A Wish, a Story, and Telling Experiences: A Case Study on Student Identity Development

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Abstract

This study explored unanswered questions about student identity development and how storytelling experiences focused on a central novel can engage students in an elementary classroom. It may contribute to learning-based research in a time period following curricular reconstruction in which identity takes the center stage. This study examined a learning process over a thirteen-week period of time where stories of discourse, engagement, agency, and relationship were supported by continuous scaffolding. In this study, stories connected to life writing and contributed to a social learning experience valuing self, others, and community.

The findings within this study value learning experiences based in storytelling and how student identity can be developed and supported over time. Knowing that great learning is often tied to social learning experiences, this case study will also explore how students in a Grade 4/5 classroom connected their knowledge of self to the shared narratives surrounding community.

Driven by personal pedagogy and a passion for learning and storied celebrations, the author was motivated to create an inclusive learning community where features of Universal Learning Design and Response to Interventions models could accommodate the needs and interests of all participants. This qualitative study investigated the process in which 13 of 23 students consented to their journals, whiteboard summaries, and engagement tallies being collected and reviewed for research purposes. The acting researcher was also the classroom teacher. Research indicated that differentiated learning experiences inspired by a central novel, hope, and storytelling experiences can incorporate features of identity from core and curricular competencies. This study demonstrates how a scaffolded learning process can encourage a group of diverse students to address their vulnerabilities and concentrate on future outcomes that benefit self, others, and community beyond the classroom. A summary of participant discourse also provides exemplars of how diverse students can belong, connect, and articulate their knowledge of self in the presence of a supportive audience. In closing, the limitations of this study will be addressed as will suggestions for further investigations into preadolescent identity development as it unfolds in a classroom involving volunteer student participants, teachers, and researchers.
Acknowledgements

To construct a story about experiences and identities I must acknowledge the names attached to my figured worlds and give thanks to the community that has supported me. In this particular journey I was humbly reminded of the power of social connection and name resemblances that confirm how most social unions happen for good cause. For my memories of the past and present connected to learning that was never easy, I think of preadolescent LeeAnn who struggled with learning yet continued to push forward. She reminds me to look at each and every one of my students for the individuals they are and the people they aspire to become. To my students, thank you for your trust and dedication to being your best selves. For the endless learning experiences with colleagues who have made me a stronger person and teacher, I give thanks to Rosanna and others like her who inspire, lead, and support. Huy ch q’u. For the hours accompanied or distanced by friends who’ve read and listened, thank you Anne and the countless others for embracing vulnerability with me and encouraging me to push forward. To my supervisor Mary Ann, thank you for your undying patience; I have come so far and I can look at research in a different light because of you. Thanks for teaching me about the power of coloured markers, for the gentle nudges, and aggressive pruning sessions—my work reads better because you never gave up. And finally, to Anna of the present and past, you remind me of the power of love and family for which I am truly grateful. Ďakujem, Mom and Baba for teaching me how to be a strong woman and for supporting me when I stumble. Thank you to my husband Chad and my father Lee for doing all the extras, for simply believing in me, and for buying jube jubes when nothing else worked, I am truly blessed. To my children and fur babies, thank you for finding ways to look past an absent-minded mother who is far from perfect. I may not bake, my spaghetti sauce will never match Baba’s, and your walks may have been overlooked, but my love for you is like no other. I love you Keegan, Ava, Mya, Lola, and Kona.
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Chapter One: Topic to be Investigated

It's like everyone tells a story about themselves inside their own head. Always. All the time. That story makes you what you are. We build ourselves out of that story.

–Patrick Rothfuss, The Name of the Wind, 2007, p.716

Introduction

The current text and dialogue that surrounds learning in British Columbia (BC) speaks in volumes to student strengths and less to the descriptors of disability. In fact, studies based on lived experiences and discourse concerning the development of student identity now focus on individuals as entrepreneurs of their own profound and personalized learning experiences. In the 21st Century, education reform now attends to this practice with mandates that speak to best practice and renewed curriculum—a curriculum that celebrates student diversity, personalized learning opportunities, and a growth mindset (Province of British Columbia, 2018).

To understand and appreciate education reform and the call for personalized learning, educators must first explore our history and the continuity of stories with no end. Over time, stories of curricular reform have blended, and complimentary and conflicting narratives were eventually directed towards the goals and rights of the Educated Citizen, which currently support a learning process for big thinkers and their ability to respond to world of constant change (BC Ministry of Education, 2015). Unfortunately, past goals of the Educated Citizen were often obscured by traditional learning outcomes of the late eighties and nineties as intentions as the central focus of learning was still largely driven by traditional content and the integration of densely scripted Integrated Resource Packages, which focused more on content knowledge and less on personally profound learning opportunities.

The history leading towards British Columbia’s renewed curriculum exemplifies the never-ending story of deep and shallow learning culture, as our renewed curriculum has moved towards personal and social emotional learning practices that complement the 1989 School Act. In fact, our core competencies now address Section 169 (3) of the School Act and the premise of the Educated Citizen, which declares,

To best understand the true essence of student identity development, students must experience more than the shallow culture of curriculum as a stand-alone subject or title. As students experience more than curriculum, they should come away from learning experiences with a better understanding of various concepts and how they relate to them and their roles as global citizens (Mitra & Serriere, 2012). As we move towards the future, students and educators must address thoughtfully constructed frameworks of learning. Without argument, the personal interests and emerging identities of every student are deserving of attention as curricular guidelines now speak to the development of Big Ideas and emerging student identities over time (Province of British Columbia, 2015). Figure 1.0 shows how BC’s renewed curriculum now speaks to competencies based in communication, thinking, and social learning in their most personal form, as each quality emerges and is recognized within authentic learning environments (Province of British Columbia, 2018, Core Competencies).

![Figure 1.0](Image)

*Figure 1.0 This figure illustrates how the Core Competencies encompass all essential elements of curriculum outlined by the Province of British Columbia.*
Moving forward, teacher-researchers can now attend to personalized learning opportunities in the 21st Century that call for student interests, experiences, and identities to be woven into learning goals and decisions. Educators can do this by planning and teaching to facilitate the development of personal and holistic learning. As educators, we can take charge and assume leading roles in the development of personal, emotional, and cultural proficiencies (Province of British Columbia, 2018, Core Competencies).

Observations of BC’s renewed curriculum in action suggest that many educators continue to cover content which is still, to this day, highly visible in classroom environments with rote learning strategies and conversations that stem from factual information easily accessed from websites, print-outs, lectures, and fill-in-the-blank questions. Educators must blaze trials and create change when curriculum is new and little is known. These surface level characteristics have been readily observed, measured and assessed for decades, and the characteristics of surface level differences amongst learners have been assigned surface classifications which are also geographic in nature (Price, Gavin & Florey, 2002). Likewise, in the surface culture of data collection, educators are most familiar with visual classifications of age, gender, race, raw scores, and designations. Therefore, it is only fair to conclude that surface level thoughts and responses have largely supported demographic characteristics designed for large groups of pupils expected to comply with the dominant culture of appointed learning spaces by providing compliant and factual responses of a prescriptive nature. In almost every classroom, an example of surface culture learning may appear in the form of a superficial response to a fact-based question, whereby a student or teacher may connect or speak to obvious similarities or differences between two or more groups of people or places.

On the other hand, the deep culture of learning, which is far less visible at a quick glance, is embraced and often attached to open-ended inquiry relating to the psychology of self-actualizing individuals who can identify with their learning and bravely project their authentic ideas toward a diverse community of observers and beneficiaries (Maslow & Maslow, 1967).

The culture of our renewed curriculum speaks to the development of self-actualizing individuals as core and curricular competencies are driven toward self-awareness, empathic responsiveness to diverse
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challenges, and a greater sense of belonging as connected communities. Curriculum rooted in deep culture becomes visible when educators and students can both identify with their work. Consequently, when viewed as equals, more learners may gain comfort in being themselves, as they learn to support one another in social interactions where personally profound learning inquiries are framed by students and educators who can identify strongly with big ideas and learning that is purposeful for many. Deep culture curriculum and learning amplifies dynamic and reflective thought processes that stem from academic content and psychological qualities such as personality traits, social emotional responses, and values (Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002). Unfortunately, my personal observations attached to lacking exemplars, realistic time allotments for collaboration, and teacher/student comfort with the process of deep culture discourse suggest that many educators and students are still uncertain of how to measure, document, apply, and communicate these skill sets in the classroom, to caregivers, and in real life applications. Therefore, curricular change and calls for action need to embrace a learning that can benefit the deep culture of self, others, and place using communication, personal, social, cultural, creative, and critical/creative thinking competencies over time. Strong exemplars of this type of curriculum and thinking are often amplified and exampled by educators whose pedagogy is grounded in process-based learning. This includes teachers who focus on Culturally Responsive Teaching, Global Citizenship, and Place Based Learning. An exemplary quote from Abraham H. Maslow summarizes the purpose, intentions, and direction of curriculum embedded in deep culture thinking, and reminds teacher-researchers to become life-long learners and educators who consider the vulnerabilities that lie within every learner. Maslow (1967) explains that this deep culture of being calls for self-actualizing individuals as motivated and gratified people who “try to free themselves from illusions, look at facts courageously, [and] take away the blindfold” (p. 100).

Curricular Guidelines

The Personal and Social Competencies encompassing BC’s new curriculum support the guiding forces of early and current research (Province of British Columbia, 2018, Positive, Personal & Cultural Identity). In this study, careful attention will be dedicated to each sub-category and its suggested areas of
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focus. This is to include: Positive Personal and Cultural Identity, Social Responsibility, and Personal Awareness and Responsibility. In the province of British Columbia, each sub-category is attached to competency profiles that learners are expected to accommodate over time. An exemplar that speaks to the context and purpose of my study states:

A positive personal and cultural identity is the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of all the facets that contribute to a healthy sense of oneself. It includes awareness and understanding of one’s family background, heritage(s), language(s), beliefs, and perspectives in a pluralistic society. Students who have a positive personal and cultural identity value their personal and cultural narratives, and understand how these shape their identity. Supported by a sense of self-worth, self-awareness, and positive identity, students become confident individuals who take satisfaction in who they are, and what they can do to contribute to their own well-being and to the well-being of their family, community, and society (Province of British Columbia, 2018, Positive, Personal & Cultural Identity, p. 2 par. 1).

The value of Social Emotional Learning is recognized by research in education and psychology (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011), as it speaks to the holistic nature of students’ developing identities. As students learn to adopt a holistic way of learning following education reform, their social and emotional development can remind educators and attentive students that every individual has a story worth telling. In this new learning environment, educators also appreciate the social constructs of varying emotions and relationships between depth of student engagement and influence of social collaboration. In truth, stories in the social sciences have been valued as a never-ending concept of truth from the beginning of time, as they breathe life into developing identities once packaged as silos or subjects of conformity (Bateson, 2000; Bruner, 1990; Clandinin & Connell, 2000; Craig, 2000; Dewey, 1938/1997; Schon, 1992; Funk, 1998, Geertz, 1995; LeGuin, 1989; MacIntyre, 1981; Moore, 2016; Novak, 1975). In fact, the story of self and the stories of others are forever changing, and story can provide students with ongoing opportunities to explore and validate their emergent understanding of self, their relationship with others, and/or their connection to community.
Story is not necessarily a book or an essay with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Life writing research (Hasebe-Ludt & Jordan, 2010) supports a natural investigation of learning that weaves voice and tradition across multiple disciplines. It focuses on creative methods of communication that include journaling, storytelling, poetry, memory, and visual arts. From a life writing perspective, a “story” can encompass any artifact or piece of information that connects to what’s most important to the learner over time. Essentially, story as life writing “constantly explores, contests, and negotiates the imaginative possibilities of knowing and being in the world” (Hasebe-Ludt & Jordan, 2010, p. 2).

Through the lens of a learning facilitator, storytelling and the meaning of identity development go hand in hand, as the craft of storytelling connects us to human agency, student voice, and the ever-changing realities of the past, present, and future. As teachers and students tread into the deep waters of stories shared in the first person, they find a collection of personally invested narratives that can speak to Indigenous methodologies, social comprehension, and valued thinking processes relating to self, others, and community (Province of British Columbia, 2018; Kovach, 2010; Ahmed, 2018).

As a method, story can be used to display and amplify elements of student identity by highlighting qualities, strengths, challenges, creativity, and critical thought and interests. In fact, storytellers who identify with the concept of self-actualizing individuals and have interests grounded in story can explore and learn from possible connections to certain protocols that reflect Indigenous knowledge of a flexible, collaborative, and reflexive nature (Kovach, 2010). In the art of learning, the structure of lessons and process of knowledge construction can be designed by educators who wish to support emerging identities. In summary, the ongoing development of personal narratives attends to the individual, their social culture, and their responsibilities to society. In the shared and flexible classrooms of the 21st Century, storytelling can benefit the ecology of communities from the past, present, and future.

**Personal Pedagogy: Current with Curriculum**

As a classroom teacher, I value the renewed state of BC’s curriculum as the personal and social components of learning are placed at the forefront of learner interests with *Core* and *Curricular*
competencies complementing students as individuals. The current curriculum complements my teaching pedagogy which supports learning process for all learners in an inclusive classroom.

My passion for listening, sharing, and responding to well-told stories has made me the teacher-researcher I am today. In fact, story plays an important role in my classroom as it fosters identity development in the accompaniment of thoughtfully placed scaffolds, which include modelling and differentiated strategies for supporting knowledge construction. In theory, stories read aloud in my classroom move beyond the surface meaning of text as students are supported as empathetic individuals who can investigate story and respond to essential questions, knowing that they belong to a community.

Using *Little Red Riding Hood* as a metaphor for all vulnerable students and teachers embarking on new journeys (investigating student identity within curriculum), I can’t help but wonder… *How does Little Red Riding Hood feel on the way to her grandmother’s house, and how can she best be supported knowing the forest is a dangerous place for people who walk alone?*

As a teacher-researcher who is passionate about better understanding students for who they are and what they wish to explore or create, I hope that the story of this study can better support facilitators of learning who feel alone and uncertain of how the deep culture of curriculum can be implemented, and how students can be encouraged to explore sophisticated questions while becoming agents of change and stronger citizens within their communities.

**Special Education and Student Identity Development**

I believe in making learning special for all learners rather than focusing on “Special Education” as an isolated topic of investigation that only addresses the strengths or challenges of some. Situated amongst students and teachers as learners, I believe that constructs of my classroom support students as valued individuals. Looking beyond designations or categories assigned to students with special needs, the learning in my classroom speaks to differentiation and the *Universal Design of Learning* (UDL) model as I make strong attempts to reach every learner with diverse tools and methods for engaging, expressing, and presenting knowledge (Cook & Rao, 2018). The tools, methods and strategies in my classroom are based on skill sets that can be supported and improved over time as they include: the use of
large/small group discussion, flexible sources of multimedia, technology and access to scribes and/or conferencing for all learners (Moore, 2016). These tools included considerations for how students interact on a social level as well as flexible allowances for learning time and work environments which called for independent learning opportunities. In my classroom some students could respond to essential questions independently while others required extra teaching or writing supports. In small groups, large groups or as individuals, students were encouraged to share, pass, develop empathy, and respect the voice of all storytellers regardless of beliefs, age, gender, ability or designation. In fact, all learners required supports and identity exploration through storytelling was achieved by all.

Supporting All Learners in Inclusive Classrooms

This study employs an inclusive approach to special education. In the current arena of learning, adjustments and changes are moving from fixed learning standards and standardized assessment to improved efforts that better accommodate student agency with meaningful learning opportunities. Strongly supported by research based in inclusion and Response to Intervention models (RTI) (Hoover, 2011), I am comfortable stating that an exploration of identity is the right of all students (Moore, 2016). I would also like to note that although all students can take part in the classroom community, not all can communicate their stories effectively through writing and speaking. Therefore, we as educators must focus on scaffolded interventions that can be applied to first, second, and third tiers of support as similar support models will encourage all students to engage with topics of identity.

In the wake of change, curricular guidelines and learning policies that speak to inclusion policies in BC actively encourage “an inclusive education system in which students with special needs are fully participating members of a community of learners” (BC Ministry of Education, 2013, p.2). In fact, many stakeholders have followed research in social science as it has contributed to the reform of Special Education with great urgency. As we embrace student-centred learning culture, renewed curriculum and mandates now align with purpose and a vested interest to support individual learners as they nurture authentic identities and diverse skill sets over time (Province of British Columbia, 2018, New Curriculum
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Info. Strategies such as UDL and RTI that attend to all students and their diverse needs need to be embedded in learning design and practice.

Overview of Study

The problem guiding this research is that little is known about student narratives/story as identity and best teaching/learning practices that allow educators to support student learning within an identity-based curriculum. My inquiry into curricular core competencies and learning processes will highlight learning experiences that foster narrative thinking and identity development, and will be guided by the following research questions:

- How can learning experiences, based in storytelling, support the development of student identity over time?
- How do students connect their knowledge of self to the shared narratives within their community?

My research will follow the framework of a case study as narratives from participant writing, whiteboard summaries, and researcher reflections address the deep culture of curriculum and how learning experiences based in storytelling may support the development of student identity over time. Qualitative by design, this study took place in a natural classroom setting where data collection supported a naturally occurring learning process that produced results (Rumrill, 2011). The method of case study complements the nature of thematic investigation, as it describes unique circumstances as they were lived and later described. Literature supports Case Study as a great fit for my research as: my research questions begin with “how,” I had little control over behavioural events, and my focus is largely contemporary (Yin, 2014, p. 4).

This study will investigate and honour renewed curriculum that focuses on core competencies and student identity development framed by story and narrative. The efforts of a teacher-researcher and volunteer participants will be noted and reflected upon to explain how a personalized unit of learning was designed to support learners in the wake of curricular change. In addition, this study will highlight the benefits of an identity-based study/curriculum in which every learner was expected to explore and act
upon the social and cultural influences of self, others, and community as a whole. It will make a conscious effort to make the connections between journaled/documentated narratives and identity development visible, so that readers can reflect on the learning experiences noted in this study and form their own opinions about storytelling and how storytelling experiences may or may not support the development of student identity over time. Additionally, this study may activate learning conversations relating to the knowledge of self and how it compares to the shared narratives within a community which best define a collection of vested interests, whether it be storytelling, inquiry, curriculum development, or identity development. Such conversations may begin with multiple perspectives and the honoured voices of diverse participants willing to explore a process that facilitates the continuous development of identity, framed by a deep culture of learning.

The artifacts of learning (participant data) created within my investigation were collected for the vested interests of research and future learning (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Macbeth, 2001; Dedin, 2000; Gray, 2003). As a study approved by ethical considerations, regular classroom practices over a thirteen-week unit on storytelling took place from September 17 to December 14, 2018. Over the course of this study, a community of learners aged 8–11 years old engaged in storytelling activities, wrote regular reflections on learning, and performed self-assessments based on the BC curriculum’s Core Competencies (Province of British Columbia, 2018). From the classroom community, 13 participants were recruited and willing to share their classroom work. Students and parents both provided consent and assent of data which included direct participant quotes from selected stories and reflective writing, student self-assessments, and summaries and individual tally summaries relating to engagement. Additional data for this study consisted of researcher reflections and photographs of teacher-composed Post-it notes and whiteboard comments. This noted, all data items were studied, coded, analyzed, and interpreted to describe this case study, and to better understand student identity development as it relates to storytelling. Evidence of identity development was interpreted from the data. This process provided me, the teacher-researcher, as well as the student participants with an opportunity to maintain our roles as valuable participants, storytellers, and identified persons.
**Limitations and value.** The knowledge created in this study is limited to the context of learning within one particular classroom. There is no claim that what unfolded within this study can be generalized for other Grade 4/5 classrooms. It is also limited by my ‘insider position’ in this case study as teacher researcher (Uncluer, 2012). As a teacher and collector of data the findings are thus influenced by my bias.

A study such as this is adaptable and transferrable to all types of learning environments, for all types of learners (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). With a focus on process, social inclusion and creative thinking, as well as trust in the process and the capabilities of developing learners, educators and researchers can use storytelling as a framework for exploring identity that addresses current curricular mandates. The value of this study therefore rests not only with the value of studying student development over time; it also reveals the value of knowledge following curricular reconstruction when little is known.
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Chapter Two: A Review of Related Knowledge

[If] people grow up surrounded by stories, fairy tales, myths and legends... we need to find methods that allow us to study identity, from a narrative perspective, before adolescence.


Overview
This literature review explores story and narrative as identity and how each contributes to research based in student development. The reviews are structured within three different sections that support an investigation of student identity development. It begins by outlining the history of social learning theories as well as narrative as it has been placed within research based in education. It then examines three case studies, which highlight features of identity exploration in a classroom context. In closing sections, discourse within the field of identity exploration will be summarized for how it can be interpreted and applied within past, present, and future research.

Background Theory

Early pioneers and current theories of student engagement. Student identity construction has played an important role as to how we can understand student development and how understanding based in psychology can be attached to features of student development within classrooms focused on student identity development and meaningful curriculum. Therefore, it is important to explore and discuss the early and late supporters of sociocultural theory and how they relate to identity development within a classroom.

Community influence. In early research Dewey (1938/1997) honored “everyday experiences” in relation to self-governing individuals who construct features of individuality through community. His early research contributed to community-based influences on the developing child and his general understanding of child psychology supports knowledge construction as his wisdom resonates in many classrooms where students can be loud, get messy and learn by doing. In other words, students must interact with their environment to learn.
**Language transfer.** As another pioneer contributing to the self-governing individuals as social learners, Vygotsky (1986) focused on identity construction and learning as developmental process centered around language transfer and the social experiences which transpire between groups of developing learners. Of further, more specific interest, Vygotsky’s (1986) “zone of proximal development,” also speaks to the collection of accumulated ‘lived experiences’ (‘Perezhivanie’) fueled with emotion and their effects on a person’s values, beliefs systems and cognitive development. Contributing to investigations of student development in the classroom, Vygotsky’s (1986) research makes strong recommendations for play, talk and applied language transfer activities as essential tools for endorsing and supporting students who learn to govern themselves as individuals.

**Empowering experiences.** Crick (2012), as a researcher studying student engagement has examined what is required for student empowerment and the improved awareness of their own personal identities. Well versed in the learning theories attached to student learning, Crick studies the connections and personal experiences students make through experiences and learning pedagogy through narrative inquiry. As a strong advocate for teachers who “guide from the side,” she speaks to the role of teacher as facilitators of learning. Advocating for student needs, Crick (2012) argues that learners are “recipients of predetermined knowledge sets and the task [for teacher facilitators] is to make experience as engaging as possible for young people” (p. 675).

