

**A STUDY TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF THE PAIDEIA SEMINAR READING  
INTERVENTION PROGRAM AT A SCHOOL IN CONNECTICUT**

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DISSERTATION

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## DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father, the late Albert R. Bond. His belief in my abilities while in this program made this dissertation possible. Specifically, I would like to thank my mother Lola M. Bond for her encouragement; without you, this dream would not have become a reality. To my sons, Troy and Joseph, thank you for your patience with me and unconditional love for me during this journey. Thank you for staying up with me until the wee hours of the night to make sure I did everything humanly possible to get this done. Thank you for taking on extra responsibilities at home so that I could get this done. I could not have done this without you. To my sister Jacqueline Hargreaves, thank you for always having a listening ear and for believing in me. Thank you for being such an inspiration to me. To my dear friend Patricia M. Miller, thank you for being right by my side and insisting that I not give up-you believed in me when I didn't believe in myself and for that, I am eternally grateful. To Dr. Sarah-Jane Henry, your advice, encouragement, and guidance helped to make this possible. Lastly, to my husband Troy; thank you for giving me the daily motivation I needed to complete this program. I appreciate and love you immensely.

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## ABSTRACT

Low achievement in reading comprehension has been an issue that has plagued grade 8 students for many years. Empirical literature strongly suggested that implementing a dialogic discussion-based reading intervention, which involves students participating in small group discussions regarding a piece of text, could lead to deeper comprehension of text and thus higher reading achievement. Historically, reading comprehension interventions within the school that was used in this study, have not focused on implementing dialogic discussion strategies as part of a reading comprehension intervention. As a result, per iReady reading comprehension diagnostic data, the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 students at this school have remained chronically low for many years.

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the Paideia Seminar reading intervention on the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 English Language Arts students. More precisely, through a mixed methods methodology and utilizing Rosenblatt's Theory of Transactional Reading, this study determined the impact of the Paideia Seminar reading intervention on the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 English Language Arts students. Findings suggested that implementation of a student dialogue-based reading intervention could lead to an increase in reading comprehension skills as evidenced by the iReady reading comprehension reading diagnostic assessment. More explicitly, student participation in this Paideia Seminar reading intervention led to an improvement in reading comprehension skills. During this study, there were some limitations that did become evident. However, major results revealed that the incorporation of a student dialogue-based intervention within an English Language Arts curriculum can change how teachers teach reading.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

In middle schools across the country, chronically low reading achievement have been a widespread issue. For grade 8 students included in this study, reading levels ranged from the Kindergarten reading level to the above grade 8 reading level. In addition, many of the interventions that were suggested to use within grade 8 English Language Arts classes at this school where the study took place were not designed to be student led and student dialogue based. Nonetheless, according to student led dialogic discussions are an important literary event that helps to shape learning and that the scarcity of student talk and classroom discussion have validated the role of discussion in learning English Language Arts content.

Research on the importance of the integration of dialogic based interventions and learning by Robinson (2006) found that dialogic discussion-based intervention are centered around complex or ambiguous problems or issues and they require authentic open-ended questions which require students to apply collaborative and critical thinking strategies and constructs. Additionally, the State Department of Education (2008) maintained that English Language Arts classrooms should be rich learning environments that foster literacy for all students and should also provide more active student involvement that includes: applying effective listening and speaking skills, read/respond to a variety of authors, texts and genres with shared responses to extend comprehension and enjoyment.

A series of Paideia Seminars were developed to provide critical thinking opportunities for all students in his study. According to the National Paideia Center (2018), the Paideia Seminar is a collaborative and intellectual dialogue facilitated with open-ended questions about a text.

These goals are aligned with this state’s Common Core State Standards of the reading of literature, the reading of informational text and speaking and listening.

Historically, the term ‘discussion’ has referred to any whole class interaction regarding text. However, every class experience that is believed to be a discussion is not actually aligned with student learning. The Paideia Seminar uses dialogic discourse which refers to the student led interaction among a variety of voices which is student led and teacher facilitated.

### **Problem Statement**

With the majority of our nation’s grade 8 students consistently scoring below grade level on reading diagnostic assessments, there was an ongoing effort to implement reading intervention programs aimed at improving student reading comprehension skills. Specifically, within the school where this study took place, in almost nine years since the inception of Common Core State Standards, there were numerous interventions that were implemented within this school’s English Language Arts classroom. However, the reading comprehension scores had not significantly improved as a result of exposure to these interventions.

As such, a powerful yet sustainable reading intervention program needed to be considered in order to help improve the reading comprehension skills of the grade 8 English Language Arts students that participated in this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the Paideia Seminar reading intervention on the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 English Language Arts students.

As explained by Burns and Helman (2012), the main purpose of a reading intervention is to improve students’ reading skills by helping to increase their decoding, fluency, comprehension or vocabulary. Seeing as though the majority of students that participated in this study were

reading well below grade level, students that participated in this intervention had the opportunity to see if their reading comprehension skills would improve as a result of being exposed to the dialogic discussion-based Paideia Seminar intervention.

### **Research Question**

The research question for this study was: How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills?

### **Significance of the Study**

An examination of research involving the implementation of a dialogic discussion-based intervention in a grade 8 English Language Arts showed there were very few mixed methods studies that have examined how students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar can impact students' reading comprehension skills. Additionally, this study also showed how the implementation of a student led dialogue-based intervention may influence best practices for English Language Arts teachers.

### **Research Design**

Rosenblatt's (1988) Theory of Transactional Reading framed this study. This theory viewed reading as a transactional process in which both the reader and the text are equally involved in the reading process and that the type of relationship between the reader and the text is reciprocal and intertwined. Based on Rosenblatt's Transactional Reading Theory, the Paideia Seminar reading intervention asserted that the efferent and aesthetic reading comprehension skills of grade 8 students could improve through a student led dialogic discussion-based reading intervention program. Rosenblatt (1978) asserted that with efferent reading the primary focus of the reader is what they will take away from the text. With aesthetic reading, Rosenblatt, maintained that the primary focus of the reader is what is happening in the story. The balance

between improving efferent and aesthetic reading skills is the basis of this study's research question.

This study sought to determine the impact of the Paideia Seminar reading intervention on the efferent and aesthetic reading comprehension skills of grade 8 English Language Arts students. This intervention utilized student led/teacher facilitated dialogic discussions surrounding a piece of text. This intervention contained small group instruction, analyzation of text and independent student work. The post seminar exercises consisted of the completion of open-ended questions students needed to answer by collaboratively completing a close reading of the text. This study followed a multi-phase action research methodology. The multi-phase action research methodology was selected because within this study's design, sequential strategies were used over time to better understand the long term impact of the Paideia Seminar intervention and the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 students.

### **Program Description**

The design of the intervention that was used in the study was based on Rosenblatt's Theory of Transactional Reading. This intervention occurred between September 2018 and April 2019 and consisted of three Paideia Seminar intervention cycles that occurred October 2018, February 2019, and April 2019. Each intervention cycle consisted of a planning, acting, analysis and reflection phase and as Putnam & Rock (2018) maintain, cyclical plans should be forward-looking to assist in examining new materials for current teaching practice and also be able to go beyond constraints.

### **Description of Participants**

Forty-three grade 8 English Language Arts students participated in this study. The researcher for this study was also their grade 7 English Language Arts teacher. As such, this

researcher was their teacher for 20 academic months. Prior to this study's intervention, these students did not have any exposure to a reading intervention that was based in dialogic discussion.

### **Method and Procedures**

This study was a multi-phase action research study. This researcher was this group's grade 8 English Language Arts teacher and this group's grade 7 English Language Arts teacher. Based on her experience as the English Language Arts teacher for grade 7 and 8 students, this researcher was able to hypothesize that a dialogue-based reading intervention could be impactful in increasing their reading comprehension skills.

In order to determine the impactfulness of this intervention, the action research cycles in this study were divided into four stages: 1) the planning stage, 2) the acting stage, 3) the analysis stage and 4) the reflection stage. During the planning phase, a plan was created to address the low reading comprehension skills of all students. Texts used in all cycles of the Paideia Seminar were selected after an examination of iReady reading assessment diagnostic results which occurred in September 2018, December 2018, and April 2019. At this time, the researcher referred to field notes and chose from a list of culturally relevant texts that were provided by this district's Department of Literacy. Seeing as though this researcher was the 7<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts teacher for the students that participated in this study, this researcher was very familiar with their preferred reading genres. Thus, the texts "Thank You, Mam" by Langston Hughes, an excerpt from Dr King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and a vignette titled 'Geraldo' from Sandra Cisneros' "House on Mango Street" novel were used in this study.

During this second stage of this study, the acting phase for this study began. Here, the Paideia Seminar lesson plan was integrated into this classroom's English Language Arts

curriculum by the researcher and the students began to lead the seminar lessons. Additionally, teachers were interviewed during this phase. Information gathered from these interviews helped to improve best practices when teaching English Language Arts for grade 8 students. As noted by Putnam & Rock (2018), this phase was important as it was critical for the researcher to be flexible during this stage and modify lessons as student needs emerged.

During the third stage, qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Data retrieved from the iReady diagnostic assessment which focused on vocabulary acquisition, comprehension of literature and comprehension of informational text were gathered. Additionally, student formative assessments, student journal entries, classroom observation notes and teacher interviews were analyzed. This stage was used to ascertain the next steps the researcher took to improve the reading comprehension skills of the students.

During the reflective stage, data that were collected throughout all seminar cycles were interpreted for subsequent Paideia action research cycles. At the end of each reflective phase, a Paideia writing assignment was completed in which the students were encouraged to take notes to brainstorm ideas that they heard or said during the seminar. Additionally, during the reflection phase, student responses to text, researcher field notes, and data retrieved from iReady assessments were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the Paideia Seminar during each cycle.

### **Assumptions**

The following assumptions were made during this study:

- 1) The researcher assumed that each student would actively participate in each Paideia lesson.

- 2) The researcher assumed each student would complete all tasks associated with the Paideia Seminar.
- 3) The researcher assumed all student participants would complete iReady diagnostic assessments with fidelity.

### **Limitations**

The following limitations were evident as a result of this study.

- 1) Students that participated in the study were not able to participate in all seminar facets as some were scheduled to receive academic support during their scheduled English Language Arts class and as a result, were not in class during some of the seminars.
- 2) This researcher was also the teacher of the grade 8 English Language Arts students that participated in this study. As a result, some of the Paideia Seminar groupings were made as a result of ability and not the iReady diagnostic scores.

### **Organization**

This dissertation was devised into five specific chapters. The first chapter was dedicated to an introduction of the study, the problem statement of the study, the purpose of the study, the research question that guided the study, the significance of the study and the research design of the study. The second chapter focused on the review of literature which guided the theory of this study. The third chapter contained the study's methodology and describes the study's participants and data collection methods. The fourth chapter contained an analysis of the research findings. The fifth and final chapter discussed conclusions from the study's findings and further questions for consideration.

## **Key Terms**

There are key terms that will be utilized throughout the pages of this research. Those words are: aesthetic reading, close reading, dialogic discussion, efferent reading, iReady assessment, and Paideia Seminar.

### **Aesthetic Reading**

Aesthetic reading allows for literature to be read and experienced through the reader's personal experience and it focuses on one's own experiences and interests to create and understand the meaning of the text (Prather, 2015).

### **Close Reading**

Close reading refers to the ability to analyze a short piece of text through multiple readings for multiple instructional objectives. Through text-based questions and discussion, students are guided to analyze deeply and appreciate various aspects of the text such as key vocabulary and how its meaning is shaped by context; attention to form, tone, imagery and or its rhetorical devices; the significance of word choice and syntax; and the discovery of the different levels of meaning as passages are read multiple times (Brown & Kappes, 2012)

### **Dialogic Discussion**

Dialogic discussion occurs when important material or topics are shared among readers and a discussion ensues as a result (Billings & Fitzgerald, 2002).

### **Efferent Reading**

Efferent reading occurs when a reader reads for a predetermined answer and the focus of the reading is to capture another person's ideas of the meaning of the text (Prather, 2015).

## **iReady Assessment**

The iReady diagnostic assessment is administered three times a year to all students in grades 1-8 as part of the district's Scientific Research Based Intervention plan. The iReady assessment is an online tool that screens students across the ELA domains of vocabulary and reading comprehension. iReady is a computer-adaptive test that continually adjusts the difficulty of each test by determining the choice of each question based on the response of to the previous question. If a student answers correctly, the difficulty level of the next item increases. If a student misses a question, the difficulty of the next item decreases. (Department of Literacy Bridgeport Connecticut, 2015). The reading comprehension of literature domain reflects the students' comprehension level of fictional texts students have acquired during the school year. The vocabulary acquisition domain reflects the students' comprehension level of vocabulary in isolation as well as contextual vocabulary that is found with text. The comprehension of informational text domain reflects the students' comprehension level of nonfiction texts. The overall iReady scores reflect the cumulative scores of the reading comprehension of literature, vocabulary acquisition and comprehension of informational text domains that are measured during the iReady diagnostic assessment.

## **Paideia Seminar**

The Paideia Seminar is a teaching approach whose foundation encourages active participatory learning. According to the National Paideia Center (2015), a Paideia Seminar is a collective intellectual dialogue that is facilitated by the teacher with open-ended questions about a text. Within a Paideia Seminar framework, dialogic discussions are the foundation of the process. According to Billings and Fitzgerald (2002), within these seminars, student understanding is developed and enriched through student-to-student interchange of ideas and concepts. That is,

learning and thinking grow through social speech. In addition, Adler (1982) stated that opposing ideas should always be considered in a civilized way and that all propositions should be examined, democratic in nature, equally respected and all talk should be student centered.

The teacher's role as the seminar facilitator is to ask thought provoking questions to students. The teacher should be very careful to limit talk time during seminar session however, their purpose is to play an active role in shaping the dialogue and tracking the process to ensure that students improve their comprehension skills. As students talk, the teacher is to listen carefully so that thoughtful follow up questions can be asked. This helps to create a map of the dialogue and to also keep track of who participates and how.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Review of Literature**

Marhaeni (2016) stated that both the reader and the text play important roles in the comprehension of reading. While this ideal behind the concept of reading is true, the reality in many of this district's grade 8 English Language Arts students has been that many students are leaving middle school not being able to read at grade level. The Paideia Seminar, whose foundation is dialogic discussion, has been used as a means to answer the research question of : How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundation of this study reflected Louise Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading. Rosenblatt (1978) stated that every reading act is an event or transaction involving a reader and a text. Elements of a story such as cultural relevance of a text, theme of a text or author's purpose are considered events in reading as they invoke an emotional response from a reader. However, during this time, Rosenblatt stated the reading process that helps produce meaning is usually neglected. Rosenblatt continued that neither contemporary reading theory nor literary theory has addressed this issue. In the past, she continued , the tendency to assume the transaction between the reader and the text actually occurred was false as readers' personal values and beliefs were not considered as valuable contributions to the overall meaning of a piece of text.

Rosenblatt (1994) suggested that the term 'transaction' be used to specifically refer to what occurs between the reader and the text when a text is read. Rosenblatt (1988) wrote: "Every

reading is an event, a transaction involving a particular reading and a particular configuration of marks on a page and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. Certain organismic states, certain ranges of feeling, certain verbal or symbolic linkages, are stirred up in the linguistic reservoir. From these areas, selective attention picks out elements that blend into the text's meaning” (p.10). Here, she stated that every time a person reads a text, a transaction or exchange between the reader and the text occurs. When this occurs, the reader begins to experience emotional feelings and connections that occur when reading the text. Through these emotions, the text’s meaning is discovered. Additionally, the terms "transaction" and "transactional" were borrowed by Rosenblatt from Arthur Brantley and John Dewey. Brantley & Dewey (1949), pointed out the terms became too closely tied to the philosophy of Isaac Newton's paradigm that says human beings and nature are separate entities. Specifically, Rosenblatt suggested the term "transaction" be used to designate relationships where each element conditions and is conditioned by the other in a mutually constituted situation.

Rosenblatt (1978) also discussed efferent and aesthetic reading. Rosenblatt’s theory (1978) explained that with efferent reading, the primary concern the reader has is what the reader will take away from the text. With aesthetic reading, Rosenblatt (1978) said the readers’ main focus should be what is happening in the story. Robinson (2006) believed this occurrence was important because by improving efferent and aesthetic reading skills, readers learn how to balance themselves somewhere between the two and once they learn how to do that, the reader is able to develop responses to text based on their need for a specific type of meaning.

Transactional theory also suggested that the reader's individuality must be respected and considered and that readers initially understand only on the basis of prior experience. The reader's background and feelings, memories, and associations called forth by the reading are not

only relevant, they are the foundation upon which understand the text is built. As seen in Rosenblatt (1985) the transactional reading theory invites readers to reflect upon what they bring to the reading and to acknowledge and examine the responses it evokes.

One of the primary aims of this theory was to also provide teachers with an understanding of the distinguishing features of aesthetic experiences so that aesthetic experiences can be nurtured in the school curriculum (Connell, 2000). Connell further stated that under the guidance of the teacher, out of his or her own thoughts and feelings, the reader is able to make a new ordering of prior understanding which for the student is a work of art. Furthermore, Connell asserted that any teacher of literature needs to keep alive this view of understanding as a work of art, as a personal evocation and the product of creative activity carried on by the reader under the guidance of the text.

In addition, Rosenblatt (1978) stated teachers need to remind themselves that reading is always a particular event involving a particular reader at a particular time under particular circumstances. In other words, we may make different meanings when transacting with the same texts at different times. And different readers may make different interpretations of the same text: such as various interpretations of the United States Constitution, or the text of Hamlet.

