them an overview, a rubric and set them free. They don't need me whereas with my generals they need more than what I can give.

Heather's explanation of the SIM program established that the reading program gave the non-reading teachers a way to address the reading problems of their students. I observed Heather

and the other freshman teachers in a PLC meeting discussing the use of reading strategies in their classes. Heather was discussing the use of clarifying and factual questions to draw inferences in the text. She had designed a lesson that her class would use when she taught *A Day No Pigs Would Die*. She was animated as she told the other four teachers about her work. The teachers agreed to use her materials when they taught the novel next. The body language of the group indicated that they were comfortable with the materials. They were leaning toward Heather, and each took her materials and put them in their files.

I asked the reading teacher, Paulette, to explain the SIM program to me. Upon asking her why Carlisle had chosen this program, she responded that it “includes short assignments, a review of data [for the teachers and students], students graphing their own progress, and it was scientifically based.” She explained that SIM had numerous modules in its reading program, but Carlisle chose the Inference Strategy since it addressed many of the problems the students were having with the EXPLORE test. Paulette also noted that she wanted to find a way to address the issue of fluency as well. According to Paulette, for students to do well on the PSAE (Prairie State Achievement Exam) and especially the ACT portion of it, they had to read at least 200 words per minute and more than half of Carlisle’s freshman read fewer than 150 words per minute. The Prairie State Achievement Exam is the standardized test that Illinois school uses to evaluate the progress of students junior year and those results determine if a school makes AYP (adequate yearly progress) based on NCLB federal standards. At the time of this study, Carlisle had not met AYP for the past 7 years and was very concerned about changing that trend. According to Rick, the division head, the English department has been focusing on the reading and language arts portions of the PSAE which are contained in the ACT part of the exam.

I observed one of Heather's classes as she used the SIM materials. There was a file in the front of the room with the SIM materials divided by grade level. Each student had a folder of his or her own work. They got their folder from the teacher at the beginning of the period. It had in it the SIM prepared materials they were to use that day. When a student finished a packet, they came to the teacher and discussed what they had done. The students worked the whole 85 minutes on the work. There was little noise. Occasionally, a student would ask another for a pen or pencil. One student asked Heather a question. They moved to the box of materials to get the next activity. The students were doing what Heather asked them to do. The students did not express any excitement about the work, but they completed their assigned tasks. At the end of the period, none of them talked about what they had done. One commented on her make-up, and another asked about lunch.

The instructions on the materials asked the students to read a short passage and find factual information. Some of the answers were found directly in the text. Others asked the students to put two and in more complex reading selections as many as four or five pieces of information together to draw some conclusions. The modules helped them discern the difference between major ideas and supporting details. The program also gave the students and the teacher a common vocabulary to discuss the reading process and reflect on what the students were doing as they read. I asked Heather what other work the students did during that quarter. She said that occasionally the students wrote a reflection on their progress. There was no other reading or writing instruction during that quarter. The classes focused completely on the SIM program.

All of the general freshman English students took the EXPLORE test again at the beginning of the year to have a baseline score. Students who scored an "11" or lower on that test would stay in general English and study the SIM program the first quarter. Paulette liked "that

students could see a clear progression.” The students started at their reading grade level. For example, some students could be placed at Grade 3. For that level, they completed the activities and took a quiz. They needed to score 80% or better to move to the next grade level. There were two review units and additional one-to-one teacher support if the student could not do the material the first time alone. The goal for the class was to have everyone finish at least the 7th grade level by the end of the quarter. The school was then going to administer the EXPLORE test again to see if there were better scores. At the time of this study, the students had not yet taken the test. In this program, students demonstrated their mastery of fluency and inference with a score on a test. During that quarter, the students did not write papers about what they read nor did they discuss any of the texts that they read.

One of the central components of this program was data-driven instruction. Students recorded the numerical scores on graphs that they kept in their course folders. They were able to chart how much their scores had improved. Teachers also had a record of the improvement of their students with quantifiable results. Paulette believed that the quantified student data was the most reliable assessment of student progress.

Rick was committed to the implementation of the reading program. He was particularly interested in quantifying the data so that he could easily monitor student achievement. Rick described the reading curriculum this way:

What is great is that freshman year we are really hitting them over the head with multiple specific reading interventions and we are monitoring the data. . . Every freshman will leave freshman year with skills that they did not have when they came in and strategies to actually paraphrase and summarize and strategies to actually infer well.

Heather was comfortable with the program. She explained that she had not known what to do with poor readers, and the program gave her a way to teach basic reading skills without being a trained reading specialist.

Carlisle was directly addressing the poor reading scores of its students. The school had found a program that asked the students to look at their own achievement level. It also established a common vocabulary for teachers and student to discuss the reading process. At the same time, the school was reducing the complex issue of effective reading instruction to one problem (Vacca & Alvermann, 1998). The way the department used the SIM program created expectations of solving students' reading problems in a few weeks. After learning some inference strategies, the students were supposed to be ready to read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Romeo and Juliet*. At the time of this study, they had not progressed to these literary works yet so I cannot give any data regarding what happened. In past years, according to Heather, the students could not read these works on their own. She either read them aloud in class or had the students read them aloud with her help.

In this reading curriculum, it was the missing components that surfaced and had an underlying impact on the program. One element that was missing was practice on easier literary pieces while the students were using the SIM materials. The SIM readings were short and simple. They taught the skill of drawing inference in a text, but the students then did not have any experience with more complex materials. Earlier Rick had discussed the importance of the progression of the materials. The SIM program helped the students practice drawing inferences from grade-level readings. The questions guided them through the process. They did not move into more sophisticated kinds of reading experiences that would expose them to deeper meanings in texts and more sophisticated use of language. The students did not get the opportunity to work with short but complex text so that they could practice these skills with slightly more difficult materials rather than making the shift to *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The

difference in the difficulty of the materials was so great that it was possible that the students would be frustrated and find it too difficult to use the skills they had learned in the SIM program.

Another missing element was the use of multiple kinds of assessments. Students had only multiple-choice questions with five options and bubbles to fill next to the possible answers. They did not experience any discussion of materials. The group never read a text together and discussed how to draw inferences from it. Instead they worked through the worksheets and read the SIM materials, but Heather did not help the students make connections between studying the SIM strategies and using those cognitive strategies in reading other materials. The freshmen in this class did not draw connections from what they read and explain those ideas in a paper. These kinds of assessments were missing during this quarter. Discussion and writing are teaching strategies that require students to express their ideas in their own language. They cannot depend on the test to guide them to an answer. By omitting work that expects students to generate answers in their own words, the program did not offer practice in critical thinking skills. The school was placing a value on the ability to perform well on objectives tests. The curriculum did not value independent thinking and the development of skills and strategies that taught students to do that kind of work in a reading and literature class.

Impact of standardized testing. Rick wanted all the staff to consider quantitative data as they evaluated the progress of students and the quality of their work in all four grades of the high school. The district office was sending Rick standardized test scores that showed how much progress the students had made after they had taken each standardized test. In discussing this matter with me, Rick was animated and sounded very excited:

Rick: Well, the data that I am most aligned to would be the value-added data. For example a student comes in and has a 15 on his or her EXPLORE test and then leaves with a 21 on the ACT. We are talking about six points value added. In other words it is the value that this institution adds to the student's achievement as

measured by standardized tests. We are just now getting to the point where I can look and see EXPLORE to PLAN that would basically be freshman year. What was the value added that our team was able to prove? Now I can look and see here is the PLAN they took sophomore year; here's the ISAT they took junior year. What was the value added growth that our sophomore team was able to show they learned?

Elizabeth: Do you have this information for each teacher?

Rick: Absolutely, which is good.

Elizabeth: Are they evaluated on it?

Rick: No, but they will be.

Many of the upper level teachers were uncomfortable with the data-driven instruction.

Marcus' philosophy of teaching came in strong conflict with this student evaluation model. Rick wanted teachers to use standardized test scores to determine how much a student had learned. When he spoke of "monitoring the data," he was referring the pretests and posttests that he and the freshman teachers were using to verify that the students were making progress. Rick also had required all teachers of sophomores and juniors to give the language arts and reading portion of a practice ACT in the fall and would require it of them in the spring so the school could monitor any progress. Marcus described his concerns:

I think that the initial response to a thing like standardized testing is that the literature starts to fall away. By fall away I mean that we lose some of our really good books to make way for books that are testable. There is a desire to teach materials that are testable. There is a desire to teach test-taking skills, the ACT skills sort of stuff, and that often reduced the literature to a pretty awful level. On the 9th grade level, you have people teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and you have them pulling passages and trying to create test questions for them from the ACT which is ridiculous because there is all this necessary context before you answer real questions. That is the scary part when we try to turn a book into a test experience. At the very least, you are going to minimize the book.