Crick’s (2012) research was supported by large scale research programs generated within Australia and the United Kingdom, and sourced by thousands of students, tutors, and teacher participants. As a slight downfall to well supported claims, the participants of Crick’s (2012) investigation are represented by study titles, which distracts readers from the meaning of her proposals, as individualized stories of participants with names are lacking. Nonetheless, Crick’s (2012) research is largely based in theory and still contributes to the construction of knowledge amongst a research community, as her focus on engagement highlights the internal qualities of a learner. These highlights include social and behavioural features of engagement that are linked to a learner’s world views and relationships with others, as well as their connections to place and time (Crick, 2012).
Although Crick’s (2012) study lacks a direct connection to student participants as learners engaged within a classroom or collection of schools, her investigation provides a strong argument for needs that must be addressed in the 21st Century classroom. Crick reminds her readers that ‘deeply engaged’ students choose to immerse themselves in a learning process that involves mastery of learning process in lieu of mastery of learning outcomes. Crick (2012) advocates for research based in engagement, explaining that the ‘deep culture’ of learning can best support students as they assume responsibility for their own learning and life stories. Justifying her call for research supported by theories, Crick (2012) states, “[w]e need a theory and practice of engagement in learning which facilitates the formation of identity and combines this with processes for scaffolding and supporting the process of knowledge creation in a world where relevant outcomes can no longer be predetermined” (p.678). Paired with Vygotsky’s (1986) reference to ‘lived experiences’, Crick reminds her readers that students can be authors of their own learning as meaningful stories sourced by engaged learners who can contribute to the development of their own identity, story, values and opinions and learning interests. To support students as young authors constructing identity, Crick explains that engaged students are best supported by facilitators who understand that student engagement is sourced by students who choose to tell their own stories. Although explicit examples of scaffolds and structures were lacking within her work, Crick (2012) reminds her readers that the ‘deep culture’ of student learning is dependent on facilitators of learning who embrace learning pedagogy based in a thoughtful process and the maintenance of sound scaffolding.

Access Points to Identity Exploration Through Narrative

As in most research, identity-based studies of learning fall into different categories of focus. Some research studies focus on teaching practice, education reform, and pedagogy while other studies concentrate on education reform and the emergence of child-centered learning and knowledge as it specifically relates to Core Competencies and the investment of personal, cultural, and socially funded knowledge (Province of British Columbia, 2018).
**Teacher narratives.** Connelly and Clandinin (1996) embrace identity as a socially defined construct of knowledge as they examine teacher knowledge by investigating narratives/stories as told by teachers from different schools and communities. They remind readers that what is already known about effective teaching practices can be attached to research on student development, as their research was influenced by the personal, social, and cultural influences of narrative inquiry, and largely shaped by participant responses. Connelly and Clandinin, (1996), validate the use of narratives through inquiry by reminding a research community that, “narrative content for the ongoing development and expression of teacher knowledge in schools is also of importance” (p. 24).

**Narrative studies of teachers.** Presenting insightful reminders to followers of narrative inquiry, Craig (2007) reminds her readers of how narratives can be recognized as data for the purpose of studying educational reform with a multi-dimensional focus of investigation. In her study, Craig (2007) demonstrates how teacher narratives can be collected and triangulated to reveal how features of identities can be situated within stories of teachers, stories of schools, and stories of larger communities. Craig’s (2007) work brings value to the field of research as she demonstrates and explains how individual stories or narratives can be placed within a “story constellations” (p.176) and studied over time to expose multi-dimensional relationships within an inquiry. Her study, though mostly based in theory, demonstrates how relationship, tied to self and others can be interwoven within a study, as social constructivist perspectives indicate that knowledge is negotiated by multiple dimensions of organic and inorganic influence. As collective agents of learning, students and teachers alike must be encouraged to explore their surroundings and search for patterns of development that speak to the value of narratives/stories over time.

As a collective summary of teacher-based narratives, Craig’s (2007) research suggests that emergent identities are motivated and influenced by diverse social elements that surround personal interests. In fact, her data, storied and supported by teacher participants, demonstrates how social, cognitive, and emotional structures of learning can be observed and recorded as story. Using narrative research as her method, Craig (2007) studied teacher knowledge and its ties to features of social learning.
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She did not visit schools during the course of her study; rather, she analyzed teachers and how they expressed their knowledge of learning to self and others, through a series of interviews. Essentially, Craig (2007) suggests that school visits are not always necessary in learning-based research as stories told by teachers are valuable as a source and as interpretation.

**Introduction to Current Research**

Identity has become a popular focus within and beyond Special Education. As Hoffman (1998) has so wisely stated, “Identity has become the bread and butter of our educational diet” (p. 324). In the 21st Century, identity has become a popular focus in educational research, and has also moved far beyond the traditional qualifiers of one’s character, nature, and personality (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). In fact, recent studies in the field of identity development in the classroom have focused largely on discourse, teacher agency, and student agency (Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Mitra & Serriere, 2012; McCarthy, 2001). The general understanding of student identity development is that students as learners bring experiences of varying range, interest, and need to the classroom. Exploration of identity-based learning is believed to enhance a deep culture of student learning that speaks to curricular components and/or teacher/learner pedagogy that addresses learning as it should be. Some examples of definitions, theories, and research methods in these pedagogical beliefs/thinking are outlined in the following sections.

**Narrative as story/identity.** To seat readers within sociocultural research on learning and to advocate for narrative methods of research, Sfard and Prusak (2005) have forwarded the lens of story and narrative to the study of student identities. Their research explores the culture of investigating student identity (through discourse) and the process from which knowledge can be acquired. Their questions, connected to student learners, asked: “Why do different individuals act differently in the same situations? And why, differences notwithstanding, do different individuals’ actions often reveal a distinct family resemblance?” (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 14).

Sfard and Prusak (2005) constructed their theory around the idea of story/narrative as identity by studying how individual learners or groups were affected by a wave of immigration from Russia to Israel. Following students in a Grade 11 advanced math class during the 1998–99 school year, Prusak (2005)
explored differences between a group of 17-year-old immigrant students from the former Soviet Union and their native Israeli counterparts. All 19 participants were from well-educated families, with the nine “NewComers” hailing from large city centres in Russia. In addition to observation and documentation of classroom processes, further data was gathered from interviews with students, parents, and other teachers.

Sfard and Prusak (2005) noted a great “salience of differences” (p. 19) between the two groups’ learning styles and behaviours. For the Native-born students, learning was described as “ritualized—that is, motivated mainly by a wish to adhere to the rules of the game” (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 19). Immigrant learners, on the other hand, consistently pursued “substantial learning—learning whose effects would outlast classroom activities” (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 19). Highlighting the importance of story, Sfard and Prusak moved beyond general mathematical abilities and studied the narratives of their participants, which ultimately revealed that features of identity connected to immigrant status motivated a need for success. In interviews, the voice of the representative immigrant spoke about wanting to become a doctor, while the representative of the other group expressed a desire to “be happy” (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 20).

Sfard and Prusak (2005) encourage their readers to examine the sociocultural context for what supports or funds (Esteban-Guitart, 2016) specific identities (in their study it was mathematical identities) by providing stories about their students. They show how the narratives of students can capture the meaning of how identities are formed and interpreted. Making a strong argument for narrative research, Sfard and Prusak define identity as it equates to social stories about a person or group of people. In its simplest terms, identity is co-defined as story/narrative.

While Sfard and Prusak (2005) acknowledge the limitations of using only one designated pseudonym for each group to report their findings, they remind readers that their study is a “story about stories” (p. 20). However, it is worth noting the limitation of generalized statements about groups, as the findings make it difficult for readers to attach themselves to the personal attributes of an individual story. Furthermore, Sfard and Prusak (2005) do not place identity and narrative within the constructs of
education or curriculum, which may be indicative of the time, as curricular mandates in Israel may not have required it.

**Student voice.** A case study conducted by principal investigators Mitra and Serrierre (2012) investigated student voice and efficacy within a school. The leading questions of this study were: *What does student voice look like at the elementary level? What types of outcomes does it produce?*

In a two-year study, a team of investigators studied young people who were asked to think critically, to question wrongdoings in their lived experiences, and to create change. The main participants were six 5th Grade girls who voiced their concerns and opinions about the lunch program within their local school and district. Noting that the program failed to meet the dietary and cultural needs of the school’s diverse population, the girls spoke to their teacher and principal, who supported an inquiry-based learning process that involved community input. With support, the students surveyed their community, spoke to district personnel, and raised general awareness of what changes needed to be made within the lunch program (Mitra & Serrierre, 2012).

The research team consisted of 10 graduate students and two undergraduate students. They studied “positive outcomes” within a school community of 450 students from K–5, and the capabilities of young students with supported examples of how agency is present amongst developing learners. The investigators were also interested in how teachers and administrators could foster a scaffolded approach to student agency. Discourse was an important part of their study, as they explored how young people interact with one another within a community. The main sources of data were interviews with students, teachers, and administrators over a two-year period. Artifacts were also collected in the form of school surveys, PowerPoint presentations, and photos. Further to this, data was drawn from six other focus groups that represented the general culture of learning within the school (Mitra & Serrierre, 2012).

As lead investigators, the authors of this case study focused on *agency, belonging, competencies,* and *efficacy.* The investigation studied how student voice can be nurtured and supported within a learning community. The research team identified a common pedagogy within a large community that spoke to a learning process that could support student voice and choice within a community.
The study was valuable as it provides examples of how student development and sophisticated engagement within an elementary school setting can be studied or modeled over time, which has been noted within research as a significant void. In addition, this study demonstrates how school culture supports the narratives of learners participating in group activities, as students learn to work with others, make mistakes, and create change. Mitra and Serrierre (2012) conclude, “The alignment of these outcomes for the Salad Girls suggests that student voice can foster positive developmental assets—even at the age of 10 years old” (p. 768).

A possible limitation of this study may be that the research team had to rely on the interpretations of others as truth for much of their background knowledge, which was established through interviews with the main classroom teacher and school principal.

**Identity construction through literacy.** McCarthey (2001) examined student perspectives, context, and literacy as they relate to identity construction in a Grade 5 classroom. The research questions guiding her study were:

1) **How do students and their teacher, parents, and peers perceive students from diverse backgrounds?** (“student subidentities” i.e., shy, kind, smart)

2) **What role did students’ involvement (success with an interest) in literacy activities play in identity construction?**

3) **What features of the literacy curriculum played a role in identity construction?**

From January to May of 1999, McCarthey (2001) conducted her study in an inner-city classroom in Texas with 12 Grade 5 students from diverse backgrounds. Data was collected from classroom observations, journals, and interviews with students, parents, peers, and teachers. In classroom workshops, thoughtfully selected books were read aloud and students were invited to relate events in the novels to their own life experiences. In interviews and writing, students were encouraged to share their stories, describe how they viewed themselves in terms of literacy ability, and also to describe their peers. Parents and the classroom teacher were also asked to describe the participants. Public and private interest in reading and writing was explored (McCarthey, 2001).
Findings noted that “perceptions of parents, peers, teachers and students played a role in identity construction” (McCarthey, 2001, p. 124). Many students who self-identified and were known by others as strong readers considered themselves smart, thoughtful, and friendly. On the other hand, students who struggled with literacy often didn’t acknowledge it outwardly, but rather focused on other aspects of their identity, such as being nice, or being helpful at home.

Although there was coherence among many student perceptions of self and the ways in which others saw them, differences in some cases were also noted. For instance, one student was known to be quiet and cooperative at school, but seen as active with an attitude at home. Drawing from the complimentary theories of Mishler (1999) and Sarup (1996), McCarthey (2001) concludes that “identities may be shaped by the audience and setting and that aspects of one’s identities, or subidentities, may clash rather than blend” (p. 142).

McCarthey (2001) was well aware of her study’s limitations, acknowledging that interview questions addressing identity are difficult to structure, scaffolding is needed in the classroom to best support student conversations and studies that feature identity, and only the teacher was able to review researcher-created profiles, while parents were not afforded the same opportunity due to time and location restraints. In addition, a possible limitation may be found in interview questions being asked by an outsider, which could make it difficult for students to comfortably report on public and private features of identity. In terms of scaffolding, limitations within the curriculum may have made it challenging for the teacher to build instruction around valuable features of student identities which the outsider researcher was looking for (McCarthey 2001).

Finally, the words of McCarthey (2001) speak to the value of many identity-based case studies where little is known and limitations have been noted, as she makes recommendations to further investigations by stating, “Other researchers can build on this study by spending more time with participants and then move to increasingly collaborative relationships in understanding the complexity of issues of identity and its connection to literacy learning” (p. 146).
Story, Pedagogy, Discourse, and Education Made Special

Master storytellers and Indigenous pedagogy. Gaining further insight into lived experiences and identity construction as being connected to naturally occurring stories, the lens of story also allows researchers to engage with honored principles of life-long learning and attachments to people, time and place, which suggest we are all part of a larger story (Wagamese, 2011). Transferring his knowledge as a master storyteller, Wagamese (2012) has spoken to Indigenous and worldly values, which extend the definition and transcending power of storytelling and its relationship to self, others and place in the following passage:

*The land spoke to all of us then. It whispered. It told stories, and those who came to it most often learned to hear that voice through the closed skin of their eyes, the soles of the feet, the palms of their hands as they rested upon stone and tree and earth and water: the storytellers. They brought us the secrets of the world we call our home, taught us to invent, to create, to imagine the space around us. They are the ones who showed us that the earth is alive, and we are joined to her by breath. The storytellers culled teachings from her mysteries. They discerned the truth that the planet we live on is but one small part of a greater, more marvelous creative energy that we are all part of as well…. When we touch the earth, we touch ourselves and the rhythms we discern are those of our own heartbeats, sounding in the context of the whole. Belonging. The articulation of who we are as a human family* (Wagamese, 2012, pp. 2-3).

To best support story and identity within a classroom, strong features of Indigenous pedagogies suggest that learning can be fostered by the *First Peoples Principles of Learning*, which states that learning must continue over time (FNESC, 2015). Research based in identity, can therefore concentrate on three (if not all) of the main components of this learning which is framed by indigenous knowledge. The first principle attends to learning that is “holistic, reflexive, experiential, and relational” (FNESC, 2015). The second attends to “learning [that is] embedded in memory, history and story” (FNESC, 2015). The third speaks to the over-arching question of my inquiry, as “learning requires exploration of one’s identity” (FNESC, 2015).
Stories of inclusion. Case studies based in narrative can support the written responses and documentation of learning process as they allow researchers to highlight the stories of varying groups of student learners. However, little is known as to how story fits within an inclusive classroom with a focus on special education and practices that support all students. Little is known about identity-based curriculum. Moore (2016), crystalizes the definition of what inclusive learning environment can look like as she states that “[t]eaching to diversity and inclusion is where we value the characteristics that are diverse, and not try and homogenize them” (p. 5). Following voice of researchers, educators, can address the ways in which scaffolds support all learners by implementing UDL and RTI into every classroom by attending to explicit statements within chapter headings and the subtitles of researchers such as Moore (2016) who’ve explicitly stated within chapters of her own studies which suggest that, “[I]nclusion Is Not Just about Students with Special Needs (p. 9).

Discourse and Identity

Linguistics and identity. In an effort to construct more knowledge, peer invested readers can be motivated by researchers who encourage knowledge seekers to explore the important role of social learning experiences that study language and discourse attached to written and spoken methods of student communication and how each contributes to identity construction (Gee, 1990). Linguistic references are important to the study of emergent identities as Gee (1990) explains that communication signals students’ membership and ownership of identity-based knowledge through “primary” and “secondary discourses.” With theory tied to research, Gee (1990) connects language to gateways of identity where groups and individuals interact with the world that surrounds them and social identities are not limited to what is spoken but what is projected through beliefs, body language, attire and mannerisms. Gee’s work is therefore valuable as he recognizes social structures within home, family and institutions based in discourse and identity construction noting that identity can change by group and/or setting and that each person contains a collection of selves (Gee & Crawford, 1998; Gee, Allen & Clinton (2001).

Public and private identities. Adding to collections of identity mentioned by Gee (1990), Sarup (1996) has explored public identity in the public manner of how others view someone and private identity
as how individuals view themselves over time. Adding a slight twist to his insight on public and private identities, one might request that similar considerations be made for the way in which students present identities of self externally to the way in which they feel about themselves intrinsically.

**Figured worlds of identity.** The premise of student identity development and its symbiotic relationship with “figured worlds” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) provides a framework that encourages students to think beyond unequivocal answers and connect to varying patterns of social interest. Holland et al. define a figured world as “a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (p. x). Essentially, people ‘figure’ out who they are when they are involved in activities with others who contribute to features of an individual ‘world’ or identity. Some of Holland et al.’s (1998) main points on figured worlds suggest that people can enter and support one another’s worlds through various states of emotional connectedness, which can be learned over time and place and practiced through social activities on a daily basis.

As a sophisticated theory of self and identity tied to experiences, Holland et al. (1998) suggest that the cultural aspects of an individual contribute to a study of identity. Social and cultural elements of figured worlds and the lens focused on self is largely connected to identity construction through process driven activities (Holland, et al., 1998). *World artifacts* described by Holland et al. (1998) complement pedagogy within Indigenous belief systems (FNESC, 2015F) as memory, history, place, storied events, and connections to objects support thinking and emotional processes. In summary, social activities and the discourse of telling experiences through story are developed by figured worlds or identities that look beyond the surface level of what is known about self, others, and worlds. Therefore, as a research consideration, the concept of figured worlds can guide the exploration of identity, and potentially bring value to the constructs surrounding identity that support the voice and agency of student learners in different places, surrounded by different people, over time.

In summary of identity-based discourse, identities can be influenced by time, place, and storytelling experiences amongst self and others. Evidence of student development can demonstrate how
identity construction is forged by, though not restricted to, classroom constructs. Figured worlds connected to social learning culture suggest that cultural placements can support identity development and emotional connectedness (Holland, et al., 1998). By examining the discourse and constructs of identity as a sociocultural phenomenon, research benefits from the multi-dimensional sites of knowledge (Gee, 1990; Holland et al., 1998; Sarup, 1996).

**Educational Reform and Identity-based Curriculum**

Looking beyond traditional identity-based frameworks that focus on Mathematics (Sfard & Prusak, 2005), English Language Arts (McCarthey, 2001), and Civic Efficacy (Mayes, Mitra, & Serriere, 2016; Mitra & Serriere, 2012), little is known about research in identity-based curriculums. Yet students are currently encouraged to focus on their personal identities and the curricular context as they were situated within lived experiences and core competencies (Province of British Columbia, 2018). Sfard and Prusak (2005), challenge the traditional discourse of education and provide a new lens for student learning by suggesting that “identity is a perfect candidate for the role of ‘the missing link’ in the researchers’ story of the complex dialect been learning and its sociocultural context” (p. 15).

As the missing link of personal identities unfolds through story, research reminds its audience that the significance of a designated learning process will extend far beyond the context of a singular study (Yin, 2014). For instance, research informs us that students will learn to act upon their claims to knowledge and inform themselves of the person they claim to be (Holland et al., 1998). Further to this claim to knowledge, empirical studies relating to learning practice can be used to support the personal and social learning culture that will foster students’ narratives, whether spoken or written, on topics concerning time, place, and relationships with self and others.

In other inquiry-based stories of identity, research has focused on students, educators, researchers, and parents as participants (Craig, 2007; Crick, 2012). The format of narrative has also been manipulated to accommodate varying methods of research and focus based in case study. For the purpose of many studies, this has included the storied responses of both researcher and student who’ve volunteered voice and/or writing to the codes that speak to the social influence of our learning institutions, local geography,
and learning culture (Vygotsky, 2012; Sfard and Prusak, 2005). As co-contributors, teachers and researchers also need to attend to the development of student identity with immediate urgency and continuous attention.

Summary of Literature

Thankfully, the pathway of scientific relevance leaning towards case studies, storytelling, and the framing of figured worlds is not a new concept, and research has paved the way for future studies of identity development (Mitra & Serriere, 2012).

Spoken or written narratives, as empirical evidence, have been valued as a process through which student discourse best supports knowledge (Sfard & Prusak, 2005; McCarthey, 2001) and engagement (Crick, 2012). In fact, research investigations based on time and story display strong holistic learning qualities and abilities. Crick (2012) shares this appreciation of storied text as she explains that stories are “deeply personal and unique, although necessarily experienced and accumulated over time in the context of relationship, community and tradition” (p. 682).

As identities are continuously created and recreated (Holland & Lave, 2003), I am also thankful for the literature that values written and spoken communication and the role it plays in the social lives of students (Gee, 2000). Providing complementary evidence, research suggests that the discourse of social interactions can and will influence: the form and pace of students’ evolving identities, their interactions between personal and public worlds (Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Holland et al., 1986; Sarup, 1996), and the intensity of their actions within a community at large. Paired with social discourse, studies on student identity can support identity-based curriculum and educational reform that services all students with developmental benefits (Kaplan & Flum, 2014). Benefits as such may include the amplification of student voice, engagement, and learning process based on narratives of personal significance.

To summarize the review of literature pertaining to identity and student development, several key ideas will lay a foundation for my research. Borrowing from early sociocultural theories, community influences and interactive learning based in language are valued (Dewey, 1938/1997; Vygotsky, 1986; Gee, 1990). Previous claims to knowledge based in narratives (Crick, 2012; Connelly and Clandinin,
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1996; Craig, 2007) validate the deep culture of student learning within my study, where features of
engagement, story, and depth of knowledge will be reported. These theories validate teachers as
facilitators, and claim that stories and scaffolding are required, yet gaps in the literature prevent
researchers and teachers from an understanding of how it can be accomplished or what it could look like
when following or examining the stories of others.

Summaries of case studies addressing identity development in pre-adolescent students support the
framework of my case study. The research of Sfard and Prusak (2005) endorses my proposal for
examining the deep culture of student learning (core competencies) beyond reading, writing, and
arithmetic. They provide the lens through which I aim to examine identity over time, through
narrative/story as identity. Following Mitra and Serrierre (2012), a key feature throughout my study is
student agency and voice. Mitra and Serrierre (2012), provide the pathways to future research, as they
demonstrate how students can come together as a class and propose improvements for a better future.

When exploring identity as a major component of pre-adolescent development, McCutcheon
(2001) supports my reliance on literature and writing as a tool. In response to her claim that little is
known about how to scaffold and deliver identity-based learning, my case study will provide some insight
into addressing this gap, by placing identity at the forefront.