Aesthetic reading happens when students have found they can assume they are free to pay attention to what the words actually say to them. After the reading of the text, the experience should be captured and reflected on (Rosenblatt, 1983). Also, the experience can be the subject of further aesthetic activities such as writing or oral interpretation. The term ‘transaction’ was borrowed by Rosenblatt from John Dewey and Arthur Bentley. According to Dewey (1949), ‘transaction’ is a type of inquiry that refers to events that are tentative or refers to events that are tentative or arguable. Input on the validity of the events are made freely and encouraged and can

be made during all stages of the inquiry. Rosenblatt (1994) suggested that the term ‘transaction’ be used to specifically refer to what occurs between the reader and the text when a text is read. Rosenblatt (1988) stated that every time a person reads a text, a transaction or exchange between the reader and the text occurs. When this occurs, the reader begins to experience emotional feelings while reading have connections to occurrences within the text. Through these emotions, the text’s meaning is discovered. Additionally, Rosenblatt (1978) referenced efferent and aesthetic reading. Rosenblatt said the reader’s main focus is what is happening within a story. Robinson (2006) believed this occurrence is important because by improving efferent and aesthetic reading skills, readers learn how to balance themselves somewhere between the two and once they learn how to do that, they are able to develop responses based on their need for a specific type of meaning.

As noted by Dewey (1938), the shift in thinking and learning helped to develop what became known as Progressive Education. This shift in educational theory referred to the practice of viewing education as an active engaged experience. According to Dewey, this shift in education was greatly needed because the newly developed progressive education model was developed as a result of discontent within traditional education systems. This mode of thinking served as the undergird for Rosenblatt’s Transactional Reading Theory.

### **Dialogic Discussion**

Beginning at a young age and extending through high school and beyond, students improve their knowledge of literacy and language when they participate in activities that include group discussion (Gee, 2001). This group interaction with text includes various exposure to a wide range of personal stories as they connect to the text, personal anecdotes, positions on outcomes of stories and opinions on newspaper articles and opinions on current events.

According to Dooley (2002) these shared experiences provide students with the opportunity to draw from their own experiences and connect their own experiences to the experiences of others

As noted by Robinson (2006) and Brookfield and Preskill (1999), dialogue discussions are centered around complex or ambiguous problems or issues and they require authentic open-ended questions which then require students to apply critical thinking constructs. In addition, Watts and Anderson (1971) and Gagne and Rothkopf (1972) have suggested that when students are expected to answer questions during reading, their understanding of the text is stronger than if it the text is only read. Importantly, Robinson found that as student co-construct knowledge when participating in a dialogic discussion, they also learn to negotiate through controversial issues by using active listening and by bringing their own background knowledge to the discussion. Furthermore, Robinson noted that during a dialogic discussion, a teacher's role is more of a lesson facilitator and thus does not impost or acknowledge their own views on the discussed topic.

The term 'discussion' was used to refer to learning activities in which two or more people consider a subject , and as well, all discussion participants are encouraged to interact with each other by speaking, by using nonverbal cues, and by listening to enrich and refine understanding (Alvermann & Hayes, 1989). While some teachers may question whether discussion-based instruction is strong enough to help develop stronger readers, it is clear that discussion can take on a wide range of activities and they can be used to accomplish an array of purposes (Mercer, 1995). According to Jesson and Rosedale (2016), classroom dialogue is a critical means of making connections from the familiar to the new and of building higher levels of understanding about texts. This method of dialogue, which this researcher used in their own classroom, helped to stimulate discussion. The most common discussion activity that occurs in a classroom, was

one in which the teacher stimulates discussion by asking questions and listening to student answers, while allowing them to discuss issues found within a text. Please note, oftentimes, discussion-led teaching has been criticized by characterizing it as controlling and encouraging convergent thinking (Nystrand, 1997).

Olaussen (2016) discussed that dialogic discussion can lead to critical thinking however, while it can be argued that dialogic teaching fosters students' thinking and learning, this style of teaching is very rare in middle school classrooms. Dialogic discourse has been traditionally characterized as being teacher initiated and students' response and ends with teacher evaluation. Olaussen continued that these dialogues often use 'closed ended questions' which usually require only a 'yes' or 'no' response. In this case, students are seldom encouraged to elaborate on their thinking or give reasonings for their thinking.

According to Billings and Roberts (2006), dialogic instruction differed from traditional classroom discussion in three critical ways. First, even though the teacher typically chooses the text to be discussed the student participants share in deciding what ideas from the text are important enough to be discussed, by them. Next, the understanding of ideas is created by this group rather than found by the students or given to them by the teacher. Third, because the group shares the construction of understanding, the teacher gives up some, or all of their authority to control the content and form the discussion including who talks, about what, and to what effect. In a classroom that uses dialogic discussion during small group and whole group lessons, both teachers and students work as 'co-leaders' when analyzing complex textual issues as they shared the responsibility of making sure that students participated in the discussion by asking open-ended textual based questions, and by evaluating the thinking of other students

participating in the discussion through use of text evidence, group discussion and reflection (Glina & Reznitskaya, 2013)

McElvain (2010) stated that a vast amount of research has proven that an interactive conversational approach is most impactful. McElvain explained that that successful reading comprehension instructional practices should be an interactive and transactional process that includes the use of culturally relevant pedagogy that engages children during the reading of a text. Additionally, according to Edwards, Murphy, Rudge, Reninger, Soter and Wilkinson (2008), discussions of literary text should be viewed as ‘Grand Conversations’ whose goal should be to create a context in which students are able to explore textual theme and meaning in an all-inclusive many through the use of group discussion. Also, Eeds and Wells (1989) suggested that the discussion approach is meant to be simple and structure but not rigid. Each dialogic discussion should contain: actual literary texts, a read aloud of the text, independent reading of the students and dialogue focusing on the lesson’s essential question.

As noted in Au and Raphael (2000), the process of reading is transactional as it is a process that travels between the student, peers, text and the teacher. Views are shared amongst peers in an effort to create greater knowledge. These types of literary activities also help to produce positive relationship between students whose first language isn’t English, and it helps to create student involvement in meaningful learning activities.

### **Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is among the most complex human activities. To support this thought, Kendou, McMaster and Christ (2016) maintained that one must be able to process phonological, orthographic and semantic representations and connect the words using rules of syntax to understand the underlying meaning of a sentence. However, it is not enough to

understand only the underlying meaning of each sentence. The reader must integrate that meaning across sentences, make use of relevant background knowledge, generate inferences, identify text structure and take into consideration the author's goals and motives. These skills, which takes years for the most proficient of readers to master, are lacking in many grade 8 English Language Arts classrooms across the country and in particular, in the grade 8 English Language Arts classroom that is focus of this study.

According to the National Council of Teachers of English Commission on Reading (2004), reading comprehension is defined as "...a complex, purposeful and cognitive process in which readers simultaneously use their knowledge of the topic of the text and their knowledge of their culture to construct meaning. Reading comprehension is not a technical skill acquired once and for all in the primary grades, but rather a developmental process. A reader's competence continues to grow through engagement with various types of texts and wide reading for various purposes over a lifetime"

Kendow, McMaster and Christ (2016), stated that reading comprehension is among the most complex human activities. They state that students need to be able to process phonological, orthographic, and semantic representations and connect the words using the rules of syntax to understand the underlying meaning of each sentence. However, they state it is not enough to understand only the underlying meaning of each sentence. However, they state, it is not enough to understand only the underlying meaning of each sentence, the reader must integrate that meaning across sentences, make use of relevant background knowledge, generate inferences, identify text structure and identify author's purpose.

Swanson and Hoskyn (2001) suggested that when reading strategies are integrated into a classroom's English Language Arts curriculum, it is important to note that secondary students

face increased accountability measures along with a great deal of academic and emotional pressure to meet the demands of a more intense curricula and content. Furthermore, Noltemeyer, Boone, and Sansosti (2014) stated that research results indicate that while reading proficiency is a prerequisite for alter educational and occupational success, many students still struggle to learn the skills needed to speak and read fluently which helps with reading comprehension.

### **Close Reading**

It has been suggested that when the incorporation of close reading strategies in an English Language Arts curriculum, it is important to note that secondary students face increasing accountability measures along with a great deal of pressure to meet the demands of more difficult curricula and content (Swanson & Hoskyn, 2001). The critical need for structured reading intervention practices such as close reading, can be seen throughout schools in across the country. Results of research indicated that although reading proficiency is a prerequisite for later educational and occupational success, many students struggle to learn the skills needed to speak and read fluently and for comprehension (Noltemeyer, Boone & Sansosti , 2014). The overarching conversation surrounding the need to increase reading achievement has been long, tedious and contentious. The more succinct and narrow conversation should focus on the need for effective reading intervention programs in urban schools. "Despite the ongoing national debate about improving reading achievement in schools, reading research has produced very few studies of the effects of specific instructional programs on student achievement score on current large-scale assessments. Furthermore, there are still fewer of these studies that have focused on instructional programs with a specific theoretical base "(Sadoski & Willson, 2006, pp.137-154).

## **Vocabulary**

Vocabulary comprehension within reading achievement has been a critical component of reading comprehension for many years. As reviewed by the National Reading Panel (2000) Whipple(1925) states growth in reading power directly connects to ongoing growth and enrichment of vocabulary in reading and increased appreciation of words. While this assertion by Whipple was made in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its value rings true almost 100 years later.

Beck, Perfetti and McKeown (1982) stated when students in grade 4 receive vocabulary instruction, these students perform better on semantic tasks than those that did not. Stahl & Fairbanks (1986) also stated that vocabulary instruction is essential for reading comprehension achievement and the best interventions contain mixes of definitional and contextual program as repeated exposures to vocabulary words were found to be effective. Furthermore, the National Reading Panel (2002) also found that text specific vocabulary instruction have helped students in grade 8 make reader to text connections and they have also noted that this method benefits both average and high-ability students.

## **Comprehension of Informational Text**

According to Yopp and Yopp (2002), between grades 1 through 3, students were required to read informational text at a greater rate than in grades 3 through 8. Without previous consistent exposure to information text, students will have difficulties reading to learn. Yopp and Yopp stated that reading non-fiction passages is very different than reading fictional passages. They state that narrative reading consists of understanding a basic story format which includes the story setting, characters and plot. However, Yopp and Yopp asserted that in contrast, the reading of non-fictional texts require students to utilize text structures such as compare and

contrast, problem/solution, using textual evidence, and cause/effect. During the reading of non-fictional texts, students need activities that will help to increase comprehension, focus students' attention, and encourage efferent and aesthetic responses to text (Yopp & Yopp, 2002).

Additionally, O'Connor, Beach, Sanchez, Bocian, Roberts and Chan (2017) stated that the recent shift in reading intervention from single strategies to multi-component strategies have been taught successfully in middle school however, Riches, McGree, Lomax and Sheard (1987) discovered that cause/effect identifications in reading were difficult for students to identify in texts because understanding this requires making inferences and judging sequences; and many students are not able to do so.

### **Metacognition and Learning**

According to Vacca and Vacca (2008), metacognition involves awareness of, knowledge about, regulation of, and the ability to control our own cognitive process. In other words, it is our ability to think about and control our own learning. For instance, reading teachers have a metacognition of reading. They have knowledge about themselves as readers, they have knowledge of the tasks of reading, and they have the ability to monitor and regulate themselves when reading a text. Furthermore, Vrugt and Oort (2008) noted "It is assumed that learners set standards or goals to strive for in their learning, monitor their progress toward these goals, and then adapt and regulate their cognition, motivation and behavior in order to reach these goals" (p.2).

Roberts and Billings (2008) defined thinking as the ability to successfully explain and manipulate complex systems. By system, they refer to a set of interrelated ideas, often represented in a human artifact. They state: "As students learn to think, they are able to explain and manipulate increasingly complex systems containing many discrete elements and complex

relationships. We can find systems in content across the curriculum, from kindergarten through high school. For example, a folktale by the Brothers Grimm, the Preamble to the United States Constitution, and a word problem in algebra are all systems. The periodic table of the elements is a complex system” (pp.1-4). Roberts and Billings (2008) stated in order to teach thinking consistently, we should treat it as a fundamental literacy skill. In addition, there is no question that reading, writing, speaking and listening are interconnected skills that develop synergistically. Lam (2011) stated that the Paideia Seminar, at its core, represents the constructivism vs. instructionism debate by highlighting their differences in their philosophies. Because of this, this teaching method is viewed as a constructivist teaching method with strong attention to the role of thinking in learning.

Vygotsky's belief that human thinking is grounded in social life frames most of the research literature involving creating and utilizing a reading intervention whose foundation is classroom discussion. Social cognition recognizes the reciprocal interaction between the learners and their environment and the influence of these interactions in learning. Social contexts and learners mutually affect each other while cognition functions as a mediator, guiding the relationships between what learners know and what they do not know (Reznitskaya & Anderson, 2002

### **Paideia Seminars**

The Paideia Seminar teaching intervention is a strategy that was advocated by philosopher Mortimer Adler (1982). Adler described the Paideia Seminar as a method of teaching whose purpose is to engage students in a discussion of ideas and values of a text the students have read and as noted by Smith (2012) an intervention that includes improving such skills as intertextual connections, find subtleties in texts, engage emotionally with a text, read

with multiple purposes, and understand multiple interpretations is needed to improve the reading comprehension skills of students. Additionally, Pittman and Honchell (2014), Pittman and Honchell (2014), and Allington (2007) agreed that establishing a culture of cooperation and collaboration along with building an atmosphere of trust which is an important component when students are sharing their thought, ideas and feelings during literacy discussions. Polit and Beck (2012) stated that it is important to encourage to actively respond to what they have read through collaborative discussion as collaborative discussion allows students to share their own thinking and consider the thinking of others when attempting to answer the essential question of the lesson.

During Paideia Seminars, students engage in activities that are developed and enriched through student peer to peer exchange of ideas and values. In other words, learning and thinking grow through social speech. Adler's (1982) work was inspired by Dewey's (1938) views on the prominent role of participatory inquiry as the focal point of learning.

Robinson (2006) found in her study that it was important for students, colleagues and building administrators to understand that the Paideia Seminars were not spontaneous teacher-driven or didactic in any way. Robinson also stated that thoughtful planning and development of open-ended questions created by the teacher was critical in a study as well as prior reading of the text by students. As such, Robinson emphasized the validity of the Paideia Seminar in stating that according Cazden (1988), true dialogue occurs infrequently in classrooms where most classroom discussions occur in stagnant sequences where the teacher asks a question and the students respond and then the teacher evaluates the response. Furthermore, Robinson contended that while teachers often have clear learning objectives which are supposed to lead students directly to the information to be reviewed or evaluated, then students are usually expected to

move on without allowing the students to interact or question each other. This, according to Robinson, showed that the Paideia Seminar is the antithesis of traditional teaching methods. With Paideia, teachers facilitate the dialogue but do not lead the dialogue.

Orellana (2008) added that in a Paideia Seminar learners collaboratively examine an artifact (literary document, artwork, musical piece, science or math problem) to determine an in-depth understanding of the artifact. Orellana stated that the Paideia Seminar is one of three components of what Mortimer Adler defined as the Paideia Proposal, a pedagogical framework according to Orellana that was devised in the 1980's as a way to improve public education.

When considering the use of the Paideia Seminar within a classroom, it is very important to understand that dialogic instruction is only one part of classroom activity. Mortimer Adler, an educational philosopher, created and defined the Paideia Seminar as a method of teaching intended to engage students in the discussion of ideas and values surrounding a text (Adler, 1982,). First, during the seminar, student understanding is developed and enriched through student-to-student interchange of ideas. Within the classroom, the learning and thinking grow through social speech (Billings & Fitzgerald, 2002). It appears Adler drew in part upon Dewey's (1938) work, viewing the significant role of participatory inquiry as a central means to learning. Second, the seminars are democratic in nature and all students' views are equally respected while the discussion is student-centered (Roberts, 1999).

Mortimer Adler and a group of colleagues created and wrote about the Paideia Program during the early 1980's. At this time, Adler was a well-known educational philosopher. According to the National Paideia Center (2002), the Paideia Group chose the word Paideia to reflect their framework and the word itself comes from the Greek word *país*, which means the upbringing of the child infers a nurturing of the child through learning. The Paideia Seminar is

one of three components of the Paideia Program and the other two components consist of didactic instruction and project-based education. Adler aligned his thinking with John Dewey's thoughts on active learning, Horace Mann's commitment to equity in education and Robert Maynard Hutchins' s belief that communication between communities is vital and that rigor and high standards must be applied to intellectual endeavors (Adler, 1982)

According to Adler (1982), the Paideia Seminar is a formal structured discussion that requires students to showcase learned critical thinking skills in open ended questions which are related to ambiguous and/or controversial texts whose purpose is to invoke debate about issues and values. At the beginning of the Seminar session, students are required to read at least one piece of text and by using textual evidence, develop answers to teacher created questions. While the seminar is occurring, the teacher's role is to facilitate a dialogue in which the students listen actively and carefully, think critically, and produce thought provoking answers and responses with each other. According to the National Paideia Center (2002), the goal is to modified or solidified synthesis, evaluation, and elaboration of the texts.

As noted by Robinson (2006), Paideia Seminars are not spontaneous, teacher-driven or didactic in any way. Thoughtful planning and development of open-ended questions, prior reading, synthesis and analysis by the student participants to utilize this seminar only when time, careful planning and appropriate texts are readily available. According to Billings and Roberts (2006), the Paideia Seminar is defined as part of Mortimer Adler's Paideia Program from the book *The Paideia Proposal (1982)*. This teaching and learning strategy was intended to be used as part of a systemic, transformational program that would impact all aspect of the school community. This intervention was designed to engage students in formal discussion of a text leading to their enhanced understanding of the ideas and values aligned to the text. Due to these

seminars requiring teachers to play a non-traditional role as facilitators in relation to their students along with utilizing dialogic instruction in the classroom.

By helping students develop strong conversational skills, the Paideia Seminar could also influence literacy development, cognitive development and overall achievement (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Additionally, Seifert (2012) stated that extended conversation that is found during Paideia Seminar interventions play a critical role in helping students develop new vocabulary, gives the students the chance to practice dialogic discourse and aid in reading comprehension. Ayers & Tay (2016) stated that a good Paideia Seminar is impactful because it can prompt students to think deeply about text and encourage them to engage in rich conversations about text.