Marcus' background influenced how he felt about the role testing played in literature selection. He taught general sophomores along with AP Language and Composition at the junior

level. He was also the debate coach and occasionally crossed over into the social studies department. As a second job, he was an ACT coach at a local tutoring center. As an ACT coach, he had designed materials to help students raise their scores and had a reputation for being a very successful test prep coach. Marcus had a bachelor's degree in English literature with a concentration in teaching from a small liberal arts college and a master's degree in reading from a local university plus many hours in literature and speech from various colleges and universities in the area. He had taught in Japan for a number of years before coming to Carlisle 11 years ago. His father had taught English at Carlisle for over 25 years and retired before Marcus worked there. Marcus knew the district well. He had a strong commitment to teaching literary analysis. He believed that literature allowed students to "explore our existence, our way of looking at ourselves, our ways of looking at the world, our way of framing the world." In my interview with him, he talked about the need for reading good literature: "Bad literature leads to bad analysis; good literature leads to good analysis." When he taught general sophomores, he used "the actual Shakespeare, not the parallel text." His ideas and methods had put him in conflict with Rick and his goals.

Barbara agreed with Marcus regarding the impact of standardized tests. She said:

I find that it pushes us away from reading novels and away from the focus on literature. We are pushed to test with tests that mimic the tests that are not designed to test curriculum. We are even being asked to use sample ACT tests as diagnostic tests. I have resisted so far. ACT itself says that these are not meant to be diagnostic tests for specific skills. They use them as pretests and posttests.

As far as assessments, my best assessments are often discussions or quick checks of journal work or what I call "take it in or take it out." You know those kinds of things, a paragraph here or a paragraph there.

Later she said:

We are making general classes very basic level. Their assignments are not particularly high level on Bloom's taxonomy. It isn't happening and I don't know how to make it happen. It frustrates me.

Barbara was concerned about the kind of literature that she would teach as the testing program grew at Carlisle. She worried that the new program would not foster deep thinking nor prepare students to do the kind of reading they would need to do in the future.

The emphasis on standardized tests had reduced the number of long pieces the classes studied. It had also shifted the focus from literary analysis to quantifiable skills. There was resistance among the tenured staff I interviewed who did not believe in what Rick was asking them to do. When Barbara said, “It frustrates me,” she was expressing the fear that she would not be able to stop what was happening.

This shift from literary analysis to quantifiable skills had the potential to change how teachers viewed their students’ literacy. Instead of addressing the thinking process of the author and its impact on the student, on culture, or on political ideas, the curriculum focused on test-taking skills. Rick was asking the faculty to teach fundamentals of text structure rather than ideas in the literature and their impact on students. The teachers expressed the fear that their job was changing in ways that they did not support. They felt frustrated that they did not have the authority or power to change Rick’s impact on the literature curriculum.

Rick did not encourage the teachers to reflect on how they had already been teaching reading in their literature classes. When teachers developed lessons on analyzing pieces of text in class to discuss character motivation or underlying meanings in the language, they were in fact giving a reading lesson (Appleman, 2010). The teachers had not understood how teaching reading complemented teaching literature. Rick had encouraged a narrow understanding of reading and its process. Historically, reading instruction had been the domain of elementary and middle school (Applebee, 1974). The teachers at Carlisle did not understand its role in literature instruction, and Rick only focused on the fundamentals of the process.

By focusing on test results, Rick was asking teachers to narrow the focus of the curriculum and limiting student skills. Research suggests that this focus on test scores could keep Carlisle students from developing necessary literacy skills (Kohn, 2000; Meier, 2004). Teachers feared that they would lose what had been important to them as teachers. One worried that the understanding of a novel would be only those elements that could fit into simulated test questions. Focusing on standardized tests and test results can result in fragmenting of information and narrowing of content (Viaderos, 2003). When schools narrow their focus to student success on tests, teachers could be asked to focus on the score rather than the student (Beers, 2010). For Latinos, standardized test protocols as well as the language of the test could act against their cultural norms (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006). The act of taking the test as well as receiving low scores could be damaging to these students.

At Carlisle, the standardized testing had become central in the curriculum. It was the major method of assessment of the students and soon it was to play a major role in the assessment of the teachers. The school was attempting to reduce the literature curriculum to the narrow standards of ACT and PSAT, and the tenured faculty was fighting against this process. They refused to teach the freshman curriculum, and they were keeping their old materials in an attempt to remain unchanged in the face of the new curriculum demands.

Influence of past chair: The older staff still felt the influence of Grace, a retired English chair who had served the department for 30 years and was continuing to influence the standards of the older faculty who had served with her. I became aware of Grace when I asked Doug whom I should ask about past programs at Carlisle. He immediately said “Grace.” When I asked the librarians to show me some of the curriculum materials that predated Rick, they gave me Grace’s telephone number. Both Alice and

Helen recommended her to me when I wanted information about books on the Protected Novels List.

As Doug explained:

Grace, she taught forever. She is brilliant. She has multiple masters. She is an enlightened woman. She is so articulate. She is the one who has a great grasp on curriculum education, the phases the school has gone through.

Upon the recommendation of so many from Carlisle, I met with Grace to uncover and understand her influence on the curriculum.

During her 28-year tenure as department chair, Grace established the literature curriculum for this school. While chair, she encouraged the department to use books outside of the textbook and to use works from the canon mixed with popular texts with similar themes. Grace's job had been to create the master English schedule, to order materials, and to organize the curriculum with the help of the staff. She did not evaluate other department members. In her 30 years (28 as chair) at Carlisle, the district adopted most of her curriculum plans for all three schools in the district. Many of the books on the Protected Novels List were adopted during her tenure. She described how she worked with the staff planning the literature program:

We did work in committees writing curriculum. It was because we had some small idea of what it was going to be like to work closely with and negotiate with others to determine what things we wanted. Everyone was pretty much involved.

Later she commented on what she and the teachers chose:

We had tons of stuff and we said now what out of all of this, mainly the books that are currently on the Protected Novels List, what did the kids really like, what did we really like teaching, what are some things that we know they should read.

Early in her time at Carlisle, the school had an elective system for seniors. At all four academic levels, the teachers had freedom to choose their materials. Grace noted:

The district pretty much let us choose what classes we wanted to teach, what textbooks or novels we were including. It's just like there was money around to do all of this and there were no holes barred.

During Grace's tenure, the school went through two more organizational models. After the elective system in the 1970s, the school went to a four-year required curriculum in 1983 at the time that Morgan (Grace's school) and Riverwoods merged to create Carlisle High School. In the late 1990s, the school went onto block scheduling, and the literature curriculum had to be reduced to fit the time frame. Grace encouraged teachers to teach from their strengths by using familiar materials.

The continued use of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the teachers' high regard for the novel exemplified Grace's influence on the department. Grace, in talking about *To Kill a Mockingbird*, said, "We could never not teach *Mockingbird*. I have a signed copy of that, very special." In talking with 6 literature teachers and 1 reading teacher, 5 of them said that *Mockingbird* was the one book that was essential to teach. Even Kate who came 3 years after Grace had retired remarked, "I guess one book I feel really strongly about is *To Kill a Mockingbird*. That is one book that really teaches a lot of lessons that need to be taught today in terms of character." Heather, a student at Carlisle at the time Grace was chair, noted while talking about books students had to study before leaving Carlisle, "I would say *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It's a classic. You're in the in-crowd if a college professor refers to it." Two others questioned its importance, but recognized that the rest of the staff had a great veneration for the text. They viewed telling me that *Mockingbird* was not essential as a "subversive act." Grace's vision of good literature and the need to teach it at Carlisle continued to reverberate in that department. Even the teachers who did not know Grace still knew about her and her ideas. There had been other forces that encouraged teachers to teach the canon, but Grace articulated that need and created the framework that many teachers used when talking about their literature choices and articulated the ideology that many of the teachers still believed.

Grace was an inclusive leader. She encouraged the department to make curriculum decisions based on the materials they knew, understood, and loved. She helped the faculty work as a team by

getting them to plan together and establish some common goals. Unlike Rick, she was not an administrator. The faculty regarded her as a peer who was an expert in the English education at Carlisle. She had created some written plans that had influenced teachers' current work. Heather knew her as a teacher. Marcus's father and Grace were colleagues. Eleven of the 17 faculty members who were working at Carlisle had served with Grace. Her vision of the English curriculum continued to influence the choices that the staff made.

Grace gave the faculty a philosophical base for their work. She believed in the canon and its power. She helped the faculty shape the literature program around significant pieces of literature. It was her philosophical voice that many of the staff still heard as Rick began to make changes. He did not build on the work that Grace and her staff had created. Instead he began to dismantle what they had done in the past, and he met with opposition. Since he did not build on the curricular structure that she had built with the faculty, they resented him and his changes (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). Rick did not present a philosophical foundation for the new curriculum (Willinsky, 1991). Instead he started to build a curriculum around improving standardized test scores. The teachers did not believe what Rick offered them solved the problems of the students' inability to read the literature nor did they think it should replace what Grace had given them.