My personal approach to using story as a support tool for learning is not a new concept.
Indigenous pedagogy informs many aspects of my study, as knowledge of self and others promotes
belonging within community (Wagamese, 2011). Common references to First People’s Principles of
Learning (FNESC, 2015) will be used to support the holistic experiences of narratives shared within my
classroom, and how we are able to explore knowledge of self, be present with others, and connect to
place.

The inclusive nature of my study is supported by McCutcheon (2001) and Moore (2016).
McCutcheon (2001) noted that struggling readers and writers will often identify other aspects of who they
are, regardless of ability. Likewise, my study will not focus on spelling or reading skills. It will focus on
scaffolds and structure within a classroom community that teach to diversity, not about it (Moore 2016).
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Returning to the value of social learning, research connects identity to the influence of home, family, and institutional structures (Gee, 1990). Knowing that features of identity extend beyond the classroom, my study will encompass these beliefs. As such, considerations of private and public selves will be noted and attended to throughout. This embraces a storytelling culture for all in which learners can exercise the right to share or remain silent (FNESC, 2015). Expanding on reoccurring themes of public and private knowledge, my study will also make strong considerations for how students define themselves in front of a public or private audience (Sarup, 1990; McCarthey, 2001). In addition, it will explore the process of how students interact with others and what is said through quotes or discourse (Mitra & Serrierre, 2012).

In the findings that follow, “figured worlds” will appear as common discourse (Holland et. al, 1998). As a concept connected to research theory, this term provides another framework and a constant reminder of how students engage with knowledge of self and others. Like Holland and associates (1998), the investigation that follows will explore figured worlds of emotions, memories, conversations, and connections over time.

Despite what is known, there is not yet research on explicit learning processes that place an identity-based curriculum (core competencies) first with pre-adolescent students. Therefore, the study that follows will attempt to lessen the gaps in literature and research by highlighting conversations based in story as identity.
Chapter Three: Research Methods

“...human beings are active agents who play decisive roles in determining the dynamics of social life and in shaping individual activities.”

–Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 15

Methodology

This study explores student learning over time as students engaged with narrative texts as part of an exploration of identity. The general focus of this study will speak to personal and socially defined learning experiences (Province of British Columbia, 2018). Since little is known about the holistic components of identity development in an elementary classroom setting, research within this study was driven by a teacher-researcher’s interest to reveal common themes and unique findings that could emerge from such an investigation. Although this case study was founded on the exploratory values of a newly studied phenomenon (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), it is expected that instrumental patterns and themes revealed by this case study may be used to highlight specific qualities within student narratives that could be used to support the future development of student identities over time and place. The all-encompassing questions which guided this case study were as follows:

1. How can learning experiences, based in storytelling support the development of student identity over time?
2. How do students connect their knowledge of self to the shared narratives within their community?

Essentially, this study will explore the social values of storytelling and the process of teaching to identity related concepts following education reform. In closing chapters, the results of this study will also explain how data was to be used to guide learning goals and future considerations for research involving the holistic nature of student identity development as it relates to storytelling in an elementary classroom following curricular restoration.

Case study is a qualitative research method that can be useful when studying the behaviours and experiences of a small group in a natural setting (Cresswell, 2014). As a method, it can facilitate
investigations relating to ‘how’ real-life experiences contribute to meaning when little is known (Yin, 2014). Case can be comprehensive and versatile, as it can explore depth and process (Grand Canyon University, Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, ND).

Additionally, case study provides new information on theories in education and other fields. When reviewed by others, it can encourage further exploration and the development of new questions pertaining to complementary or opposing research. Illustrative case studies, in particular, are valuable for studying learning experiences, as they can describe an event or situation (Grand Canyon University, Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, ND).

Making a socially structured claim to knowledge, Klein (2012) highlights the value of case study by explaining that it allows for “the close collaboration between researcher and participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories, through the researcher’s mining of data (p.71). The type of knowledge created by the method supports my research questions as I “deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions—believing that they might be highly pertinent to [my] phenomenon of study” (Yin, 2003, p.13) As a method, case study was valuable as it allowed me the researcher, to stay close to the natural occurring events as they unfolded in my classroom while searching for answers to unanswered questions.

Participants

The case study that follows will interpret a collection of data relating to the identity development of a group of 4th and 5th Grade learners residing on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

The 13 participants in this study were drawn from a class of 23 learners ranging from eight to eleven years of age. This study took place in an inclusive classroom. As such, a number of students required significant adaptations to learning support that utilized a scribe, use of technology, and continuous re-teaching and prompting.

Participants were recruited through a process that addressed ethical concerns related to teachers conducting research with their own students. Early in the term information was sent home with all students about the study, requesting that any students who assented and parents who consented to having
journal-based reflections and general observations of learning being used as part of this study would submit signed assent and consent forms to the office in sealed envelopes. The learning experiences took place with all students in the class, and neither the teacher researcher nor any other students were aware of who was and who was not a participant in the study.

On the afternoon of December 14, 2018, consent/assent envelopes were opened by the teacher-researcher to reveal and honour participants’ requests to consent or be withdrawn from the study. Journals of student who had assented/consented to the study were transcribed by the teacher-researcher in full. This data was sent home to parents/guardians by email with information about how to request revision or withdraw from the case study within a two-week time frame. Parents were also offered the opportunity to review the findings summary with further options to request revision or withdraw before thesis completion.

**Learning Experiences**

From September 17, 2018 to December 14, 2018, students were encouraged to investigate subject-based learning goals that aligned with many competencies, yet a greater focus was directed toward personal, social, and cultural learning experiences within the *core competencies* (Province of British Columbia, 2018). To communicate common language and clear expectations, rubrics were attached to culminating storytelling activities used to guide learning and reflection.

Students were asked to address core and curricular competencies as they are outlined in ministry frameworks (Province of British Columbia, 2018). Examples of learning intentions, drawn from the curriculum, read as follows:

- Respond to text in personal and creative ways;
- Connect and reflect on concepts relating to personal interests and one another;
- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills;
- Understand information and gather information;
- Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through experiences;
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- Appreciate the influence of relationships, choices, and goals; and
- Develop and demonstrate respectful behavior when participating in activities with others.

Specific learning experiences are described in Findings chapter.

Data Collection

This case study utilized student journals, student self-assessment rubrics (Appendices A1-A3), and researcher reflections.

Student journals. Student journals were used as a primary source of data. The storied text within journals was important as students’ words and ideas were examined for themes and patterns existing within first person narratives. Common references to story will be connected to life writing (Hasebe-Ludt & Jordan, 2010), which essentially weaves the social fabric of how identity entertains, shapes, and connects a community of learners. Stories include information about who students are and how they relate to others, as life writing is believed to provide answers to stakeholders with a lasting effect. Journals were used to capture student voice, interests, questions, and reflections that were most relevant to a population of grade four and five learners. Recognized as story (Hasebe-Ludt & Jordan, 2010), journals were used on a daily basis to communicate elements of student identity development. These elements were guided and noted with rubrics and tables that were used to guide and frame most lessons. Although the writing of student journals followed a basic linear approach for documenting evidence on student-identity development over time, journals were also analyzed for themes and embedded codes. The overarching guidelines included the following guidelines and I can statements:

- Identity within the new BC Education Plan;
- A participant/learner’s story of self, others, and community;
- I can use storytelling to amplify my personal and cultural identity;
- I can use storytelling to highlight the socially responsible elements of my identity when…; and
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• I can use storytelling to highlight my understanding of Personal Awareness and Responsibility as it relates to my sense of….

**Researcher reflections.** Researcher reflection notes were dated and recorded throughout the thirteen weeks of this study. My reflections post lesson or weekly review were recorded in a research reflection journal. On average, I as the teacher-researcher committed to two entries per week. Lengthier reflections at the midway and end point were dually noted. To preserve the events of each activity in holistic and most authentic form, temporary photographs of whiteboard comments, student work, sticky-note comments, and tally charts were also used pre, post, and during lessons to document observations, guide future learning, and support reflective practices that had transpired earlier in the day or week. The frequency of researcher reflections ranged from one to three reflections per week and all photographs and sticky notes were deleted or destroyed once the information was recorded. Key ideas and commentary embedded within varying lessons or collections of ideas were guided by curricular tables and rubrics mentioned earlier. As the teacher-researcher, I continuously responded to questions such as the following:

* What did we do?
* What were our goals?
* In general will our goals achieved?
* If this activity were to be repeated what would I change?
* What considerations need to be considered for a follow-up activity?
* In general was this storytelling experience effective in amplifying student voice?
* In general, is storytelling an effective tool for tracking developing identities?
* In general, how might the storytelling platform support the process of learning modes in metacognitive thought development? In general was this storytelling experience effective in amplifying student voice?
* What challenges or persistent questions does a teacher-researcher ask when exploring a unit framed by storytelling and student-identity development?
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* What suggestions can be made regarding the future development of storytelling and identity development in the classroom?

As volunteer participants were not identified until the end of this observation period, researcher reflection notes were later transcribed according to the research consent agreement that identified students under non-identifiable profiles from which volunteer participants selected their own pseudonym. The “narrative within researcher” reflections were important to this narrative study as they added context and clearly relayed recollections of depth based on the interpretation of student development as it was lived and witnessed. Researcher reflections were also significant as they introduced new codes of interest pertaining to research based in storytelling.

**Tally charts and whiteboard comments.** Tally charts were used to collect individual student observational data about their engagement in learning (Appendix B). The tally descriptors attempted to identify not just participation, but the depth of their engagement with learning. Therefore, tallies, titles, and columns pertaining to identity-based references needed to be paired with whiteboard comments that contained greater descriptors of student knowledge. Time dedicated to tallies also distracted my attention from participants within case process when I attempted to categorize ideas on the fly. As my main goal was to attend to student identity and the meaning of narratives within a community, my data collecting process evolved early and I elected to attend fully to classroom discourse by completing tally and whiteboard comments in a blended yet complementary format post instruction.

**Data Interpretation**

Once data was transcribed, I as researcher had the daunting task of trying to select the data and narratives that were best suited for this study. Following this process, I then attended to pre- and post-emergent codes revealed by journals, rubrics, and reflections. Upon analysis, evidence provided by student writing were organized by theme from the student journals. Quotes were selected with care and purpose, and were used to support qualitative research and the holistic story of student identity development in an inclusive classroom environment with storytelling, process, time, and growth as the focus. Quotations from student journals are provided as written (sometimes with added interpretation) in
order to represent the voice of student participants as they reflected and learned. The interpretation of quotations were crafted by thematic codes embedded within discourse pertaining to ministry regulated competencies (Province of British Columbia, 2018), and are represented in the findings chapter to most effectively represent student learning and ideas shared in journals and in community.

In my findings chapter, codes were capitalized to highlight how data related and how themes emerged.

Summary of Narrative-Based Case Study

In summary, the reflections and stories of the student participants were interpreted and shared through my personal lens as a teacher-researcher. As this study was based on student identity development in a classroom context, it should be noted that the learning experiences and the quotations shared honoured pedagogy within First Peoples Principles of Learning that states, “learning involves recognition that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations” (FNESC, 2015). These principles are worth noting as I, as teacher-researcher, included holistic writing samples with purpose and intent to honour the lens of every storyteller present. In fact, all stories were valued for their personal and shared qualities, and each source of data was cross referenced to themes, codes, and the conveyance of discourse relayed over time.

Value and Limitations

Limitations of case study as a method can include the possibility of not being able to replicate the conditions of the study; the danger of researcher bias due to the subjective nature of case; and reliability of results (Grand Canyon University, Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, ND). The learning that transpired within my case study was clearly limited in several ways. First, the knowledge that was created cannot be generalized beyond this single case. Additionally, teacher as researcher does represent insider bias that I simply cannot refute (Uncluer, 2012). Interpretations within this study may be limited as they belonged to me, the teacher-researcher, with no other data sources for triangulation.

In closing I will address the values of a case study conducted within a classroom context by highlighting the naturalistic elements of research that can take place in context: for instance, a classroom
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community over time. Teacher as researcher can speak to the value of insider research as positive relationships with student participants are important not only to the researcher but also to the participants we study. Additionally, case study research also provides exemplars of what can be further explored and confirmed in different contexts and learning communities. This data can be used to help educators and future researchers understand how students and their communities can begin to understand that the shallow and deep expressions of identity are framed by story and a learning culture that continuously evolves.
Chapter Four: Findings

One of the advantages of being a good listener
is that you learn a great deal about how the world works.

—Applegate 2017, p. 80

Introduction to Findings

This chapter describes the findings of a case study conducted with a class of 4th and 5th Grade students from September 17–December 14, 2018. Designed to explore research questions about learning experiences, narratives, story-telling, community, and student identity, the pathways of this case study were woven through a range of learning throughout those time periods and paired with particular focus on a novel titled Wishtree (Applegate, 2017). From the story of my combined grade classroom, 13 students and their parents generously consented to share student journal entries and records of learning (tallies) and have reviewed transcripts of the data provided below. Participants are identified by pseudonyms in descriptions and data to protect their identity.

This case study is an exploration of how students engaged with these stories as part of their own consideration of their identities and understanding of interconnected relationships, experiences, place and intensions. These findings respond to the following research questions:

1. How can learning experiences, based in storytelling, support the development of student identity over time?

2. How do students connect their knowledge of self to the shared narratives within their community?

Learning experiences based in storytelling were used to support participants’ developing abilities to identify, express, analyze, and reflect upon diverse identities within a community. Learning goals provided measurable codes and themes to use in the case study for tracking the development of identity through learning support and the communication of Wish(es) and/or Story(ies) belonging to student participants. These thoughts and wishes were noted in new and well-received journals of varying colours. Early entries of student narratives were recorded by participants or scribes who committed their voices and stories to Bullet Journals, Lapbook Response Folders, and Whiteboard Comments pertaining to
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learning experiences in the classroom. Each student, despite literacy ability, was encouraged to express their own understanding of identity. Whether responses were written independently or scribed is not a direct focus of these findings.

The findings in this chapter are presented chronologically. This is intended to both demonstrate the shape of the unit and the learning experiences based in identity, and to attend to the research question’s focus on ‘time’, recognizing student learning as a process. The first section titled Prelude to Case provides brief summaries of start-up lessons, which demonstrate how student agency, student-teacher relationships of trust, and connections to a novel were established at the beginning of the school year. The Introduction to Learning Process follows, with parts 1–5 summarizing learning frameworks that provided scaffolds for storytelling experiences and parts 6–14 outlining lessons specifically tied to Wishtree and participant relationships with self, others, and community. Finally, this findings chapter comes to a close as parts 15–20 highlight valuable features of revisited wishes, reflective practices, ‘messy’ learning opportunities, and thematic summaries of what is now known about storytelling and student identity development in a Grade 4/5 classroom.

The intent of this study is to explore student learning in progress in the classroom. To best represent my findings, data will be provided in the form of direct quotes from journals, both student journals and my own teacher-researcher journals. Because students are learning, expressing identity through new and challenging concepts, and because the intent of student storytelling as writing is self-expression and not writing for an audience, the writing samples have not been edited or developed to a ‘presentation copy’. First draft reflective writing as students learn often does not yet attend to spelling or sentence structure conventions. The data is presented as transcribed, sometimes with some interpretation, and the reader is encouraged to look beyond conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation). Also, a goal of this research is to recognize the range of abilities and needs of students in an inclusive classroom, and to demonstrate how uniquely individual students are able to respond to issues of identity, regardless of their literacy skills or supports needed.
References to figured worlds occur throughout this study, as they “[e]mphasize the importance of cultural activities in framing human cognition and social activity, but [go] on to inquire into how persons develop in practice. More precisely, [figured worlds encase] how history-in-person [can take] shape in local practice interpreted according to cultural activities” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 5).

Prelude to Case

The focus on identity based in storytelling within a classroom community started in our first week as a class, during which time scaffolds were set by mini-lessons designed to amplify student voice and social agency. In four short lessons from September 10–14, Grades 4 and 5 students responded to questions and learning prompts in verbal and written responses. Sitting or standing at round tables, raised standing benches, and singular desks, students shared their responses as a whole class or in small groups before committing their thoughts to paper and submitting their written responses for teacher review.

In the week leading into my case study, students were invited to share their first stories with classmates and/or classroom teacher. Thanks to an inspiring tweet and teacher prompt by Erin Olson@eolsonteacher (2018, August 20), students began sharing their stories on large colourful Post-it paper by responding to the following sentence starters: If I’m angry, please… If you’re proud of me, I hope you ….

When I’m not in school, my responsibilities include… I hope this class is a place where… (Erin Olson@eolsonteacher, 2018). This collection of students’ first solo reflections was instrumental as it introduced learning experiences based in storytelling from our first day together. It also sparked my plans as a researcher as I discovered that students enjoyed using a variety of different materials and style-related applications. They loved the coloured Post-it paper. From a researcher’s perspective, I also appreciated how quickly our learning community assumed and embraced the early application of discourse pertaining to student identity and storytelling.

When reviewing participant data, the lines of relationship were blurred. It was difficult to report on individual categories. For example, when responding to the sentence starter “If you are proud of me…,” one student simply said, “Let me be,” while another requested that donations be made to Children’s Hospital. The first response could go under the category of “Relationship with Self,” while the
second response would include the student’s “Relationship with Others.” Yet another response was, “Pay attention to my work and show it to the class,” which fit a blended or multi-dimensional category of *figured worlds* not listed within curricular configuration (Holland et al., 1998; Holland & Lave, 2009), belonging to fields of anthropology and sociology.

In this activity, requests for verbal, physical, or material acknowledgements were common and addressed at varying depths. While one student asked for candy, others asked for verbal praise, and some asked to be recognized by members outside the learning community such as parents or friends. In addition, one participant extended her thoughts to include pleasure and displeasure, requesting smiles and thumbs up, to be spoken to in a whisper, and not to be poked, hit, or yelled at. All of these responses suggested that the lines of relationship framed by identity are difficult to define in isolated silos. However, learning experiences such as this are useful, as they help students understand that identity is connected to *figured* relationships within community.

Student responses were not solely based on experiences or emotions contained by classroom activities. Responses to the question relating to *responsibilities* outside of school provided valuable information about my participants’ home lives, including the care of self, pets, and siblings. Household upkeep, meal preparations, homework, and extracurricular activities were also noted in varying degrees.

Responses to the question about anger addressed students’ abilities to express basic needs for self-regulatory care when challenged by anger. Some students simply requested for an action to “Stop,” without providing a detailed explanation as to how, whereas others stated specifically that they wished to be alone, and in their time alone they could draw, read, watch TV, participate in physical activity, rest, eat sweets, or simply breathe. One student was able to provide a variety of different strategies. She spoke about getting out of her room, playing music or the game Odyssey, punching her toys or stuffies, surrounding herself in nature, eating, reading books, and drawing, thus proving her ability to communicate self-regulating strategies in various situations.

Wishes for school were divided, as half of the participants’ suggestions included possible rewards of an explorative and/or active socially engaging nature such as elaborate field trips, increased free time
with outdoor play and art, a suggested book title for read-aloud, class parties, and suggested topics of
learning for Socials, Science, and Math related learning. Other requests appeared in a category based on
“Social Relationship with Self and Others.” One student requested a class pet and a classroom where all
behave and listen, another requested an opportunity to meet new friends, and the third student wished for
an opportunity to have time with friends, to learn math, to spend more time with specific people in partner
activities, to play as a class, to climb trees, and to participate in cleanup activities with little buddies. The
emergent themes from this analysis suggest that some students address wishes within a singular category,
whereas others appreciate and speak to the layered discourse of multiple relationships and needs relating
to self-interest.

In our first week together, our attachment to story and storytelling also began as the students were
introduced to the novel *Wishtree*, written by Katherine Applegate (2017). Before the case study began,
Chapters 1–7 were read aloud to the whole class. The weave of storytelling was embedded within our
social learning experiences, which included text-to-life connections as well as modelled thinking
processes based in emotion, metacognition, and reflective thought. As students and I shared our
connections to text, our raw and authentic wishes, and our dedication to a well-told story, writing samples
from participants showed that figured worlds of story could provide a springboard for further
investigations of self. In truth, a study framed by students’ learning experiences with a dominant novel
was never intended. However, the story of *Wishtree* provided a framework that contained and supported
the development of student identity, as it modelled the importance of thought based in metacognition,
appreciation of differences, awareness of divided and blurred lines of relationship, and the acquired skill
of personal storytelling. Stories selected for study through the unit were chosen for their attention to BC
Curriculum’s *core competencies* with particular interest in personal and social learning competencies
which encompass “the abilities students need to thrive as individuals, to understand and care about
themselves and others, and to find and achieve their purposes in the world.” (Province of British
Columbia, 2018, Core Competencies).
In the very beginning, students learned that stories can support the awareness of self-interest as well as relationships with others and ties to community. Students were reminded that to be strong storytellers they must all learn to observe and listen, and always consider the personal strengths and vulnerabilities of self and others. The metacognitive process was modelled with teacher-researcher examples that demonstrated personal vulnerability, with a key focus on storytelling as a tool for navigation. I told my students that I love to hear the stories of others, that it is difficult for me to read unfamiliar words, and that I sometimes feel overwhelmed by a public audience so, consequently, I am not always comfortable sharing pieces of my story. Students were then invited, in pairs, to share elements of their story with an audience. Many participants were not able to focus or stay on topic, and I noted that participation and focus improved when ideas were shared as a whole group with teacher direction. This included the right to pass or share, which is supported by literature and aligns the value of classroom conversations to the fostering of community (Lundy & Swartz, 2011). Sharing personal stories in this way was new to many students, yet most of them embraced the opportunity to address their personal strengths and challenges. As a community, participants also aligned their understanding of story and conversation to Indigenous pedagogy and practice as students fully understood that shared experiences were valuable, yet they only shared and investigated others’ stories when permission was granted (FNESC, 2015).

Our starting platform was balanced with a strong attachment to belonging and goals that could accommodate every learner. Together, the students and I acknowledged our starting points as emergent storytellers and researchers, shared goals in social conversation, and spent time in self-reflection. As a community, students and I discussed the idea that storytelling and identity development could be our focus throughout a life-long learning process. Participants were reminded daily that I as a researcher and teacher would neither assess nor judge their stories. As well as being framed by the BC Curriculum, learning activities responded to First Peoples Principles of Learning (FNESC, 2015). The top four principles that guided our learning based in story and identity were:

- *Learning requires patience and time*;
- *Learning is embedded in memory, history and story*;
Learning requires exploration in one’s identity; and
Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

Moving forward, students’ connections to identity were investigated through the concept of a wish. They were asked to write down the wish they would place on a wishing tree. One participant did not commit his wish to paper, and only four participants contained their wish to a singular idea. This process revealed potential themes and codes. It also complemented the evidence of identity from earlier lessons where colored Post-it responses revealed the altruistic nature of some students’ identities. Student examples outlined the varying depth of their understanding of a public self as well as their layered relationships to family and community. For instance, Grade 4 participant Colin repeated his wish of money for Children’s Hospital. Another altruistic wish was provided by Jessica, who had spoken earlier of her extensive home responsibilities, the importance of alone time, and hopes for group-based school activities. She embedded two wishes: one for her mother, and the other for the homeless community, writing, “I wish that my mom would stop getting sick all the time and that she would stop having back pain and *brouses all over her body. I wish that there is no such thing as *homless *peopl.” The responses bring attention to evidence of Core Competencies, as wishes were connected to identity and Social Responsibility.