### **Chapter Summary**

This study's research question of 'How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills' helped to guide this review of literature. As mentioned previously, the issue of implementing an impactful reading comprehension intervention in this school's grade 8 English Language Arts class has been a concern for many years because the majority of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in this school were reading between 2 to 4 grade levels below the 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. This literature review focused on Rosenblatt's Theory of Transactional Reading and how it framed this study. Additionally, this review of literature discussed how a dialogic discussion based intervention can improve the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 English Language Arts students.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHOD

#### Introduction

The focus of this action research mixed methods research study was to determine if a reading intervention that was based on dialogic discussion could aid in strengthening reading comprehension skills of middle school students at a school in the northeast section of the United States. Determining whether or not this reading intervention could aid in improving reading comprehension skills was powerful as it could aid in decreasing the reading achievement gap within middle school students at this school. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) proposed that there is a close relationship between the use of language and how it can transform children's thinking. Furthermore, Vygotsky believed that children's involvement in joint activities can help generate new ideas and ways of thinking.

The issue of middle school reading achievement at this school has been established. It was also noted that there were gaps in research regarding the role of dialogic discussion in middle school English Language Arts instruction. Therefore, it is the belief of this researcher that since the issue of reading achievement has already been identified at this school, the Paideia Seminar intervention, whose foundation is dialogic discussion, may help teachers and literacy personnel within this school improve their best practices and maximize learning time. Furthermore, it was noted that there were positive effects when students are encouraged to talk and work together on curriculum-related tasks, particularly when they support their views with reasons and differences are discussed, debated and resolved (Mercer & Littlejohn, 2007). As such, this researcher believed that this teaching approach could positively impact the reading

comprehension skills of middle school students.

While utilizing Rosenblatt's theory of reading (Rosenblatt, 1988), this study explored reading as a transactional process, which involved the reader and a text at a particular time. The term 'transaction' was selected by Rosenblatt because of the influence of John Dewey's idea of an intertwined and reciprocal relationship between the text and the reader (Dewey & Brantley, 1949). Therefore, this study focused on the use of the Paideia Seminar in the classroom as dialogic discussion coupled with higher order thinking and communication to aid in strengthening reading comprehension skills of middle school students. This chapter reviews the research design, setting and participants, site access, research methods, trustworthiness, anticipated limitations, role of the researcher, ethical considerations and the description of the Paideia Seminar used within this classroom. The Paideia Seminar served as the foundation of this project's research question of: How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills?

As proposed by Rosenblatt (1988), efferent reading was used to 'take away' certain pieces of information from a text. With efferent reading, the reader is not focused in the rhythm of the language or prose style but is focused solely on obtaining a piece of information from the text. For example, if a student wanted to learn about the economic potential of the transatlantic slave trade, a student could read a book that focused on the Middle Passage. Rosenblatt further states that during efferent reading, the reader concentrates on what the words point to the structuring of ideas, information, and conclusions to be retained.

Regarding aesthetic reading, Rosenblatt (1988) described it as a process in which readers are engaged in the experience of reading. Rosenblatt states that in aesthetic reading, the reader's

attention is centered on what they are living through during their relationship with the text . For example, a reader would read “Where The Red Fern Grows” to live through a hunting adventure with a beloved pet and not to learn how to hunt. In addition, with aesthetic reading, the reader experiences, situations and resolutions as they unfold and according to Rosenblatt, this evolution between the reader experiences, situations and resolutions is the object of the reader’s interpretation of the text during and after the reading of the text.

The English Language Arts standards of the school district where this study took place, expected that all grade 8 English Language Arts students were able to read texts deeply and critically. With the implementation of an intervention that focused on Rosenblatt’s Theory of Transactional Reading, the expectation was, the reading comprehension skills of the grade 8 English Language Arts students involved in this study, would improve.

### **Research Design**

This multiphase mixed methods action research analysis was designed to determine if the Paideia Seminar reading intervention could help to strengthen reading comprehension skills of middle school students. As noted by Creswell (2014), the multiphase mixed methods approach was most appropriate for this study because the ‘mixing’ or blending of qualitative and quantitative data provided a stronger understanding of the problem and a possible solution. In addition, Creswell further noted that the multiphase mixed methods design is a design that is common in the fields of evaluation and program interventions. Within this design, sequential strategies were used over time to better understand a long-term program goal. In this study, the researcher gathered and coded the qualitative data. Concomitantly, quantitative data were collected and analyzed to provide a clearer understanding of the issue as well as the possible impact of the intervention. Qualitative data regarding the significance of dialogic discussion,

close reading and reading comprehension were collected through interviews with educators whose level of expertise in reading comprehension ranges from being state credentialed classroom teachers, published authors, district wide professional development facilitators, and university professors whose focus is on improving the teaching of literacy within this district's classrooms. There were also additional qualitative data sources: students' assessments, students' reflection journals, and researcher's field notes.

According to the National Paideia Center (2013), the Paideia Seminar is a tool that is used to actively engage students by teaching them to think while reading. The Paideia method is based on three columns of teaching which are designed to support specific aspects of reading in a fully integrated way. The first column is called Didactic Instruction which allows the student to showcase or 'acquire' their background knowledge of a subject. Didactic instruction provides facts and concepts that students need to know. The second column is called Intellectual Coaching and it provides teachers/facilitators with tools to teach essential skills which are structured to increase critical thinking, speaking, listening reading and writing skills. The third column is Seminar Dialogue which showcases increased understanding of ideas and values with the hope of leading to conceptual understanding (National Paideia Center, 2013).

In this study, student groups were expected to make personal group goals, which were designed to encourage the more reluctant speakers in the class to become more active participants during the seminar process. Some of the individual student developed Paideia Seminar student goals could be : Student will 1) focus on the speaker, 2) speak at least three times during share out time, 3) ask at least two questions, 3) refer to the text at least twice.

According to the National Paideia Center (2013), the classroom teacher has many options in choosing a good topic as the focus of a Paideia Seminar. For instance, a teacher can use any

kind of text—a poem, a painting, a science experiment, a math problem, or historical document. As long as the topic can foster discussion, it can be used for the Paideia Seminar. Within this English Language Arts classroom, the texts used in each cyclical seminar was “Thank You Mam” by Langston Hughes (1958), a portion of Dr. King’s “I Have A Dream” speech, and a vignette titled “Geraldo” from Sandra Cisneros’ (1989) “The House on Mango Street” respectively.

According to the National Paideia Center (2013), relevant and timely perspectives helps to connect the reader to a text topic and thus increase engagement. In these lessons, the ‘Big Idea’ was empathy. To introduce the topic, students were expected to read this text with an aesthetic lens and think about a time when they had to show empathy toward someone when they didn’t necessarily want to.

Another critical aspect of choosing a seminar topic was to ensure the students have received an adequate amount background knowledge so that text comprehension can be achieved. In addition, choosing the seminar topic depends on the analysis and reflection stages of each action research cycle. This occurs during whole group instruction. In the case of “Thank You Mam”, the teacher informed the students that the poet was born in the South during the early 1900s, moved to New York as a teenager, and was a very vital part of the Harlem Renaissance. During the second and third action research cycles, the students were given information on the societal timeframe of Dr. King’s (1963) “I Have a Dream Speech” and the students were given societal information on neighborhood gentrification and immigration from an excerpt from the “House on Mango Street” novel. Background information is critical with Paideia Seminars as it provides students with a backdrop as to what the main character (who

happens to be the poet in this case) makes the character behave in the matter in which they behave.

According to the National Paideia Center (2013), good Socratic questions are always open-ended, thought provoking and clear. These questions were designed to elicit multiple perspectives. In addition, the questions were also designed to be thought provoking: To start, questions should spark numerous responses. Then they should challenge students to evaluate and synthesize their ideas. Numerous answers can be correct as long as the students stay on topic. Within the first seminar with this cohort, a question suggested by McDougal Littell (2008) was used for the 'Thank You Mam' Paideia Seminar. The question was: Who sees the best in you? Think about a time when you did your best to achieve a goal or think about a time when you reached your potential because someone else believed you that you could. Bailey, Jenkins, Lee, Mazzucco, Nolan & Zdru (2014) developed the open ended questions that were used in the 'I Have a Dream' Paideia Seminar. The questions were: 1) Explain the different versions of the 'dream' Dr. King sees. 2) Explain what Dr. King meant when he wrote "...With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood." Open ended questions developed by this researcher were used in "Geraldo (House on Mango Street)" Paideia Seminar. The questions were: 1) Why do you think it was stated that Geraldo had no last name? 2) Describe how Geraldo was treated once he arrived at the hospital. Was this fair? Why or why not? 3) Why is Geraldo's story tragic?

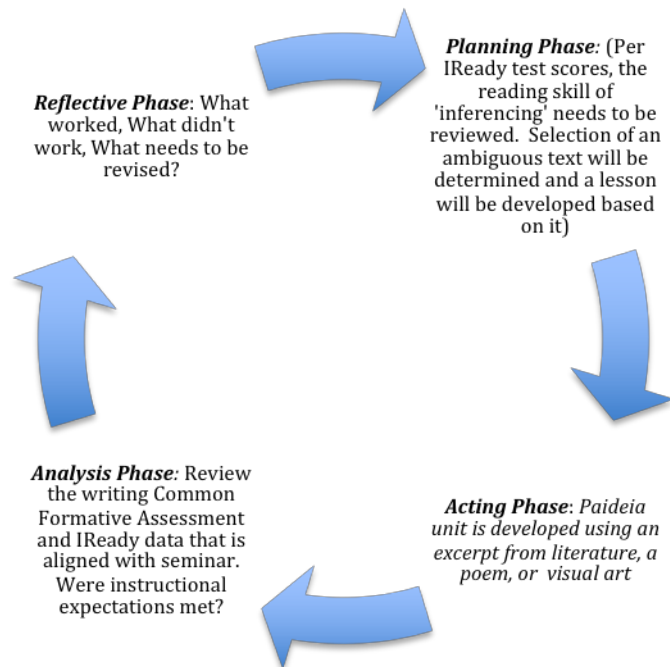
To facilitate a successful Paideia Seminar, the researcher planned questioning strategies ahead of time and prepared questions to engage students in dialogue. Referred to as 'Opening Questions' these questions were designed to ask the students for their personal perspective. These questions are known as 'maieutic,' a term that stems from the Greek word for 'midwifery'

and used here because they encouraged students to 'give birth' to their own ideas. Also, during the core of the dialogue, questions become more analytical than personal and thus required careful observation of the text and attention to logic.

**Table 3.1**  
***Paideia Seminar intervention plan for grade 8 English Language Arts students.***

Research question	Action research cycles	Action research stages	Data sources	Aesthetic or Efferent Reading & Title of text	Chronology	
How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills?	Pre-action research		Classroom observation Field notes		September 2018	
	Action Research cycle 1	Planning (1)	iReady diagnostic scores (Fall -1) Classroom observation Field notes (pre-AR)	Aesthetic "Thank You Mam" by Langston Hughes	September 2018	
		Acting (1) Analysis (1)	Paideia #1 Students' assessments Student journal entries Field notes		October 2018 November 2018	
		Reflection (1)	Researcher's reflection		December 2018	
	Action Research Cycle 2	Planning (2)	Reflection notes from AR cycle 1 iReady diagnostic scores (2 – Winter)	Efferent Excerpt from Dr. King's "I Have A Dream" speech	January 2019	
		Acting (2) Analysis (2)	Paideia #2 Students' assessments (2) Student journal entries (2) Field notes (2)		February 2019 March 2019	
		Reflection (2)	Researcher's reflection		March 2019	
	Action Research Cycle 3	Planning (3)	Reflection notes from AR cycle 2	Efferent Excerpt from "The House on Mango Street"	March 2019	
		Acting (3) Analysis (3)	Paideia #3 iReady diagnostic scores (3 – Spring) Students' assessments (3) Student journal entries (3) Field notes (3) Interviews with experienced teachers		March-April 2019 May 2019	
		Reflection (3)	Researcher's reflection (3)			
	Study concludes with overall data analysis					

This action research study consisted of three action research cycles. Each cycle consisted of four recurring stages: planning, acting, analyzing and reflecting (Table 3.1) The acting stage corresponded to the implementation of one Paideia Seminar. As observed in Putnam & Rock (2018), each cycle contained these four phases and each cycle repeated throughout the project. During each cycle, information was collected from specific data sources while aesthetic and efferent text framed the theoretical elements of the study. As noted by Rosenblatt (1988), the selection of the texts to be utilized throughout this project were specifically chosen using an efferent or aesthetic lens. The acting stage corresponded to the implementation of one Paideia Seminar. For example, for the first Paideia cycle, the selected text was “Thank You Mam” by Langston Hughes. The lens the researcher encouraged the students to use an aesthetic lens when reading this text. In other words, students were encouraged to examine the empathy the main character, Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, showed Roger after he tried to steal her purse. While planning the second and third cycles, the researcher used an excerpt from Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have A Dream” speech and a vignette from Sandra Cisneros’ novel “A House On Mango Street” respectively. Here, students were encouraged to read these texts using the efferent lens suggested by Rosenblatt (1988). Students were expected to learn about the injustices that marginalized people faced during the 1960s as seen in Dr. King’s speech. They were also expected to infer the reasons why the issue of immigration impacted the neighborhood health care system in the vignette “Geraldo”.



**Figure 3.1** Stages (phases) included in each action research cycle.

Source: Adapted from Understanding Action Research by Margaret Riel, Retrieved March 5, 2018, from <http://cadres.pepperdine.edu/ccar/define.html>. Copyright 2017 by the Center for Collaborative Action Research, Pepperdine University.

As seen in Figure 3.1, the purpose of the planning phase was to create a plan of action in order to improve an issue-students' poor reading comprehension skills- that have been found to interfere with student learning. In this particular case, the planning phase involved text selection, after examining preliminary student data(iReady scores). iReady scores indicated the level of reading comprehension skills, Putnam and Rock (2018) indicated the action research plan should be forward-looking to assist in examining new potential for the current teaching practice, be flexible to adjust to unforeseen effects and unrecognized constraints, and strategic in its ability to go beyond current constraints and empower all those involved to act more appropriately and effectively (p. 8). When determining the class texts used during the seminars, this stage was crucial for the overall lesson, as it served as the 'guide' for the seminar.

The acting phase required deliberate implementation of the Paideia Seminar unit plans included in Appendix A. According to Putnam & Rock (2018), as the ideas were put to work, reflection on the plan needed to happen in parallel as it was important for the researcher to not be controlled by the plan. In other words, the researcher had to remain flexible, aware and open to change as ideas were put into practice. During the class seminar, this researcher's field notes were used to help gauge and guide upcoming seminar cycles, as modifications would be necessary.

During the analysis phase, the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative documentation was used to guide the teacher's reflection on the results of the first cycle of the study. Documentation gathered included iReady diagnostic results that focused on the vocabulary, comprehension of literature, and comprehension of informational text domains, student common formative assessments, student journal entries and classroom observation notes. Putnam & Rock (2018) suggested that the researcher "will want to observe the action process, the intended and unintended effects of the action, any related circumstances of and constraints on the action". This phase was used to aid in determining the next steps the researcher took in order to improve best practices in her classroom and consequently, improve the reading comprehension skills of her students.

During the reflective phase of the process, the researcher analyzed the data collected from data sources throughout the seminar and interpreted it for the purpose of using such interpretation in the planning phase of the subsequent action research cycle. Data were collected from a classroom observation, researcher field notes, iReady diagnostic scores, student performance tasks, and student journal entries that were found in the analysis. During the Paideia writing phase, which occurred at the end of the seminar, students were encouraged to

take notes to brainstorm ideas that they heard and said during the seminar. Then, they shared their thoughts about the assignment's writing task and how they might respond. In terms of teacher data, the researcher reflected on the seminar in her field notes. With this data, the teacher determined what, if any, modifications needed to be made for future seminar sessions. Putnam & Rock (2018) determined that the researcher engaged in reflection in order to make sense of the processes, problems, issues and constraints made in the strategic action. Important action research scholars maintained that "reflection leads to the reconstruction of the meaning of the social situation and provides the basis of the revised plan" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982, p.9). Additionally, during this reflective phase, the researcher analyzed student responses to text, data retrieved from the iReady assessment and researcher field notes. Information collected from these sources determined the impactfulness of the Paideia Seminar during each iteration.

### **Setting and Participants**

The school, which is located in a low-socio economic area of an urban town on the east coast of the United States, is a Pre-Kindergarten to grade 8 school, which serviced approximately 635 students. Out of approximately 100 middle school students, about 30% of the them received special education services, while almost 40% receive English Language Learner (ELL) services. This study took place during the 2018-2019 academic school year.

During the 2018-2019 academic school year, only 6% of middle school students at this school tested at the grade 8 reading level while 94% tested below the grade 8 reading level. According to iReady data, the vast majority of students in this grade 8 were struggling readers thus, providing a clear justification for the need of this study. As an approach to teaching reading comprehension skills to all middle school students, the Paideia Seminar reading intervention was used with 43 students.

The majority of student participants in this study possessed low reading comprehension skills. This trend had been the case for over 5 years at this school. During this time, the researcher had been an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher at the school. In addition, this researcher had not previously implemented a dialogic discussion-based intervention for the students. According to Mercer and Littlejohn (2007) positive effects of student learning were shown when students were encouraged to talk and work together on curriculum-related tasks, particularly when they supported their views with valid arguments and differences of opinion were discussed and resolved; yet the history of education shows that joint activities amongst students has rarely been incorporated into the mainstream of classroom life.

As suggested by Putnam & Rock (2018), a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis is an effective approach for action research studies due to its applicability with the multiple forms of data that are available in the classroom. Moreover, James, Milenkiewicz, & Bucknam (2008 p.81) stated that researchers need to "make use of all available data (both qualitative and quantitative) in order to build a rigorous, cohesive set of conclusions". In addition, with constant use of quantitative data being used to demonstrate student learning growth, Greene (2007) indicated that the primary purpose of a study conducted with a mixed methods research approach is to better understand the complexity of the reading achievement phenomena being studied. In this study the data sources used were classroom observations, researcher field notes, iReady diagnostic scores, , student common formative assessments (performance tasks responses to text-related questions), student journal entries, and interviews with experienced ELA teachers.

## **Ethical Statement**

This research study was conducted with full compliance of research ethics norms along with codes and practices established by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research as noted in Appendix B. The ethical aspects of this study were reviewed and approved by Institutional Review Board at the University of Bridgeport in Bridgeport, Connecticut. All study participants volunteered and provided written informed consent while their anonymity has been preserved throughout the duration of the study and beyond its completion.