Discounting the importance of demographic changes. Carlisle's English department was White with the exception of Rick. Of the 17 staff members, 6 had been there fewer than 10 years. Eleven had been at Carlisle when it was mainly White. Alice, an experienced teacher at Carlisle, was typical of many of the experienced staff. Her story recounted the resistance that Rick and Adam faced with many of the teachers as they tried to find ways to make changes in the English curriculum.

After graduating from a regional university, Alice had taught language arts in 7th and 8th grade in one of the middle schools before leaving to stay home with her young family. Fourteen years ago, after her children had started college, she resumed her teaching career at Carlisle. She had worked as a freelance writer when her children were little. She used this experience at Carlisle teaching journalism and creative writing. She also had taught freshman English until the year of this research project. She had asked to move to another grade since she was uncomfortable with what she called the “rigidity of the [9th grade English] program.” Instead she taught senior English. Her husband taught high school in a local district, and they had lived in Carlisle’s district and had raised their children there when the school was predominately White. White, middle class, and middle aged, Alice was representative of many of the teachers at Carlisle.

Even though Alice and I met in the English workroom with other teachers near us, she was comfortable telling me what she thought about the school and its changes. As she discussed the possible literature changes, she became agitated:

Elizabeth: If you were going to choose a Latino or African American piece, what would be your criteria for your choice?

Alice: My choice would be based on what that author can contribute to this conversation. What is their contribution? I would never pick just based on it being Latino or African American. That seems like a false criterion. And it also seems a bit like trying to keep a line in place that should not be there. I think it is better that we don’t look at literature that is representational with that being our only criteria. I think it is a huge mistake that because a student is Latino that they can only relate or connect to Latino literature. Matter of fact when I was teaching freshman, the selection of I can’t remember the title, the one where the boy keeps going to the store and he keeps getting beat up.

Elizabeth: Do you mean *Black Boy*?

Alice: Yes, I think there are a lot of great things to discuss in that piece but it has a very limited appeal because there are not many kids who can connect and relate to that situation of the boy’s mother throwing him out on the street to be beaten

up. It was my least favorite and I would say it was my students' least favorite. *Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet*—writers like these cross all lines. They are more broad-based in speaking to the human condition. I am not saying that it is not there with *Black Boy*, but it is harder to access.

Alice had difficulty understanding the cultural significance of the scene she referenced in Part One, Chapter One, pp. 16-19 of *Black Boy* (1993), and claimed that the students could not connect with it as well. In that scene Wright's mother tells the 6-year old Wright that he must get some groceries at the store. On his way to the store, some older boys take the money his mother gave him and beat him up. When he comes home, his mother gives him more money and tells him to go to the store again. Again the boys take the money and beat him. When he comes home the third time, she tells him to go again and if he returns without groceries, she will whip him. On this trip he took a stick and beat up the boys and returned with the groceries. The mother's actions were not what Alice with her cultural background felt was the right decision for a mother to make. She could not understand why a mother would teach her son to fight. She could understand Shakespeare and the violence in his plays. She had studied them and had learned frames of reference so they made sense to her. Wright's violence did not have a frame of reference for her. The reasons for Wright's mother to push her child to stand up to the bullies and fight them did not resonate with Alice's values.

Alice's experience with *Black Boy* demonstrated her inability to understand the desperation of the mother's situation. She did not want to teach materials that contained values different from her own that she could not understand. In stating that looking at the literature through the lens of its racial or ethnic background was a "false criteria," she communicated that she did not see the importance of finding literature that matched the background of her students nor did she recognize that the literature she found acceptable reflected White Anglo-Saxon values. Alice wanted to teach the materials she knew and that resonated with her.

Other teachers I interviewed expressed similar reluctance to teaching multicultural literature. They had different reasons, but the end result was that they did not want to change what they were doing. Barbara explained:

We had a series of readers that are so-called multicultural readers and a lot of them have stories about Latino or Mexicans or whatever, but they are kind of lame. I tried using them once, and I thought, “why do this when I can give them much richer literature?”

In her comments, Barbara framed the multicultural literature as being of poor quality and the other materials she used that were from the canon as being richer and better.

An 11th grade teacher, Kate, discussed with me her need to find compelling literature for her struggling students many of whom were Latino or African American. When she talked about what she would add to the curriculum, she said that she would like to add “something more accessible.” She suggested *The Handmaid’s Tale* that she used for her junior AP class because she wanted a “compelling narrative.” When she had the opportunity to add a piece to the junior curriculum, she lobbied the department to add *Into the Wild*. However, both of these novels are by White authors. Although they have compelling stories, they did not address the issues of the changing population at Carlisle (Brown, 2007).

One teacher, Heather, expressed a desire to have Latino literature in the curriculum.

Elizabeth: Tell me if I have this right. You want to appeal to students?

Heather: Yes, to be able to recognize themselves in the literature. Some of the stuff in the textbook is written at a level that my generals will not be able to access right now. We need to look elsewhere such as in the multicultural reader. It has short stories and poems.

Heather wanted her students to learn to read, and she believed that having literature that reflected their culture made them more interested in the text and made it easier for them to read it.

Heather's background compelled her to find materials that interested her students. Heather had gone to Carlisle High School and had graduated 7 years before this study. As a freshman, the school had placed her in advanced English. She continued in that track sophomore year until she moved into honors as a junior where she completed the program. After graduation, she attended the large university in the Midwest and majored in English and was now completing a Master's degree in school leadership at a local university. At the time of this study, she was starting her 4th year of teaching at Carlisle. When I asked her what motivated the literature choices at Carlisle, she exclaimed, "The past!" She noted that the literature was almost the same she had studied there. When she talked about Greek mythology, she said:

It was Greek mythology, the same Greek mythology that I am still teaching with the same handouts that I still hand out. The kids hate it, and I feel total sympathy for them because I used to hate it, and I still hate it.

Heather wanted the department to make some changes in the curriculum so that it would appeal to her students. She talked about wanting to put more Latino literature into the curriculum and replace part of the Greek mythology unit with it. "I think the whole point in taking away some of the Greek and putting in Latino is to make sure that the kids can connect to it." Her experience in the advanced classes made her sensitive to the needs of students of that level as well as the general track. Heather wanted her students to have a better experience than she had had at Carlisle. She wanted the literature to speak to them in some way. Whereas the older teacher Alice wanted to retain the White Anglo-Saxon literature the faculty knew, Heather, a new teacher, acknowledged the need for change.

Students benefit from a curriculum that contains materials that reflect their culture and heritage (Brown, 2007). They do better in school since they are able to understand that what they are studying has meaning in their lives. Teachers sometimes believe that all students are the same and have similar opportunities (Darder, 1997) and do not respect the cultural difference of their students. This belief can cause teachers to use materials written by White people and assume that they are universal. Some of the

teachers at Carlisle made the assumption that the materials by White people were universal. At Carlisle, there was little recognition that the students needed to see themselves in the curriculum materials. Not all of the texts needed to reflect the backgrounds of the students, but having some in the curriculum would help the students understand that school was for them (Brown, 2007; Darder, 1997).

The desire to use literature from the traditional canon. Many of the teachers expressed a desire to use materials that they considered worthy. Among the faculty, Barbara presented the strongest case for using canonical literature, and her strong academic background pushed her in that direction. She graduated as an honor student from Carlisle 40 years before this study. After high school, she attended a liberal arts college in the East to study English literature for her Bachelor's degree, then attended a prestigious Midwestern university for her Master's degree in English literature. Later she completed a doctorate in theater and then went on to teach at a small college in the South. Her husband's work brought them back to the Chicago area, and she taught at some local junior colleges before coming to Carlisle as an English and theater teacher. Her children attended Carlisle, and she was committed to having a strong academic program that she defined as classical.

Barbara valued academics and the intellectual stimulation that reading literature gave her, and she wanted that for her students. According to her, "literature should have great ideas and great uses of language that expand people's understanding of their world." In describing her ideal course, she chose works from Shakespeare, Twain, Faulkner, and Plato. In talking about the literature that she used in her senior classes, advanced and AP, Barbara described what she wanted to teach.

Barbara: An expanse of literature that is high quality.

Elizabeth: What do you mean by high quality literature?

Barbara: Complex. That uses language in very complex ways. It is not plot driven necessarily. I mean you could have plot driven novels as long as there are other things at work literarily as well.

Barbara's philosophy for choosing literature was similar to Marcus'. Both wanted literature that they believed had literary merit. He wanted his students to think deeply:

I like them to struggle. I like them to feel challenged. I like them to fail at it and realize that they have failed at it and then try to succeed at it later. The one thing the kids joked about is that I never provide them reading for entertainment. I find argument entertaining so that is great. I will never ask them to read something because it is entertaining. I am frustrated that we have asked them to do so much of that. It is so easy for them.