Imaginative or creative elements of student identity were present in wishes for a pet unicorn that could fix forests, talking kittens, and flying beds. Another participant even wove his problem-solving strategies and inventive thinking into his singular wish for bubble gum that never loses its flavour. Impossible wishes or those not yet attainable were also highlighted as additional wishes included another student’s desire to visit the place of his dreams and to travel through time. This suggests that students do not limit their thoughts to attainable goals, and imagination and creativity still play a large role in the development of student learners (Burvall & Ryder, 2017).

This task proved to be challenging, as a request for one wish soon became many wishes, highlighting the limitations of a singular response when looking at identity and its ties to relationship. For
example, participants such as Elliott presented various themes such as environmental interest, appearance, fame, and self-awareness. She wrote: “I wish for a pet *unicorn so it can make more trees for the forest and I wish for a pug. I wish for the *longs (longest) *hare in the *word. I wish we did not have to do math.”

Attainable and unattainable wishes of varied and astonishing depth emerged in connection to relationships with others. Seven of 13 participants requested pets, flagging a potential theme or dominant appreciation of child and pet relationships. Two other participants included human needs/desires and thoughts of others in wishes for the improved health of a parent or close family friend. Comparable interests were also extended towards the return of loved and displaced family members both present, past, near, and far. The emotional need for personal connections with adult friends and family members was highlighted by one student who wished to see her grandparents in India with embedded emotion by explaining that she missed them. Students’ desire for grandparents remained strong as well as wishes that were difficult to categorize by one singular relationship. Carter wrote, “My *wishs *whould be for no more *cuting Down *to Much trees and for my *cusen and *Grate *grama to come Back alive and I *wiss *logan my *Gramas Dog can come Back alive.” These findings indicate that identity is not just connected to relationship with self and others; it is also connected to place, time, and limitless thinking.

The credibility or authenticity of public wishes attached to student identity should be questioned, as students wrote wishes knowing they would be shared with a public audience. It appears that James may have been the only student to follow the literal form of the initial question by recording his singular wish for a material possession in the form a Play Station Pro. His wish was largely focused on self-interest, and also connected to the influence of his social culture. We must consider that some writing was likely influenced by students’ awareness of having an audience. However, James was not alone in his wish for material possessions, as the wishes of other students also included exotic cars and the desire to be rich.

Early experiences solidified evidence of identity and storytelling with Post-it notes, classroom conversations, and journals. They also showed that student identity development is attached to figured worlds and historic contexts which cannot be defined by singular silos of focus such as age, grade, or
subject. As a narrative tool, storytelling allows students to express who they are in a social learning environment. From material possessions and wealth to illness and homelessness; from pet companionship and dreams of flying beds to environmental concerns, wishes connected the emergent understanding of identity, relationships, and the ever-changing nature of self by making them visible.

In response to the research questions, the codes of Discourse, Engagement, Experience, and Relationships support the understanding of development of student identity over time. Diverse stories framed by a display of public wishes provided early evidence of student identity, as students volunteered great exemplars of altruistic thoughts, material appreciation, and varying acknowledgements of self. In fact, this opportunity provided an early preview of research that would come from figured worlds and shared narratives amongst a community.

The findings from this section indicate that:

a) creating a responsive classroom environment where students are encouraged to reflect on their own interests, connections, and wishes, can frame investigations of identity; and

b) a literature-based unit of study with an identity focus can encourage students to view themselves as ‘upstanders’ who can contribute to change in the world;

Part One: Emergent Understanding of Identity

Trees can’t tell jokes.

But we can certainly tell stories.

And if all you hear is the whisper of leaves, don’t

Worry. Most trees are introverts at heart.

—Applegate , 2017, p. 3.

The story of this study and its accompanying results spread like whispers of leaves belonging to a wishtree. The whispers of this study will speak to the core and flavour of story and relationships through volunteered narratives framed by identity and shared amongst a community.

Participants’ first experience with storytelling and a designated thirteen-week case study on student identity development continued with small group and whole class discussions. Students watched a
short YouTube video (Osman, 2009) and were asked to examine a character and respond to questions based in identity. Wait time and teacher prompting were required to support student responses. Whiteboard comments and tally notes demonstrated that Grade 4 participants struggled to communicate their ideas, while the Grade 5 participants, all whom I had taught/looped from Grade 4 to 5 in a second year of learning, were more successful in contributing to class discussion. The question, “What is identity?” was followed by an “uncomfortable silence” as noted in researcher reflections. When students were told that not knowing or guessing was okay, two participants shared their thoughts, thus supporting the need for scaffolding such as teacher prompting. One Grade 4 participant, noted in tally references, was able to make a connection to the “things” or “whats” that define the “identity” of an individual, thus proving that students had an early understanding of identity-based attributes.

Themes of identity were supported in early findings. The codes of Caution and Respect were evident in classroom discussion. For instance, researcher reflections noted that, “students responded in socially and culturally respectful manners by presenting their thoughts cautiously.” Codes pertaining to Relationship with Self and Relationship with Others were also noted in tally references and included one Grade 4 and one Grade 5 participant’s references to the ways in which individuals behave and treat others. In other words, students understood that identity is not just based on self; it is also constructed by the interactions and influences of others. This supports Holland’s figured worlds of identity based in relationship (1998). Codes pertaining to Engagement, Discourse, and Relationship also emerged when students were asked, “How is your identity different when you compare it to mine [teacher’s] or the identity of someone else?” At this time, more participants contributed to the discussion, showing evidence of increased student engagement. A summary of classroom dialogue indicated that identity is best described by students who can compare facets of their identity to the identifiers of another.

After the first viewing of the video, I as teacher-researcher was able to condense student ideas into four main categories of identity. Key points from early conversations were recorded on the whiteboard in the following form:

- Our actions & their impact on others
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- **Language**
- **Religion and Beliefs**
- **Emotional Responses to positive and negative experiences**

These findings are important, as these categories suggest that participants’ understanding of identity and relationship is constructed by interactions with others, belief systems, memories, experiences, and emotional reflections.

After a second viewing of the video, students responded to the question, “What identity-based features might make this storyteller different from us on our second viewing?” The titles below summarize the spoken discourse of students’ social learning experience:

- **Social awareness**
  - caution to avoid racism
  - awareness of how people treat one another

- **National Identity—Canadian, Immigrant…**

- **Social Status—Employment title**

- **Culture**
  - city culture vs. urban.

- **Skin Colour—based on historic views, race, and social relationships of difference**

- **Possible food preferences**

- **Ancestry**

- **Accents**

- **Interests**

- **Thinking**
  - curiosity, creative thinking, problem solving strategies, metacognitive thought

- **Behavior/manners**
  - City ‘budging’ pushing, crowded
The findings upon second review suggest that students can expand on their thoughts and identify a deeper culture of identity-based discourse. The categories that emerged from the first experience were later expanded in the second viewing to include more specific detail and evidence of sophisticated thought. This included ways of being and a culture of thinking. Students explained that identity is also based on relationship. Carter, for instance, focused on how an individual may treat others. References by Darion, noted on the whiteboard, summarized the discussion by explaining that identity could be formed within a person’s actions and their relationship with others. His contributions to class discussion therefore suggest that Darion, as a Grade 5 student, was able to reflect on Social Responsibility and Personal Awareness competencies within identity-based research and social learning experiences within the classroom.

Behavioural codes of Depth, Engagement, and Caution were also noted in the combined analysis of whiteboard comments and tallies. This may have been attributed to the Grade 5 students’ prior knowledge and experiences with familiar methods of learning. For instance, participants projected their thoughts with cautionary statements such as, “maybe...” he is South African, a New Yorker, generous, cautious, immigrant, or person from a different place.

As a collective group, showing an emergent understanding of identity-based discourse, participants made their inquiries and knowledge of identity ‘visible’. Engagement of Grade 4 students with less experience was also noted in findings. This depth of participant discourse was noted in tally charts and whiteboard comments as consistencies with a surface level of understanding were abundant. For instance, in their first lesson, Grade 4 students connected identity to different activities, roles, preferred activities, personal traits, employment, and leisure. Depth of student understanding was also exemplified as Aiden explained that people do “different stuff,” Star explained that people speak different languages, and Donna commented on ancestral differences. Yet another level of Engagement was noted as Jillian mirrored the early comments of her Grade 5 counterparts in a timid whisper by explaining, with teacher-researcher encouragement, that identity is based on who you are and what your actions may be. This is interesting, as Jillian is the student who spoke earlier about identity relating to how you speak.
Findings indicate that:

a) students are able to locate communities of origin, family, physical characteristics, and likes/dislikes; and

b) story, in text or video form, is a tool used by students to compare facets of their identity to the identifiers of another.

Part Two: Factual and Analytical Interpretations of Others

In our second lesson, one student sat in front of the classroom on a stool as classmates contributed to a list of his identity-based features, which I wrote on the whiteboard. This collaborative lesson was framed by an empathetic approach to investigating the story of another person, and it scaffolded a process that would later support students’ individual narratives as they wrote their own stories or lists of self. In this stage, participants and I walked through a lesson borrowed from Rosanna Jackson (R. Jackson, personal communication, April, 2017), a respected friend and colleague. It involved students reading a guided printout I created from past collaboration sessions with Rosanna, which read:

Sawabona

I honor you and I am quiet. I see you and your humanity. Therefore, I see dignity and respect.

Looking at someone is a cross cultural experience—it is something we all have.

We look at Student name and see a reflection.

We do not intentionally hurt him/her because we see how they respond.

A What is a starter for analytical questions. (More than one possible answer)

With TEACHER DESIGNATED STUDENT sitting on stool—what do we see?

In the first round of identifying the ‘whats’ of the individual sitting before our learning community, some participants provided surface responses of core understanding by referencing identity-based characteristics such as glasses, skin features, and hair colour. The characteristics volunteered by student participants proved that participants could address core elements of identity at a basic level of thinking while demonstrating several proficiencies based in Communication. For instance, students were
able to list exemplars of *Personal Strengths & Abilities, Relationships and Cultural Context, Building Relationships,* and *Valuing Diversity* (Province of British Columbia, 2018, Core Competencies).

Whiteboard comments, later combined with tally notes, also identified codes pertaining to Identity, Depth, Engagement, and Relationship with Others, as several participants commented on personality traits that represented their perspective of another’s identity. In fact, whiteboard comments noting participant involvement captured the movement from surface thinking in the first half of our lesson to greater demonstrations of depth of knowledge in the second half. With teacher-researcher prompting, Grade 5 participants had more success expanding their earlier references to surface features such as shoe type, glasses, and kindness to exemplars of identity situated at a greater depth of understanding. Discourse was attached to empathetic and analytically driven responses that started with “Maybe….” These general exemplars included:

- *Maybe he wears hiking shoes because he spends lots of time outside.*
- *Maybe he wears glasses because his needs have been recognized and he is loved by someone.*
- *Maybe his ongoing conversations on the playground with others make him a good person.*

With minimal support and direct references to whiteboard comments, Darion identified surface features or ‘whats’ such as shoe color and being nice by explaining that his classmate was “a cool guy.” In part two of blending ‘whats and ‘soWhats’, Darion was able to extend his thoughts of someone being “a cool guy” by communicating how our subject was “a good friend” and that “he called my friend Boss.” This demonstrated that Darion understood how he could start with an idea and elaborate on the meaning by providing specific detail that built a story around identity.

Students were later asked to investigate the meaning of the ‘whats’ and consider how experiences might shape an individual’s identity. Open conversation, whiteboard comments, and tallies highlighted the meaning of participant discourse, story construction, and social engagement pertaining to identity. My reflection journal noted that “whiteboard comments also showed participants that their words held value, and that their actions contributed to meaning of a socially beneficial nature.”
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Engagement was also noted in tally notes and whiteboard comments, as only two participants did not contribute to the discussion. The findings within engagement tallies also point to participants’ public and private identities as social or independent learners. Writing conferences in later activities suggested that silent participants can also maintain a fair understanding of the identity-based meaning that their community was attempting to explore in group discussion.

The comments from an in-class summary of participant discourse were condensed on the whiteboard under the following themes:

- Kindness
- Loyalty—Friend
- Humour
- Comforts/Discomfort
- Participant of Physical Activities
- Team Play

This list of identity-based categories emphasizes the values and focus of Grades 4 and 5 participants. In this list we understand that Relationship with Self and Relationship with Others are equally important, as Kindness, Loyalty, and Humour may represent both an individual’s way of being and/or the qualities they look for in others. Comfort and discomfort emerged as an important theme, implying that identity is attached to figured worlds in which different people attach comfort to different experiences. Yet, team play, friendship, and physical activities suggested that the students share some identity-based values, as friendship and belonging were recognized needs for all participants.

In a follow-up lesson designed to check participants’ understanding of identity, students were asked to define identity in their journals by connecting knowledge of self to figured worlds of relationship and socially defined experiences such as our earlier lessons. Students varied in their ability to express understanding through writing. Findings from participant writing shine a spotlight on the ‘whats’ and ‘so whats’ of discourse based in identity as shown below:
Colin: If I like math. Way I look

Adam: [With scribe and conference. Stuck, teacher-researcher re-worded sentence. What makes you Adam?] “…rigidless—like you believe God something. [Teacher-Researcher] asks if he means religion. [Confirms, “Yes.”]

Colin’s response was somewhat limited as his later journal entries suggest that his reluctance to record ideas may have been connected to his confidence with spelling. Adam, in comparison, tried to take chances and record his understanding, yet he needed support to find the correct words to communicate his ideas effectively. As demonstrated by the learning of these two participants, providing support, scaffolds, and adaptations can foster success in exploration of identity.

Aiden: How you react to yourself and somebody *elts.

Donna [POINT 6 of 6]: … how you show people how you feel.

Jimmy: … how you react to your emotion and culture or religion. Sometimes when *some one is bullying it brings out your true emotion. *my parents *now that it is me because I am funny, I am *stuburn and *curios and a good sense of *humar.

The writing samples provided by Aiden, Donna, and Jimmy remind readers that students do not separate identity of self from relationship with others, as they attached their identities to self, feelings, and emotional responses or reactions connected to others. Taking one step further into the depth of participant discourse embedded within identity-based learning culture, Jimmy also reminds his readers that emotion plays a large part in whether or not participants share public or private features of identity, as he explained how bullying can bring out “true emotions” that a person cannot hold back.

Jillian [POINT 6 of 10]: … what you sound like...


Jessica: Where you come from, how you act, what you like to do, what your good at, what you like, what your name is, your language, * if *your mean to people, how you feel most of the time, how you live your life, what part of the world, and your *actoins.
In closing, findings note a great variation and range of how students connect identity-based qualifiers. We see students attend to emotion, skill sets, actions, humour, curiosity, place, talents, and name. Yet we also see additional students such as Jillian, Darion, and Jessica expand on their thoughts and explain how time, method of communication, and interactions with others represents the who, what, where, and when components of identity by including descriptors such as “what you sound like,” “why you do things,” “who you love,” “how you feel most of the time,” and “how you live your life.”

This lesson supported social discourse, *Social Emotional Learning*, and storytelling experiences framed by identity. Findings indicate that:

a) **students are able to extend characteristics of identity with ‘so whats’** that ask them to explore the implications of the ‘whats’ that construct human beings;

b) **group discussion over time increased student awareness**, which noted improved engagement and depth, as students explored connecting features of self and others with emotional responses; and

c) **public identities as they are viewed may not always be a reflection of an individual’s true identity.**

**Part Three: Assessment for Learning**

In early stages of this study, students were able to represent their personal interests and connections in bullet journal responses and structured social conversations. Researcher reflections noted a continued need for scaffolding as students made inferences and extensions based on general observations. As assessment for future learning, students were challenged with a thought-provoking question that asked, “*What do I [as a participant] question about my whats, myself, my identity, my relationship with others, and my connection to community?*” When reviewing participants’ bullet journals, I noticed that students could identify the ‘whats’ or surface ideas defining their own understanding of self. Yet, the depth of their ‘so whats’, or responses secured in analytical thought, presented greater challenges, as many responses were left blank.
To better connect with student understanding of self, we returned to *Wishtree* and attached memories and personal experiences to symbolic ideas within the story that participants could connect to. As Applegate (2017) addressed the impact of a vandalized tree on the main character and the community, I shared my personal experiences of also having personal property vandalized and a jeopardized relationship with my neighbourhood. Following my lead, students began making varied connections to metacognition and major and minor themes within the story. This led to improved engagement and continuous conversation based in open explorations of identity. Findings indicated that students could better connect with elements of their own identities using examples from story.

Although students were not yet able to independently connect with multiple relationships of identity and fully answer the initial question, they were able to at best report on one. Tally records pertaining to Engagement recognized that all participants had something to contribute. Some participants were able to share their connections in discussion while others remained silent and simply welcomed an opportunity to listen.

Prevalent codes such as Relationships with Others were noted in findings from both student writing and classroom discussion, as participants spoke to the themes of communication, experiences based in activity, and group/team association. Their thoughts about identity in these categories included actions, familial relations, citizenship, uniqueness, caregiving, and the impactful actions of others such as lying.

This lesson proved to have value, as students did address who they were in the context of Relationships with Others. For example, references to siblings, cousins, friends, and family members were prevalent. Star was the only participant not to provide a reference to a sibling. As an only child, this was expected. However, in unique responses unmentioned by others, Star identified gender as well as her connections to family as a daughter, cousin, and friend. Disregarding spelling accuracy, Star’s list attending to identity provided depth of student understanding; her list included the following:
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A *dauter (daughter), a girl cat lover and Dad Lover, A friend, a *student, An *exampl, *ethleck (athletic), *haeardresser (hairdresser), a Human, *cosene (cousin), *kide (kid), and Bird *wacher.

In codes pertaining to Sibling Relations, students addressed the figured worlds of relationships and differences of attachment to student identity. Two participants wrote about enjoying time with young siblings, while two others commented on the challenges of sibling relationships. One participant commented on having to take care of her little brother and her perceived responsibility for having to make him happy while another simply wrote, “it’s so hard being a sister.” While these responses did not directly answer the feature question of our lesson, aspects of identity can be interpreted from their responses, as students did connect identity to their Relationships with Others.

Returning to the initial question, “What do I [as a participant] question about my what’s, myself, my identity, my relationship with others, and my connection to community?” three Grade 4 participants wrote about activities they enjoyed and questioned why those activities were attached to the value of their identities. Student responses complemented core competencies of cultural context, [Building] Relationships, Self- Regulation, Generating Ideas and Explain[ing] and reflect[ing] on experiences and accomplishments (Province of British Columbia, 2018, Core Competencies).

Jillian: Maybe art is important to me because it makes me feel like I did *something *Amazing.

Marie: *Maby Art it important to my story because Art helps me calm down. Art makes me feel happy and its fun.

Donna: Sports is a big part of my life because I get *stronger and I feel great after and I was in hockey for one year and I do swimming *alot. I love running swimming and *stuf like that. My *Favourit sport is *hokey and basketball.

As a notable mention, only one participant’s voice was silent in classroom discussion, which was a marked increase in student engagement. Again, participants readily connected their understanding of self to the narratives of others within their community. However, in terms of depth, only a few
participants were able to transform one or more of their ‘whats’ into analytical questions or statements at this stage.

As a whole, this activity demonstrates that student confidence in addressing themes of identity can build fairly quickly; however, depth of engagement requires extensions of time and ongoing support.

Part Four: Reflective Practices and the Removal of Rubrics

The realities of negotiated and non-negotiated time allowances in a thirteen-week case study called for early adaptions as the reflection rubrics I intended to use were placed aside and focus was dedicated to learning experiences. At the end of Week Two, students were asked to reflect on their relationship with storytelling as they looked back to their Post-it notes from pre-case experiences and discussed the public reality and value of sharing their storied narratives with others (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). In their bullet journals, students responded to a writing prompt that I recorded on the whiteboard, which read: “My ideas should be shared with others because...”

In this lesson, whiteboard comments and tally notes encompassed codes of varying Relationships, Experience, Communication, and Engagement. The writing samples below clearly identify students’ appreciation for self as they note strengths and identity-based qualities. Students like Jillian also identified the importance of sharing narratives amongst the community.

Elliot: [*December writing conference] ... because I am important

Star: ... *because I am *speshol and *creyatav like other kids.

Donna: ...I am human and I think I should be included with other people

Jillian: ... My Work is Important. Yes *Pleas explore

Themes emerging from Post-its and reflective bullet-journal entries highlighted common codes of identity within Relationships as well as students’ abilities to Communicate with others. Responses were clearly shaped by learning experiences that embraced participant knowledge, understanding, and doing within core and curricular competencies (Province of British Columbia, 2018a). Researcher reflections noted that challenges remained constant for many students and continuous supports and adaptations were
required. As time allowed, unanswered study questions were best addressed when participants and I could join in conference. In one of these sessions, Marie, a Grade 4 student, explained her struggle to attach meaning to her thoughts about sharing her identity-based story with others, as the scribed comments in her bullet journal read, “…because I know what but it’s hard to say in words. But it is important.”

As comparisons to their Grade 4 counterparts, Grade 5 participant written and spoken responses displayed greater depth and insight about the importance of their own narratives.

*Jessica [wrote]:* ... maybe people can learn from my story and think its *intresting and inspiring.*

[UNFINISHED. COMPLETED DEC. 3, 2018] Its *important to know other *peoples thoughts because maybe *their thoughts are actually really important

*Jimmy:* ... [BLANK. DEC. 5, 2018. Added post teacher-researcher conference] ... they set an example for people who don’t like to share their ideas. I like to share my thoughts and ideas and writing is my favorite way to share.

In summary, disparities between levels of Depth and Engagement remind us that not all learners will develop at the same rate, and at times some students require scaffolds and time extensions to fully express their understanding. However, students who struggled to answer the initial question about why their stories were important were still able to listen and attend to the narratives of others. As a community, all participants connected their knowledge of self to the shared narratives of others in ways that worked for them—for some it was written, for others it was spoken, and for others it may have been internalized. Although some participants needed little prompting to speak or write and others needed encouragement, modelling, or conferencing, all participants came away from the lesson with an awareness of themselves as emergent storytellers.