## **Data Sources**

### **Class observation**

In action research cycle one, the researcher was able to observe a Paideia lesson taught by an experienced ELA teacher. During this lesson, the researcher recorded qualitative field notes focused on student-to-student interaction, seminar expectations, and teacher-facilitator actions. The insight gained from this observation helped to modify all action research cycles in this study.

### **Field notes**

During each action research cycle, the researcher kept detailed notes on the Paideia seminars implemented in class. Student behavior, student engagement and task completion were noted along with unexpected teachable moments were recorded along with unexpected teachable moments. These qualitative data sources were used to modify action research cycles two and three.

## **iReady Assessment Scores**

Students' reading comprehension skills were measured periodically throughout the academic year by a computer-adaptive online test (iReady). The iReady diagnostic assessment was an internet based diagnostic assessment that is administered three times per academic year. It was administered in the fall, winter and spring of each school year. The reading assessment was a tool that screened students across the three domains of vocabulary, comprehension of literature, and comprehension of informational text. The researcher believed the text excerpts used for the comprehension of literature and comprehension of informational sections of this assessment utilized the efferent and aesthetic reading lens as critical thinking skills in reading were a main focal point in the state standards and those state standards were expected to be used in all reading lessons.

This diagnostic assessment was a computer adaptive test that continually adjusts the difficulty of each test by determining each question based on the previous responses. For example, if the student answered a question correctly, the difficulty level of the next question increased. If the student answered a question incorrectly, the difficulty level of the next question decreased. This assessment is a single K-12 adaptive diagnostic for reading, and pinpoints students' needs to the sub-skill levels of vocabulary skills, comprehension of literature skills and comprehension of informational text skills as well as ongoing progress monitoring that shows whether students are on track to achieve end-of-year targets.

Three scoring measures were used on the iReady assessment. They were scale score, placement level, and percentile rank. The student scale score is the score that measures the overall level of reading skills each student has mastered. It was measured on an interval/ratio scale of measurement. The placement level gave information on what the student could likely do

and what the student might benefit from learning next. The percentile rank identified how students were performing compared to national grade-level peers. For example, according to the iReady parent guide (2013), if a student's percentile rank is 90% that meant the student scored better than or equal to 90% of their peers from the same grade level. For the purposes of this research project, the scoring measures that were used to evaluate reading comprehension growth were the quantitative student scale score, vocabulary score, comprehension of literature score and the comprehension of informational text score. According to iReady (2019) guidelines, the vocabulary, comprehension of literature, and comprehension of informational text scores are reported using a vertical scale that compares academic growth over the course of an academic year. Students received a scale score each time they take an iReady assessment. The difference between these scale scores represented their academic growth across the vocabulary, comprehension of literature, and comprehension of informational text domains. When administered three times per year, the scale scores provided a valid measure of growth a student has achieved and it also provides the teacher with rich data to adjust lessons according to the students individual academic needs.

Individual student scores provided by iReady were retrieved via a secured electronic site that was monitored by the district's board of education. Three times per academic school year, students completed reading tests via the district owned Chromebook personal computers. The assessments focused on the reading areas of phonics, vocabulary and reading comprehension. This computer adaptive test (iReady) provided results that were indicative of students' levels of vocabulary, comprehension of literature, and comprehension of informational text.. Based on students' performance collected from iReady and the Paideia Seminar tasks collected throughout

the study, the researcher was able to revise the methodological design of action research cycles as needed.

### **Student Common Formative Assessment Scores**

During each action research cycle comprised of different Paideia seminars, student performance tasks were completed by students. These qualitative assessments were open-ended and focused on students' comprehension of a short story or text excerpts. During cycle one, students addressed the open-ended questions by using their aesthetic lens to answer the question 'Why is empathy toward others important?' and "How do you show empathy towards others when you don't want to?" During cycle two, the students were expected to answer the efferent question of "What does the 'American Dream' mean to you?" and "How is your idea of the 'American Dream' different from Dr. King's?" Finally, in cycle three, the students were expected to answer the efferent questions of "How has your school's neighborhood changed over the last few years?" and "Describe the improvements being made in your neighborhood." Student responses were scored using the constructed response rubric found in Appendix C.

### **Student Journal Entries**

During each action research cycle, students completed story reflections in their personal student journals. These qualitative journal entries contained student responses to aesthetic questions such as 'What is Roger's internal conflict' and efferent questions such as 'How has health care been impacted by immigration?' These entries along with the student constructed responses helped to modify lesson expectations for cycles two and three of this action research study. Student journal entries will be scored using the written response rubric found in Appendix C.

### **Interviews with experienced teachers**

Through their respective experiences in literacy education, these teachers were selected to be interviewed due to their perception of the impact of the Paideia Seminar on the reading achievement of middle school students and their experiences with implementing Paideia Seminars in their classrooms. The semi-structured interview protocol used in this study can be found in Appendix D.

## **Trustworthiness**

### **Credibility**

Credibility refers to the truth of the data and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher (Polit & Beck, 2012). Furthermore, Polit and Beck found that this was enhanced when the researcher described their experiences as a researcher and verified their findings with participants. Moreover, a study is considered credible if the descriptions of the human experience are immediately recognized by individuals that have shared the same experience (Sandelowski, 1986). For this study, credibility was established with the use of triangulated data such as aggregated standardized reading comprehension test scores from the iReady online assessment platform, teacher interviews, student journals, teacher field notes, and class observations. In short, these methods were put in place to establish and maintain internal integrity of the data collected.

### **Member checking for interviews**

According to Guba and Lincoln (1985) it is recommended that member checking be used as a means of enhancing rigor in qualitative research and it also gives credibility to the accurate descriptions or interpretations of phenomena. In this study, the researcher returned verbatim transcripts to interviewees to ensure factual information was transcribed by the researcher.

### **Constant review of field notes**

The research kept field notes during the three action research cycles of this study. These ongoing field notes helped to modify lessons as needed and also served as confirmation of teaching ideas that best worked with the cohort of students.

### **Anticipated Limitations**

*Time.* From the 43 participating students, 7 of whom received English Language Learner support and 19 were scheduled to receive Special Education services during this 90 minute literacy block. Depending on the individual accommodations, some students were removed from the classroom to receive their Special Education services. As such, if students are removed during the initial stages of a seminar cycle, it will be difficult for them to meet seminar expectations set forth by their group and they could also miss crucial discussion on the text that could aid in comprehension.

### **Role of the researcher**

The researcher had been teaching middle school English Language Arts for over 10 years. During this time, the researcher had access to Paideia training via district professional development opportunities, as well as exposure to Paideia Seminar instruction through observation of peers. The Paideia Seminar intervention has never been used in this school's grade 8 English Language Arts classroom.

Additionally, the researcher is a teacher of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts classes at the aforementioned school. She played the role of researcher in this action research study by using a series of Paideia Seminars with her 43 8<sup>th</sup> grade students during the academic year 2018-2019.

By using a pragmatic lens throughout this research, this researcher took a look at the Paideia Seminar intervention, made necessary modifications to the intervention in accordance to the academic skill levels of each student and realistically reported on the impact of the intervention.

### **Description of the Paideia Seminar Design**

#### **Description of Paideia Seminar Within the School's Grade 8 Classroom**

Beginning in September 2018, the Paideia Seminar was implemented in two grade 8 ELA classrooms. During the remainder of the 2018-2019 academic school year, the Paideia Seminar sessions continued to occur within the grade 8 ELA classrooms with the same students for a total of 4.5 hours intervention time per week. This equaled to 90 minutes per day, three times per week. The following calculations were used to determine how many total hours students were exposed to the Paideia Seminar over the course of one academic year.

#### **Seminar Exposure Hours**

Both Class A, which had a total of 21 students and Class B, which had a total of 22 students, were exposed to the Paideia Seminar 3 times per week from 10:30am until 12:00pm. This equaled to 4.5 hours of Paideia exposure per week (1.5 hours per day multiplied by 3 days). The months the students had the Paideia Seminars were from October 2018 until April 2019. This comprised a total of 23 weeks. In total, over this 23-week period, there were three Paideia Seminar cycles were implemented. At the end of each cycle, each class received a total of 34.5 hours of Paideia instruction. By the end of the third cycle, these students received a total of 103.5 hours of Paideia Seminar instruction,

It is important to note the length of the seminars could have extended depending upon text complexity. The texts, while challenging, reflected the reading levels as noted from the

iReady reading assessment which ranged from a 600 to an 800 Lexile level. Various leveled versions of texts were available for all learners to support differentiation of instruction. The seminar structure, text selection, and class instruction were also revised according to the seminar flow and unexpected teachable moments that may occur.

According to the National Paideia Center (2013), when designing a Paideia module, the teacher must be clear about the ideas students are to obtain within the reading, discussion and writing responses. As seen in Table 3.2, these core concepts, suggested by the National Paideia Center (2013) were chosen with the help of the course same objectives set forth by the school's literacy department and the English Language Arts curriculum. During the Paideia intervention, students were assessed on their reading comprehension skills. For example, cycle one of the Paideia Seminar focused on Langston Hughes' "Thank You, Mam". During this cycle, students focused on the concept of 'empathy' and were challenged to consider what they would do if placed in a similar situation as the main character Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. Based upon completion of this task, if needed, the teacher could have chosen to lengthen the time of the seminar, reread the text with the students, or determine if the complexity of the text needs to be increased or decreased. Through this module, according to the National Paideia Center (2013) the teacher/facilitator could identify pacing, skill and definition, product and prompt criteria for scoring and instructional strategies through a modified version of the suggested system.

**Table 3.2*****Suggested structure of Paideia Seminar intervention in a grade 8 English Language Arts classroom***

Pacing	Skill & Definition	Product & Prompt	Criteria for Scoring	Instructional Strategies
Day 1 -Ask "Based on the title, what do you think the text is about?" -Distribute text -Individual reading of text(known as a 'cold' read to see what they already know) -Give students background information of author and time period	Skill Focus: Inferencing	-Inspectional Reading -Introduce Big Idea	-Not done on the first day	-Clarify meanings of misunderstood terms
Day 2 Background information -Review background information about author (teacher-led)	Skill Focus: Inferencing	-First reading -Share writing from the previous day's prompt with group	Scoring will be done by teacher	-Review meaning of misunderstood terms. -Review writing expectations
Day 3 Background information -Review background information about author (teacher-led)	Skill Focus: Inferencing	-Vocabulary Study -Continue to share writing from the previous day's prompt with group	Scoring will be done by teacher	-Review meaning of misunderstood terms. -Review writing expectations
Day 4 Review of Text	Skill Focus: Inferencing	Student Journaling -Group members read each other's drafts	Scoring will be done by teacher	Final thoughts on text
Ongoing -Review of vocabulary -Reminders of time period and why it is important to the text	Skill Focus: Inferencing	-Close reading -Vocabulary list Listed in student notebook, words and phrases that are essential to text are listed -Phrases that 'speak' to students	Review assessment expectation	-Ask students to share words or phrases that were interesting to them

**Pacing-** This provided the means for disseminating the series of mini-lessons to the day(s) when the lessons will be taught. This served a very important purpose as it helped to determine the number of class periods it will take to teach the facilitate the seminar.

**Skill and Definition-** Here, the skill was described to the class in enough detail to clarify what the skill will look like within the classroom lesson.

**Product and Prompt-** The description of the product the teacher wanted the students to produce and the process to use is described here. The 'product' should be described here just as how it will be described to students. The 'prompt' was also laid out in the same language used to give students their directions.

**Criteria For Scoring-**Descriptions of how the teacher will know when most or all of the students have successfully practiced the skill in question so that they are fully ready to move onto the next step in the instructional practice. According to the National Paideia Center (2013), this column is not for listing tests or quizzes. Instead, this semi reflective section was used to answer the question of 'How will the teacher know when the students are ready for the next step in the process?'

**Instructional Strategies-** the strategies placed here helped to guide students through their practice of the skill.

As suggested by Billings and Roberts (2013), the Paideia Seminar intervention cycles were formatted utilizing a lesson plan similar to the lesson plan found in Appendix A. The Padeia Seminar cycle was implemented as follows: (see Table 3.3):

**Day One (Engagement in Efferent Reading):** The focus was on introducing the students to the reading task and discussing it with them in detail. Here, the teacher disseminated the text excerpt, gave students the opportunity to read it silently and identify unfamiliar contextual vocabulary

words. The teacher read the excerpt aloud and assisted students in defining unfamiliar contextual vocabulary words (which are written directly onto the excerpt for reference). As seen in Table 3.3, before the students were ready to move on to the actual activity, the teacher needed to know that the students understood the reading task, writing prompt, open ended questions, how to respond and what information would be included in their writing. Students were paired to share their thinking and collaborate on assignment. The teacher determined if the students comprehended the text by the dialogic discussions the students were having as well as by asking specific contextual questions to group members. The text was also be discussed on day 1 along with a class-wide discussion on unfamiliar vocabulary found in the text

**Days Two and Three (Engagement In Aesthetic Reading):** Students were involved in a four step 'reading phase' during the Paideia Seminar. In Table 3.3, these steps were: inspectional reading, first reading, vocabulary study, and close reading of text. During the inspectional reading, the students read the text individually and as a review, identified and defined unfamiliar contextual vocabulary words. The students then conferred with their colleagues for definitions. Once the teacher confirmed these definitions, the students then wrote the definitions on the margin of the excerpt. During the first reading, the students were actually re-reading the text along with the definitions of the unfamiliar words now confirmed by the teacher. The vocabulary study was used during the analytical reading during which time students were expected to take a look at the text again for inferential comprehension, which usually occurred toward the end of the reading phase of the seminar. These steps were designed to scaffold the successful reading of a challenging text by all the students, so they were able to discuss and write about it successfully. The second step of the reading phase consisted of the first reading of the text from beginning to end. The third step of the process included important academic vocabulary such as

the one found within the Connecticut Common Core State Standards for grade 8 ELA. The fourth and final stage in the reading phase was analytical because it involved 'pulling apart' the text in smaller compartmental parts and collaboratively establishing the literal comprehension of each part of the text as well as the relationship of the parts. During this time, the teacher facilitated the seminar by providing prompts, open-ended questions or scaffolds to ensure inferential comprehension is occurring.

**Day Four (Aesthetic):** The final phase of the seminar was designed to increase participants' awareness of how they communicated so that they could use the seminar itself to improve their speaking and listening skills. Pre-and post-seminar process activities were immediately before and after the discussion and were used to assess participation skills. It is also important to mention length of texts and 'teachable moments' altered the length of the Paideia Seminar.

During the post seminar writing process, there were seven areas that need to be completed within this process.

**Understanding the Assignment-**After reading the text, the students worked in pairs to discuss the assigned writing prompt.

**Brainstorming Content-**Students jotted down lists of points they heard, read or thought of during the seminar that relates to the writing prompt. This occurred throughout the duration of the seminar.

**Structuring the Composition-**Prepare a draft outline of a four to six essay, look at and read one or two exemplars, discuss the function of each paragraph.

**Writing the First Draft-**Students wrote the first draft of the essay

**Revising-**Set up students in a workshop to read their papers and receive feedback

**Editing**-Have students proofread and format to make writing more effective

**Publish Final Copy**-Upon completion of the writing task, student work was graded using the written response rubric noted in Appendix C. Upon completion of this first phase of the Paideia Seminar the teacher used the results of the comprehension questions and writing prompts to guide the remainder of the seminar. These results indicated levels of text comprehension and gave the teacher the opportunity to reteach particular reading skills (such as inferencing), in a mini lesson or create a more challenging reading comprehension task.

At the conclusion of the seminar, follow up activities were aligned with the theme (or 'big idea) of the text takes place. The purpose of these activities was to further develop the students' dialogic and intellectual skills. The coached activities consisted of open-ended writing activities that were completed in response to the open-ended questions extracted from the text, which were completed on lined paper and submitted to the teacher. Scores from these assignments indicated the student's ability to answer the open ended questions using evidence from the story to support their answer.

Prior to the implementation of the Paideia intervention, the iReady reading comprehension assessment assessed each student's reading comprehension skills, with a focus on the comprehension of literature and informational texts. The overall placement calculation of this assessment represented each student's reading level. As seen in Table 3.4, once the winter iReady assessment was administered (administered during the second week in January 2019), the Paideia intervention was implemented into the classroom. By this time, all grade 8 students would have received approximately 9 hours of the Paideia Seminar intervention.

**Table 3.3**  
***Paideia Seminar Action Research Timeline***

Action Research Cycles	iReady Diagnostic	Paideia Seminar Date
Action Research Cycle 1	September 2018	October 2018
Action Research Cycle 2	January 2019	February 2019
Action Research Cycle 3	March 2019	March/April 2019

Texts used for all seminars were chosen because they required multiple readings and close discussion understanding that could be difficult to teach otherwise (Billings & Roberts, 2013 p.20). The method for text selection included in Appendix E states, when choosing a text, Billings & Roberts (2013) it is recommended that the teacher lists the ideas and values he/she hopes to teach then search for a text that embodies those concepts. When selecting texts for this school's students, the various reading levels of the students were considered during text selection. According to Billings & Roberts (2013), successful texts have four important characteristics: rich ideas, personal values, complexity and level of challenge. Three Paideia seminars were offered from October 2018 until May 2019 during the 2018-2019 academic year.

### **Chapter Summary**

Within this chapter, the study's theoretical framework, research design, action research cycles, and data sources were examined. As noted previously, the issue of middle school reading achievement at this school have been firmly established. With gaps in research regarding dialogic discussion within middle school classrooms, it is the belief of this researcher that the Paideia Seminar intervention, whose foundation is dialogic discussion, may help teachers and literacy personnel within this school improve their best practices and maximize learning time. With several modifications to action research cycles of the Paideia Seminar made during this study, as seen in chapter 4, there were significant gains made in student learning.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

The results presented in this chapter begin with a description of the qualitative data analysis. The qualitative data analysis is divided into four sections according to data sources: classroom observation, teacher interviews, student journal entries, and researcher field notes. This is followed by a description of the quantitative data analysis. The quantitative data analysis is divided into four sections: analysis of the overall iReady scale scores, iReady vocabulary scale scores, iReady comprehension of literature scale scores and iReady comprehension of informational text scale scores. Information collected from these data sources helped to address the low reading comprehension skills of the grade 8 English Language Arts students and to answer the research question of this study: How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills?