Marcus wanted literature that had enough substance to make him think deeply. Barbara and Marcus had classrooms that were next to each other. Both expressed a desire to teach literature they considered complex. They often argued about different points of interpretation. When I was interviewing Marcus in his room, Barbara came in to discuss a reference from *Heart of Darkness*. Together they then told me some finer points about *Things Fall Apart* that one of them was teaching. As I interviewed them, they entered and left each other's classroom with questions about literature or ideas to pull from the texts they were reading. In both teachers' classrooms, students ate lunch and worked on homework as I conducted my interviews. The students also were talking about literature and ideas that had sprung from the class work they were doing. Some were on the debate team. Most of the students were White, and there were equal numbers of male and female students. Occasionally, animated conversations broke into my interviews with Marcus or Barbara, and the students asked questions or sought affirmation for a point of view. These interruptions added to my understanding of the kinds of teachers both Marcus and Barbara were.

The administration was critical of the use of the canon and wanted changes in the curriculum. Adam and Rick had some strong concerns about the teachers' strong adherence to a traditional canon of literature. Adam described the department as "unwilling to give up the canon." Rick wanted the English teachers to focus on reading rather than literature. Rick noted that the teachers wanted "literature that they had taught and knew." The teachers had been unwilling to eliminate Shakespeare from any level of

the curriculum. This strong adherence to this kind of literature frustrated both administrators since they wanted materials that they believed would appeal to the Latino and African American population who were academically unconnected to the school.

The department's refusal to eliminate *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the curriculum illustrated the conflicting forces in the department as they considered changing the literature they had taught for years. Rick described his proposal to change the sophomore literature curriculum:

So something from a minority author is key. That is one of those things we are exploring with sophomore year because that's world lit and world lit right now for the most part is still dead White guys in the world lit curriculum. . . I think it would just increase engagement and obviously still increase all the skills that we want them to know in terms of reading and understanding literature and interacting with text.

In talking about Rick's proposal to drop *Midsummer* and add a Latino or Latin American text, Marcus expressed his concerns about the process:

Supposedly we all make changes together, but I have to use the word guardedly. What really happens is somebody champions some sort of cause and they get it in front of the right people and the right people being the divisional [Rick, the division head]. We did get asked if we wanted to continue with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the sophomores. I felt like it was political rhetoric. I felt we were being pushed in one direction. The suggestion was what about a Latin American book. . . . I think it is going to be a lot more top down and I think Rick wants it to be that way.

Marcus expressed anger at Rick as well as distrust of his methods. The conflict over removing *Midsummer* was not just a fight over what piece of literature to put in the curriculum. There was distrust of Rick and his methods.

Marcus' opposition to *Midsummer* centered on his distrust of Rick, a view that Alice shared. She denied the need for multicultural literature when she commented:

We all think Shakespeare is pretty important. Well no, I shouldn't say we all do because there is a kind of move to dump him as some White guy who has no relevance to the lives of minorities, which I seriously question.

Alice saw the removal of the play as a racial issue. She did not want to give up the literature that she knew and with which she was comfortable. Carlisle's literature curriculum reflected the values and ideas of the 20th century.

Marcus, Barbara, and Alice all wanted to keep the literature that they believed was important. Marcus and Barbara wanted to teach ideas and wanted materials that had enough depth that they could explore the richness of ideas and text with their students. They also saw themselves as subversive and opposed Rick and his focus on testing. Although Marcus and Barbara talked about the importance of deep and rich literature, what they were also saying was how important it was to teach students to think critically and deeply. They did not see that component in Rick's plans for Carlisle. Alice's motives had more political overtones. She wanted to keep the White literature that she had taught in the past.

Summary. All six of these influences overlapped one another. The administrative pressure, the poor reading levels of the students, the influence of standardized tests, the influence of the former chair Grace, the White dominance in the school, and the teachers' need for the traditional canon all blended together to keep the curriculum the same. Rick and Adam had instituted some changes. They had added a reading program and asked the teachers to give the ACT at the beginning and the end of the school year to assess growth in student learning. They added some reading components to the upper grades' curriculum, but many of the teachers did little of it unless they were untenured. Much of the literature the faculty chose for the new curriculum was the same that they had been teaching for over 15 years. The lack of change in the sophomore curriculum illustrated the lack of change in the whole curriculum. Rick attempted to lead the faculty to make changes in the literature curriculum, but the faculty resisted his methods and remained committed to the literature program they had used for years.

Patterns of Change Found in the Literature Curriculum

What stood out about the literature curriculum was its continuing sameness as the school faced significant changes in its student population. Two years before this study, Rick, with the English teachers, had started the process of restructuring the English program. The department chose mainly the same books they had taught for at least the past 15 years. There were four new novels that they included in the updated program out of 30 pieces of literature named in the curriculum. The new textbooks the district selected remained almost unused. To accommodate the district changes in themes, the department moved a few books from one grade level to another. With few exceptions, what the teachers had taught in the past had continued into the new curriculum they were in the process of creating.

When asked, Rick and the teachers believed that there had been significant changes. Marcus said, “There is very much a tightening.” Rick said, “The change process is underway.” Barbara said, “They [the administration] want to systematize because they don’t trust teachers any more.” Each of these staff members had different attitudes toward the changes that they noted, but all of these comments indicated that there were some modifications in Carlisle program. The following were the changes that I noted:

- An administrative push to make reading, not literature, the content of courses
- An increased use of standardized testing to determine academic gains of students
- A lockstep curriculum in the freshman year
- Some questioning of the literature selections and their relevance for Carlisle students
- The use of grade-level PLCs to plan curriculum

All of these changes involved a change in the structure of the program. I questioned if any of these changes made significant modifications in the thinking of the faculty or impacted the way the teachers regarded their work at Carlisle and their understanding of the needs of their students.

Reading as content. In discussing the reading program in the last section, I quoted Rick as saying that he wanted the department to focus on reading skills such as “main ideas, supporting detail, cause and effect, comparative relationships, conclusions, generalization, meanings of words. As they [students] were reading, that was not something most teachers thought about. Instead it was about lit crit.” He had a limited vision of what reading instruction was. He defined it as finding the structure of a text or defining some of the words used. He did not express an understanding of the complexity of the process nor did he recognize that literary analysis was a form of reading instruction (Appleman, 2010).

Rick had been asking the teachers to envision what they did in a different way. They had been focusing on what they knew, literary analysis. Many of the teachers had spent over 15 years doing this kind of work and resisted Rick’s attempts at making changes. Marcus understood the process of reading differently from Rick. In talking about teaching literature, he said:

When someone said when did you learn to read, in this culture, we think of either when we learned to sound out words and do it as a string of things or when we read silently when you ask an adult. Reading is a mastery level thing and there are always things to know and learn. We are always learning to read. Instead of I have taught him to read or I have taught him to read at grade level. Instead it is where are we going with that reading.

Later in that conversation, Marcus talked about teaching literature:

In literature I often recognize the human mind as it grasps for understanding, that in literature we often delve into ourselves and our world in a way that makes us and it whole. It is not a major part of my life: it is a way of living. It is place where making [a complete life] can occur.

In literature we dream, we fabricate the lives that keep us alive.

Marcus’ understanding of reading complemented his teaching of literature. He was not changing to Rick’s vision of reading instruction. Unlike Rick, Marcus saw teaching literature as reading instruction with many complexities. Marcus wanted his students to find ways to understand the

text while Rick wanted them to learn techniques to use. For Rick the techniques were the goal, but for Marcus understanding the literature was the goal. Neither had found ways to understand how their processes could complement one another.

Increased use of standardized tests. Along with the focus on reading, Rick also wanted the faculty to use standardized tests as the major way to demonstrate what students were learning. The emphasis on quantifying a student's progress was a change for the school. As I noted in an earlier section, Rick had teachers administer standardized tests at the beginning and at the end of each school year so that he could determine if students were learning. According to Barbara, Heather, and Alice until this program, the school had used observations of the students, class discussion, essays, teacher-created tests with objective and essay questions, and reading journals as well as guided reading questions to assess the students' learning. The older methods required the teachers to evaluate the student progress based on their personal assessment and understanding of the material and the students' work in the class. In the freshman class for the first semester, the teachers would depend on the numerical measurements of the SIM tests, the pre and post EXPLORE test and the simulated SIM tests given to the students as they studied *A Day No Pig Would Die*. Heather, a freshman teacher, was excited about using this program. If this program was successful, she planned to use it for other freshman texts as well.

Although Heather was excited about using these new methods, many of the other teachers had reservations about depending so much on standardized tests scores and programs that quantified student progress and learning. Doug spent the last 31 years teaching English at Carlisle. At the time of this study, he was planning to retire at the end of the school year. He commented on the impact the data-driven materials had on his decision to retire.

I never thought about retirement. To me it was just something way out there. I think about retirement now because of those types of issues. It is time for

someone else to pick up the mantel. Everything is data driven. We want to quantify everything. We are going to test everything. We are going to analyze that data. I understand it; I appreciate it. I think I see what is attempting to be done here. I respect it. It is not my philosophy of education. Maybe it is time for someone else to come in and do that. With emphasis on tests and scores and data and lockstep curriculum, I don't know. I think I have been frustrated. It is not me.