Findings suggest that:

a) *story as a tool for reflection* acknowledges students who wish to simply share their story and be heard; and

b) *identity exploration in community* with multiple means of representing understanding and focused supports can offer modeling, opportunities for discussion, and reflection.
Part Five: Shape and Structure of Story as Identity

In our fifth lesson on story supports, employing another process borrowed and adapted from Rosanna Jackson (R. Jackson, personal communication, April, 2017), students participated in a discussion where they were asked, “How are cotton candy, caramel apples, and shish kabobs like the stories within each of us?” This lesson is supported by literature that unites narratives or story to identity (Sfard & Prusak, 2005).

The coded findings within my tally system again noted an early decline of participant engagement with an absence of whiteboard comments. Researcher reflections also recognized that, “[m]y participant group once again faced uncomfortable silence in the absence of an immediate response from which others would rescue them.” Therefore, references to wait time and some prompting codes pertaining to Learning Supports and Engagement were also flagged in data review. In this learning experience, students created a reasonable list of ‘whats’ as I scribed their ideas on the board. When asked to address the parts or structure of plate-less edibles, wait time eventually led to the spoken discourse of a familiar term, as the term “simile” was volunteered by our veteran Grade 5 participant, Darion, who slowly reclaimed his memories of learning experiences from the previous year. In review of data, findings indicated that Grade 5 students led this discussion as storytellers. In fact, participant discourse condensed into whiteboard comments and tallies demonstrated that Grade 5 participants activated their prior knowledge and were able to explain that every story, like the varied flavours of treats or similes mentioned, has a core and flavour.

Codes pertaining to Identity, Story, Discourse, Depth, and Engagement were strong as whiteboard comments and tallies indicated that Grade 5 students could co-instruct a lesson. They explained to the Grade 4 participants that the core of a story is the basic structure such as beginning, middle, end, capitals, punctuation, etc. Grade 5 students went one step further to explain how sights, sounds, texture, and feelings can add flavour or depth to story structure. When I asked why empathy is often attached to story structure, Grade 5 participants were able to communicate that empathy allows people to listen and attend to others’ feelings, and that it also adds depth to stories based in identity. James summarized by
explaining that empathy invites us to step into someone else’s shoes and try and understand how we might feel in their space.

This final lesson on storytelling ended with an unintentional closing hook for my emergent storytellers. As I wrote metacognition on the board, Grade 5 participants called out the word before I finished writing. Guiding from the side, I observed as Grade 5 participants informed and alerted Grade 4 participants of their up and coming learning opportunities. Totally unaware of their newly assumed roles as mentors or leaders, Grade 5 participants answered both of my research questions, as familiar learning experience clearly allowed them to lead an identity-based conversation that I had introduced one year earlier. In their references to edibles on a stick, students were also able to connect their knowledge of self and storytelling to the shared narratives within their community, as older participants explained that metacognition adds to the finishing flavours of story and advised that I would invite students to “think about their thinking” and not just retell experiences. With combined skill sets and a summative voice, students demonstrated that a learning experience could support a community of emergent storytellers with knowledge of self and a familiar method of story.

In a follow-up activity, written discourse of relationship, story, and self was framed by a sentence starter written on the whiteboard. Bringing Chapter 12 of Wishtree to a close, students responded to a two-part question: “How is my story like Cotton Candy...?” and “The strongest What from Wishtree makes me think about...”

Written responses to the question addressed codes based on Memory and Thoughts of Self. While Elliott commented on the difficulties of picking a puppy and Jimmy spoke of his past experiences riding his bike on trails, Donna addressed thoughts of “bad things”: lice, wasps, the cutting of a famed tree within our community, and the perceived threat of another wanting to hurt her. In separate yet similar stories, one Grade 4 and one Grade 5 student each spoke of their experiences with physical and neurological states of being. Colin and Darion wrote:
Colin: I do not know what to *rite about. [With a scribe] ... I am not really good at thinking. My ADHD makes it hard for me to control my mind and there is no background and it is just pitch black. Today I learned four things. The biggest one was that I like helping others.

Darion: ... when I was really sick with... and *I empathize with anyone who has had [the disease]
Then I think to myself about *every body Who has had it and I feel bad for them. Finally, I really hope I never get it again.

The storied discourse of other participants also addressed the emergent themes of Self-Awareness, Social Interests, Wishes, Memories, and Appreciation pertaining to Shared Experience with friends and family members. Participant discourse included: the future possibility of Adam going to Disneyland with “the best mom ever,” the pleasure-based memory of Jillian watching her father carve, and the concerned memory of James watching his mother break her toe on a tree root.

Additional participants also spoke to elements of social justice with a heightened state of self-awareness pertaining to anger, expectations, and general frustrations with those who cheat in sport or are simply bossy. For example, Carter and Star wrote:

Carter: The strongest what in wish tree make me think about *Popole Being Boss around I think that *everone should Be *adel to do what they wan to I think everyone should DO what they want *inless it *inclouds someone else if the *Dout what too or If *Thay are inDanger I think pePole should Not Be Bosd aroiung that *whould Be Like Being *traped in a Box for a week I *whhould hate to be told What to do I *whould ignore *any Budy that ever *trid.

Star: ... makes me think about *friends it’s *realy hard to find the right friend they *saport you no *mater what happens in *you’r life *you’r friend will help you play when you are alone and nice even *thoe you *mack a *mastake.

Marie’s cotton candy response not only identified personal interests, values, and elements of self-awareness, it also volunteered Marie’s gracious appreciation for all the good that comes from her home. She wrote:
In my home there is lots of laughter and giggling all the time. My house is a *structure of comfort. I want to write about my home because I love it. My house is my happy place and I think that I am very lucky that I have one. In my back yard is like a jungle of adventure to me I am very grateful that I have food, water, a bed and a family. My favorite room in my home is my *bed room because it is where I go when I am sad or when I am bored or when I am sleepy. I love my home because it is where I grew up. And I also love my parents because there were nice enough for us to live in it. My home is when I learn sometimes, for example it is where I [UNFINISHED]

This fifth lesson contained unexpected advancements in answering my research questions. Grade 5 students, drawing on past learning, demonstrated sophistication in their abilities to connect metaphoric thinking processes to features of identity. Grade 4 participants were beneficiaries in this learning community, as they were introduced to figurative comparisons by their peers. In closing, all participants advanced in using storytelling as a way to connect their own identities to narratives in their shared community.

As findings, the outcomes of this section remind us that:

a) the challenge to think metaphorically about experiences in lives, though difficult for some students, can add depth and sophistication to their exploration of memories and identity;

and

b) story provides a framework for identity construction and how it can be communicated over time.

Summary of Storied Frameworks and Process

In the activities mentioned above, Core and Curricular Competencies merged with English Language Arts and Social Studies categories of British Columbia’s mandated curriculum. Each lesson addressed the three curricular categories of participant knowing, understanding, and doing. Knowledge of Content was evident, as students connected the concept of identity to narrative content, thinking strategies, oral language strategies, language features, structures, and conventions (Province of British Columbia, 2018, English Language Arts 4). The Doing or Curricular Competencies category aligned with
participant ability to “recognize the role of language in personal, social and cultural identity, [and also the process of using] personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and deepen understanding of self and world” (Province of British Columbia, 2018, English Language Arts 4). Finally, and arguably most importantly, the Big Ideas connected to participants’ understanding of:

narrative texts whether real or imagined, that teach us about human nature, motivation and experience, and often reflect a personal journey or strengthen a sense of identity. They may also be considered the embodiment of collective wisdom. Stories can be oral, written, or visual and used to instruct, inspire, and entertain listeners and readers. (Province of British Columbia, 2018, English Language Arts 4).

At the end of Week Two, evidence of learning clearly supported my research questions. Students were thanked for sharing their ideas and listened as I explained that student voice shows me as well as others what students know about identity. Through written and spoken discourse, students explained that identity is a big subject that surrounds and affects us in our everyday lives. Moving one step further, student writing also proves that students understand that identity means different things to different people at varying times of their lives, and that it is largely shaped by personal experiences and memories.

The findings of these five lessons responded to the research questions providing themes which indicated that learning experiences based in storytelling could support the development of student identity over time. The dominant themes suggest that:

a) exploring story ‘flavours’ as representing core and tone can support detailed connections to memory and experience; and

b) making empathetic connections to characters from literature encourages students to interrogate their own experiences and relationships.

Part Six: Embedding Student Agency

Story grounded our classroom community in the emotionally challenging weeks where participants were called on to fulfill standardized assessment requirements. In parts 6–14, students explored topics of student agency, identity, and the value of storytelling experiences. As students
responded to Chapters 13–18 of *Wishtree*, they were informed that identity/story encases a person’s ability to exist as an individual, as well as their ability to act, while investigating their potential to create change—a quality described in the *Social Responsibility* component of BC’s *Core Competencies* Curriculum as Agency. Not yet introduced to the term *Upstanders* (Daniels & Ahmed, 2015), students were asked to place themselves in the events of *Wishtree* and consider how they might respond to the possibility of a special tree being vandalized or cut down in their community. They were not only asked to present proposals for action; they were also asked to consider multiple perspectives within a community.

Written responses noted in *Lapbook Folders* revealed several different themes and codes. The first findings included identity-based codes such as Age-Appropriate Responses, Self-Interest, and Creative Play. One example of a proposal for action was Colin’s call for the construction of a tree house. Though initially framed as creating a fort as a play space for himself, the support of a scribe and additional conferencing shifted his response to leaving the tree alone because it was nice, kind, and also provides us with air. Students required different levels of support for their writing, with some requiring multiple conferences, scribes and support with iPads. Colin also wrote that knowing how to spell words challenged his ability to communicate effectively.

Age-Appropriate responses came from students like Star, who crafted her proposals for preserving a problematic wish tree around the mutually beneficial considerations for Others and Self. She suggested that wishing events continue to be granted under the conditions of others helping her clean up and that the yearly event be attached to her birthday. This thought process was framed by a *give and take* thought process, and demonstrated *Personal, Social,* and *Thinking* competencies.

The coded elements of identity based in participants’ ability to read and respond to social challenges within a community of difference were forever constant. As I looked for connections to identity and storytelling, indecisive responses were common; yet most students were able to connect with a variety of perspectives within the classroom or story. With a scribe and extra conferencing, Adam made this point clear as he explained, “If I could control the events in this story, I don’t know what I would do
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because if you cut the tree people would start talking and police would stop looking around. [Other people] might think… Finally, the tree is gone.” Adam reminds his readers that language and writing skills should not deter an individual from sharing their ability to think critically, consider multiple consequences, and explain why making certain decisions can be difficult.

An important element of effective learning experiences is student engagement, which can be difficult to monitor or assess. For example, blank entries in journals could be a result of absences, lack of engagement or agency, or to a need for more conferencing and scaffolding. Some positive evidence of engagement was noted between Donna and Marie who challenged each other to write the most ideas, words, or pages in several writing exercises.

In closing, findings attached to my research questions suggest that:

a) learning experiences that encourage students to imagine responses to story-based events can link identity to action; and

b) ongoing and responsive support, based on assessment of student needs, can encourage students to extend thinking and responses.

Part Seven: Text-to-Self Experiences

After fulfilling standardized assessment requirements, students’ relationship with story and self exploded in Weeks Five through Seven, as participants had more time to write and participate in extended conversations. In this particular lesson, participants were asked to identify the things that make the world a difficult place to live in, while mirroring Wishtree’s sentiment suggesting that “meddling” in the lives of others is not easy (Applegate, 2017, p. 100). Student discourse was supported by identity-related themes from Chapters 19–27. In group discussion and individual writing, students addressed events that bound their life experiences to new identity-based terms such as “optimism” and “pessimism.”

Findings indicated a great variation of participant perceptions of “a difficult world.” Again, learning experiences were accompanied by codes of Depth and Engagement, as student journals included blank pages and a range of responses. Thinking codes were also evident in student writing, with evidence of unique, creative, and altruistic ways of thinking. For instance, student responses included: gravity...
simply because “it is a pain,” pollution, war, language differences, theft, drugs, disease, illness and injuries, violence, bad rules, and people not having friends.

Student ability and a new code titled Readiness was apparent in findings, as some participants were not able to think, write, or speak as an *Upstander* who could propose social change for a better world. Findings at this stage of case review recognized that many Grade 4 and 5 students are still in an early developmental stage in which many of them can identity ‘whats’ in writing and in classroom conversation but struggle to identify specifics or propose solutions without teacher supports. However, when I focused on what participants could communicate in writing, identity-based findings noted some sophisticated thought, with emergent proposals for a better world attached to *Creative* and *Critical Thinking* competencies. For instance, as participants entertained the possibility of a better future, suggestions included calls for: a machine that would eliminate gravity, the removal of gas powered vehicles, drug bans, implementations to drug production, an end to senseless fighting, and practical requests to be more careful, to stay calm when going places, to wash our hands, to find cures, and to spend time with friendless neighbours.

Star’s response to difficult rules and Donna’s response to war prove that Grade 4 and 5 students can attach stories of self to a variety of exploratory investigations. As a reminder, students were encouraged to “meddle” with social realities and make proposals for *improved experiences* and *figured worlds* of the future. Donna’s story connects war and peace to her concerns for a global community, while Star’s narrative connects the impact of national and international laws to self and family.

**Donna:** “To make this less of a problem I think STOP FIGHTING especially for no *reason another one is war [as if] makes this world *quote hard to live in.

**Star:** Bad Rules make the world a difficult place to live in. To make this less of a *problem [problem] I think the *Government should make a vote because it stops my *cousen [cousins] and *ment [prevents] other *people from seeing family.

This lesson demonstrated that:
a) **learning experiences** that encourage imaginative solutions to problems, both from stories, and from students’ own lives, can position students as “agents of change,” linking identity to potential action in the world; and

b) **student reflections** proved that students in Grades 4 and 5 were mentally equipped with an understanding of self and empathetic appreciation for others that allowed them to consider their role as potential agents of change within their community.

**Part Eight: Communication and Social Learning Culture**

The challenges of communicating with someone “different” were discussed in Chapters 21–27 of *Wishtree*. Whiteboard comments summarizing students’ understanding naturally fell under the code of Communication, as participants listed identity-based qualifiers such as not knowing the language of others, different countries of origin, sounding different, being deaf, looking different, eating different things, or simply not knowing someone. Findings also implied that our class, as a collective group of learners, could address multiple reasons why individuals in our classroom or school community may not be able or willing to communicate in words or by voice. This was important as it provided strong parallels to difference and participants’ ability to communicate their story of identity. Class discussion was rich and connections to place and others were strong, as many students empathized with individuals in their school community who had significant challenges with communication. However, researcher reflections indicated that writing in this lesson appeared to constrain students’ full understanding of their roles as individuals and *Upstanders*, as simple yet achievable solutions of being “RESPECTFull” were common. This example of being “respectful” represents one of many samples of how student writing was far less descriptive than conversation shared openly in the classroom, as whiteboard comments and tallies were far more detailed.

Although many struggled to expand and explain their thoughts in writing, participants demonstrated Personal and Social states of being, presenting a general awareness of the ‘Stretches’ or known limitations associated with communication. In student writing, codes pertaining to Identity-Based Characteristics, Support, and Relationships with Others were noted as participants identified “shyness”
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and people who need the support of family and friends. Aiden’s writing sample demonstrated how awareness of self is important when investigating new relationships with others, as he explained that sometimes you just need to “talk about yourself” to discover how similar or different people are from one another.

Participants’ suggestions for improved communication when conversing with someone “different” included acting out thoughts, reverting to play, or finding ways to help. At this time many storytellers leaned on class discussion notes and whiteboard comments, which included sign language or Google translators. Marie’s written response to making conversation less awkward with a non-verbal student in our school was insightful, as she was able to explain how the smallest gestures can make a big impact in the life of another. Although she was not able to explain in words why sharing her own story is important, Marie’s writing demonstrates empathetic social interaction ideas. She wrote:

> give them a *surprise and by that, I mean give them a present or a card of some-thing nice or welcoming something like that. It can be really hard for some people to communicate with us too!

> To make a friend at first you can use your body language for example, smile, wave our you can give them a high five in the hall.

Carter often chose to tell his story without iPad support and rarely asked for help. As a student with a strong drive toward personal determination, growth, and independence, Carter reminded his audience that social inclusion often requires a group effort and the strong leadership skills of someone like himself, who was known for making wise decisions on the playground. He wrote, “I would help a kid *that's from a Different Place By telling my friends and Playing With him. In Big Groups of Play With him and show my friends what *his Like.” As a finding, this writing sample spoke to student identity as Carter was able to recognize his social strengths and his attachment to group, and later apply that strength to an empathetic course of action that would support another’s need to belong.

As students connected with Applegate’s characters and transferred ideas about “difference” to their own lived experiences, social codes based in Identity, Relationship, Experiences, Place, and Memory were amplified. As memory and emotions were activated, the storytelling platform provided opportunities
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for participants to air their frustrations and expand on their personal states of being. Star, for instance, discussed personal struggles related to her relationship with self and others, commenting on her “shyness” and her frustration with someone not remembering how to pronounce her name properly: “...*people; can be *rely mean or so *annoying like asking me what my name is like 100 times and *sase the same [things] to me the *hole Lunch time.” Her writing suggests that the ways in which community members address one another can have a profound impact on how someone might feel or respond to social interactions.

To accommodate student interest, all participants in this activity were given an opportunity to share and explore thoughts that supported their relationship with story/identity. I invited participants to look beyond the storied exemplars of helping someone find a friend, knowing that not all students could connect to this topic, and other pressing issues could be explored. A broader lens, supported by flexible writing/conversation topics, attended to topics of greater personal concern such as the naming of a new kitten, neighbours with no family and few friends, the impact and importance of video games, and new adventures where fathers would be absent for long periods of time and miss special occasions. As a finding, it is worth noting that:

a) flexibility within topics of conversation and writing options was conducive to building an overall impression of identity development, with a community of unique individuals who were happy to explore topics of their own interests; and

b) learning experiences that explore interpersonal relationships encourage students to consider who they are in relation to others.

In an extended and unplanned activity following Stretches based in Communication, class discussion turned to the impact and implications of video games. Discussion of relationships and interactions did not just involve real life encounters and most participants were able to share their thoughts and opinions. Clearly, peer relations and social culture around online video games represented a large piece of what was important to Grade 4 and 5 participants. The diversity of comments around the
meaning and value of social gaming culture suggested that participants can form and respect differences of opinion in matters concerning the ‘whats’ of student identity in the 21st Century.

Participant writing was largely framed by core competencies such as Social Responsibility and Communication. Jessica and Donna acknowledged that their peers were “always playing or talking about” video games and that gamers never comment on how much they might “need a friend.” Donna even went one step further, expressing a genuine concern for her peer group in her written discourse by highlighting warnings or disclaimers on video game packages that suggest some games are not intended for players under thirteen years of age. Donna’s closing remarks demonstrated great ease in her ability to communicate her concern for others and connect to previous lessons on improving the world. Also amplifying her voice as a storyteller, she wrote, “I’m *especially *worried that *there going to be addicted to video games. Sometimes I wish that video games don’t even *exist and this [is] the story I have to tell you.”

Darion was a strong classroom voice in communicating and defending the socially beneficial qualities of a gaming culture. He and many others did not differentiate between the number of ‘friends’ they had online and the friends they had outside of the online gaming world. In addition, Darion was the only participant who chose to defend the use of video games in writing. His journal entry suggested that the figured worlds of relationship and identity can change with time, experience, and importance. He wrote, “I’m more focused on video games and soccer [than] I am concerned about friends. Because I feel that at this time of my life that’s most important to me.”

This lesson, which started with discussions of communicating with “different” people like the main characters (Samar and Stephen) in Wishtree, took unexpected and fruitful turns, highlighting the need for flexibility in learning experiences like this. Whiteboard comments and tally notes indicated a marked advancement in student engagement with identity exploration in this lesson. The application of flexible springboards for learning suggested that students can attend to their own investigations of self, others, and community.

As a whole, this lesson reminds us that:
a) story presented in numerous forms encourages identity exploration: both reflective writing
   done individually and with personal support, and guided discussion and conversation
   within the learning community; and

b) social culture (i.e., video games) is recognized by students as a contributing factor of
   identity and community.

Part Nine: Student Attachment to “Teamwork” and Communication

Through whole class discussion, small group talk, and writing, students attended to Chapters 25–
27 of Wishtree and applied self-to-text connections that complemented the elements of lived experiences
relating to teamwork. After listening to the story, students participated in a reflective learning activity in
which they were asked to consider and write about past memories, current views, and the benefits and
challenges of teamwork.

Elliott was the only participant who appeared to have a difficulty with this activity, as she
explained with a scribe and extended conferencing that teamwork was a difficult concept for her to
explain. After reviewing participant data post study, written responses were arranged into two categories
titled “Benefits of Teamwork” and “Challenges of Teamwork.” As another notable finding, students in
this particular group strongly identified with teamwork, as written benefits far outweighed the challenges.
Out of 28 charted responses, 20 noted benefits and only eight noted challenges. However, the opportunity
to present findings as quantitative data and stand-alone facts felt risky, as evidence pointing to student
identity and early storytelling experiences suggest that every group is different. In this particular school
year, many participants attached early writing samples to a strong culture of athleticism and activities
constructed around team or group play. My particular relationship with participants is also worth noting
as extended knowledge of participant backgrounds, access to early writing samples, and inferences as a
teacher-researcher are woven into my meaning-making with participant data. My emergent findings
suggested that this particular group may have had an easier time than previous groups of learners who
may or may not have been able to identify positive qualities of “teamwork” and social relationships due to
memories, their involvement with team play, and involvement in storytelling experiences. Simply put, evidence of teamwork is stronger in some classrooms than others.

When examining student writing and participant discourse connected to Relationships with Others, I noted that students, as storytellers, appeared to value the writing opportunity, as they were able to express themselves more in writing than in group discussion. In group discussion, ‘whats’ were clearly identified, but in writing the deeper culture of teamwork was attended to more fully. For instance, Jessica wrote, “Without teamwork everyone would be fighting and nothing would get done the people without teamwork will crash and burn.”

In writing, participants connected teamwork to a variety of purposes such as the creation of masterpieces, supported victories, significant contributions to completed tasks, and lightened workloads. This suggested that Grade 4 and 5 students can acknowledge the benefits of teamwork. The codes emerging from student discourse also alerted my attention to participant Values and attachments to varied Relationships, as students mentioned that teamwork brings people together, it helps individuals learn amongst difference, it allows people to become better friends, and it supports the development of new friendships.