#### **Qualitative Data Analyses**

##### **Classroom Observation**

During a professional development session within this study's school district, English Language Arts teachers were given the opportunity to observe a Paideia lesson. This seminar took place in a middle school English Language Arts classroom. It was noted by the researcher that it appeared these students had been previously exposed to the Paideia Seminar previously as they were following the seminar expectations that were posted in the classroom. The seminar expectations were: 1) Everyone must raise their hand when they want to speak, 2) When responding to a classmate's opinion, you must address the classmate by name (for example, I see where you are coming from David however, I disagree...) 3) Responses must be related to the

seminar topic. During this seminar, the teacher opened the lesson by reviewing the seminar expectations that were posted on the white board where all of the students could easily refer to it. Then, the student seminar leader, which was randomly assigned by the classroom teacher, began to lead the seminar while the teacher observed each group to ensure students were on task. Once the seminar leader reviewed the seminar prompt with the student groups and reviewed the lesson objective, the seminar began with small group discussion of prompt and then, after 25 minutes of small group sharing, the whole group of all students reconvened and discussed their thinking of the prompt. Seminar responses are summarized and organized in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2 Summary of Paideia Seminar Class Observation**

**Seminar Demographics**

Students were grouped at desks that were lined up in the shape of a capital “U”. There were five groups. Each group had four students. There were a total of twenty students that participated in this seminar. Seven students were on one side of the “U,” another seven were on the opposite side of the “U,” and six students were on the lower part of the “U.” Each group member had a specific role: information organizer scribe, group speaker, and timekeeper. According to the teacher, each group had diverse learning needs with diverse leaning levels that included above level learners, average level learners and low-level learners.

**Speaking and Listening Standard**

The essential question was “Is it better to be a teen or adult?” This was a question that was based on a reading they completed during a prior seminar session. Once each group collaborated for a total of twenty-five minutes, each group had up to 10 minutes to present their ideas. While each group shared their thinking and ideas, students from other groups took notes and in their own responses, referred to information presented by other seminar groups. Groups were also required to respond to each group speaker by name.

## Small Group Discussions

Student groups listened to the oral presentations from the student seminar leader during this Paideia Seminar lesson. Within groups, students exchanged ideas about the essential questions and responded to each group member's ideas about the essential question. Students also acknowledged new information presented by each group. Students also developed questions for clarification if a group's response to the essential question was not clear.

In summary, this observation revolved around the use of the speaking and listening state standard for grade 8 English Language Arts students. The Common Core State Standard for English Language Arts 8.1 state "...students are expected to engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly" (Grade 8 Speaking and Listening Common Core State Standards, 2010). According to the National Paideia Center (2002) execution of this standard is critical to the Paideia Seminar intervention as its foundation is in dialogic discussion.

## Teacher Interviews

In March 2019, three experienced teachers were interviewed for this study. The verbatim transcript of the teacher interviews were analyzed by this researcher. By doing so, the researcher was able to identify interview response patterns. As indicated in Appendix D, the semi-structured interview questions were developed to align with Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading. In this theory, the term 'transaction' referred to the thought of there being a reciprocal relationship between a reader and the text. This theory alluded to the readers being able to comprehend pieces of a text and it also referred to the process of the reader becoming engaged with the text. According to the three experienced teachers that were interviewed during

the 2018-2019 academic school year for this study, the close reading, or thorough examination of text, that occurs when students perform the close reading of a text and the collaborative nature of dialogic discussion are the key components of Rosenblatt's Theory of Transactional Reading and need to be focus points for English Language Arts instruction in order to improve the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 students. Therefore, the semi-structured interview protocol, as found in Appendix D, that was developed, focused on the transactional nature of reading as it pertained to the reading comprehension skills of the grade 8 English Language Arts (ELA) students that participated in this study and helped to develop this study's research question of : How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills?

Teacher interview data were analyzed by the researcher and by doing so, the researcher was able to identify response patterns. As such, these patterns helped to create codes pertaining to the close reading aspect of the Paideia Seminar intervention. To protect the identities of the three interviewees, pseudonyms were used.

### **Interviewee 1: Ann**

Ann was an English Language Arts teacher that has taught in this district for almost 20 years. Within this time, Ann has taught high school, English and Creative Writing, she had been a Reading/Language Arts interventionist for grades 6-8 and she has been a literacy coach and middle school English Language Arts teacher. Additionally, Ann also delivered district and school based professional development in literacy instruction, has done extensive research, has done extensive research on close reading and has facilitated numerous Paideia Seminars.

**Table 4.3**  
***Codes extracted from the interview with Ann***  
**Codes**                      **Quotes**

Higher Level Thinking	Paideia method exposes students to different ideas about texts which helps with their own thinking and processing...
Independent Reading	...some students were engaged to the point of wanting to continue the seminar by taking turns as facilitators and generating their own questions...their written reflections revealed that even the most reticent students benefited from listening to other students' point of view...Paideia directly addresses the first Common Core speaking and listening standard...speaking and listen are equally important components of a balanced literacy program
Speaking and listening	
Internal motivation	listening to discourse validated their own thinking...the seminar opened the door for the most reluctant participants to be more active participants.
Building confidence in reading	...students explore their own thoughts and ideas about a text...students listen and process the ideas of others along with expressing their own thinking

**Table 4.4**  
***Emergent themes and codes interview #1***

Research question	Interview Questions	Codes	Emergent Themes
How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe your experience in teaching reading as well as your experience in facilitating Paideia Seminar in your classroom.</li> <li>2. As seen in this state's Common Core State Standards, why do you think there has been a return to close reading?</li> <li>3. What are your views on the Paideia Seminar? How long have you been implementing Paideia in your middle school classroom?</li> <li>4. In terms of middle school reading, do you view a classroom-based intervention as a means of closing the reading achievement gap?</li> <li>5. As an educator, what are some sustainable benefits of close reading for students in middle school?</li> </ol>	<p>Higher level thinking</p> <p>Independent reading</p> <p>Speaking and listening</p> <p>Internal motivation</p> <p>Building confidence in reading</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personal engagement of text</li> <li>2. Higher level classroom discourse</li> <li>3. Equity in learning</li> <li>4. Student centered learning</li> <li>5. Sustainability in learning</li> </ol>

The codes that emerged from this interview were: higher level thinking, independent reading, speaking and listening, and internal motivation. As seen in Tables 4.3-4.4 the codes that emerged from this interview encompassed the foundational structure the students in this study needed in order to become stronger readers. With higher level learning, the students were able to make more conceptualized connections to the texts they are reading. Attention, interest, and even passion, which are all aspects of student engagement, are specifically needed in middle school English Language Arts classes. According to Lee (2011), all students should have the opportunity to reading books independently that interest them to build reading stamina, reading achievement, and motivation. Pertaining to speaking and listening, Wolf, Crosson, & Resnick (2004), state that students ages 6 through 14 benefit from student led dialogue opportunities as it assists students to deepen their understanding of texts. According to Wang & Guthrie (2004), students who exhibit high levels of reading motivation are likely to persevere during a challenging reading task and demonstrate a higher reading performance compared with other students with lower reading motivation levels. Conclusion: Codes emerged from this interview analysis align with findings extracted from previous research.

Throughout the interview process with all interviewees for this study, codes were obtained after performing content analysis of the interview transcripts. A code is how one defines what the data mean. Coding is a process of identifying a passage in the text or other data items searching and identifying concepts and finding relations between them. Collins & Stockton (2018) assert that the role of theory in coding helps the researcher identify existing participant predispositions and interpretation. Within this study, coding helped to design the initial action research cycle and helped to modify the subsequent research cycles of this study by supporting

and confirming that the students' efferent and aesthetic reading skills could improve by being involved with a reading comprehension intervention that is rooted in dialogic discourse. Additionally, the emergent themes that emerged from this interview were: personal engagement of text, higher level classroom discourse, equity in learning, student-centered learning, and sustainability in learning. These codes and themes helped to design the action research cycles and implementation of the Paideia Seminar intervention by revealing an in-depth analysis of student learning as it pertains to middle school reading comprehension. In the first interview for this study, the code 'building confidence in reading' emerged. This code revealed to the researcher that the initial text selection for first cycle of the Paideia Seminar in this grade 8 classroom need to be culturally relevant to the students. Therefore, the text "Thank You, Mam" by Langston Hughes was selected due to its theme of being empathetic to others being easily relatable and thus increasing students' confidence in utilizing their higher order thinking skills.

### **Interviewee 2: Marilyn**

Marilyn started her education at a state university and double majored in Education and Psychology. Marilyn also earned her Master of Science degree in Reading and was a state credentialed Reading Interventionist and Reading Specialist. Marilyn also works with her school's 'Student Assistant Team' to implement reading interventions school wide. At the time of this study, Marilyn was currently working toward an EdD dissertation focused on reading difficulties. Marilyn has been a teacher within this district for over 10 years.

**Table 4.5**  
*Codes and themes extracted from the interview with Marilyn*

Codes	Quotes
Deeper analyzation of text	<p>There are many skills that can be covered by reading the text once, but skills should be covered one close read at a time...Close reading of text allows students to begin to be actively engaged in the reading of text and the practice of higher order thinking skills</p> <p>With Paideia, it allows for all students of varying backgrounds to enjoy the texts without trying to read and comprehend text independently...</p> <p>Students who are on grade level for reading and have strong comprehension skills can read the text independently. Paideia allows for students to build upon the skills that they have which hopefully will transfer over to their reading of independent texts as this is what 'bringing the text to readers' mean.</p>
Critical thinking	<p>...students are able to refine higher level thinking skills by actively listening to peers' opinions about text...personal views from students who read below grade level can still be used to improve thinking skills...students that read above grade level improve their thinking skills by connecting their own thinking of a text to the thinking of other students in the seminar</p>
Engagement	<p>...when students collaborate, engagement often ensues...students need to enjoy the reading process in order to be actively engaged...by being active in seminars, students will be expected to express their opinions and by incorporating the speaking and listening standards, all opinions will be respected and valued...</p>

**Table 4.6**  
*Codes extracted with interview with Marilyn*

Research question	Interview questions	Codes	Emergent themes
How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As a remedial reading teacher and soon to be reading specialist, why is the concept of 'bringing readers and texts together important?</li> <li>2. As seen in this state's Common Core State Standards, why do you think there has been a return to close reading in our school's classrooms?</li> <li>3. What are your views on the Paideia Seminar?</li> <li>4. In terms of middle school reading, do you view a classroom discourse method such as Paideia as a means of closing the achievement gap in reading?</li> </ol>	<p>Deeper analyzation of text</p> <p>Critical thinking</p> <p>Engagement</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student centered learning</li> <li>2. Significance of shared reading</li> </ol>

As seen in Tables 4.5-4.6, the codes that emerged from this interview were deeper analysis of text, critical thinking and reading engagement. According to the Partnership for Academic Readiness for College and Careers (2011), close reading refers to the engagement with the text both directly and thoroughly. Mendelman (2007), stated critical thinking in reading refers to the gradual progression from superficial or ‘surface’ reading to the increasingly complex reading, or close read, of a text. With reading engagement, as noted by Hyland and Jiang (2016), reading engagement occurs when a reader emotionally responds to a text which, according to Wang, Fredericks, Ye, Hofkens, and Linn (2016), may affect one’s reading comprehension. The themes that emerged from this interview were student centered learning and the significance of shared reading. Together, the codes and themes that emerged from the second and third interviews helped to modify the final action research cycle and final implementation of the Paideia Seminar intervention by revealing the need to shift the structure of the final Paideia Seminar to include additional time dedicated to the close reading of the text.

### **Interviewee 3: Danielle**

Danielle holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and is a state credentialed reading consultant. She worked abroad in developing reading programs for student in international settings, consulted on federal research grants and presented at national and international conferences. This interviewee also taught courses in the field of educational research, teacher education, Reading and Language Arts, curriculum and instruction and Special Education programming. This interviewee was also a principal investigator on a three-year research study on higher educational reform initiatives.

**Table 4.7**

*Codes extracted with interview with Danielle*

**Codes**

Higher level learning

Engagement in reading

**Quotes**

...an environment that encourages students to talk about what they read and that their thinking is valued...an environment in which talking about what had been read is valued with students discussing varied and sometimes varied and sometimes opposing

views...purposeful reading allots time for students to think about what they are learning...reading texts closely and students thinking deeply can impact reading comprehension

...when students read critically, they can begin to think deeply about what they are reading

...by reading text closely, they will gain confidence in their ability to access challenging texts...

...close reading supports readers in approaching texts which may be deemed as too difficult...students read short passages multiple times with the intent of critically examining what they are reading and this brings readers closer to texts...close reading supports readers in approaching texts which may be deemed as too difficult with an intentional plan to make meaning...

...classrooms that incorporate dialogic discussion are integral to highly effective learning environments...the importance of this discourse builds on the instructional principle that the type of class talk shape the thinking produced by the students...student discussions are lost in most classrooms...approximately two thirds of classroom time is devoted to classroom student led discussion...teacher directed talk does not encourage students to read deeply, think reflectively or articulate clearly.

The codes that emerged from this interview were higher level learning and engagement in reading. According to Song (2019) the basic elements that make up critical thinking are claims, issues and arguments. Furthermore, students must be proficient in identifying, analyzing and evaluating these elements within texts as they are key to critical thinking. Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2012) asserts that reading engagement is a reflection of a motivated action in reading which incorporates an emotional connection to a text along with purposeful and consistent reading.

**Table 4.8**  
*Codes extracted with interview with Danielle*

Research question	Interview questions	Codes	Emergent Themes
How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As noted in your book, could you please explain what it means to bring reader and texts together?</li> <li>2. In your opinion, why do you think there has been a return to close reading?</li> <li>3. What are your views on the Paideia Seminar/dialogic discussion?</li> <li>4. Can you please share your views on closing the achievement gap in reading and the Paideia Seminar?</li> </ol>	Higher level learning Engagement in reading	Personal engagement of text Personal perception as reader

As seen in Tables 4.7-4.8, the codes that emerged from this interview were: higher level learning, and engagement in reading. According to this interviewee, while the overall perception of close reading has evolved over time, these skills are still critical when it comes to improving reading comprehension skills. The themes that emerged from this interview were personal engagement of text and personal perception as a reader. As mentioned previously, the codes and themes of engagement of text that emerged from the second and third interviews revealed the need to modify the final Paideia Seminar cycle by dedicating additional seminar time to include additional time to complete a close read of the text. Upon review of this class' schedule of the students that participated in the Paideia Seminar's and upon approval of the other middle school teachers within this school, this teacher was able to utilize a twenty minute 'creative arts block' that was built into the middle school schedule for the 4<sup>th</sup> marking period of the 2018-2019 school year. This time, which occurred after each English Language Arts class, served an extension of the Paideia Seminar. As a result, this additional twenty minutes of class time was used to ensure students were given an adequate amount of time to fully review their own thinking and the thinking of other students as it pertained to the close reading of a text.

Within this action research study, interviews played a central role in developing Paideia Seminars for this grade 8 English Language Arts class. Insight from these experienced teachers helped to reveal to the researcher that additional time during the scheduled Paideia Seminars needed to be allotted for the students to closely read texts by independently re-reading each seminar's text, make annotations based on their readings and read the text again with their group peers. According to the codes that emerged from the three interviews used in this study, the time dedicated to the modified close reading of the texts would provide meaningful and

relevant dialogic discussion that could help to increase engagement of the text and the readers' perception of text by encouraging readers to think deeper when reading text.

### **Student Journal Entries**

During the three action research cycles that occurred during this study, students kept writing journals to record their thinking while reading the efferent and aesthetic texts that were used in this study. The students completed a journal entry at the end of each Paideia Seminar intervention cycle as a culminating activity.

The question that guided the journal entry during the first action research cycle (Paideia Seminar) was derived from McDougal Littell (2008) was "Who sees the best in you?" Since this was the first Paideia Seminar intervention for this grade 8 class, this researcher focused on determining whether or not students were able to make connections to the main character Roger and his experience with Mrs. Jones. After reviewing the student journal entries, this researcher discovered that less than half of the students were not able to make this connection. Some of their entries noted were not able to make the connection because they did not live in environments that contained positive adult figures. Other entries noted that the only positive adults they encounter are the adults at school and not at home. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2001), students making self to text connections is critical when initiating the prior knowledge needed to complete an assignment because it is very important to build on students' experiences to create new learning experiences. Additionally, these same students did not have role models (other than teachers at school) to give them positive affirmations and words of encouragement. When I conferenced with the students to get a sense of their thinking, I asked them about ways to make a connection to the writing prompt and the response from over half the class was "I have

no one at home that sees the best in me.” The absence of this experience did not allow these students to make a connection to the journal writing prompt.

The question that guided the journal entry collected from students during the second action research cycle (Paideia Seminar) was developed by this researcher. The essential question to “What is your view on the American Dream and how is it similar/different from Dr. King’s?” As the Common Core State Standards (2010) suggested, students in grade 8 are expected to be able to support their written responses with evidence from the text, the researcher had the same expectations for these grade 8 English Language Arts students. Here, the students were expected to make personal connections to an excerpt of the “I Have A Dream” by comparing the excerpt to their own idea of what the American Dream means to them and they were also expected to use contextual evidence from the excerpt and their lives, to support their answer. While individual answers varied, the common factor in the responses needed to be the use of contextual evidence to support student thinking. As measured by a Common Core aligned written response rubric seen in Appendix C, over half of the class were able to correctly site contextual evidence in their responses.

The results that emerged in the journal entries helped the researcher modify this Paideia Seminar essential question, as noted previously . These results presented the researcher with clear evidence that continued emphasis and modeling of ‘using textual evidence’ state standard, needed to be reinforced within this grade 8 English Language Arts classroom. This information was used to gauge the planning stages of subsequent action research cycles to include exercises on citing textual evidence in written responses.