Doug saw the direction of the department and announced his intention to retire after 34 years of teaching.

Not all displeased teachers had the option to retire. Without enough years in the retirement system, Alice was not going to retire soon. She called this data-driven teaching a “microwave mentality.” Then she added:

We have gradually dumbed down, we have dumbed down and dumbed down and dumbed down. We have tried to quantify every single thing in order to justify what we do. It has to fit in the box. We have to be able to check it. It is a checklist mentality that has been taking over education.

Later Alice continued to talk about this change. “It is a messy process [curriculum planning]. If it is too neat and tidy, nobody's needs are being served.”

The younger teachers supported the use of data-driven instruction and supported Rick's efforts to use it while the older staff found ways to resist this change. The younger teachers were using Rick's ideas about reading and saying that they found satisfaction in that work. The experienced staff resisted the changes and held onto their old understanding of literature and its place in the curriculum. They resisted using numbers and standardized test to quantify student achievement. They were not comfortable with reducing student achievement to one test nor did they accept that the ACT adequately evaluated the scope of what they taught.

What no one at Carlisle discussed was the impact that the testing had on the students. One consideration should be the amount of instructional time that was used for test taking. At least two 85-minute periods or an equivalent of four class days of instruction were used per year

in the actual taking of the test. Another consideration was the impact of the scores on the students. The number, whatever it was, labeled the student with an evaluation from an impersonal source. That number was personal to the student and possibly damaging to the students' self-esteem (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006). The school considered the combined total of the scores to evaluate the success of the school or the department or the teacher. In that process the impact on the student was lost. In using standardized testing, schools need to consider the impact on the individual students and carefully weigh if the results merit the potential impact on the students (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006).

As an English teacher, I considered what the use of standardized tests as an assessment tool symbolized at that school. Using the test scores allowed the school to depersonalize the teaching process. The teachers administered the tests, but they did not grade them. They only scored them, and in doing that, they could remove themselves from a relationship with the students. The teachers were not actively involved with the thinking and processing of ideas of their students in this assessment process. Eisner (1998) said that evaluating the kinds of assessments used in a school revealed the values of the school and its teachers. The standardized testing said that the school valued higher scores without any consideration for the impact on the students or the teachers. The students received a number. Marcus complained that he did not get to see the ACT tests of his students so he did not know what they had missed. The teachers and the students relied on numbers only, not the content that they represented. The real substance of teaching reading and literature had been lost in this kind of accountability.

Lockstep curriculum. Marcus, Doug, and Alice were resisting the lockstep curriculum along with the use of standardized testing. Rick structured the freshman curriculum so that there was a prescribed literature curriculum, and all teachers would be doing the same thing at the

same time. Rick believed that kind of structuring was essential to the reading instruction of the low-achieving students. The use of this lockstep curriculum was demoralizing to the teachers (Jimenez, 2004). The tight structure limited the teachers and kept them from responding to the needs of the students and limited their ability to be flexible as well creative in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Jimenez, 2004). The experienced teachers at Carlisle resisted this change. As an experienced teacher, Barbara was uncomfortable with the new structures in the freshman classes: “There is a movement from above to put people back in lockstep and have everybody teaching the same thing at the same time. I am highly resistant.” Barbara called herself “subversive” since she opposed this trend at the school. At the time of this study only the non-tenured teachers who taught freshman would teach in this manner. Rick had not been able to impose this structure on the other grade levels since, according to him, there were not enough books.

Possible adoption of Latino literature. Another pattern of change at Carlisle was in the way some of the teachers talked about the need for Latino literature in the curriculum. At the time of this study, the department had not chosen a Latin American book for the sophomore curriculum, and most junior teachers did not teach *The House on Mango Street*, the only Latino American book on the junior list. The fact that the department was even discussing the need for this kind of change signaled the beginning of such a change. Heather talked about possible modifications to the sophomore curriculum: “In such a diverse community as Carlisle, I think it is important to see your face in the literature, and my Latino students do not. There is zero representation. I would like to see some Latino literature.” Barbara was not sure that the school could find suitable Latin American literature, but she was considering the possibility: “The problem is the rich literature is hard to get in translation and once you get it in translation

sometimes it has changed too much to be doable.” Even though Barbara had not found appropriate literature yet, she was considering that change and looking for options.

Marcus believed that the pushback against adopting a Latin American book came from the department’s lack of knowledge about the texts.

The suggestion was what about a Latin American book. I am obviously interested in a Latin American book, but they did not have any suggestions. It was interesting to see where they were going to go with that. There were no Jorges, Marquez. Without knowing how to teach them especially to our lower level kids, they tend to be very difficult. Most of the department did not know them except *Like Water for Chocolate* that someone got adopted years ago. We don’t teach that anymore.

Marcus’s comments illustrated that the department had been seriously considering texts and had been searching for the right one. That the department was even talking about this change illustrated a shift in thinking.

Bringing in multicultural material would not necessarily signal a change in the thinking of the faculty. They also would need to change how they teach the literature. The new literature should have the same status as the old (Graff, 2007). Teachers need to value the additions to the curriculum and the cultures they describe. This new teaching style would require the teachers to acquire a transnational understanding of the many cultures that they would teach and the skills to offer to students that knowledge as the foundation of the curriculum (Appleman, 2010; Luke & Carpenter, 2003). White culture would become one of the many understandings student would develop along with understanding of various other cultures that they encounter in the reading. Such a change would require a shift in the way the faculty perceived themselves and their students.

Introduction of professional learning communities. Another change at Carlisle was the introduction of the Professional Learning Communities. They changed the way the

department planned its curriculum. This structure caused the teachers to plan together and work as a unit. Before Rick arrived, the teachers decided for themselves what literature to teach in their classes. They had textbooks selected by the district, a bookroom filled with classroom sets of literature that had been used in the past 20-30 years, and a general plan from the district and the department. When Grace had been the department chair, there had been some committees to plan curriculum, but all of that work had been voluntary. There had been some common practices, but no requirements. Adam instituted Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that Rick used as common planning time. The grade-level groups planned lessons together and used common materials. The full faculty chose materials that they agreed to all use at different grade and ability levels. The staff was moving from being “independent contractors” to use Rick’s words to group decision-makers who created a collective vision of the curriculum rather than individual ones. That shift in method of operation had some resistance, but it had become the working style of the new staff and had become an adaptation that the older staff had started to make. This shift was a change in the way the faculty worked, but not necessarily the way they thought.

Summary. The administration initiated all of the changes at Carlisle. Adam and Rick pressured the faculty to select at least one piece of required literature and to set a definite order for teaching the literature. There was the addition of a reading program for one quarter to the freshman program with some overlapping of the skills taught throughout that year. Rick pressured the faculty to use the literature to teach reading concepts instead of literary analysis. He structured PLCs for the department so the teachers could plan together even though the upper grade teachers still planned most of their materials alone or in pairs. All of these changes were structural. These changes modified to a certain extent how the teachers worked, but they had

little effect on what they thought. For the most part the literature, the faculty's attitudes about literature, and their methods of teaching it had remained the same. From my interviews with teachers, they were still teaching the materials in the same way with the exception of the reading instruction in freshman year. They continued to identify reading as separate from the teaching of literature. The teacher's attitudes toward race and equality had remained unchanged as well.

The focus on data-driven instruction changed the way teachers presented materials, and it moved the focus from literary analysis to reading instruction even though that shift in focus was met with much resistance from the staff. The demographic shift from predominately White to more than half Latino and African American had made the staff aware of the need for some Latino or Latin American literature. The awareness of the need was there, but there were no new choices yet. The staff had started to plan its work differently. Instead of each teacher making his or her own choices, the full department met to make book choices and the grade-level groups met to create units that they could share and all teach. These modifications came from the administration imposing a structure or change upon them. There were no changes that came from the staff. They were concerned with defending the work that that had been doing for years. These attempts at change were making the staff defensive and demoralized. None of the changes had modified the thinking of the staff about their work or about the needs of students.

Conclusion

I started this project wanting to know why a school chose certain literature for its curriculum. I chose a school that was experiencing significant changes in its student body that would put pressure on the school to modify its curriculum. What I found was a school that had made structural changes to its program, but not really any substantive changes. The faculty I

interviewed held onto their historical perspectives and filtered all of the information about the school through the old prism of Carlisle from more than 15 years ago.

There had been changes in the make-up of the student body. It was no longer White. It was no longer monolingual. It was no longer predominantly middle and upper middle class. Most of its students spoke English as one of their primary languages, but many spoke Spanish as well. Almost 60% of the student body was either Latino or African American. More than 50% of the student body was on the free and reduced lunch program. Those students were now a part of the growing class of poverty in that community. Carlisle had stopped ignoring that there were academic problems for Latino and African American students, but they had not found ways to fully understand what those issues were.