Darion’s response supported a deep understanding of a student-valued social culture based in teamwork. Using an iPad and some word prediction as learning supports, Darion wrote:

*Teamwork is valuable because it brings people together and makes people friends. *you need *team work on a daily basis because without it we would feel really *empte. When you’re on a soccer team you need team work if you want to win the game. I like to Play soccer because it Involves *A lot of teamwork. I like to play midfield because it involves a lot of responsibility. *

In his personally profound writing sample, Darion presented features of a well-told story, as the core of his writing was strong, the flavour of his discourse included relationships with others, considerations were made to a life lived without teamwork, evidence of emotion was present, and identity-based references to his self-identified position of a midfielder who enjoyed roles of “responsibility” were noted.
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Social elements of vulnerability were present in participant writing and descriptions of teamwork, as students were aware of the public versus private implications of storytelling. In other words, they were hesitant to share emergent ideas about their challenges with teamwork, as their Relationships with Others may have been implicated, and their ability to reveal private thoughts with confidence was noted (Brown, 2006). Written discourse proved that students were connecting the relationships of self, others, and place to their authentic beliefs relating to the pros and cons of teamwork. Of further interest, the deeper culture of students’ thinking brought added attention to a wider array of vulnerable experiences attached to self and storytelling at lesson’s end, as most students still did not want to read or share their honest reflections openly with classmates.

Student writing about the challenges of teamwork included personal differences, not feeling ‘good enough’, targeted blame, role division, and reduced opportunities to participate. Participants expressed disappointment, embarrassment, and a heightened awareness of their detached sense of belonging. The blended narratives of Adam, Donna, and Jillian not only answer the question about teamwork challenges, they also reveal that there is a time and place for public and private sharing of narratives. In open conversations, no whiteboard comments mentioned gender identity, trust, or frustration with team involvement.

**Teamwork can be hard sometimes because…**

*You might not hear themEveryone has different thoughts, *difrent *personaltys, gender identity and *progress important people have all of *thouse *stuf and a real person has all of them, not a *robout...”

*Something that *fustrats me in teamwork involved...

*Say I’m playing soccer, *know-one ever *pases the ball to me, not even my friends. I just feel like they don’t trust me with the ball and only trust the “good” players.

*The game is not fun when I can’t even play.

*I try to get into the game and I still never get passed to."

Themes emerging from this collection of participant narratives suggest that:
Part Ten: Reflective Practice, Process, and Social Emotional Learning

In Chapters 28–30, students were asked to focus on the meaning of a quote that stated, “Oh the things I wanted to tell them that friendship doesn’t have to be hard. That sometimes we let the world make it hard.” (Applegate, 2017, p. 126). With support, students unpacked the driving question on the whiteboard that stated: How does fear, anger, confusion, sadness, perspective, personal focus, or silence paralyze us [students and teacher-researcher] from moving forward and doing great things? After I shared my personal story with the classroom, participants were asked to think of one of the challenges or ‘Stretches’ that shaped their own identities (Moore, 2016). Participants were asked to consider and explain what prevented them from taking on their challenges with greater effort, less struggle, or a greater voice. They were also invited to share what they were prepared to take greater risks or efforts with. A story starter was recorded on the whiteboard to guide emergent thoughts and ideas, as students as required scaffolded support systems to respond to this learning activity. The guiding supports read:

By doing _____, I can do _______

_______ paralyze me from moving forward with_______

Students’ written responses included references to fishing, soccer, Jump Math, and video games. Though student responses could identify challenges or frustrations in their own lives, suggesting solutions seemed to be difficult. For instance, Darion’s frustration with fishing was connected to not being able to land a big catch. Of these four writing samples, Darion was the only student who could highlight a potential solution, as he presented self-regulation strategies of walking away and taking a deep breath. As a comparison, Colin’s connection to playing video games included an explanation that screen time can “rot your brain.” Yet, he was not able to attend to the flavour of his story by identifying a possible solution. Similarly, James was able to identify his difficulty with Jump Math due to his struggles with
understanding the way in which it communicates meaning to him, with the noted absence of a plausible solution. He wrote: “*Jmp MATH is diFFicuLt Because: ITS ConFusing.*” Many students struggled to identify solutions to challenges or propose self-regulating strategies that they could implement without the support of an adult. As a teacher-researcher, I soon realized that students who struggled to identify solutions and strategies for self also struggled to assume the role of an *Upstander.* As teachers and researchers, we can therefore see how student agency is strongly connected to readiness and a participant’s ability to advocate for self, to self-regulate, and also to propose actions for change as *Upstanders* (Daniels & Ahmed, 2015). A learning community focused on student identity must attend to the *figured worlds* of relationship, as this lesson suggests that a student who struggles to identify possible solutions for their own internal struggles will likely struggle to identify efficient solutions and strategies for others. Elliott’s wrote:

> Anger *sometimes* *people Do Bad things like *tell things and if that person is *there *Firned [friend]. [They] May not be *friends any more. Because that *persons *firend did a Bad thing, And now they *don’t want to be *friends any more. I can help them by talking with them about it.

She was clearly angered or frustrated by an experience, yet the expected calls for distrust and punitive action were not attached to the poor choices of another. Identity-based qualities such as supportive, nurturing, and forgiving remained strong as Elliott’s writing suggested that a reasonable and just solution for another’s actions called for the healing powers of a simple ‘talk it out’ conversation.

Two writing samples demonstrated insight and understanding of the impact of changes. Jillian connected to her relationship with self and admitted that “*[h]eeping sleepy stops [her] from moving forward with work because [she] can’t think straight.*” Star, on the other hand, did not separate her thoughts of self and others as she explained that fear prevents her from doing what she is supposed to do and what she wants to do. She explained that she always thinks of “…what bad could *happen [to] me or us.*” However, the power of reflection and evidence of self-talk resonated from her suggested solution to her ongoing and internal struggle, as she was able to identify “fear” as the source of her problem and later
proposed, “I could try to face my fear and not let my fear control my *brane and my body I will try as hard as I *cane to face my fears."

For students like Jessica, who were often reluctant to share in small group or class discussion, identity-based journal writing can provide an opportunity to communicate attachments to relationships, frustrations, celebrations, memories, self-regulation, and self-awareness, as well as showcase personal and social identities amidst an entire community that might not otherwise be noted. Jessica wrote:

“Sometimes *negative personal *focas [focus] *affects me from doing things and I end up feeling not at all *confadent in myself and confused I think I can change that by telling myself, “I can do this! Even though I’m not the best at it, I can still try to do my best and at least try.”

Connecting the narratives of this section to themes that respond to my research questions, learning experiences within this exercise demonstrate that while most students can identify events, emotions, and experiences that challenge them, some students need ongoing support in imagining solutions.

Part Eleven: Connected and Disconnected Relationships

Motivated by a *Wishtree quote that maintained a lengthy presence on the whiteboard, speakers and listeners were able to recognize the unique talents of self, others and community. The quote that inspired participants within Chapters 31–33 read:

*Maeve soon discovered she was gifted at caring for the sick. She had no special knowledge. No secret remedies. But she was kind and patient, and she knew how to soothe a fevered brow with a cool cloth as well as anyone. What she didn’t know she was willing to learn. (Applegate, 2017, p. 131)

In this activity, connections to others and/or community were explored by students and teacher-researcher alike. Participants’ attachments to physical environments, emotional states of being, and connections with others were noted in whiteboard comments and in students writing. In their writing, three participants identified with strong elements of personal disconnect within their community/local spaces, while five acknowledged strong connections to others.
The students who connected to community commented on feeling supported, safe, and joyful when companionship and love was present. Additional participants also attended to figured worlds and states of being that benefit from connected communities where kind gestures, gifting, quality time with others, and the shared enjoyment of neighbouring pets were/are present. Elliot’s response was particularly unique, as her connection to neighbourhood and friends highlighted examples of lived experiences where student agency and memory were attached to her past efforts and a different type of community connection. She reflected on her participation in a local bottle drive for Children’s Hospital. Summarized data findings from tally charts, whiteboard comments, lapbook journals, and researcher reflections all recognized how most learners were connecting the importance of place and belonging (amongst others). Findings connected to the written discourse of lapbook journals revealed that the focus of Grade 4 and 5 participants was largely related to emotional connections with people and place.

Three participants were largely focused on the absence of preferred communication or interactions with others, which spoke to the code of Disconnect[ion]. For instance, Aiden explained that he felt upset when he moved because he had 10 friends at his previous home and they often played together. In conference and with a scribe, Colin provided a descriptive summary of disconnect within his neighbourhood, explaining that he had no friends there and he only knew two of his neighbours. It was particularly interesting to hear Colin explain, “[M]y downstairs neighbour doesn’t even talk to us.” Colin and Aiden remind their readers that student identity in connection with place is clearly attached to social interactions, meaningful experiences, and connected relationships with others.

With further evidence of flavour and storied depth, Darion’s writing, supported by assistive technology, focused on emotional awareness, features of long-distance relationships, and strained communication between loved ones. The following sample allows us to appreciate his bravery as a storyteller, as well as recognize strong evidence of sophisticated thinking based in metacognition. Sharing his need for physical intimacy and connectedness, he wrote, “I feel disconnected from my grandparents it makes me feel sad and empty inside. I *don’t know why but I do. I mean we *skype every *Suday but it’s
not the same.” With a storied invitation into the figured world of Darion’s domain, readers are reminded that a student can feel “empty inside” while maintaining conflicting emotions.

Teasing unique qualities and codes from participant writing isolated the depth of another student’s response, as Marie was able to address the figured worlds of Diversity within her neighbourhood. Although several students commented openly on their connected or disconnected neighbourhoods, Marie was one of the rare students to question why. She wrote,

...my neighbours are all very nice and 4 years after that it was time that I had to welcome some neighbors from Germany, now that we know them better every week they give us *home made doughnuts and bread. We also have neighbours that we do not know but I never know why.

Marie’s statement of personal inquiry was highlighted by natural curiosity and inquisitive thought.

In closing this lesson summary, three additional participants remind their readers that Grade 4 and 5 participants can attend to the figured worlds of identity as their writing samples prove that one question can draw multiple responses from the attached or detached worlds of self, others, and community. Early writing addressed participants’ Relationship with Self and Others, while the closing samples of writing connect Self to Others and Place. For example, Jimmy wrote about the skate park, the self-regulating values of place, and the shared space and talents of self and others; Jillian spoke of her connection to the public-school community, her current classroom, and connections to social learning and interests; and Jessica discussed her altruistic connection to the larger community of homeless people by addressing differences between herself and others. Identified through codes of Depth and Thinking, Jessica’s writing revealed elements of sophisticated thought, as she also recognized that other people may not share the same feelings. The figured worlds of Jimmy, Jillian, and Jessica were addressed with the following statements. These statements connect student identities to people and place (Anderson, 2017).

**Jimmy:** I feel *connected to my community and skate board because it calms me down. And it is very frustrating when I don’t land a trick… my friend [Darion] *Skateboards with me he is pretty good at it too.*
Jillian: I feel connected to the *community because I go to public school. Public school makes me feel *connected because in grade 4 we talk and write about social things that are *happening in our world. I am most enjoy talking about pollution and how we can stop it.

Jessica: I feel connected to homeless people because of *differences such as maybe, they don’t have a warm place to sleep, *they don’t *usually get to eat because *they can’t *afford it. They don’t get water or anything to drink, they might not have very much money, a lot of people might not like *homeless people and might be really mean to them, and it just makes me really sad to see those poor people, and *especially the kids just living on the street with no food, water or money! I really connect to them because I feel really sorry for them.

Themes emerging from this section demonstrate how:

a) Grade 4 and 5 students connect to community through strong emotions and valued relationships with family, friends, animals, and home-based neighbourhoods; and

b) an exploration of connections can encourage students to both recognize where they are disconnected from community, and how they can build connections with both place and people.

Part Twelve: Embedded Wishes for Others

Chapters 34–37 of Wishtree supported student identity explorations in a challenging month, during which large chunks of time were dedicated to the collection of standardized test scores. Researcher reflections noted that the completion of testing manuals and online testing modules brought relief to our learning community, allowing us to return to regular classroom practices. As participants added to their identity webs of Wishtree characters, they also added to their improved awareness of their own identities by directing thoughts to underlying wishes, acknowledging strengths and stretches (Moore, 2016), and making strong text-to-self connections (Gear, 2015). This lesson was framed by figured worlds and Relationships with Others and addressed student capacity to think about and present ideas based in altruistic thought. Participants were asked to consider the messages in Wishtree and respond to the following story-starter:
I think the ‘IDEAL’ gift of love could be given to _____.

I think ________ deserves this attention because _____.

First steps of delivering this gift of love could include/involve_________________________________________________

In participants’ written responses to this altruistic thought process, narratives differed. Some students focused on self, some spoke to characters within the story, and one participant struggled to attend to the task at all, as he was distracted/consumed by thoughts and figured worlds that impaired his thinking. This reminded me and my students that figured worlds, time, evolving experiences, and ever-changing identities, affect an individual’s ability to communicate or respond to calls for action. However, the depth and variation of participants’ written responses also identified their awareness of varying worlds and attachments to relationships. For instance, Colin focused on his puppy who was in need of obedience training while Adam wrote about his grandmother and commented on his appreciation of how she cares for him and his brother.

Identity-based findings connected to larger communities were noted by students like Star, who focused on animals in danger. Possibly connecting to earlier experiences and discussions of poaching and conservation, she explained that people will not be able to enjoy animals if their lives are lost to non-sustainable hunting practices. Marie spoke to the value of unadulterated water and an ocean in need of assistance due to invasive plastics and suffering marine life, and Darion and Jimmy focused on Syria and the Middle East, noting that aid is needed, and people have been suffering for many years.

In an appreciation for all stories, I have blended the following responses, which support my interpretation of figured worlds and students’ ability to recognize and communicate the universal need for the “gift of love” (Appletree, 2017, p. 146):

The ideal gift of love could be given to

Tonnes of things but the ones that stand out are *Anamails

because lots [are] dieng from the* poison like sea turtles...
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[George] because he *hastant been at church for a while
for my Sunday School teachers with all the work *they do
Mrs. Smith for being being *stressed just to get us some stuff to learn.
And with being so busy with stuff
and *eliphints *because *there almost *extince.
True fact people are killing *eliphants just for their tusks
People, because I “think so!
I *donot *no why.
But I still think so... ok bye!!!

To someone who *dousn’t have a home or isn’t loved and *doun’t have a *friend.
I think this person deserves this *attention
because life would be very *lonely and hopeless without friends
and without anyone to love
or to love you.

The theme emerging from this collection of participant wishes suggests that a wish for others can connect features of identity to local and global communities, as students can maintain a sense of empathy by embracing relationships with self, others and community.

Part Thirteen: Conferences with Voice-to-Text Technology

In Chapters 38–40 of Wishtree, students were given an opportunity to choose, explore, and analyze a quote with which they could identify. Within the context of this study, evidence of empathy and understanding of relationships and place were evident as most participants could explore the possibility of “standing tall,” “digging deep” within self and reaching out to others and community (Applegate, 2017, pp. 71, 93). Using four different quotes from Wishtree, the essential questions from a teacher-researcher, and writing samples from student participants, findings based in storytelling and identity continued to emerge as shown below:
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Applegate Quote #1: “This isn’t a fairy tale, Red,” he would say. But people are full of longings, and decade after decade, the hopes kept coming” (p. 151).

Essential Question #1: In your own words, explain the difference between a fairytale and a longing. Why do you continue to hope or wish for the same things, week after week or year after year? Stop, think, and reflect... What story do you have to share?

Essential Question #1 was selected by two Grade 5 participants who could subtly connect the elements of story to self while differentiating between the figured worlds of reality and fantasy. Jessica explained that fantasy is something that does not exist whereas a longing is “something in your mind that you want to happen....” With presumable references to past experiences, Jimmy also demonstrated a solid understanding of longings and fairytales as he explained that a wanting process could take weeks and that a fairytale is, “fiction it was never a thing and never will be....” This demonstrates that these students in Grade 5 can differentiate between factual and fictional elements of story and identity, as they can connect knowledge to time, memory, and prior experiences. Subtle connections to identity construction were also teased from student reflection as Jimmy wrote that “people,” presumably like him, wish for things repeatedly for good reason. He explained, “I think you wish for stuff over and over again because you want it so bad you just go crazy... You want it because you know *you’ll do your best to use it and you will give it good use hopefully.”

The subtle tones of Jimmy’s and Jessica’s responses revealed differences in personality and figured states of being. For instance, one of the participants was publicly extending hopes for a new bike, while the interests or longings of the other were not expressed to a public audience. Although her audience did not know what Jessica was longing for, she, like Jimmy, maintained a great depth of understanding as she wrote, “Maybe they wish for the same things over and over again because they really want those things to happen or maybe they [are] just really *depending on them to happen.”

Applegate Quote #2: “Stephen and Samar still stared open-mouthed at me. They looked as rooted to the ground as I was. Neither had uttered a sound while I’d told my story” (pp. 153–54).
Essential Question #2: How should people be ‘present’ with you when you share your story? What might make storytelling difficult for you? What method or memory of storytelling felt good (or not) for you?

In their written responses to Essential Question #2, Elliott, Darion, Jillian, and Star highlighted the importance of being acknowledged by friends, family, or larger groups of people in and outside of their school community. Star’s response, like many of her earlier ones, remained firmly connected to her relationship with others, as her writing focused on the necessity of an attentive audience and the value of named friends who could acknowledge her need for relationships of trust and emotional comfort amongst peers. Elliot, on the other hand, highlighted her appreciation for attentive listeners by connecting to prior experience and the figured constructs of identity that exist within and beyond school relationships.

Elliot’s writing reminds us as readers/research community that storytelling supports the figured worlds of student identity in different ways, as the features of self are largely dependent on time, experience, and connections to an audience. She wrote, “Storytelling can be difficult for me because sometimes people never listened…. I have felt good sharing my story out another time when my mom was actually listening to me.”

The written discourse of Jillian and Darion suggests that students were well connected to the deep culture of storytelling, as each student commented on how an audience should listen.

**Jillian:** “I think when *your telling a story *its important for your *listiers [listeners] to give you respect and listen closely. Storytelling can be *difacult because sometimes *its an *imberising [embarrassing] story. I think the people who are listening can be present by looking me in the eye and *ignoliging [acknowledging] that I am speaking.

**Darion:** “I feel that when you are sharing a story *every body *should be listening *quitly storytelling is easy for me when *I’m speaking to a class.”

These responses expose the vulnerable nature of students who attached their comfort in sharing a public story to the need for being acknowledged by audience members. Jillian and Darion effectively communicated how the deep culture of identity and storytelling can benefit a larger community of readers or listeners, by telling others how they exist as storytellers and how their expectations lie. With empathy
in tow, I as their first reader was humbly reminded of the student vulnerabilities pertaining to the ease or difficulty of speaking/writing and not being heard, sharing while being embarrassed, and students’ ability to recognize who is truly present with them as an audience member.

Applegate Quote #3: “I’d broken the rule because I wanted something. I wanted to matter. I wanted to do something meaningful before I died” (p. 155).

Essential Question #3: In your opinion... Are some rules meant to be broken? Can you think of rules in our school, home, and/or community that are bendable or in need of an update? Rules are written into our history, the story of our past, present, and future. Please share your story and your connection to rules that may or may not be broken.

The popularity of Essential Question #3 amongst five student participants was not surprising, as the largest group of writers in our classroom elected to respond to this quote about rules and potential “rule breaking.” Whiteboard comments, tallies, and researcher reflections noted that Grade 4 and 5 participants could easily identify with the general themes of social justice. Although James and Marie commented on school rules and place, the meaning and depth of their responses differed. James, for instance, was more focused on the need for school rules and the importance of having them followed and attended to with to social justice. Marie, in comparison, addressed the same question with strong evidence that her identity was largely shaped by narratives/story (Sfard & Prusak, 2005), lived experiences (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014), figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998), and Funds of Identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2016) connected to familial relationships and shared learned cultures of the home. Marie closed her journal entry by questioning why some kids believe vaping is “cool,” and showed emergent states of agency by proposing that vaping should be illegal due to health risks and the fact that some students in her brother’s school trick their teachers and vape in the bathrooms.

Donna communicated her written thoughts deeply with minimal classroom supports, explaining that social rules such as matching blue and black socks to proper attire don’t matter when you are wearing shoes or boots. She also supported a strong argument for creative play and self-expression by disregarding safety considerations for jumping on a snow- or rain-covered trampoline and explaining to her readers
that “it feels like you are skating.” However, when highlighting rules that must remain intact, Donna listed important ones that involve theft, murder, smoking, drugs, drinking, distracted driving, and impaired driving. As a finding attached to research questions, the codes of identity and list of rules outlined by Donna made a substantial connection to depth, personal beliefs, and self-awareness as she referenced social responsibilities and figured worlds that support the ‘so whats’ of student identity. Her writing also proves that the development of a student’s identity is largely connected to funds (Esteban-Guitart, 2016) and worlds (Holland et all, 1998) beyond school experiences and home life, as beliefs systems and life experiences clearly impacted Donna’s voice, choice, and her ability to share the story of self. She wrote, “That’s all so so so so so…. *wronge like I mentioned *three of the ten commandments of the lord that I *now are *wronge and I should not do *Enye of the bad stuff!”


Essential Question #4: To share our hope and our dreams as a story requires bravery. How vulnerable do you feel when asked to share your story? Please provide examples and try and explain your feelings so another person can connect to or better understand your standpoint.

Colin, who used an iPad with voice-to-text supports to communicate his story, stated,

*When someone asked me to share my dreams or my story, I am brave because I feel like I can survive *and evasion. An example of when this happened was a time when I was camping but I just don’t want to talk about it. People can learn from my story because they can never be scared.*

Colin’s suggestion that he can be a role model to others is a recognition that his experiences and actions may have value to others. This written response is supported by Indigenous pedagogy (FPPL), which encompass the intrinsic value of a participant’s lived experiences, and their desire/comfort involved with sharing stories of self (FNESC, 2015).

In closing, lessons such as this offer students choice and voice as they engage with stories of identity. At this point it is important to recognize two new themes:
a) students can relate individually to characters, events, and themes of stories, and thus educators must facilitate choice; and

b) reflections noting the value of students’ uniqueness, experiences, and identities offer an understanding that they can contribute to their community and world.