The question that guided the third journal entry which focused on the vignette “Geraldo” from the text “The House on Mango Street” was ‘After Geraldo’s arrival to the hospital, what do

you think is/are the reason(s) Geraldo was not seen immediately by a physician?’ As measured by a Common Core aligned written response rubric found in Appendix C, by the end of this seminar, almost all of students were able to correctly use evidence from the story to support their opinion. This means that students’ reading comprehension skills were improving because they were beginning to correctly cite contextual evidence to support their thinking regarding the essential question.

Student journal entries measured by a Common Core aligned rubric found in Appendix C, were used to assess the students’ comprehension of the grade 8 English Language Arts standard encompassing the citing textual evidence skill. This skill, which serves as the foundation for inferencing, is a crucial component in close reading. In this study, the findings from student journal entries revealed that students reading between a 4-6 grade reading level, needed additional support in this area. As such, during this and subsequent planning stages, practice in citing textual evidence was included in each Paideia Seminar cycle.

### **Researcher’s Field Notes**

During the course of this study, the researcher kept field notes to document the findings of each Paideia Seminar cycle. These field notes spanned from late September 2018 to May 2019. The location, days and times of the intervention as well as study participants, remained the same throughout the duration of these field notes. The researcher noted the iReady reading comprehension diagnostic results of all of the grade 8 English Language Arts (ELA) students that participated in this study. The researcher also recorded rudimentary notes on the components of the previous year’s reading intervention that did not incorporate dialogic discussion and subsequently compared that teaching approach to the Paideia Seminar intervention. Additionally, while maintaining student anonymity, the researcher recorded

students' oral responses to the discussion and implementation of the Paideia Seminar reading intervention. As such, the researcher also recorded students' written responses to the Paideia Seminar at the end of the final Paideia cycle in May 2019. Final comments within these field notes included a comparison of student oral responses from class observations of study participant class #1 and study participant class #2. The researcher relied heavily on the field notes, which contained excerpts of conversations amongst students during seminars. These notes revealed positive experiences the students had during the seminars such as: comprehending contextual vocabulary with peers, making connections to text, and comprehending the essential question of 'Who sees the best in you?' These notes also revealed some areas in need of improvement such as: needing additional seminar time dedicated to closely reading the text, the need for the researcher to develop various text annotation strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners, and also develop various graphic organizers that students to use during the reading of the text. These notes were instrumental in providing insight for intervention modification that were implemented throughout the study.

The findings that emerged during the qualitative portion of this study included information gathered from a class observation, student journal entries, teacher interviews, and researcher field notes. The information collected during the qualitative portion of this study helped to develop and implement the Paideia Seminar intervention which was used to address low reading comprehension iReady diagnostic assessment scores.

### **Quantitative Data Analyses**

The iReady online assessment tool is a digital platform that is used to assess the reading skills of grade K-12 students in this district. The results from this diagnostic assessment provided an in-depth representation of the specific skills the grade 8 English Language Arts

students needed to improve upon in order to become stronger readers. In addition, diagnostic results for the grade 8 students, which were collected in Fall 2018, Winter 2019, and Spring 2019, were used to guide Paideia lessons.

### **Findings**

The quantitative data analyzed in this study were obtained via the iReady diagnostic assessment platform. The scale scores of the following academic areas were analyzed: vocabulary, comprehension of literature, and comprehension of informational text. In the vocabulary domain of the iReady assessment, students were expected to be able to determine the meaning of words and phrases as they were used within text and be able to analyze the impact of specific word choices along with contextual word meaning and tone while using an aesthetic lens. In the comprehension of literature domain, students were expected to be able to comprehend grade 8 texts and be able to make logical inferences by using evidence from the text. In the comprehension of informational text, students were expected to cite evidence that supported logical inferences and be able to determine the central idea of a text using an efferent lens.

During the study, forty-three students were expected to complete the iReady assessment as it was a mandated assessment tool required at the district level. Forty-three students completed the Winter 2019 iReady assessment, forty-three students completed the Winter 2019 assessment and forty-one students completed the Spring 2019 iReady assessment.

### **Analysis of overall iReady scores**

The scores that were measured for this study were the comprehension of literature, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension of informational text. A repeated measures ANOVA compared means across one or more variables that are based on repeated observations. As part

of the data analysis, a repeated measures ANOVA was used to explore whether there were statistically significant differences at the 0.05 significance level among student iReady scores collected in Fall 2018, Winter 2019 and Spring 2019. iReady scale scores were measured on an interval/ratio scale of measurement and were indicative of the overall reading levels of students.

An ANOVA with repeated measures can be used to compare three or more groups. Within these groups, the participants were the same but their iReady scores were collected at different times: Fall 2018, Winter 2019 and Spring 2019. For the purposes of this study, a repeated measures ANOVA was used because the scale scores of the students participating in the study were measured three times over the course of the academic school year to determine the impact of the Paideia Seminar intervention. For the purpose of this study, the alternative hypothesis stated that there were statistical differences (at the significance level of 0.05) among iReady scale scores of students collected in Fall 2018, Winter 2019, and Spring 2019. The null hypothesis indicated that there were no statistically significant differences (at the significant level of 0.05) among iReady scale scores of students in Fall 2018, Winter 2019 and Spring 2019. The null hypothesis was assumed true and tested at the 0.05 significance level.

**Table 4.9*****SPSS Output from ANOVA comparing iReady scores of students in Fall 2018, Winter 2019, and Spring 2019***

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>a</sup>
Intercept	38712927.0	1	38712927.0	3314.827	.000	.988	3314.827	1.000
Error	467148.634	40	11678.716					

a. Computed using alpha

A repeated measures ANOVA was computed comparing the iReady scale scores of 41 students collected in Fall 2018, Winter 2019 and Spring 2019. Independent/grouping variable was represented by the time of iReady assessment (Fall 2018, Winter 2019, Spring 2019). A significant difference was found among these iReady scale scores ( $F(1, 40)=3314.827$   $p < .05$ ) indicating that iReady scores significantly increased from Fall 2018 to Spring 2019. The effect size was calculated by computing the partial eta squared. The findings suggest that the different times at which iReady scores were calculated accounted for 98.8% of the variance in iReady scores (see Table 4.9)

The significant results obtained from the repeated measures ANOVA were subsequently followed by pairwise comparisons (Bonferroni test) to examine which groups of iReady scale scores (Fall 2018, Winter 2019, Spring 2019) differed significantly. This analysis revealed that iReady scale scores from Fall 2018 ( $M=548.80$ ,  $SD = 69.546$ ) compared with Winter 2019 ( $M=562.59$ ,  $SD =58.616$ ) and from Fall 2018 ( $M=548.80$ ,  $SD = 69.546$ ) compared with Spring 2019 ( $M=571.66$ ,  $SD = 65.394$ ,  $p > .05$ ) were significantly higher from Fall to Winter and from Fall to Spring. These findings suggest that the overall reading levels of students increased throughout the action research study, from Fall 2018 to Spring 2019. Moreover, the first action

research cycles have led to significant growth reading skills of students. The Paideia Seminar implemented in the last action research cycle (between Winter 2019 and Spring 2019) did not lead to significant growth of reading skills.

**Analysis of iReady vocabulary scores**

Friedman tests were performed in order to assess the statistically significant differences (at the significance level of 0.05) amongst the vocabulary scale scores during the Fall 2018, Winter 2019, and Spring 2019 assessment times. The Friedman test is a non-parametric alternative to a one-way repeated measures ANOVA and was used in this study to test for differences between these scores mentioned above, which were measured on ordinal scales of measurement. These variables were considered ordinal variables because students’ comprehension and vocabulary skills were assessed as they would correspond to grade level characteristics. As such, the alternate hypothesis stated that there are statistical differences (at the significant level of 0.05) among vocabulary acquisition scores collected in Fall 2018, Winter 2019 and Spring 2019. The null hypothesis stated that there are no statistically significant differences (at the significant level of 0.05) among vocabulary acquisition scores collected in Fall 2018, Winter 2019 and Spring 2019.

**Table 4.10**  
*Friedman Test for vocabulary scales scores for Fall 2018-Spring 2019*

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<u>N</u>	<u>41</u>
<u>Chi-Square</u>	<u>14.257</u>
<u>df</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Asymp.Sig</u>	<u>.001</u>
<u>Z</u>	<u>-3.240</u>

As seen in Table 4.10, the conclusion from the Bonferroni test (post-hoc test) was that students' iReady scores grew significantly from Fall 2018 to Winter 2019 and from Fall 2018 to Spring 2019. This indicated that the first action research cycles have led to significant growth in the reading skills of students. The Paideia Seminar implemented in the last action research cycle (between Winter 2019 and Spring 2019) did not lead to significant growth of reading skills.

The significant results obtained from the Friedman test were subsequently followed by pairwise comparisons (Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test) to examine which groups of iReady vocabulary acquisition scores (Fall 2018, Winter 2019, and Spring 2019) differed significantly. Statistically significant differences between Fall 2018 vocabulary scale scores and Spring 2019 vocabulary scale scores were observed ( $Z = -3.240$ ;  $p = .001$ ) and indicated that Fall 2018 vocabulary scores were significantly lower than Spring 2019 vocabulary scores. Additionally, statistically significant differences between Winter 2019 vocabulary scores and Spring 2019 ( $Z = -2.341$ ;  $p = .019$ ) vocabulary scores were observed indicating that Winter 2019 vocabulary scores were significantly lower than Spring 2019 vocabulary scores. No statistically significant differences were observed between Fall 2018 vocabulary scores and Spring 2019 vocabulary scores.

### **Analysis of iReady Comprehension of Literature Scores**

Friedman tests were performed in order to assess whether statistically significant differences existed among students' comprehension of literature scores obtained during Fall 2018, Winter 2019, and Spring 2019 testing times. The Friedman test is the non-parametric alternative to the one-way ANOVA with repeated measures. It was used to test for differences between groups when the dependent variable being measured is ordinal. As mentioned

previously, comprehension of literature test scores are ordinal because students' comprehension skills were assessed as they would correspond with grade level characteristics.

**Table 4.11**  
*Friedman Test for comprehension of literature scales scores*

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<u>N</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>Chi-Square</u>	<u>6.448</u>
<u>df</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Asymp.Sig</u>	<u>.040</u>

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The Friedman test found statistically significant differences among the three sets of comprehension of literature scale scores (Chi-square = 6.448;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Statistically significant differences were obtained from the pairwise comparisons (Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test) among iReady comprehension of literature scores from Fall 2018, Winter 2019, and Spring 2019. Statistically significant differences between Fall 2018 comprehension of literature scale scores and Spring 2019 comprehension of literature scale scores indicated that Fall 2018 comprehension of literature scores ( $Z = -3.018$ ;  $p = .040$ ) were significantly lower than Winter 2019 and Spring 2019 comprehension of literature ( $Z = -1.745$ ;  $p = .081$ ). Additionally, statistically significant differences between Winter 2019 comprehension of literature scores and Spring 2019 comprehension of literature scores were observed indicating that Winter 2019 comprehension of literature scores were significantly lower than Spring 2019 comprehension of literature scores. No statistically significant differences were observed between Fall 2018 comprehension of literature scores and Spring 2019 comprehension of literature.

### Analysis of iReady comprehension of informational text scores

Friedman tests were performed in order to determine whether statistically significant differences existed among students' comprehension of informational text scores obtained during Fall 2018, Winter 2019, and Spring 2019 testing times. The Friedman test is the non-parametric alternative to the one-way ANOVA with repeated measures. It was used to test for differences between groups when the dependent variable being measured is ordinal. As mentioned previously, comprehension of informational text scores are ordinal because students' comprehension of informational text skills were assessed as they would correspond with grade level characteristics.

**Table 4.12**  
***Friedman Test for comprehension of informational text scales scores***

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<u>N</u>	<u>39</u>
<u>Chi-Square</u>	<u>4.891</u>
<u>df</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Asymp.Sig</u>	<u>.087</u>

Friedman tests were performed in order to assess whether statistically significant differences existed among students' comprehension of informational text iReady scores obtained during Fall 2018, Winter 2019, and Spring 2019 testing times. Statistically, as seen in Table 4.12, there was no significant differences that existed among the comprehension of informational text scores ( $p > 0.05$ ).

This study took place over the 2018-2019 academic school year at a K-8 elementary school. The researcher had been a teacher at this school for over 10 years. During this time, this researcher attended numerous conferences, professional development sessions and content area trainings devoted to improving best practices regarding reading comprehension strategies for grade 8 English Language Arts students. At the time the study started, she has taught the student

participants for over 10 months as this researcher was also their 7<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts teacher. As a result, the initial implementation of the Paideia Seminar was seamless as the students had already built a level of trust with this researcher. As seen in the 2018-2019 iReady reading comprehension results, there were academic gains in the Winter 2019 and Spring 2019 academic school year. As a result of implementing the Paideia Seminar reading intervention into the grade 8 English Language Arts curriculum, there was an increase in the area of vocabulary acquisition scale scores, comprehension of literature scale scores, and comprehension of informational text scale scores.

Chronically low reading comprehension skills of this school's grade 8 English Language Arts students have been a long withstanding issue with the majority of students that participated in this study. This study was driven by the research question: 'How can students' engagement in efferent and aesthetic reading through the Paideia Seminar impact students' reading comprehension skills.' Findings suggest that grade 8 students' participation in the three cycles of Paideia Seminars, as part of the reading intervention, led to a positive effect on student reading achievement. The iReady vocabulary acquisition scale scores and comprehension of literature scale scores for the 2018-2019 academic school year indicated there was statistically significant impact on the reading comprehension skills of students that participated in this study. For comprehension of informational text scores, there were no statistically significant differences as a result of students being exposed to the Paideia Seminar reading intervention. In addition, findings from the classroom observation, student journal entries, researcher's field notes and teacher interviews provided insight on the intervention modifications implemented in each Paideia Seminar, which in turn helped to increase student reading skills. Some of the effects evidenced by the diagnostic assessments via the iReady digital assessment platform were:

increased vocabulary scores, increased levels of literature comprehension, and comprehension of informational text between the start and end of the reading intervention. Therefore, it is this researcher's opinion that integration of the Paideia Seminar reading intervention can significantly impact the efferent and aesthetic reading skills of grade 8 English Language Arts students.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations**

This study was based on Rosenblatt's Theory of Transactional Reading (1978,1983,1988, 1994) and the use of the Paideia Seminar reading intervention program. Forty-three grade 8 English Language Arts (ELA) students and three English Language Arts teachers participated in this study, which took place from September 2018 until May 2019. The grade 8 ELA students participated in the Paideia Seminar reading intervention program which focused of increasing reading comprehension skills by conducting close readings of texts using the dialogic discussion technique.

### **Conclusions**

#### **Reading Comprehension Skills and the Paideia Seminar**

The literature found on the Paideia Seminar reading intervention described it as a reading comprehension intervention where students' close reading skills were developed and enriched through student to student interchange of ideas and where learning and thinking grow through social speech (Billings & Fitzgerald, 2002). As such, Mortimer Adler (1982) defined the Paideia Seminar as a method of teaching intended to engage students in the discussion of ideas and values surrounding a text. In fact, Adler appeared to have drawn in part upon Dewey's (1938) work, viewing the significant role of participatory inquiry as a foundational means to learning. Consequently, the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 English Language Arts students who participated in this study were examined with the goal of determining whether or not the Paideia Seminar intervention program could aid in increasing reading comprehension assessed using the iReady assessment platform.

The forty-three grade 8 English Language Arts students participating in this multi-phased action research study all tested at various reading comprehension levels as seen in the preliminary iReady reading diagnostic assessment which was administered in September 2019. The initial reading levels of the student participants ranged from grades Kindergarten through grade 8 reading ability level. When the Paideia Seminar intervention was first introduced to this class and this school's administration, the intervention was not perceived as being structured enough for the 8th grade learners at this school because it was promoted as being a student-led and teacher facilitated intervention whose foundation involves dialogic discussion. As such, having over forty students and all of whom were reading on different reading levels, they had all been previously exposed to reading interventions whose goal was to improve reading comprehension skills-however, according to this school's literacy coach, the interventions the students were previously exposed to were not based in dialogic discussion. However, the initial notions that the Paideia Seminar was not structured or rigorous enough for this school's learners, the literacy coach and building administrator wanted the students' reading comprehension skills to improve. In essence, even though they were not convinced of the potentially powerful impact of a dialogic based intervention, they gave their full support to the researcher for the implementation of this intervention in the school's grade 8 English Language Arts class.

At the beginning of this study, the grade 8 English Language Arts students were previously involved in independent interventions that involved improving reading comprehension skills by learning how to closely read text. This intervention did not include collaboration amongst peers to enhance learning nor was it supported by a learning theory. Based on this researcher's findings on improving the reading comprehension skills of older students with the support of Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading, this researcher

reviewed suggestions from McElwain (2010) where it was concluded that while a large amount of research has proven that an interactive approach to learning is impactful, reading comprehension strategies should be an interactive and the transactional process that includes culturally relevant pedagogy that allows the student to be engaged with the text. According to Cazden (1988), true learning through dialogue infrequently occurs in class and in order for the thinking skills to improve, students should be involved in classroom experiences that involve aspects of the Paideia Seminar, such as student centered dialogue and teacher facilitated lessons.

It is important to note that the grade 8 English Language Arts students that participated in this study were students in this researcher's English Language Arts classroom as 7<sup>th</sup> graders during the 2017-2018 academic school year. This was a key component as according to Brake (2019), academic achievement occurs when there has been social emotional connection and academic engagement between students and their teacher. This factor was important to this study because the researcher was able to build a level of trust between herself and the students. This trust was crucial while implementing a dialogic-based intervention in a middle school classroom as the researcher needed buy-in from the students to ensure they would be fully committed to the project. Therefore, the students trusted the teachers' assumption this Paideia intervention would help make them stronger readers.

### **Student Engagement in the Paideia Seminar Intervention**

All grade 8 English Language Arts students at this school were invited to participate in this 3-cycle action research study, which involved the use of the Paideia Seminar intervention on increasing reading comprehension skills. However, all students that were invited to participate in the study did not become active participants in the study. In particular, there were two students while being active participants in the dialogic discussion, they refused to complete the iReady

diagnostic which would have noted their growth or regression of skills due to exposure of the Paideia Seminar intervention.