Change in the literature program. Carlisle added some structural modifications to its program, but there were no substantive changes. At the 9th grade level, the faculty evaluated what they considered to work well for that level and chose many of the same books such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Day No Pigs Would Die*, and *Animal Farm*, that had been a part of the curriculum for the past 15 years and continued to be at the time of this study. Students studied a collection of essays and memoirs or took SIM reading program for inference. The advanced level could read *The Secret Life of Bees*, the only new book added to this program. The general teachers put more focus on reading instruction, but otherwise the program was almost the same. For the sophomores, there were two new books *The Kite Runner* and *Beetles and Angels*. For the juniors, the school added *Into the Wild*. There were no new texts for the seniors. Structurally, the school added some required texts to each grade level. Otherwise, the literature program was the same.

What had changed were the assessment methods that the department used to determine student achievement. The school placed freshmen into general classes based on their EXPLORE score. At the sophomore and junior levels, teachers administered the ACT practice test at the beginning and end of the year to assess academic progress. What the school had not considered was the impact that these numbers had on the students. The school had also not given the teachers the actual tests so that teachers could evaluate what concepts and practices the students did not know so that they could change what they were doing or remediate the students.

Reason for the absence of change. The administration and the teachers did not understand the school's problems in the same way. The administration in response to pressure from NCLB wanted to find ways to demonstrate that change was happening at the school. Rick and Adam asked the teachers to give standardized tests to the freshman, sophomore, and juniors at the beginning of the year and at the end to quantify student achievement and to take part of the evaluation of students away from teachers. NCLB asked the school to have quantifiable results to show change to meet state and federal guidelines. Rick and Paulette believed that these tests measured student learning. Heather, a freshman teacher, said that she was comfortable with this method of evaluating students and their progress. The tests measure one kind of learning-- in this case drawing conclusion from articles, but they do not measure all that the students could or should learn (Meier, 2004).

The faculty I interviewed did not believe that they were a part of the process of deciding what would work for students. Teachers in other schools who have been involved in the decision-making process have been less resistant (Fullon, 1996). Rick told the teachers to give tests with multiple-choice questions that simulated the ACT questions. He also told them to use the SIM reading program and provided workshops for them to learn to use that program. He

assigned them the classes they taught and put them into PLCs. According to Grace and Rick, the teachers had not had that kind of oversight before Rick came there. In the past according to four of the teachers I interviewed, they had been able to choose what classes they taught and what materials they wanted to use.

The background of the teachers also influenced how they responded to Rick and the changes he had imposed. They were attached to certain pieces of literature they had taught for years and believed that those pieces of literature should always be a part of the curriculum. Those included *Romeo and Juliet*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Of Mice and Men*, and at least two other Shakespeare plays. They had lived and grown up in an almost entirely White culture, had taught that culture's standards and ideas, and they wanted to continue teaching those values. Rick did not value literature in the ways that the faculty did nor did he address the White values embedded in the curriculum. He wanted changes in procedures and methods, but he did not find ways for the faculty to change their values. The faculty's displeasure with Rick and the new changes made them unreceptive of his ideas. In opposing him, they had become stronger advocates of their old points of view.

Grace, the former department chair, continued to exert influence on the literature curriculum after her retirement. She had served the school for almost 30 years and two thirds of the staff had worked with her. People throughout the building spoke of her with reverence. Four of the 6 teachers interviewed recommended that I speak with her about the school. She had established the patterns of work and literature selection that the school had used for years. She was a colleague so she functioned as a facilitator rather than a boss. She also had a great love of literature and wanted students to read pieces from the canon with a few current pieces to add interest or to teach a particular idea or concept. She had used the protocols and planning ideas

that were typical of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. She had been able to encourage the faculty to make changes in the structure and content of the literature during her tenure. Those concepts and attitudes still resonate in Carlisle's curriculum and the faculty's attitude about effective literature work for students.

The structural changes that the administration imposed on the school did not bring about substantive changes. The literature remained almost the same. The teachers continue to teach in the same ways except for the SIM program. The demographic changes in the school population had continued to be unacknowledged in the literature program. The teachers had said they wanted to change the program, but they have not found ways to do so. The leadership had not found ways to work effectively with the faculty to bring about desired changes. The program looked different, but was essentially the same.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This study at Carlisle High School brings to light some of the problems concerning effective literacy instruction. The curriculum that had worked for student in the past was no longer serving the needs of the students in multicultural classrooms. Historically, secondary English classes had focused on the study of literature (Applebee, 1994). Secondary school literature curricula included the analysis of literature and ways that students could relate that literature to their lives. Carlisle and schools like it have had to reevaluate what the focus of the English classes should be. Many of the students did not find the predominately White literature compelling, and some of them did not have the reading skills to access these texts. Instead teachers have had to reorient their understanding of an effective literature curriculum and focus on the needs of the students. The faculty has structured literature programs that allowed for more range of literature and encouraged teachers to honor students' current reading practices (Staunton, 2008).

To make these changes, teachers have had to eliminate the historical view of teaching great literature as the center of the curriculum. Now teachers have begun to focus on the reading practices of their students as well as the multiple literacies present in our culture today such as blogs and microblogs, video games, and text messages to their friends (Appleman, 2010). These activities constitute the reading practices of our students today and do not always prepare them for academic reading. Effective literature curricula should bridge the practices that students already have with the practices they need for academic success.

Schools have started to include more non-academic literature such as video games, blogs, and film, but they have also had to reevaluate the traditional literature that they are using in their

classrooms. Carlisle's English department and others like it have started to reconsider what they define as appropriate literature for their courses. In the past, curricula stressed literature from a traditional secondary school program that included mainly literature by White British and American men with a few pieces of literature from other countries and by female authors or authors of color. Numerous educators have called for culturally sensitive or culturally responsive curricula (Ladsen-Billings, 1994). What texts a school chooses for its literature program indicates what it values and what it wants its students to understand about the world around them. Choosing literature that reflects the make up of the school values all of the students and their heritages. Choosing literature that reflects the full diversity of the country prepares students to accept and honor the diversity of our country. Broadening the definition of literature to include non-academic literature such as blogs and Internet recognizes their authority in the contemporary world and offers students ways to evaluate them and their ideas.

Previously, literature has been at the center of the secondary English curriculum. This focus on literature rather than reading does not offer students access to the literature in question. Teachers should have an understanding of what reading skills students need to read academic literature and should incorporate them into current literature curricula. The old view that reading instruction belonged in middle and elementary school (Applebee, 1974) has had to change. English teachers have had to redefine their role as literature teachers so that they understand that teaching literature involves teaching reading (Appleman, 2010). This change in professional identity has been uncomfortable for some, but a necessary transformation, especially since many secondary students lack the skills for academic reading. Effective leadership can help teachers understand the needs of students and redefine their teaching roles to meet these needs.

Changing the vision of a curriculum is a difficult process. To make these kinds of changes, an English department needs strong leadership that is committed to defining the needs of its current student population, helping the faculty understand its White ethnocentric values, and facilitating programs that assist the faculty in finding ways to modify the literature curriculum to meet the needs of the current student body (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clark & Curran, 2004). With most of America's teaching force being White, middle class and monolingual (Ladson-Billings, 2001), teachers need help understanding the needs of the diverse population in the classrooms. Many in the White teaching force have not had much experience with diversity and have not had opportunities to learn about the issues that diversity in a classroom present. Carlisle and schools like it have teachers who have had little training in dealing with multicultural classrooms and have had little exposure to the issues that multicultural students bring to the classroom. The school leadership must find ways to foster commitment among the faculty for building caring communities that acknowledge and celebrate differences among the community members (Weinstein et. al, 2004).

Carlisle is an example of a secondary school that struggled to make the needed changes in its curriculum to address the needs of its students. It had been in the process of evaluating its literature program and attempting to make changes that would address the needs of its underachieving student body. In the past two years, Carlisle's English department adopted SIM, a reading program for underachieving freshman, created a lockstep freshman literature program with materials that the school had been using for years, chose one required novel for junior and senior year, and implemented the EXPLORE for freshman and the ACT for sophomore and junior year as beginning and end-of-the-year assessment tools for reading proficiency. All of these changes produced some structural changes in the literature program, but none of them

addressed the underlying causes of the poor reading skills of the majority of Carlisle students. Carlisle's problems were similar to those that educators have described in many schools with multicultural populations (Jimenez, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Carlisle needed to find ways to teach students how to read and interpret academic reading material and to develop the critical thinking skills needed to handle such work. To accomplish these goals, Carlisle needed to address the leadership issues in the English department, update the faculty's understanding of effective literature for the curriculum, integrate reading instruction into the literature program, and allay the department's numerous fears.

Leadership issues

Teachers need help from principals and division heads to change their thinking about teaching literature. In particular White teachers who have complacently taught a traditional White canon of literature for years and have been comfortable with their work need to realize that they need to change (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The school leadership needs to find ways for the teachers first to recognize their own White ethnicity. With that recognition can come an understanding of how multicultural groups have other perspectives and needs (Appleman, 2010; Weinstein, et. al., 2004).