Part Fourteen: Cloze Statements and Supports for All

As experiences with *Wishtree* were nearing their close, class discussions and writing explored relationships of belonging that connected participants to emotion-based elements of love, trust, fear, and frustration. With familiar support systems in place, student learning was again attached to a focus quote and participants’ ability to stand tall and face great challenges as storytellers (Daniels & Ahmed, 2015; Applegate, 2017). The following quote from *Wishtree* reminded students to focus on emotion as well as the physical attributes of their internal and external states of being: “… light rain had fallen just before dawn soothing my leaves if not my mood.” (Applegate, p. 157).

The essential question written on the board to frame student participant responses read:

“*Standing Upright*” how can we [student participants] put ourselves into the context of this story and experiences noted as an ‘Upstander’?

*(Someone willing to stand up and make a difference in the life and or lives of others.)*

In this activity, students as ‘social scientists’ were asked to select one topic or theme from a class-created list of “socially awkward” or “challenging” *Wishtree* events and respond to a drafted cloze statement with depth following guided, step-by-step, teacher modelled supports.

On this particular day, members of the learning community did not have access to the support of an Education Assistant or Pre-service teachers, and evidence of participant unease was noted in researcher reflections. However, the majority of participant responses were lengthy, layered in depth, and full of meaning. Using voice to text technology, direct teacher-researcher support, and borrowed time within our timetable, participants confirmed in supported writing conferences that they could identify with topics of social interest and respond to the cloze statement connected to self, others, and community.
Students’ analytical potential was demonstrated in the blended narratives below, as they were able to attach meaning to *figured worlds* of interest. The first writing samples were attached to homes, habitats, and vandalized properties. Bold font represents focus ideas and themes provided by the teacher-researcher.

**Think about**

*Animals not having a home*

*A tree being cut*

*Vandalism*

*Personal property wrecked by others*

*Focus on someone or something like Red and [their] situation*

*Everyone should have a home*

*Loss of animals and habitat*

*How would others feel if they got kicked out of their homes?*

*[Living things] Don’t have freedom*

*Everybody dies eventually*

*but the animals Red is housing will really be affected by him being cut down*

*Feel[ing] sad and terrible*

*for [the] loss of a home*

Darion, Donna, Colin, and Jillian chose to speak about people, animals, loss, not having a home and the destruction of personal property. Participants’ general interest in animals, habitats, and homes was noted as students in Grade 4 and 5 maintained a consistent interest in balanced communities over the course of this study. Colin reminded his readers that student discourse and identity is largely connected to *figured worlds* and *lived experiences* as topics such as vandalism, for him, were difficult to respond to when he could not attach his response to a comparable/familiar experience of his own. Responses connected to everyone needing a home displayed depth and evidence of continuous growth, as empathy and proposals for future improvements to local and global communities were noted. In addition, the
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acknowledgement of all living things not having freedom suggests that our youth can view the world for
the realities that exist, even though they are in the early stages of development.

The same group of students later focused on the symbolic role of characters and events from
Wishtree:

*The animals in this story are a symbol of:*

*Activists, Life, All trees, Fear*

*I don’t Know*

*People who are forced to live how other people want them to live...*

*This is like years ago when*

*people wanted the children in residential school*

*to have indigenous children live somewhere else and learning different languages.*

With these responses, students demonstrated the development of a greater connection with
history, others, and community, reminding their audience to focus on others and consider how they might
feel if they were forced from their homes. Noting the circle of life and the reality of shared experiences,
student responses also displayed strong attachments to the histories of the living world and evidence of
empathy. This proves that participants were clearly affected by thoughts of the past and present by
addressing destroyed properties, valued/threatened ecosystems, and recognition of (displaced) people and
suffering of living things attached to the loss of homes. One student felt comfortable enough to admit that
he couldn’t think of a symbol, while others noted themes about life, activism, living forests, and fear.

Comparing the *figured world* of Wishtree to self, the students identified the flavours of their
existing realities in the following blended response:

*This connects to our lives because*

*People bully me or be mean to me.*

*There are crazy teenagers you know.*

*I feel sad when people focus more on themselves*

*instead of listening to other people and what they want.*
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I feel like I want to eradicate all guns and weapons

unless they are used for war

or responsible hunters who need to have special permits.

Can I stay inside today?

Memories of moving around a lot.

People can’t pay for their homes and have properties of their own.

Maybe that’s because people can’t have well-paying jobs

that allow them to do something that they like to do.

When talking of animals losing their homes

I have no personal experiences,

but I have my thoughts about what should and shouldn’t be done.

We are connected to animals and habitats

because we kind of need animals to live.

They help the human race,

examples are hard to think of

but like the salmon, they keep populations in check

Without this we might have too many.

Every animal deserves a home... Everybody matters.

Personal property getting wrecked by others...

usually my favorite thing.

Nothing of mine has ever been wrecked.

There is vandalism, there are boundaries, there are trees being cut down

there are optimists and pessimists
there are tough decisions and all of those things exist.

James spoke freely and demonstrated that a student’s thinking can be framed by several worlds in any given moment, as he deviated from the main topic to explain that “teenagers are crazy,” before asking if he could stay in at lunch. As a finding, written and spoken reflections similar to James’ demonstrates that most students can respond to a question, yet some need time and space to express their “in the moment” thoughts. Drawing on earlier learning experiences, students like Jessica, who expressed disapproval for people who think more of themselves than others, proved that they could culminate their understanding of self and others and connect knowledge to lived experiences. Students also demonstrated that they were willing to take on new identity-related concepts such as metacognition, analytical interpretations, and symbolic understanding. References to optimists, pessimists, tough decisions and existing realities drew from earlier lessons and directly from the language within Wishtree.

When considering their roles as potential Upstanders, most students displayed a strong sense of empathy accompanied by an awareness of their own agency. A few students had little or nothing to say in this case, but over the course of our lessons had developed both the understanding that not knowing is okay and the confidence to say so.

To be an upstander I could…

I have no idea

Consider someone like Francisca

and all the reasons why she should keep the tree

It is important to stand up for what you believe.

I really don’t know who I would help

because I don’t really know much about stuff getting wrecked.

Give animals good homes and food

Be kind, be strong

like species that are strong.
For students who had difficulties positioning themselves as *Upstanders*, readers must understand that many supports are still required, and Grade 4 and 5 students share their thoughts best with group discussion and individual conferencing. Although they are ready to take their first steps as agents of change, some students are not yet ready as student agency and inquiry is a new thinking process for many.

A second group of responses came from Jimmy, Aiden, Elliot, and Carter, who selected their topics based on themes of friendship and belonging. These participants’ choices and responses exemplify their ties to social relationships, decision-making, and connections to characters from *Wishtree*.

**Loss of friend—Belonging**

*Being lonely*

*Bongo*

*One good friend*

*Someone*

*not having a friend*

*Loss*

*of a best or only*

*friend*

**Symbol of**

*A character and a person*

*Friendship*

*People in need of a friend*

*Pessimists and kindness*

*People that need a friend*

*Peace and honour*

*I don’t know*
what Bongo could be a symbol of

Connections to me

I think of people with no friends

I have strong feelings about people

because I don’t know what to say or do.

I moved here from Ladysmith

I lost my friends in Grade 1

I didn’t get to see my friend anymore

I lost friends when I moved

I’ve seen bullying all over the place

I also build off of Darion’s ideas shared in class

I think about moving from place to place

a couple times before getting to the place we currently live

it reminds me of how it felt when I lived in Cranbrook, Nanaimo and here

It is difficult moving places and it makes me feel squishy and tight inside

I think about people that have to move often in their lives

I think of people like the Syrian family that lived in my house

They have seen terrible things and they deserve to be treated

with respect

Like any other human beings

If they don’t have a friend

they don’t have anyone to play with

I think [of] kids in our school and other schools around the world

that don’t have a friend
I feel

Sorry for [them]

[They] did nothing wrong

It makes me upset

Knowing that others are upset.

Sad

Someone is losing a friend

ey don’t get to see them anymore

I feel

mad

Everyone should have a friend

I feel

It is important for everyone to have friends

because that will make them happy

As an Upstander… I could

Consider

being more helpful

by playing with people who don’t have a friend.

I really don’t know what I would do

because this is hard.

I don’t know how

I could show them around

I need to make a difference in my life

because it is [also] important for me to have a friend

Disagreement in places like Syria or Saudi Arabia
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We can work on finding ways to agree on some of our ideas.

When I think of lives

and our ability to make a difference.

These combined narratives suggest that students are entuned to the struggles of others and what they can do or propose for change. Participants’ ability to connect to their current experiences and evolving identities was featured in this activity, as students spoke freely and openly with equal access to the supports of teacher-researcher and iPad. This activity replaced common practices of using pencil and paper. Asking participants to keep a specific quote from Wishtree and a guiding question in mind, while at the same time filling in the blanks of a cloze statement and drawing further on the story of Wishtree was a complex and challenging request. The multi-faceted approach was not only intended to assess how far students had come in their engagement with storytelling and identity, but also to provide a variety of opportunities and vehicles for participants to communicate their stories and future inquiries. Not all students were ready to meet this request unassisted, and not all were able to engage with every facet of the cloze statement; however, evidence of growth was noted as each and every participant demonstrated an improved ability to communicate their understanding of self, others, and community. Noting learning frameworks that were often challenging and far from perfect, Darion’s words support a new understanding of developing student identities, as some of our greatest learning comes from individuals who can say, “I have no personal experiences, but I have my thoughts about what should and shouldn’t be done.”

The profound statements noted within this section suggest that:

a) students who focus on the challenges of others can unite communities by devoting attention to how they might contribute to change;

b) over time, students build confidence in telling their stories, as they understand that their proposals can impact a global community; and
c) depth and complexity increase ‘over time’ as students respond to layered prompts, all of which decenter their own wishes to considerations of others.

Part Fifteen: Closing Wishes

In closing weeks of case, Chapters 42-46 of Wishtree guided emergent storytellers through ongoing discussions of current events, guest speakers, field trips, personal memories, and shared experiences. Well-versed with Relationships of Identity, students were informed that they would be granted three wishes. The first wish would be for self, the second wish would be for others, and the third wish would be for community.

Wish #1: wish for self. Before storied exemplars of wishes from Wishtree were revealed, students were asked to focus on their current identities, to think of their earlier wish(es), and to record their current wish for self, based on ‘what’ was important to them at that given moment. Within students’ responses, familiar codes of Creativity, Materialistic Desires, and Appreciation of Play were revisited as Colin wished for a magical pencil that could draw anything he wanted, Star wished for ice cream for breakfast, Elliott wished for a collection of dolls, and Jimmy reiterated his prior longings for a full-suspension mountain bike.

Common themes pertaining to Identity, Time, Relationship, and Preferred Methods of Communicating Story were also evident in this lesson. For instance, Donna’s wish for self was connected to a familiar topic of interest as she often wrote of animals, and her most recent wish included good grades that could accommodate her future goal of being a vet.

James chose to draw a picture of his wish: a character playing war-themed video games in bed. At this point in our investigation, it had become clear that illustrations, for James, were the best method for communicating his story. To a scribe, he explained that drawing kept him calm and he loved playing video games. Although James may not have been able to communicate in the same way as many of his peers due to various influences of figured worlds or current states of being, interpretive meaning could be attached to his drawings as his creative design held symbolic meaning. For example, the fallen creature in James’s illustration reminded me as his teacher and viewer that:
a. The identities of fallen characters are hard to read when we as teachers/researchers only study one medium of storied representation.

b. Identity-based realities are sometimes difficult to communicate in words and in writing.

Nearing the end of my/our case study, it was interesting to see how the majority of student responses to *Wish for Self* included the bond of relationships with family. For instance, Darion wished for a lot of money to help his family, Marie wished for a dog to keep animals away from her family’s vegetable garden, Star’s second wish included a visit from her dad, and Jillian wished for a family trip to Hawaii. This was particularly interesting, as these written wishes indicated that features of identity, for Grade 4 and 5 participants, are largely based on relationships with others and place.

The focus on Relationships with Others remained strong and consistent, as shown by students like Aiden and Star who wished for increased or improved play opportunities with friends. Star’s response spoke to her value of healthy friendships and her improved awareness of self and others as she recognized that she and her friends needed to get along more.

Depth and connections to students’ extended communities were evident in three participant responses that expanded their *Wishes for Self* to include greater communities and issues that were important to them. Jessica wished for her local community of homeless people and drug addicts to no longer be hanging around McDonalds, Adam wished for a safe world where “bad people” and gun problems would not exist, and Carter once again proposed that every person who died in war be granted an opportunity to come back and meet the family and friends who have missed them.

**Wish #2: wish for others.** Students’ *Wish(es) for Others* demonstrated that identity, for Grade 4 and 5 students, is largely affected by and connected to relationships with pets. On their second wish cards, some students wished for pets to be obedient and for animals of varying sorts to live long lives. Participants like Donna called for no injury to come to animals and for them to be provided “happiness and freedom.”

Additional wishes for others were strongly influenced by participants’ relationships with self, family, friends, and classmates. Colin’s wish was for a sister who would make good choices so both he
and his parents would be less frustrated; Elliot wished for an affordable rental house for her and her mother that could also house her dogs; Aiden wished for more friends in his neighborhood; Darion wished for a visit from grandparents; and Star wished for a visit from her dad.

In this section of findings, prominent wishes for others were also directed to longevity, as Marie’s wish for improved health was attached to her grandmother’s struggle with short-term memory, and Adam and Jillian wished for grandparents to be younger or to live longer lives. However, the altruistic nature of student reflections also suggests that participants’ thoughts for others are also frequently connected to the needs and wants of the wish-maker. Jimmy and Jessica support this finding below:

- **Jessica:** *I wish that my mom would stop getting sick all the time because we never get to do anything together when she’s sick.*
- **Jimmy:** *My wish is for my *friends* *Mothers sickness to go away. It is important to me because he is like family to me and my family. The Sickness is...and it is very bad.*

**Wish #3: wish for community.** In the third and final segment of wishing activities, student participants responded to their *Wish for Community*. Two participants connected memory and experiences to their wish for proper animal care and safe homes for loving pets. While themes for animal welfare remained strong throughout this study, four participants also directed their final wishes toward a common focus on environmental concerns. This included: Colin’s wish for all people to stop littering; Jillian’s wish for all people to stop using gas-powered vehicles; and Jimmy’s wish for an end to polluted waters around the world. These responses show evidence of influence by dominant ideas within society, as participants echoed narratives from the global community. For example, Star wrote, “*I think that the old saying of cut *done a tree you plant five more....*”

In my closing review of this activity, I noted that wishes, like identity, were tied to *figured worlds* and Relationships that encased participants’ social values such as belonging and safety. Participant growth over time was celebrated in researcher reflections, and samples of participant writing were again gathered as evidence of students’ understanding of the deep culture of identity. In writing, Aiden acknowledged that some people do not have friends, and he wished for an end to loneliness and friends
for all. Marie and Donna addressed the injustices of looming death and inadequate housing for living beings and creatures, dedicating their wishes to housing the homeless. Some statements about other deserving communities were fueled by a strong sense of justice, such as Adam, who wished that kids wouldn’t use drugs and that guns wouldn’t be used for theft or war. Adam’s sentiment was mirrored by the wishes of others like Darion who also wished for world peace, noting the reality of innocent people dying, and Jessica, who called for the end of war by putting a stop to killing, abuse, suffering, and pain. I was again alerted to the nearly impossible or unattainable wishes of humbling storytellers who were not afraid to wish for dreams that were difficult to attain and categorize. Building off of narratives that were often shared in our classroom community, Carter’s wish, based on his own knowledge and a vested interest in ending worldly atrocities, wrote, “I wish Places like *Serea (Syria) *shouldn’t have to see all the stuff that *they have seen for a long time.”

Findings from this lesson indicate that:

a) altruistic thoughts, vulnerabilities, and values framed by belonging and safety are acknowledged through story,

b) features of identity can be explored over time using sentence starters and wishes; and

c) a particular focus on wish(es) can articulate confidence in expression over time using coloured Post-it notes, lapbooks, conversation, and journals which provide an esoteric sense of how students articulate their thoughts and develop their own learning network (building a community and assisting in the construction of classroom culture).

Part Sixteen: Our Messy Garden

In Weeks Ten and Eleven, the remaining chapters of Wishtree felt messy and somewhat rushed. Researcher reflections noted that Chapters 47–51 needed to be wrapped up and tended to, because learning plans for “My News” (Current events) and learning explorations further involved with inquiry and agency were expected to follow (Ahmed, 2018). Chasing squirrels and wrestling with timetables, the figured realities of our classroom included participant unrest, pre-service teachers joining our community
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for two weeks, a district audit, and the chaos of Winter Concert preparations. Our classroom community had become “wild and tangled and colourful. Like the best kind of garden” (Applegate, p. 54).

To help unpack meaning and respond to my initial research questions, participants were again asked to “stand tall” and “reach deep” (Applegate, 2017). Driven by embedded themes within identity and a quote from Wishtree, participants reflected on personal truths pertaining to lived experiences and their evolving states of being as optimists and pessimists.

Inspired by Wishtree, students shared their stories of messy gardens. The original quote written by Applegate was followed by twelve participant originals. Applegate’s quote read: “And real life, like a good garden, is messy. Some things have changed. Some things haven’t. Still, optimist that I am, I’m feeling hopeful about the future” (2017, p. 209).

Participants’ personal interests, current events, states of reflective thought, and self-awareness were brought to life through shared stories of similarities and difference. At this stage of case, students demonstrated the kind of trust and willingness to share with their community that is essential for a study such as this. Some students explored differences and tensions within their own families, particularly in relation to siblings. Frustrations with others whose actions and interests conflicted with the students’ own hopes, intentions, or wellbeing were also widely expressed.

Displaying knowledge and understanding of the concepts of optimism and pessimism, most participants explored possible solutions or coping strategies for their challenges. Star again addressed a father who was away in Tibet, as well as animal chaos that has unraveled in her home and created a disastrous mess. Elliot expressed a heightened awareness of financial issues connected to the challenge of surviving a rental crisis, fear of possibly having to separate her pets, and concern about leaving her friends if she has to change schools. However, both students balanced their pessimistic views by closing with optimistic thoughts that included mother-daughter time for Star and a well-deserved 22-year reunion for her father and grandfather, and Elliot exemplified the power of a material distraction that could provide comfort, as her wish also included a new doll. Jillian explained that she could recover or self-regulate from persistent nuisances by redirecting her thoughts to positive experiences such as Christmas
baking. Comparing her life to others, Donna summarized the sentiment of an optimistic pessimist overlooking her messy garden by stating, “... the Bad feelings I have are OK because our life is not so bad.”

Jessica’s response indicated that pessimism is sometimes an inescapable reality, as the figured worlds of others can be layered with challenges that are difficult to escape. In her reference to being repeatedly woken by a younger sibling at 4:00 am and receiving little sleep, she implied that solutions may be hard to come by. Jessica wrote, “...he is really hyper, he has been doing this since he was three and because he has autism.” In a comparable response involving messy relationships with siblings, Carter—a self-proclaimed pessimist—remained doubtful of change and admitted, “I don’t know what to do about it.”

The messy gardens noted by student participants included the weight of varying responsibilities and realities of their lives. For example, Darion considered the intricacies of balancing figured worlds, writing:

The messy things in my *current Story are my morning responsibilities my afternoon responsibilities and just finding time to balance everything out. They challenge my thinking because I *can’t do what I want to do in the afternoon and I have *too much to do in the morning. However, the optimist that I am I feel fine because it’s a fun everyday challenge.

The final writing sample attached to the beauty of a messy garden was best communicated in conference with James, who surrendered to his communication-based vulnerabilities. With access to common supports, James concluded the thoughts of his current story by explaining that:

1. It is difficult to stop drawing as it makes him calm.
2. Waking up early makes him angry.
3. Outside noise is challenging at lunch-play.
4. He hates being forced to go outside when he doesn’t want to… especially on cold and rainy days.
Believing that James’ story was far from complete, I prompted him one last time, and he later explained that it was difficult to stop drawing, as he often felt the need to finish his thoughts. With further prompting and extra time, he explained that when there is a thought in his mind, he often feels as though he has to finish it. And so, with a little space, chunking of time, timetable adjustments, movement breaks, and a change in scenery, James was able to propose a reasonable solution to the elements of his messy garden by facing his pessimistic self and assuming an optimistic vision for troublesome drawing sessions. Using familiar goals and well-communicated language, James proves that story can address diverse needs and goals within a learning community by simply requesting warnings from adults and negotiable time limits when least-preferred activities are proposed. In closing, I ask readers to consider how a process like this may benefit all learners, not just those working toward learning goals outlined within Individualized Education Packages. In addition, I wish to highlight how learning experiences that encourage students to directly address challenges with hope can shift future outcomes and possibilities.

Part Seventeen: Eternal Gratitude

In Week Ten, Wishtree came to a close, and my students were asked to summarize the figured worlds and relationships that supported their story, just as Applegate expressed her “eternal gratitude to the remarkable people who helped Wishtree take root” (p. 213). Although one participant’s voice was missing from this activity due to absences and time restraints, I would like to summarize the individuals of the group as a whole. Using Applegate’s shared word choices such as “amazing,” “brilliant,” and “fabulous,” student participants acknowledged others and their impact on emergent young storytellers focused on self and their relationships with others, place, and time (Applegate, 2017, p. 213).

Participants’ references to others included: the “parents of Genoa Bay,” mothers, fathers, a lone sister, and even a subtle hint of emergent bonds with brothers. Recognizing their extended families, participants also acknowledged relationships with grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles. In their connections to named and unnamed accomplices outside of family, acknowledgements were also extended to a nanny, friends, pets, and teachers. In closing I, as a teacher-researcher, was rewarded with the responses of some participants who were also comfortable acknowledging self and the transformative
powers of a “MeSSy classroom.” To summarize and encompass the funds of student identities (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014) in this activity, participants and I wish to display blended narratives of thanks to those who “get things done.”

To our Parents

Who do what parents do

Who help our siblings get things done

Who help me eat more because I’m skinny

To the Moms who buy toys and help us with all sorts of things

like learning new stuff, walking, applying make-up, baking,

reading, and giving me tips with math.

I need to love you because you gave me life and you carried my when I was a baby

Thank you, Mom, for helping me be who I am.

To the Dads who helped us with homework, got us into sports, took us to the movies, cooked

Pad-Thai, taught us to hunt, drove us places, built stuff, and fixed tablets

It takes a lot of effort and you make stuff look better in our homes.

To the Moms and Dads who take the hard job of being good parents, you deserve to be mentioned in this book because we would not be at school if it was not for you and we know you love us because you always feed us and always give hugs before bed time,

I know you love me because I am a little goofball, I know I love you because you love me.