It has been suggested by Awada and Ghouth (2018) that the Paideia Seminar may be necessary to ease reading anxiety students may face when reading text. The majority of students that participated in this study were reading at least 2 grade levels below the expected grade 8 reading levels and were subsequently considered to be 'reluctant readers'. Prior to the implementation of the Paideia Seminar, these students rarely contributed to any teacher led reading comprehension exercises. However, these students did reach some milestones with the Paideia Seminar such as volunteering to answer text based questions during whole group instruction, volunteering to read aloud in class and increasing usage of textual evidence when answering open ended questions. As noted in journal entries, five students who participated in this study noted they felt less anxious when reading and discussing text. It is important to note that while the reading comprehension levels of these 5 students may not have increased over the course of the study, they began to participate more in class and had been using close reading techniques learned during the Paideia Seminars. While some teachers may have questioned whether discussion-based instruction is strong enough to help develop stronger readers, Mercer (1995) found that it is clear that discussion can take on a wide range of activities and these can be used to accomplish an array of purposes. Jesson and Rosedale (2016) added that classroom dialogue is a means of building higher levels of understanding.

During this study, there were teachers that questioned whether a dialogic discussion-based intervention can be structured enough to balance student engagement and higher order thinking skills needed for close reading of text. Billings and Roberts (2002) acknowledged that interventions whose foundations are dialogue based are often criticized by characterizing

teachers as controlling and encouraging convergent thinking. However, Billings and Roberts found that a teacher could choose to focus a discussion on points a student should learn and thusly view themselves as a guide providing scaffolding through the discussion to help the students find important textual meaning for themselves.

### **Influence of the Paideia Seminar Intervention on Teaching Practices**

Prior to the implementation of the Paideia Seminar intervention program in the grade 8 English Language Arts class that was used in this study, iReady reading comprehension diagnostic test scores were chronically low with very little evidence of reading comprehension growth. By implementing this intervention into this grade 8 English Language Arts classroom, this researcher's best practices were changed from September 2018-May 2019 during the 2018-2019 academic school year. In years prior to the 2018-2019 academic school year, the reading interventions that were used in grade 8 English Language Arts classrooms in this school did not focus on close reading of text nor student discussion.

As Rosenblatt's (1978) Theory on Transactional Reading suggested, the journey of a reader while reading has not been previously emphasized. In other words, the reader often remains invisible during their journey of reading. During this journey, Robinson (2006) added that the author of a text and their own thoughts are often the focus of meaningful and impactful reading while the reader themselves are virtually invisible. As such, as this study showed, an intervention that is based on dialogic discussion leads to the growth of reading comprehension skills. Additionally, if dialogic discussion were implemented in grade Kindergarten through grade seven, a widespread increase in reading comprehension levels for all students could have followed.

## **Implications of Implementation of the Paideia Seminar into a Middle School Classroom**

The importance of improving the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 students is undisputable however, incorporating impactful reading comprehension interventions have been a major concern for teachers of grade 8 students across the country. At the school in which this study took place, the majority of grade 8 students have historically scored at least two grade levels below the expected grade 8 reading level as evidenced by the iReady diagnostic assessment. Therefore, implications for both classroom teachers and students were apparent. The extensive planning in which teachers must engage to successfully deliver a Paideia Seminar is “rewarded” with student assessments scores that reflect the level of student engagement and new learning that resulted from this Tier 1 intervention.

An important area of research regarding the Paideia Seminar is whether exposure to the intervention improves measurable achievement as evidenced by not only district-wide reading assessments but also in state-wide and nation-wide reading assessments in reading comprehension. Implications for school leaders, especially the principals for whom an increase in test scores serves as evidence of the successful implementation of best practices, include a need to hold discussions with district level leaders on training and resources so that Paideia Seminars become a component of a guaranteed curriculum for all.

This study occurred in a grade 8 English Language Arts classroom. It would be critical to know how or if close reading strategies have been implemented in grade Kindergarten through grade 6 reading curriculums. This has implications for reading consultants who maintain longitudinal records on their students, as well as on curriculum directors, who seek to create seamless K-8 vertically aligned curriculum guides with skills building upon each other.

There is only one school in this district that embraces the Paideia instructional methodology. It would be worth analyzing the reading achievement data of the grade 8 students at this school. Again, this has implications for reading consultants across the district, as growth data must be compared across the entire population of grade 8 students for the differences at the school utilizing Paideia Seminars.

The implementation of a more intense contextual vocabulary intervention along with a thorough review of grade-wide comprehension of informational text comprehension strategies would prove powerful for the Paideia Seminar. As evidenced by the overall iReady scores, additional exposure to vocabulary comprehension strategies and comprehension of informational text would be beneficial to grade 8 students. Implications for school leaders include a need to review various tools and resources with classroom teachers that may be available, as well as a review of the district budget to determine how a purchase of these materials may be feasible.

Beyond implications for students, teachers and school and district level leaders, implications for educator preparation programs also exist. All pre-service teachers should have access to training in the Paideia Seminar method as well as the opportunity to model it with actual students.

### **Recommendations for the Implementation of the Paideia Seminar into a Middle School Classroom**

Based on the results gathered from this study, there are two recommendations for improvement of the students' reading comprehension skills in grade 8 is the usage of the Paideia Seminar reading intervention grades seven and eight with the same group of students. According to Baran (2008) the benefit of this continuous cycle at the middle school level builds the long-term relationship of trust between the teacher and the student. This trust will be key in maintaining classroom order and implicitly, implementing specific learning goals during seminars. In order for this to occur, the grade 7 and 8 content area teachers would need to meet

with the school's administration to discuss the positive aspects of continuously cycling with (or 'looping' with) the same set of grade 7 students as they become grade 8 students. This occurrence would be seamless in this school building as it would only impact grade 7 and 8 homerooms because there was only one English Language Arts teacher. However, if this were to be an option at a school that has a larger student and teacher population, planning amongst the grade 7 and 8 staff and administration could still provide the continuous cyclical opportunity for students by assigning 7<sup>th</sup> grade content area teachers with a student cohort for 2 years.

The implementation of a dialogic discussion based intervention helped to improve the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 students that participated in this study however, in order to meet the expectations set by this state's grade 8 Common Core Standards, ongoing professional development trainings provided by both the building administration and the district administration, courseware materials and classroom peer observations would be beneficial to K-12 teachers that implement the Paideia Seminar strategies into their classroom curriculums. Access to professional development on the implementation of the Paideia Seminar is critical because professional development opportunities for teachers are a vital component of policies that have been designed to improve teaching and learning in schools (Ingvarson, L., Meiers, M. & Beavis, A. 2003).

Recommendations for superintendents and curriculum directors include holding a discussion with their district finance directors to determine how to direct dollars towards the purchase of these necessary materials, plus a vocabulary program, while maintaining a fiscally responsible budget. Perhaps a multi-year plan for acquiring these materials can be developed so that a single-year budget is not so large that it becomes maintainable. Curriculum leaders should investigate the use of literature that is in the public domain so that multiple books do not need to

be purchased. Professional development may be considered using a train the trainer model in which a few teachers are trained to deliver the training to others, saving thousands of dollars.

Educator Preparation Program leaders should meet with local districts regularly to determine the best way to meet the needs of both the students they are preparing to teach in those districts, as well as their current teachers. These partnerships will serve to strengthen the relationships will serve to strengthen the relationships between school districts and colleges as well as provide an opportunity to illustrate the links between theory and practice.

### **Further Questions for Consideration**

Throughout the course of this study, grade 8 English Language Arts student participants remained engaged in the Paideia process. This group's reading skills were considered to be representative of the reading skills of the majority of the grade 8 students in this district. Therefore, as a result of this study, this researcher was in the position to determine that the Paideia Seminar reading intervention is a means to help improve reading comprehension skills of middle school students.

Further research on how the Paideia Seminar intervention impacted the reading comprehension skills of other grade 8 students throughout this district would be powerful. For example, a long-term study on the increase or decrease of reading comprehension skills of eighth graders as a result of exposure of the Paideia Seminar could warrant this intervention being used in the primary grades as well. A long term study could offer English Language Arts teachers and Departments of Literacy insight regarding the importance of transactional reading in student reading achievement. This information could impact reading achievement of grade 8 students for years to come.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Paideia Lesson Plan #1**

Teacher: Mrs. Chandra Maxwell

Grade Level: 8th

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Content Focus: Reading Comprehension/Citing Evidence

Ideal/Values: Empathy

Text: “Thank You Ma’am” by Langston Hughes

(This lesson plan is modeled after the suggested lesson plan created by Jeremy Spielman with the National Paideia Center)

#### **(A) Relevant State Content Standards**

##### **State Standard CCSS ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1**

*Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.*

#### **(B) Learner's Background**

- Classroom dynamics consist of Special Education students, English Language Learners, students reading below grade level, students reading on grade level and students reading above grade level. Reading grade levels are per district mandated iReady reading assessment.
- Students have been focusing on making logical inferences

### **(C) Student Learning Objectives**

- Students will be able to comprehend complex texts by utilizing skills learning in the Paideia Seminar
- Students will be able to make logical inferences as a result of using group dialogic discussion

### **(D) Materials and Teacher-Developed Resources**

#### **1) Published Instructional Materials**

- **"Thank You Ma'am " by Langston Hughes**

#### **2) Teacher Developed Materials**

- **Open Ended Question**
  - 1. Who sees the best in you? Think about a time when you did your best to achieve a goal or think about a time when you reached your potential because someone else believed that you could.**

### **(E) Learning Activities**

- **Teacher Facilitated Activities-** Launch Activity-Teacher will ask students "Have you ever gone through a time when it seemed like you couldn't do anything right? If so, then you know how important it is to have someone have faith in you. When a friend, a family member or teacher believes you can do better, it can help you try harder instead of giving up. In the story we are about to read, a woman sees potential (possibility) where others may see a problem."
- **Inspectional Read-**Teacher will then distribute the text and ask students to first number each line of the story so that lines can be easily identifiable when discussing text or citing evidence. Then students will be asked what do they think the story will be about. Teacher will also ask (based on the title alone) if the students think they have read (or heard of ) a story like this before. Students will read the text to themselves, identify unfamiliar words and words/phrases that help to explain the meaning of the title (10-12 minutes) and then teacher will read the text aloud and discuss unfamiliar vocabulary found in text and students will share the words/phrases they identified that helped them to understand the meaning of the story.

- **Background Information**-Langston Hughes was an American poet playwright whose popular themes focused on African-American experiences in Harlem New York during the 1920's. themes made him a primary contributor to the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s.
- The story "Thank You Ma'am" is set in Harlem New York during the 1920's. Like many similar areas during this time, there were many single-family building that were converted into small apartments. The main character, Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, lives in one of these apartments which is also known as a 'kitchenette'. Her 'kitchenette' consisted of a bathroom (which all tenants shared) and one large room with a mini-kitchen in the corner of the room.
- **Vocabulary**-As a whole group, we will discuss imagery and tone within the text. Students will identify unfamiliar words or phrases as well as words or phrases that aid in comprehension. (barren, frail, mistrust, presentable)
- **Analytical Read**-Teacher will
  - post seminar directions for students.
  - showcase phrases of emphasis
  - encourage independent work that will explain how the text is organized and why

Students will

  - note the use of imagery within the text
  - turn and talk with seminar group members sharing examples of stereotypes and empathy
- **Pre-Seminar Process**-Define and state the purpose of the seminar. Teacher says "A Paideia seminar is a collaborative intellectual dialogue about a text that is guided by open-ended questions. The main purpose of the seminar is to develop a fuller understanding of the text and of ideas and values of ourselves and each other."
- **Have participants set a 'Personal Goal'**-Teacher says "Please reflect on how your group will normally participate within a seminar. Who will be responsible for what? What goal will you set for yourselves? Here are some examples:
  - To speak at least three times
  - To refer to the text
  - To ask a question
  - To speak out of uncertainty (you are not quite sure if your answer is right but you ask it anyway)
  - To build on others' comments
    - After personal goal is set, then develop a group goal with your group
- **Core (Analyze textual details)**
  - Based on the attached image, what can you infer about the woman?
  - According to lines 1-13, what can you infer about the woman's personality? Why?
  - In the story, Mrs. Jones says "...I've got a good mind to wash your face for you." Why would she want to do that?

- Reread lines 59-62. Why does Roger go back to the sink?
- **Closing** – If you could share this story with someone, who would it be and why?
- **Post Seminar Content**
  - After reading and discussing ‘Thank You Ma’am’ by Langston Hughes, write your own version of this story.
    - **Brainstorm-**
      - Write one or two lines that will describe the mood you would like to pursue in your story.
      - List as many details about that mood as possible
      - Create a brief summary that will explain how you will personify your story.
    - **First Draft**
      - 20-30 minutes of class-time will be dedicated to the first draft
    - **Final Draft**
      - Once the first draft is complete, students in the seminar groups will take turns reading each other’s first drafts (slowly and silently) and marking any grammatical or spelling errors they find.
- **Timeline-90 Minute Class**
  - 20 minutes introduction of lesson
  - 10 minutes independent student reading of text
  - 15 minutes teacher reading of text
  - 10 minutes group discussion
  - 30 minutes open-ended questions completion
  - 5 minutes reflection and wrap up

## **Homework**

As this is an ongoing activity, students will be allowed to complete open-ended responses and on the next meeting day, share responses with group mates.

## **Modifications for Students With Learning Needs**

Google Translate

Reading Level based text

## Audio of text

### Text

#### Thank You, Ma'am (by Langston Hughes)

She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o'clock at night, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with the single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy's weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance so, instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk, and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

After that the woman said, "Pick up my pocketbook, boy, and give it here." She still held him. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse. Then she said, "Now ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

Firmly gripped by his shirt front, the boy said, "Yes'm." The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?" The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

She said, "You a lie!"

By that time two or three people passed, stopped, turned to look, and some stood watching. "If I turn you loose, will you run?" asked the woman.

"Yes'm," said the boy.

“Then I won’t turn you loose,” said the woman. She did not release him.

“I’m very sorry, lady, I’m sorry,” whispered the boy.

“Um-hum! And your face is dirty. I got a great mind to wash your face for you. Ain’t you got nobody home to tell you to wash your face?”

“No’m,” said the boy.

“Then it will get washed this evening,” said the large woman starting up the street, dragging the frightened boy behind her.

He looked as if he were fourteen or fifteen, frail and willow-wild, in tennis shoes and blue jeans.

The woman said, “You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is to wash your face. Are you hungry?”

“No’m,” said the being dragged boy. “I just want you to turn me loose.” “Was I bothering you when I turned that corner?” asked the woman. “No’m.”

“But you put yourself in contact with me,” said the woman. “If you think that that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones.”

Sweat popped out on the boy’s face and he began to struggle. Mrs. Jones stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half-nelson about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street. When she got to her door, she dragged the boy inside, down a hall, and into a large kitchenette-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still had him by the neck in the middle of her room.

She said, “What is your name?”

“Roger,” answered the boy.

“Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face,” said the woman, whereupon she turned him loose—at last. Roger looked at the door—looked at the woman—looked at the door—and went to the sink.

Let the water run until it gets warm,” she said. “Here’s a clean towel.”

“You gonna take me to jail?” asked the boy, bending over the sink.

“Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere,” said the woman. “Here I am trying to get home to cook me a bite to eat and you snatch my pocketbook! Maybe, you ain’t been to your supper either, late as it be. Have you?”

“There’s nobody home at my house,” said the boy.

“Then we’ll eat,” said the woman, “I believe you’re hungry—or been hungry—to try to snatch my pocketbook.”

“I wanted a pair of blue suede shoes,” said the boy.

“Well, you didn’t have to snatch my pocketbook to get some suede shoes,” said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. “You could of asked me.”

“M’am?”

The water dripping from his face, the boy looked at her. There was a long pause. A very long pause. After he had dried his face and not knowing what else to do dried it again, the boy turned around, wondering what next. The door was open. He could make a dash for it down the hall. He could run, run, run, run, run!

The woman was sitting on the day-bed. After a while she said, “I were young once and I wanted things I could not get.”

There was another long pause. The boy’s mouth opened. Then he frowned, but not knowing he frowned.

The woman said, “Um-hum! You thought I was going to say but, didn’t you? You thought I was going to say, but I didn’t snatch people’s pocketbooks. Well, I wasn’t going to say that.” Pause. Silence. “I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son—neither tell God, if he didn’t already know. So you set down while I fix us something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable.”

In another corner of the room behind a screen was a gas plate and an icebox. Mrs. Jones got up and went behind the screen. The woman did not watch the boy to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse which she left behind her on the day-bed. But the boy took care to sit on the far side of the room where he thought she could easily see him out of the corner of her eye, if she wanted to. He did not trust the woman not to trust him. And he did not want to be mistrusted now.

“Do you need somebody to go to the store,” asked the boy, “maybe to get some milk or something?”

“Don’t believe I do,” said the woman, “unless you just want sweet milk yourself. I was going to make cocoa out of this canned milk I got here.”

“That will be fine,” said the boy.

She heated some lima beans and ham she had in the icebox, made the cocoa, and set the table. The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him. Instead, as they ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty-shop that stayed open late, what the work was like, and how all kinds of women came in and out, blondes, red-heads, and Spanish. Then she cut him a half of her ten-cent cake.

“Eat some more, son,” she said.

When they were finished eating she got up and said, “Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook nor nobody else’s—because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But I wish you would behave yourself, son, from here on in.”

She led him down the hall to the front door and opened it. “Good-night! Behave yourself, boy!” she said, looking out into the street.

The boy wanted to say something else other than “Thank you, m’am” to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but he couldn’t do so as he turned at the barren stoop and looked back at the large woman in the door. He barely managed to say “Thank you” before she shut the door. And he never saw her again.

## Paideia Lesson Plan #2

Teacher: Mrs. Chandra Maxwell

Grade Level: 8th

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Content Focus: Reading Comprehension/Citing Evidence

Ideal/Values: Empathy

Text: Excerpt from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream"

(This lesson plan is modeled after the suggested lesson plan created by Jeremy Spielman with the National Paideia Center)

### **(A) Relevant State Content Standards**

#### **State Standard CCSS ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1**

*Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.*

### **(B) Learner's Background**

- Classroom dynamics consist of Special Education students, English Language Learners, students reading below grade level, students reading on grade level and students reading

above grade level. Reading grade levels are per district mandated iReady reading assessment.