With an understanding of their own ethnicity, the Carlisle teachers would have been in a position to use their expertise in teaching literature to bring forth changes in the curriculum. The English faculty had a depth of experience in teaching literature and significant training. Many had advanced degrees and years of service and had planned curriculum materials under Grace's leadership during her tenure as department chair. When Rick stepped in as leader of the department, he needed to help them shape a new curriculum that focused on the needs of the Latino and African American population in the school, not just the White one. The faculty I

interviewed expressed deep caring for their students. Structuring change around the teachers' academic strengths, their understanding of the diverse student body, and their care for all students would empower and help them understand their mission as educators (Fullon & Hargreaves, 1996). Those teachers needed a stronger understanding of the needs of the Latino and African American population in their schools so that they could sculpt a new curriculum that would address the diversity of the school.

Another leadership issue at Carlisle centered on the shift of emphasis from literature to reading in the English program. Changing the focus of the curriculum from literary analysis to reading skills impacted the self-esteem of the teachers. Historically, teaching reading was the responsibility of elementary and middle schools (Applebee, 1974). Secondary teachers had defined themselves as literature teachers (Applebee, 1974). From my experience as a secondary teacher, teachers wanted to teach the more sophisticated learners. They looked down on teaching underachieving students and gave less status to teachers who taught them. The experienced teachers taught the most accomplished students, and those teaching assignments had the most status. At Carlisle, there was the same pattern. The experienced teachers taught the higher tracks and the upper classmen. Both Adam and Rick needed to find ways to give status to teaching reading and underachieving students.

Effective school leadership not only involves relationships among the faculty, but also relationships with the community served by the school. When schools are making significant curriculum changes, school leaders need to involve the whole community. All the families at Carlisle had a stake in having an effective literature program at the school. As Carlisle started to make changes in the curriculum, the school needed to involve the families as well as the students in the process of determining what the school should do to address the academic needs of its

student body. Low achievement on standardized tests led the administrators and faculty to conclude that if Latino and African American students at Carlisle lacked improved their reading scores, they would be more successful in school. The school functioned on the supposition that the administration and teachers knew what the students needed. The school did not consult the students or their families. The school could offer a series of community meetings to gather understanding and information from the families so that they have a level of involvement and commitment in the literacy program (Valverde & Scribner, 2001). At school, the administration and teachers needed to find ways to involve all students in defining the issues. The school needed to recognize that different groups might have different issues (Darder, 1997). The underlying paternalistic attitude of the school, though well meaning, could alienate the students and could cause a misinterpretation of student needs. By focusing the whole community on the needs of the diverse student body, the administration could lead the faculty and community to a greater understanding of each other and help the forge common goals.

Literature Issues

Anglo-Saxon centered literature programs do not meet the needs of 21st-century students. Students should study works of many origins, multicultural American literature as well as international literature. As well as including the community in defining the needs of a new literature curriculum, Carlisle needed to consider changing the literature used in the English program. English education in the United States has a long tradition of teaching Anglo-Saxon literature. In the 1890s British literature was the foundation of literature study in secondary schools (Applebee, 1974), and in the early 20th century, literature programs began to focus on American literature, much of it from the Anglo-Saxon tradition in the United States. In the second part of the 20th century, literature programs added some multicultural texts and more

literature by women (Applebee, 1993). Still the common core has remained predominantly White literature. The current content of Carlisle's literature program reflected the values and content found in this history. Students should be reading works that reflect the diversity of American culture such as Anglo-Saxon, American Indian, African American, Mexican, and Puerto Rican. Carlisle had not considered the changing role of the United States in the global community. Students needed to see themselves as members of a global community, not just the United States, and the literature program needed to reflect these values (Luke, 2004). When the school brings in new materials, it needs to give them the same status as the long-standing classics that schools have taught for decades (Graff, 2007; Moore, 2011). Carlisle students, like students across the United States, need to read materials from the multiple cultures in the United States as well as numerous world cultures.

The literature in the curriculum should cultivate the interests of students and help them see themselves as involved in school and the academic process. As Carlisle grappled with the low achievement of its Latino and African American students, it did not include required literature from those cultures. Underachieving students, especially, benefit from studying literature about their culture (Garth-McCullough, 2008). Readers depend on prior knowledge to frame what they read and to understand its content. Learning to figure out what knowledge they need to read a text will enable them to develop the cognitive skills they will need to access more traditional texts such as Shakespeare later in their academic career, especially if they go to college (Moore, 2010). When students read literature from their own culture, they usually possess prior knowledge needed to grasp the material and have greater success in interpreting the text (Garth-McCullough, 2008).

In the process of modifying the literature curriculum, the faculty members did not consider the cultural framework in which they worked nor the cultural framework of their students and other staff members. Carlisle needed leadership that would guide its White faculty to understand that they often see the world from a White perspective and interpret the world from that White perspective (Appleman, 2010; Darder, 1997). Making that shift in perspective would foster respect for multiple cultures and encourage incorporation of that principle into the curriculum (Jimenez, 2004).

Carlisle did not consider the role that literature filled in student lives in the 21st century. The school had been stuck in the latter part of the 20th century with its literature choices. English as a discipline is in a state of change (Graff, 2007; Luke, 1998; Wilhelm & Novak, 2011), and the Carlisle English department should rethink what constitutes literature in the 21st century. Educators are suggesting that English classes should include a global world perspective. Also literature itself has been changing with the sophisticated nature of the graphic novels, the dominance of blogs and microblogs, and the preponderance of video games. Novels, short stories, essays, plays and poetry all have their regular place in a literature curriculum, but these other literary forms fill the 21st century world with words and ideas and merit consideration (Alvermann & Heron, 2001). In planning a new curriculum, the department should consider which of these materials they should study and how to build on the knowledge students have of non-academic literary form to improve their reading and understanding of academic literature. Using many literary forms would allow students to build on non-academic reading skills and find ways to bridge the reading they do in their lives with the reading they do in school (Alvermann & Heron, 2001; Moje, 2000).

Reading Issues

Along with creating a richer and more diverse body of literature to study, the faculty needed to consider what reading skills the students needed to access literature. Many students today lack cognitive strategies for reading and would benefit from more reading instruction (Tatum, 2005). An effective English curriculum should include strategies for teachers to expose the structure of the literature and methods for accessing ideas from it (Delpit, 1995). By offering that kind of instruction, more students would have the skills to succeed in college, trade training programs, and the military (Hilliard, 2003). A balanced literature curriculum should blend literary analysis with reading instruction (Appleman, 2010). In building the literature curriculum for all four grade levels, the faculty could assess what reading skills the students needed to understand the texts and integrate those skills into the lesson about the ideas in the text (Tatum, 2005). With that kind of instruction, students would learn to be independent readers and thinkers. The skills should not be the purpose of the reading instruction; they should be a means to create thoughtful readers and thinkers. (Hilliard, 2003; Tatum, 2005).

Reading instruction is an important component in a 21st-century literature program. Students need to understand how to access academic texts and appropriate reading instruction should be embedded into any literature program (Appleman, 2010). Carlisle did not integrate the reading program for general freshman into the full freshman curriculum. For general freshmen, the highly regarded SIM reading program (Slavin, et. al., 2008) was a stand-alone program. For one quarter, students used the SIM program. They had no other literature instruction, no discussion of anything they read, and no writing about what they had read. Students need to be engaged in rigorous thinking as they learn to read (Shanahan, 2004). An alternative way to use the SIM program would be to integrate the SIM program into the curriculum and offer literature

study alternately with the SIM instruction to emphasize the reading skills the students were learning. Students could also have the opportunities to write about literature they studied and learn how they could use strategies they were learning to find evidence for their papers. Adding more literature, conducting regular discussions on the literature, and applying the reading skills they learned in the SIM reading program to writing assignment and discussion about the literature would give students more rigorous practice and would be beneficial for blending reading, writing, and literary analysis (Conchas, 2001).

Issues of Faculty Fear

The professional standards of English teachers have changed in the past 20 years as the student population has become more diverse and the curricula have not met these students' needs. Educators now expect teachers to be able to effectively teach a diverse population (Appleman, 2010). Carlisle's English department is an example of a program that felt the stress to meet the needs of a diverse population by teachers with little or no training in meeting the needs of these students. When the Carlisle faculty talked about the changes in the English department, they used words such as "subversive," "angry," "pushed," and "frustrated." These words expressed their feelings of fear and apprehension as they dealt with the changes in the curriculum.

Teaching a diverse student body requires an understanding of the cultural norms and learning patterns of the students different from the teachers. Without that kind of training, teachers can unknowingly impose their own White cultural expectations on their students and meet with frustration as they experience resistance from the diverse student population (Darder, 1996; Hilliard, 2003; Jimenez, 2004). Carlisle teachers illustrate this lack of training that resulted in fear since they lacked an understanding of the their new students. Carlisle needed to

develop staff development programs that helped the faculty understand the culture of the students they taught and learn about different teaching strategies that have worked well with Latino and African American students.