- Students have been focusing on making logical inferences

### **(C) Student Learning Objectives**

- Students will be able to comprehend complex texts by utilizing skills learning in the Paideia Seminar
- Students will be able to make logical inferences as a result of using group dialogic discussion

### **(D) Materials and Teacher-Developed Resources**

#### **1) Published Instructional Materials**

- **Excerpt of "I Have A Dream " speech by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

#### **2) Teacher Developed Materials**

- **Open Ended Questions**
  - 2. Explain the different versions of the ‘dream’ Dr. King sees.**
  - 3. Explain what Dr. King meant when he wrote “...With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood”**

### **(E) Learning Activities**

- **Teacher Facilitated Activities-** Launch Activity-Teacher will ask students “What can be the effects of equality?”
- **Inspectional Read-**Teacher will then distribute the text and ask students to first number each line of the story so that lines can be easily identifiable when discussing text or citing evidence. Then students will be asked what do they think the story will be about. Teacher will also ask (based on the title alone) if the students think they have read (or heard of ) a speech like this before. Students will read the text to themselves, identify unfamiliar words and words/phrases that help to explain the meaning of the title (10-12 minutes) and then teacher will read the text aloud and discuss unfamiliar vocabulary found in text and students will share the words/phrases they identified that helped them to understand the meaning of the story.
- **Background Information-**Dr. King was an American reverend and civil rights advocate that often gave speeches on the need for equality of all people.
- The speech “I Have a Dream” was given on August 28, 1963 in Washington DC during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. This speech focused on

Dr King urging America keep the promises of democracy and the need for change and the potential for hope in American society.

- **Vocabulary**-As a whole group, we will discuss imagery and tone within the text. Students will identify unfamiliar words or phrases as well as words or phrases that aid in comprehension. Reviewed vocabulary words include demonstration, Emancipation Proclamation, momentous, injustice, segregation and discrimination
- **Analytical Read**-Teacher will
  - post seminar directions for students.
  - showcase phrases of emphasis
  - encourage independent work that will explain how the text is organized and why

Students will

  - note the use of imagery within the text
  - turn and talk with seminar group members sharing examples of stereotypes and empathy
- **Pre-Seminar Process**-Define and state the purpose of the seminar. Teacher says “A Paideia seminar is a collaborative intellectual dialogue about a text that is guided by open-ended questions. The main purpose of the seminar is to develop a fuller understanding of the text and of ideas and values of ourselves and each other.”
- **Have participants set a ‘Personal Goal’**-Teacher says “Please reflect on how your group will normally participate within a seminar. Who will be responsible for what? What goal will you set for yourselves? Here are some examples:
  - To speak at least three times
  - To refer to the text
  - To ask a question
  - To speak out of uncertainty (you are not quite sure if your answer is right but you ask it anyway)
  - To build on others’ comments
    - After personal goal is set, then develop a group goal with your group
- **Core (Analyze textual details)**
  - Explain the different versions of the ‘dream’ Dr. King sees.
  - Explain what Dr. King meant when he wrote “...With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood”
- **Closing** – If you could share this speech with someone, who would it be and why?
- **Post Seminar Content**
  - After reading and discussing ‘I Have a Dream’ by Dr. King, describe what the ‘American Dream’ means to you.
    - Brainstorm-

- Write one or two lines that will describe the mood you would like to pursue in your story.
    - List as many details about that mood as possible
    - Create a brief summary that will explain how you will personify your story.
  - First Draft
    - 20-30 minutes of class-time will be dedicated to the first draft
  - Final Draft
    - Once the first draft is complete, students in the seminar groups will take turns reading each other's first drafts (slowly and silently) and marking any grammatical or spelling errors they find.
- Timeline-90 Minute Class (modify as needed)
    - 20 minutes introduction of lesson
    - 10 minutes independent student reading of text
    - 15 minutes teacher reading of text
    - 10 minutes group discussion
    - 30 minutes open-ended questions completion
    - 5 minutes reflection and wrap up

## **Homework**

As this is an ongoing activity, students will be allowed to complete open-ended responses and on the next meeting day, share responses with group mates.

## **Modifications for Students With Learning Needs**

Google Translate

Reading Level based text

Audio of text



## **"I HAVE A DREAM . . ."**

(Copyright 1963, MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.)

Speech by the Rev. MARTIN LUTHER KING  
At the "March on Washington"

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago a great American in whose symbolic shadow we stand today signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree is a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. But 100 years later the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later the life of the Negro is still badly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land. So we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our Republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men—yes, black men as well as white men—would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of

honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children. It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality—1963 is not an end but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual.

There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright days of justice emerge.

(Copyright 1963, MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.)

And that is something that I must say to my people who stand on the worn threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protests to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to distrust all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny.

They have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone. And as we walk we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.

We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities.

We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their adulthood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating "For Whites Only."

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We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and the Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote.

No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulation. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering.

Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our Northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, though, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice,

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sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream . . . I have a dream that one day in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today . . . I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning. "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountain side, let freedom ring." And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New

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### Paideia Lesson Plan #3

Teacher: Mrs. Chandra Maxwell

Grade Level: 8th

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Content Focus: Reading Comprehension/Citing Evidence

Ideal/Values: Empathy

Text: "Geraldo No Name" vignette from "The House on Mango Street" by Sandra Cisneros  
(This lesson plan is modeled after the suggested lesson plan created by Jeremy Spielman with the National Paideia Center)

#### **(A) Relevant State Content Standards**

##### **State Standard CCSS ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1**

*Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.*

#### **(B) Learner's Background**

- Classroom dynamics consist of Special Education students, English Language Learners, students reading below grade level, students reading on grade level and students reading above grade level. Reading grade levels are per district mandated IReady reading assessment.
- Students have been focusing on making logical inferences

#### **(C) Student Learning Objectives**

- Students will be able to comprehend complex texts by utilizing skills learning in the Paideia Seminar
- Students will be able to make logical inferences as a result of using group dialogic discussion

#### **(D) Materials and Teacher-Developed Resources**

##### **1) Published Instructional Materials**

- "Geraldo No Name" by Sandra Cisneros

##### **2) Teacher Developed Materials**

- **Open Ended Questions**
  4. **Why do you think the author chose to focus on empathy in this vignette? Describe the author's purpose by providing specific examples to support your opinion.**
  5. **As seen in each vignette, there are different narrators describing their experience in the neighborhood. Why do you think Cisneros chose Marin to be the narrator of this vignette?**
  6. **How is society described in this vignette?**

**(E) Learning Activities**

- **Teacher Facilitated Activities-** Launch Activity-Teacher will ask students 1) “Why do you think the author chose to focus on empathy in this vignette? Describe the author’s purpose by providing specific examples to support your thinking.” 2) As seen in each vignette, there are different narrators describing their experience in the neighborhood. Why do you think Cisneros chose Marin to be the narrator of this vignette? 3) How is society described in this vignette?
- **Inspectional Read-**Teacher will then distribute the text and ask students to first number each line of the story. Then students will be asked (based on the title of the vignette) what do they think the story will be about. Teacher will also ask (based on the title alone) if the students think they have read (or heard of ) a story like this before. Students will read the text to themselves, identify unfamiliar words and words/phrases that help to explain the meaning of the vignette (10-12 minutes) and then teacher will read the text aloud and discuss unfamiliar vocabulary found in text and students will share the words/phrases they identified that helped them to understand the meaning of the vignette.
- **Background Information-**Sandra Cisneros is a poet, short story writer, and artist whose work examines the lives of working class communities. The story “The House on Mango Street” is her reflection as a young girl growing up in a Latino section of Chicago. Her neighborhood, which is the focus of each vignette in the novel, is one of harsh realities and harsh beauty. The main character, Esperanza, doesn’t seem to want to belong to the neighborhood in which she lives nor does she want to belong to the expectations society has set for her.
- **Vocabulary-**As a whole group, we will discuss personification, imagery, and tone within the text. Students will identify unfamiliar words or phrases as well as words or phrases that aid in comprehension. Reviewed words include : Uptown, Logan, Embassy, Palmer, Aragon, Fontana, The Manor, cumbias, salsas, rancheras, and kitchenette.
- **Analytical Read-**Teacher will
  - post seminar directions for students.
  - showcase phrases of emphasis
  - encourage independent work that will explain how the text is organized and why  
Students will
  - note the use of imagery within the text

- turn and talk with seminar group members sharing examples of stereotypes and empathy
- **Pre-Seminar Process**-Define and state the purpose of the seminar.  
Teacher says “A Paideia seminar is a collaborative intellectual dialogue about a text that is guided by open-ended questions. The main purpose of the seminar is to develop a fuller understanding of the text and of ideas and values of ourselves and each other.”
- **Have participants set a ‘Personal Goal’**-Teacher says “Please reflect on how your group will normally participate within a seminar. Who will be responsible for what? What goal will you set for yourselves? Here are some examples:
  - To speak at least three times
  - To refer to the text
  - To ask a question
  - To speak out of uncertainty (you are not quite sure if your answer is right but you ask it anyway)
  - To build on others’ comments
    - After personal goal is set, then develop a group goal with your group
- **Core (Analyze textual details)**
  - In lines 11-14, the text says “...Only Marin can’t explain why it mattered, the hours and hours for somebody she didn’t even know. The hospital emergency room. Nobody but an intern working all alone. And maybe if the surgeon would’ve come, maybe if he hadn’t lost so much blood, if the surgeon had only come, they would know who to notify and where.” How does Marin feel Geraldo is being treated in the hospital? Why do you think he is being treated this way?
  - How does Cisneros use imagery in this excerpt?
  - Reread lines 15-18. What does Cisneros mean in these lines?
- **Closing** – If you could share this story with someone, who would it be and why?
- **Post Seminar Content**
  - After reading and discussing ‘Geraldo No Name, by Sandra Cisneros, write your own version of the story using imagery and focus your story on the idea of ‘empathy.
    - Brainstorm-
      - Write one or two lines that will describe the mood you would like to pursue in your story.
      - List as many details about that mood as possible
      - Create a brief summary that will explain how you will personify your story.
    - First Draft
      - 20-30 minutes of class-time will be dedicated to the first draft
    - Final Draft
      - Once the first draft is complete, students in the seminar groups will take turns reading each other’s first drafts

(slowly and silently) and marking any grammatical or spelling errors they find.

- **Timeline-90 Minute Class**

20 minutes introduction of lesson

10 minutes independent student reading of text

15 minutes teacher reading of text

10 minutes group discussion

30 minutes open-ended questions completion

5 minutes reflection and wrap up

### **Homework**

As this is an ongoing activity, students will be allowed to complete open-ended responses and on the next meeting day, share responses with group mates.

### **Modifications for Students With Learning Needs**

Google Translate

Reading Level based text

Audio of text

Text

Geraldo No Last Name

Sandra Cisneros

She met him at a dance. Pretty too, and young. Said he worked in a restaurant, but she can't remember which one. Geraldo.

That's all. Green pants and Saturday shirt. Geraldo. That's what he told her.

And how was she to know she'd be the last one to see him alive. An accident, don't you know. Hit and run. Marin, she goes to all those dances. Uptown. Logan. Embassy. Palmer. Aragon. Fontana. The manor. She likes to dance. She knows how to do cumbias and salsas and rancheras even. And he was just someone she danced with. Somebody she met that night.

That's right.

That's the story. That's what she said again and again. Once to the hospital people and twice to the police. No address. No name. Nothing in his pockets. Ain't it a shame.

Only Marin can't explain why it mattered, the hours and hours, for somebody she didn't even know. The hospital emergency room. Nobody but an intern working all alone. And maybe if the surgeon would've come, maybe if he hadn't lost so much blood, if the surgeon had only come, they would know who to notify and where.

But what difference does it make? He wasn't anything to her. He wasn't her boyfriend or anything like that. Just another brazer who didn't speak English. Just another wetback. You know the kind. The ones who always look ashamed. And what was she doing out at 3:00 A.M. anyway? Marin who was sent home with her coat and some aspirin. How does she explain?

She met him at a dance. Geraldo in his shiny shirt and green pants. Geraldo going to a dance. What does it matter?

They never saw the kitchenettes. They never knew about the two-room flats and sleeping rooms he rented, the weekly money orders sent home, the currency exchange. How could they?

His name was Geraldo. And his home is in another country. The ones he left behind are far away, will wonder, shrug, remember. Geraldo—he went north . . . we never heard from him again.

## Appendix B

### IRB Approval



April 4, 2019

#### APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

Ms. Chandra D. Maxwell  
College of Engineering, Business and Education University of Bridgeport

Dear Ms. Maxwell:

On *April 4, 2019* an IRB member approved the following human subject research:

Type of Review: Project Title:

Investigator: IRB ID: Funding Agency: Grant Title: Grant ID: IND or IDE:

*Initial*

Using the Paideia Seminar to Impact Reading Achievement in an English Language Arts Classroom  
Chandra D. Maxwell  
2019-04-01

To request continuing approval, you are to submit a completed "UB HRP-212 FORM: Continuing Review Progress Report" and required attachments by March 4, 2020. For study closure, you are to submit a completed "UB HRP-212 FORM: Continuing Review Progress Report" and required attachments by May 4, 2020.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of April 4, 2020 this research expires on that date.

In conducting this research you are required to follow the requirements listed in the *Investigator Manual*.

---

Sincerely,  
  
Julie F. Demers  
IRB Administrator

126 Park Avenue • Bridgeport, CT 06604 • Tel: 203.576.4973 • E-mail: [irb@bridgeport.edu](mailto:irb@bridgeport.edu)

### Appendix C

#### Written Response Rubric For Paideia Writing Assignments

Scoring Elements	Not Yet 1	Approaches Expectations 2	Meets Expectations 3	Advanced 4
Focus	Attempts to address prompt but lacks focus or is off task.	Addresses prompt appropriately but with a weak or uneven focus.	Addresses prompt appropriately and maintains a clear, steady focus.	Addresses all aspects of prompt appropriately and maintains a strongly developed focus.
Reading/Research	Attempts to present information in response to the prompt but lacks connections or relevance to the purpose of the prompt.	Presents information from reading but lapses in accuracy or completeness.	Presents information from reading as it applies to the prompt with accuracy and sufficient detail.	Accurately presents information of the prompt with effective selection of sources and details from reading materials.
Organization	Attempts to organize ideas, but lacks structure	Appropriately addresses the prompt but lacks clarity.	Maintains an appropriate organizational structure to address the expectations of the prompt.	Maintains an organizational structure that intentionally and effectively enhances the presentation of information as required by the specific prompt.
Conventions	Attempts to demonstrate standard English conventions but lacks proper grammar usage and mechanics	Demonstrates an uneven command of standard English conventions.	Demonstrates a command of standard English conventions with few errors.	Demonstrates and maintains a well-developed command of standard English conventions

Source: The Paideia Manual by Laura Billings and Terry Roberts Copyright 2013 by the National Paideia Center

**Appendix D**  
Interview Protocol  
Interviewee #1

**Instructions**

*Good Morning. As you know my name is Chandra Maxwell and I am conducting a study on determining the impact of the Paideia Seminar on the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 students. The purpose of this interview is to discuss your perceptions using a dialogic based intervention to improve the reading skills of grade 8 students in this school.*

Q1. Please describe your experience in teaching reading as well as your experience in facilitating Paideia Seminars in your classroom. Also, could you please provide specific examples of seminars you have facilitated in your classroom? What were student reactions? Did reading comprehension levels improve?

Q2. As seen in this state's Common Core State Standards, why do you think there has been a return to Close Reading in our schools' classrooms?

Q3. What are your views on the Paideia Seminar (Socratic Seminar/Dialogic Discussion)? How long have you been implementing Paideia in your middle school classroom? Is your school a Paideia school? If so, please provide the model.

Q4. In terms of middle school reading, do you view a classroom discourse method such as Paideia as a means of closing the achievement gap in reading?

Q5. As an educator, what are some sustainable benefits of Close Reading for students in school in a middle school?

Interview Protocol  
Interviewee #2

**Instructions**

*Good Morning. As you know my name is Chandra Maxwell and I am conducting a study on determining the impact of the Paideia Seminar on the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 students. The purpose of this interview is to discuss your perceptions using a dialogic based intervention to improve the reading skills of grade 8 students in this school.*

Q1. As a remedial reading teacher and soon to be reading specialist, why is the concept of 'bringing readers and texts' together important?

Q2. As seen in this state's Common Core State Standards, why do you think there has been a return to Close Reading in our school's classroom?

Q3. What are your views on the Paideia Seminar (Socratic Seminar/Dialogic Discussion)?

Q4. In terms of middle school reading, do you view a classroom discourse method such as Paideia as a means of closing the achievement gap in reading?

Interview Protocol  
Interviewee #3

**Instructions**

*Good Morning. As you know my name is Chandra Maxwell and I am conducting a study on determining the impact of the Paideia Seminar on the reading comprehension skills of grade 8 students. The purpose of this interview is to discuss your perceptions using a dialogic based intervention to improve the reading skills of grade 8 students in this school.*

Q1. As noted in your book “Close Reading in Elementary School” could you please explain what it means to bring readers and texts together.

Q2. In your opinion, why do you think there has been a return to Close Reading in our schools’ classrooms?

Q3. What are your views on the Paideia Seminar/Dialogic Discussion? If you are in favor of this method, how does the combination of student group talk and text increase reading comprehension?

Q4. Can you please share your views on closing the achievement gap in reading and the Paideia Seminar?

Q5. In your view, what are some sustainable educational benefits of Close Reading for middle school students?

## Appendix E

### Text Selection For Paideia Seminar

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
Ideas and Values	Addresses multiple ideas and values	Addresses some idea and values	Addresses an idea or value
Degree of Challenge	Few participants comprehend without assistance	Some participants comprehend without assistance	All participants comprehend without assistance
Relevance	Clearly related to the curriculum and/or students' lives	Somewhat related to the curriculum and/or students' lives	Limited in relation to the curriculum and/or students' lives
Ambiguity	Is open to a wide variety of interpretations	Is open to some variety of interpretations	Is open to a few interpretations

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