Another cause of the faculty's fear came from the way they were treated as the new curriculum decisions were made. These teachers felt as if their role in the classroom was changing, and they did not have any control over the changes being made or, in some cases, an understanding of them. They had the task of choosing literature, but they had little opportunity to analyze the problems the school faced. They also did not have any training in what the new diverse population's needs were or leadership in bridging the skills they had as teachers with the new skills they needed to handle the needs of this new diverse population. The faculty needed to identify the problems in the old curriculum (Weinstein, et. al., 2004) and construct a new one so that they could take full responsibility for it (Fullon & Hargreaves, 1996). Teachers stand at the center of the curriculum since they help students mediate their understanding of text and the structure for the learning in the classroom (Applebee, 1993). If they are not a part of developing the curriculum, they will not effectively execute it.

Under effective leadership, the English faculty needed to find ways to articulate the concerns that they had about student achievement, understand the cultural needs and interests of their new diverse population, and develop a plan to address these issues. Possibly, a partnership with a local university or college with an educational program could offer guidance and results from research that would address some of these issues (Jimenez, 2004). Many of the teachers had ways to address some of the achievement issues and had been using them in their classrooms. The leadership in the school needed to find ways to empower the faculty to find solutions either from work they were doing in the school or from sources outside. In involving

the faculty in finding ways to work with the diverse student body and its set of needs, the leadership would help allay the faculty's fears and dispel the anger in the department.

Limitations of this study and recommendations for future research

Some of the conditions of the study caused limitations on the scope and focus of the study. I was only at Carlisle High School for 8 weeks and was not there for the administration of standardized testing at the end of the semester or the end of the year. Knowing how the faculty used this data to modify their teaching and understanding how the administration planned to use the data would have added to this study. The study itself focused only on the faculty and the school's literature curriculum. Parents, students, and the community all play a major role in curriculum planning and assessment of curricular needs. Those elements were not in the scope of this study.

This study suggests additional research in five areas. First, I would like to see more research in effective reading instruction for regular, honors and AP English students. Teachers need to understand the process of exposing students to reading skills at higher levels, and students need those skills to be successful as they move into more advanced tracks. Second, the teachers at Carlisle had a varied knowledge of current literacy research. It would be useful to have further understanding of how schools help teachers keep up to date on current research in the field and its application to their work or if schools even do that. Third, it would be helpful to have further study of successful Latino students. Understanding how and why they are successful could offer ways to assist all Latino students and possibly all students in being more successful in school. Another dimension to that study would be what teachers do to help Latino students to be successful students. Fourth, additional research in what White teachers should do to change their practices as they teach non-White students is needed. Fifth, there is a need for

further research on understanding teacher attitudes about teaching reading with literature at the secondary level as well as research on ways to support teacher morale especially as they work with underachieving students.

In my interview with Adam, the associate principal for curriculum and instruction, he spoke of his concern that the White English faculty had not found ways to reach Latino and African American students who were now in their classes. He also expressed a fear that they had not fully embraced the changes in the school and in some ways still functioned as if it were White. This study has been about what changes and adjustments Carlisle's English faculty had incorporated into their literature study and what impediments kept them from making the kinds of changes that served the needs of all of the students at Carlisle. I return to Langston Hughes' narrator in his poem "Theme for English B" as I note the similarities between the instructor in the poem and Carlisle's English faculty. The narrator of the poem gave his paper to his instructor and described his feelings: "You are White--/yet a part of me, as I am a part of you. /That's American" (Rampersad & Roessel, 2001, p. 410). The tension the student felt as he submitted his paper rumbled through the poem. That same tension permeated Carlisle as it began to address the issues of multiculturalism and to acknowledge the need for change in the literature program. The students, teachers, and the school will all change, as they each become a part of the other. The molding and shaping that change demands strong leadership with a vision that supports all of the students: Latino, African American, and White.

Appendix

Interview Questions

Questions for Teachers from Initial Interviews

1. How long have you been working at Carlisle?
2. Did you have any teaching experience before you came to this school? What?
3. What professional training have you had? University degrees? Certificates? Other course work or relevant workshops?
4. What do you teach now? How long have you been teaching these courses?
5. How did you get this assignment? How do these assignments change?
6. What literature are you teaching in each class? How long have these books been a part of this curriculum?
7. Is there required literature for each course? Additional literature? How does the department decide upon the required literature? How do you decide upon the other literature?
8. How does the department make changes in the literature curriculum?
9. How do you feel about the literature that you are teaching?
10. What influences your choices for materials? Suggest these areas if they are not part of the response: parents, community, students, personal experience, personal beliefs.
11. What motivates the department choices?
12. In the time that you have been at Carlisle, what kinds of changes have been made in the literature curriculum? What has motivated these changes? Have they been effective?
13. As you think about what you teach now, in what ways is it the same and in what ways is it different than what you studied when you were in high school?
14. Do you believe that all students should read the same materials? Why or why not?
15. Have you changed what you are teaching over the years? In what ways?
16. If you could drop one book from the Carlisle literature curriculum, what would it be? Why?
17. If you could add one book to the curriculum, what would it be? Why?
18. Are there some authors that all students should read? Why or why not?
19. There is a large Latino and African American population at this school. Should the curriculum include books about them? Why or why not?
20. Are there other groups that also should have representation in the curriculum? What are they? Why include them?

21. If you could design the literature curriculum at Carlisle from scratch and did not have to consider money or class size, what would it look like?

Questions for Teachers from Follow-up Interviews

1. I have copies of the textbook table of contents and the list of protected novels list. Would you please mark those pieces that you use from each and note what class you use them in. How effective are these pieces for teaching literature at Carlisle, including the textbook?
2. What do you think are the purposes of teaching literature? (If they do not talk directly talk about the following, ask them if these are part of teaching literature: reading instruction, understanding diverse cultures, problem solving, retention of cultural values, understanding diverse groups such as women, gays, Blacks)
3. What impact has standardized testing had on the literature curriculum at Carlisle? What ways on 9th? On 10th? On 11th? On 12th?
4. Even if you do not teach AP, are there ways AP testing and curriculums impacts Carlisle's literature curriculum? Please describe.
5. As you think of your study of literature from 9th grade until now, what pieces of literature/authors have remained constant? Why do you think that is true?
6. (For Marcus, Barbara, Heather) Tell me about your experience at Carlisle as a student of literature. What has changed? What has remained the same? Why do you think the changes and lack of changes have occurred?
7. Many of you have spoken of the importance of teaching rhetoric as a part of teaching literature. What do you mean by rhetoric? How does it impact the choice of literature and its instruction?
8. Many of you have spoke of the importance of teaching "argument"? How does that influence the selection of literature? The teaching of literature?
9. Many of you spoke of the need for more Latino literature in the curriculum. In choosing materials about different cultural groups such as African Americans and Latinos, what factors influenced your choice? (In the past interview, they alluded to availability and money, difficulty of text, historical importance, literary importance, picture of the culture. Remind them of these points if they do not touch on any one of them.)
10. As you are choosing literature, how do make it appealing and accessible to the low-achieving students?
11. What role does critical thinking skills have as you choose literature?
12. After we talked the last time, is there anything else that you wanted to tell me about the selection and teaching of literature at Carlisle?

Questions for Administrators

1. How long have you been working at Carlisle? Were you hired as the division head or did you have another position at Carlisle before that?
2. Did you have any administrative experience before you came to this school? What? Teaching experience? Where? Teaching what?
3. What professional training have you had? University degrees? Certificates? Other course work or relevant workshops?
4. Could you explain the role of the division head? How is it different than a chair?
5. What made you seek this position?
6. How would you describe the literature curriculum when you first came to Carlisle?
7. What do you know about the history of the literature program here? How has it changed over the years?
8. What kinds of changes have you implemented in the literature curriculum since you came?
9. What kinds of changes would you like to make? What motivates you to make those changes?
10. How does the department choose books?
11. How does the department decide what pieces of literature should be required? How does it decide upon the non-required list?
12. How do you feel about the literature the department is teaching?
13. Is there a core of literature or authors all students should have read? Why or why not?
14. From your experience, how difficult is it to change the literature curriculum at Carlisle? What are the reasons it changes or does not change easily?
15. If you could drop certain books or authors from the Carlisle literature curriculum, what would they be? Why?
16. If you could add books to the curriculum, what would it be? Why?
17. What motivates you to push for change in the literature curriculum at this school? What stops you?
18. Are there some authors that all students should read? Why or why not?
19. There is a large Latino and African American population at this school. Should the curriculum include books about them? Why or why not?
20. Are there other groups that also should have representation in the curriculum? What are they? Why include them?
21. If you could design the literature curriculum at Carlisle from scratch and did not have to consider money or class size, what would it look like?

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