Thank you for supporting me in everything I do, that is why I know who I am.

Thank you for supporting me in doing the things I want

but also for helping me when I make a mistake.

I feel very lucky to have many supportive people in my life

because many people don’t have that.

Thank you for talking to me and making me feel better when I’m upset.
There are so many reasons

Mom, Dad, Ken, and Janet you help me a lot.

You help me get through challenging thing like doing my homework, getting ready for school

and cleaning Panda’s cage.

I am grateful for that.

I was happy when you went to Vegas

so you could have a break from me and my brother fighting

Thank you for taking me to sports and driving me places.

To Nanna and Grandma

You help me with not getting so mad and you taught me how to cook

To my “Dope grandma” who makes funny jokes and buys me fast food.

You cook for me and you are a great cook.

Grandma makes great rice which isn’t as easy as you think.

Thank-you Nan, for always keeping me in check

and straightening me out when I am distracted or disoriented

When I am around you Nana everything goes perfect

To my Papa

Thank you for getting me to do stuff outside

Thank you lone sister

For helping your brother do things last year when our mother told you to

And to Two of our brothers

You are cool for playing toys with us and laughing at almost everything

You make me feel happy and proud because when I do something, you do it too

Although I find you to be neat, you can also bug me and put pressure on me

To my Cousins

When I came to Canada, you welcomed me, and it felt like home.
It made me feel more comfortable

Thank you, Jillian for helping me gain courage and bravery

Thank you, Donna for playing with me at church

To my Uncles

Thank you for teaching me how to fish and hunt

And to my Aunt

Thank you for helping me develop the love of baking

To a valued Nanny

Thank you for taking care of me and my brothers when my parents are away

To our Teachers

Of the past and the cool Mrs. Smith that taught us things

Thank you for helping me learn about lots of things that I would never have known

Such as writing, I never really liked doing that, but all you made it fun!!

And I probably would not know about times tables or adding, but there is still hope with the Drinkwater teachers!!!

The reason why is because I do not think that my parents are that into math.

To our Fabulous Friends

Who help me when I’m upset and helping me feel better,

by just talking about similar things that have happened to you.

Thank you, Donna, for teaching me about nature and animals,

... for helping me love animals more and more every day and for making me realize how important friends are to me.

Thank you, neat Elliott, who tried to make me fashionable and comforts me when I am sad

and thanks to the extraordinary Marie who makes me laugh.

Thank you to the friends who keeps me happy all the time by telling cheesy but funny jokes
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To our Pets

We are grateful because you make us feel calm and quiet

To Me

I am grateful for my ability to be funny, to make jokes, to be nice to people, and also for taking care of baby brothers who pee on the carpet.

I am also grateful for the amazing/awesome imagination that helps me.

To a Special Group

Like the *MeSSY class that helps me understand who I am

I am grateful for everyone in my life and all my family and friends

Thank you, to my grandma, best friends and parents, all this takes place at my house, my friends’ homes, and many other places

This helps me because these places and activities help me stay myself

Summarizing the themes with collective voices, we see how learning experiences inspired by stories (such as novels) can encourage the acknowledgement of significant others in our lives, all of which assists in the placement of student identity in relationship and community.

Part Eighteen: Reupholstered Reflections

Findings attached to Weeks Twelve and Thirteen were largely connected to the reflective practices of student learners. Researcher reflections noted that participants struggled to communicate their growth and current positioning within identity-based rubrics framed by Personal and Social Core Competencies (Province of British Columbia, 2018g). With 3–4 adults in the room, plenty of talk, and guided instruction, students in Grade 4 and 5 struggled to complete their rubrics as instructed. For instance, many participants were not able to reflect on their experience and mark the beginning of their journey with the suggested highlighter. Researcher reflections noted that frustrations ran high with numerous calls for help and a noted drop in engagement that had been established in previous activities.
To find meaning and reclaim reflective value amongst vulnerable students, I released my hold on rubrics and proposed the familiar practice of a written response. Focusing on the Personal/Social components of Core Competencies, participants completed three separate reflective activities. The first identified Positive Personal and Cultural Identity (D-1), the second represented Social Responsibility, and the third represented Personal Awareness and Responsibility (Province of British Columbia, 2018g).

One participant stated that self-reflection was not important to her as she did not understand the process and noted that it was difficult. Other participants also explained that reflection could be difficult because it was their first attempt, it was “hard” to communicate in words, and it was confusing. In writing, some participants also admitted that they appreciated the process of getting to know one another more and shared their appreciation of being able to look back and remember things they had done but had since forgotten. To maintain a positive learning atmosphere and reclaim students’ beliefs in the value of reflection, I invited them to respond to an impromptu sentence starter on the whiteboard that stated: “Self-reflection is important to me because…” The positive participant discourse drawn from this process is noted below:

Self-Reflection is important because

It helps to show how you have grown, [and] how I have improved in my learning.

It helps me be *my self because I like *my self

If I don’t remember my true identity *than I could have a sad life

that is why I think it is important

This is me it’s my identity it is my *pashin

It explains who I am and where I was in life and how much I’ve learned.

This activity shows how I have learned a lot of stuff

I learned more even in one week

It helps me clear my *mid [mind] when I fight with my brother

or get into a fight with my parents...
Walking away from our first reflection activity, it was evident that reflective practice was a new concept for many participants. It also demonstrated that rubrics may not be the best form of reflective practice for learners in Grade 4 and 5, as a simple question can elicit personally profound responses from student participants.

The second rubric-related lesson was a little less awkward than the first, as the experience was less foreign, and most participants could follow along and respond to general elements of Social Responsibility (Appendix A-2). In this process, the meaning of participant understanding was difficult to decode from rubrics. However, bullet journals and whiteboard comments suggested that some students chose to lean on and manipulate ideas within the rubric to guide their written and spoken responses. After taking a second run at reflection, students again surrendered willingly to writing prompts framed by “My greatest social strength is...” and ‘My greatest social challenge is....” Participants attached their social strengths to their worlds of art and crafting, talking, working with people of their choosing, speaking to the class, contributing to community and caring for the environment, improved relationships with friends, ability to decode the spoken discourse of little kids, helping people with school work, working with animals, “scienring” (Science), and compromise.

Student’s written reflections and ability to identify specific social challenges presented familiar codes and meaning from earlier findings. This included journal samples connected to Social Challenges and Self-Acknowledgments, a challenged relationship with another (sibling), not talking when others are speaking, working with people who a participant would not choose for themselves, asking for help, building relationships, difficulties understanding little kids when they talk, learning new things with liquids, saying mean things to siblings, listening to instructions, and trying to get help from a teacher.

In students’ final attempt to attach personal meaning to Core Competencies and/or a summative reflection based on experiences over time, they were able to complete their third rubric with greater confidence. Yet the meaning within a rubric held little value for my personal findings report and for participants as well. This finding was supported by whiteboard comments and researcher reflections,
which suggested that participants favoured written responses for a reflective practice framed by Core Competencies. After going through the third and final process with highlighters in an attempt to find meaning of storied self in reflection, students demonstrated confidence and a great sense of public trust by trying their best and recording their storied discourse. The sentence starters on the whiteboard read, “I have a difficult time...” and “My greatest strategies are...”

Again, in this section, students reiterated familiar stories of identity relating to the impact of difficult experiences such as a sibling with behavioral and emotional challenges, a relentless dog that bit, a fear of heights, responding to questions about their feelings, caring for one’s/their own well-being, math, not getting mad when possessions were repeatedly wrecked by a sibling, reading books with a noted loss of interest, getting along with a brother after a fight, and speaking up for self, due to shyness or the recognized vulnerability of not knowing what another will say.

To me, as teacher/researcher, students’ ability to cope with and communicate challenges was personally profound, considering the public and private nature of each participant’s lived and shared experiences. Evidence of identity-based meaning within students’ reflective writing is best retrieved using read aloud “I can” statements. For the purpose of this learning summary, blended messages below provide a sample of participant narratives attached to the woven threads of identity development.

I can...

Recognize emotion, play sports to relax, find solace my bedroom

Not look down, not talk about my feelings a lot, do what makes me happy,

proclaim and/or self-affirm my ability to show a sense of accomplishment and joy.

Tell mom what happened or read quietly

Imagine it’s something else and not so weird

Close the book of disinterest and read a new book

Chew on candy, make it smaller in my mind,

Listen to music,

and go for walks with my mom.
Themes emerging from the previous collection suggest that:

a) **student participants can address curricular competencies, which encompass emotional states of being, and share a wide range of self-regulating strategies fueled by tangled worlds and messy gardens; and**

b) **rubrics as a stand-alone method of self-assessment, although useful, may distract from the authenticity of what can be simply stated as an informed story.**

**Part Nineteen: Summary of Reflective Practices**

In one of our final activities, students were asked to explain, in writing, how they felt and what they had learned about themselves within this unit of study. Common narratives spoke to participants’ concern for sibling’s actions, recognition of one’s ability to participate in preferred activities, “being smart” in math, and being strong. Exploring further depths, students, as storytellers, also exposed their appreciation for the “great flavour of tropical fruits,” art, crafts, Lego, sports, video games, baking, comedy, and exercise. Capitalized descriptors within narratives also included references to book titles, Math, Reading and Language Arts, and ADHD. Colin again attended to the **figured world** of a life lived with ADHD, as he recognized that it was a part of him. Yet, ADHD was not the only thing that identified him as an individual, as Colin also recognized his ability feel others’ emotions. Adding further to flavour and findings based in **lived experiences and figured worlds,** Marie informed her readers, “Grade 4 is a big step.”

In our classroom, Grade 4 and 5 participants demonstrated how activities framed by curricular features of story and identity may deliver meaning, understanding, and a greater sense of belonging amongst a community. This process begins with improved knowledge of identity, communication skills, and access to meaningful relationships/worlds where participants can be heard.

Findings indicated that some individuals naturally empathize and “feel others’ feelings” while others have to work hard and put in a conscious effort. Participant writing, shaped by identity and reflection, celebrates growth and an improved awareness of self over time as students were able to develop a stronger understanding and appreciation of their storytelling abilities, learning partners, and
surrounding community through numerous dedications/stories to family, friendships, “best-friends,” pets, teachers, and self. For instance, participants continuously commented on their identity-based features that included making people laugh, being bothered by a lingering cough, playing with pets, swinging on playground equipment with a partner, enjoying nature, informing others of their need to be alone, the celebrated joy of helping others, watching the reactions of others, angered feelings, and an individual’s recognized inability to successfully equip others with happiness.

Noting participants’ improved ability to comment on strengths and stretches within their own figured worlds, I as a teacher-researcher was moved by Marie’s ability to express her current vulnerabilities with math versus her ability to focus on her overall experiences as a truly successful storyteller. In the figured world of this particular example, Marie was focused on stretches (Moore, 2016) in her mathematical identity as she stated that “not being able to do things makes me want to quit school but I don’t think I’m a *quitter.” Marie’s responses demonstrate how the figured worlds of a storyteller can change with or without warning. Noticing Marie’s frustration in this particular situation, I sat with her and explained that math was also extremely difficult for me. Believing that Marie may have found some additional comfort in an opportunity to also discuss her strengths and endless positive qualities as a storyteller, I asked Marie to consider what she had done up to that moment and she wrote:

I do like to write about my thoughts and ideas because I feel like I can express my feeling[s] more and it is easy for me, and my parents said I might need a tutor for math because I am not very good at it and because my mom and dad get frustrated at me and *some times it might be hard for me to understand [a] question[s] but I think I can do it because my parents and my teachers give me lots of *suport. My teacher and my parents help [me] grow as a* storyteller as well.

Through reflective practice and shared storytelling experiences, participants remind their audience that it can be hard to think when tired or stressed out, and sometimes all that is needed is a place to start or time to regroup.
James was also able to communicate his understanding of identity with extra support, chunked writing sessions, scheduling adjustments, and an opportunity to experiment with flexible learning spaces. Although James was not able to respond immediately, I witnessed the beauty of patience and perseverance as he later wrote, “I feel that I’m good at math, poetry, and drawing. I really like drawing. Sometimes I find math difficult. I see myself as a baker, it makes me feel pretty good because everyone likes my cookies.”

Contributing to their reflective practice, students explained that stories are “best” shared under varying circumstances, design, and time. Discourse summarized within participant data provided the following exemplars of participant writing, which identified abilities and preferred methods of sharing a story: shared inside my head; in a drawing because it is easier than writing; in writing because I can express my feelings more and it is easy for me; listening to others tell stories; verbal storytelling because I have a hard time writing ideas down; and in a Grade 4/5 classroom because “I love school and this type of classroom learning, speech is easier and people can actually hear my ideas.”

Jillian explained that “doing Wishtree” and “that kind of writing” was enjoyable. She also explained that she enjoyed writing about herself and her experiences. Likewise, Donna expressed her preference for people sharing before her, or when her friends could volunteer, through a surrogate voice, the things she wished to publicly share from her story. In noting students’ attempts to acknowledge themselves for their strengths, I was pleased to see each student self-identify as a storyteller in public and private worlds. By revisiting the reflections of Jillian and Jimmy, a reader may bear witness to the figured worlds of each participant. This includes acknowledged relationships, public and private attention to storied narratives, and the process of students becoming storytellers.

**Jillian:** “I am great at drawing, I can do a lot of things. I am *ARTistically talented. Reading helps me grow as a *Story teller because it helps me use my imagination and drives my *ideas.”

**Jimmy:** The important *pieces of my identity are my friends, family, and dog. I Like these things because they keep me going and my family is the power of storytelling for me. I am most
comfortable writing my ideas because it can’t go out in public and it can be Shared with the classroom. family has helped me grow as a story teller.

Findings attached to Jillian’s response indicate that after 13 weeks of investigation, students could identify with an improved Relationship with Self, noting that a variety of personal strengths and interests can activate a participant’s imagination and ability to communicate as a storyteller. As a strong visible contrast, Jimmy’s narrative identified his ties to identity through Relationship with Others.

This case study was validated by the subtle insights of students like Star, who explained that “if you don’t share stuff,” people will never understand, and problems will likely continue. Noting this problematic truth of not sharing a story, I was pleased to review the discourse of participants who could transfer their justified vulnerabilities and thoughts of unrest into writing, explaining to me and to others that their greatest discomforts rested in: math, saying stuff, telling their stories, pondering the actions of siblings, writing, proper spelling, and speaking aloud but not knowing why. This collection of findings strengthened my relationship with my students as well as my planning considerations for future lessons.

Feeling valued in this shared learning community, many participants like Adam attributed their strengths and abilities to others. One of Adam’s final written reflections proves that identity is socially constructed and connected to others, as his response included his memory of a mother who had discredited the put-downs of others and reaffirmed his self-worth. Further evidence of the funded self was noted through participants’ common references to storied experiences amongst friends and classmates. For instance, some students stated that they appreciated the opportunities to tell stories or simply provide comfort by sharing first. In summary, participant writing largely recognized the social values of identity development amongst Grade 4 and 5 students who valued friendships and clearly amplified their voices and shared ideas amongst a community of storytellers over time.

Closing reflections referencing the realities of our classroom culture addressed the added benefits of story-related experiences. Acknowledging the ability to speak freely in this classroom, one student noted that “for once,” our storytelling platform often provided a silent and comforting atmosphere. Many participants craved quiet learning experiences in a classroom community that was forever noisy.
Attending to student voice, lessons based in storytelling later allowed students to reconstruct the design of their classroom. To accommodate students’ well-communicated needs and ongoing concerns, our case study ended with round tables being replaced with individual desks that were situated in complementary groupings. Reports of improved focus and ability to become agents of change followed this accommodation.

Exploring participants’ ability to self-identify as Upstanders, and as individuals prepared to “stand tall,” “dig deep,” and act for self and the well-being of others, findings suggest that students in Grade 4 and 5 are at several different levels of readiness (Applegate, 2017; Daniels & Ahmed, 2015). The closing statements of participants’ bullet journals, student lapbook folders, whiteboard comments, tally charts, and researcher reflections point to a range of confidence and readiness. The reflections of Donna, Adam, and Darion connect the blended nature of figured worlds of identity using story and discourse based in relationships. The particularities of each participant’s closing story support narrative as identity (Sfard & Prusak, 2005), figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998), and various funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2016).

**I think I’m an Upstander because**

*I like helping people and standing up for other people.*

*This is my story.*

*My mom told me that I’m not fat.*

*My mom stood up and [spoke] to me about it.*

*I think in the classroom, I am an Upstander,*

*but not in other places.*

*At home I kinda keep to myself,*

*and hang out in my room reading and watching Youtube.*

*In the class people are always close to me*

*so I can share my ideas and help set the pace for other people’s sharing.*
In this investigation, features of an identity-based learning activity supported comprehension, language development, communication skills, self-awareness, and emotional states of being. Although a focus on Core Competencies, storytelling, and reflection was new to many participants, all progressed in their own way during the course of the study. Progress included the brave declarations of students who assumed a vulnerable position at the conclusion of case and admitted to a public audience that they were not yet Upstanders or Storytellers, reminding readers that it is okay to say, “I don’t know.”

**I am not yet an Upstander because**

Sometimes it’s hard to stand up to other people when you are little.

It’s hard because

it makes me be stressed because

I can feel other people’s feelings

I have learned that

Storytelling is sometimes difficult.

Speaking out loud makes me feel uncomfortable

[But] I don’t know why.

I am most comfortable listening to people tell stories

because I don’t know.

I don’t know who has helped me grow as a storyteller.

I don’t see myself as a storyteller and I am not comfortable talking about myself.

I sometimes just freezes and just think of myself

if I was in the situation

what would happen

so I get really scared and want to walk away

but I want to do something

but I am scared and nervous

and I have to learn how to not freeze
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and get all *cranched up.

I am not an Upstander yet

because *soms I don’t feel brave *enugh.

Themes emerging from this exercise indicate that:

a) reflective practice allows students to communicate their favourite forms of presenting story; and

b) vulnerabilities can be celebrated when students can pass, admit that they are not brave, ask for help, or state that they don’t yet have answers to questions.

Part Twenty: Summary of Themes

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of student participants as they engaged in learning framed by curricular change. This study was designed to explore and answer the following questions:

1. How can learning experiences, based in storytelling, support the development of student identity over time?

2. How do students connect their knowledge of self to the shared narratives within their community?

Themes will be described in terms of the learning process that was found to support students’ exploration of identity, and the specific nature of how identity is expressed through narratives. In answer to the questions, themes that emerged from this case fell under two classification: behavioural response themes and student response themes. Behavioural response themes included Participant Discourse, Engagement, Depth, Agency, and Comfort/Discomfort. Themes highlighting behaviours recognized Grade 4 and Grade 5 participants for who they were, how they learned, and how they contributed to themes of identity within a classroom. These features were also entwined with the know, understand, and do components in British Columbia’s renewed curriculum—more specifically elements of the Core Competencies, which supports and measures the development of student identity.
Behavioural Learning

Participant discourse. The dominant theme of participant discourse framed the creation of community and defined features of social learning based in relationship, identity exploration, and definitions crafted by students. The first theme based on discourse suggests:

- a particular focus on articulation and confidence in expression using coloured Post-it notes, lapbooks, conversation, and journals can provide an esoteric sense of how students articulate their thoughts and develop their own learning network (building a community and assisting in the construction of classroom culture); and

- students are able to locate communities of origin, family, physical characteristics, and likes/dislikes; and

- students are able to extend characteristics of identity with ‘so whats’ that ask them to explore the implications of the ‘whats’ that construct human beings; and

- story provides a framework for identity construction and how it can be communicated over time; and

- exploring story ‘flavours’ as representing core and tone can support detailed connections to memory and experience; and

- making empathetic connections to characters from literature encourages students to interrogate their own experiences and relationships; and

- social culture (i.e., video games) is recognized by students as a contributing factor of identity and community; and

- Grade 4 and 5 students connect to community through strong emotions and valued relationships with family, friends, animals, and home-based neighbourhoods; and

- altruistic thoughts, vulnerabilities, and values framed by belonging and safety are acknowledged through story; and
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- student participants can address curricular competencies, which encompass emotional states of being, and share a wide range of self-regulating strategies fueled by tangled worlds and messy gardens.

Depth and engagement. A social learning investigation tied to wishes and identity is accompanied by layered responses which maintain altruistic thoughts and strong ties to story and features of figured worlds within a learning community. The second section of behavioural response themes, framed by depth and engagement suggests that:

- group discussion over time increased student awareness, which noted improved engagement and depth, as students explored connecting features of self and others with emotional responses; and
- student confidence in addressing themes of identity can build fairly quickly; however, depth of engagement requires extensions of time and ongoing support; and
- the challenge to think metaphorically about experiences in lives, though difficult for some students, can add depth and sophistication to their exploration of memories and identity; and
- a wish for others can connect features of identity to local and global communities, as students can maintain a sense of empathy by embracing relationships with self, others and community; and
- depth and complexity increase over time as students respond to layered prompts, all of which decenter their own wishes to considerations of others and.
- learning experiences that explore interpersonal relationships encourage students to consider who they are in relation to others.
- story as a tool for reflection acknowledges students who wish to simply share their story and be heard.
Agency. A storytelling process framed by core competencies and features of identity development, encourages students to extend their actions beyond the knowing and understanding components of curricular competencies (Province of British Columbia, 2018, English Language Arts 4). Transformative ideas, drafted by student proposals and personally profound stories, encase the third theme of agency which suggests that:

- learning experiences that encourage students to imagine responses to story-based events can link identity to action; and
- learning experiences that encourage imaginative solutions to problems, both from stories, and from students’ own lives, can position students as “agents of change,” linking identity to potential action in the world; and
- student reflections proved that students in Grades 4 and 5 were mentally equipped with an improved understanding of self and empathetic appreciation for others that allowed them to consider their role as potential agents of change within their community; and
- reflections noting the value of students’ uniqueness, experiences, and identities offer an understanding that they can contribute to their community and world; and
- students who focus on the challenges of others can unite communities by devoting attention to how they might contribute to change; and
- over time, students build confidence in telling their stories, as they understand that their proposals can impact a global community.

Comfort and discomfort. The ‘whats’ and ‘so whats’ of identity explored within a social context are connected to public and private features. The fourth theme, based in comfort or discomfort, suggests that:

- identity flexibility within topics of conversation and writing options was conducive to building an overall impression of identity development, with a community of unique individuals who were happy to explore topics of their own interests; and
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- public identities as they are viewed may not always be a reflection of an individual’s true identity; and
- deep feelings embedded within private and public identities influence ability and willingness to share; and
- students can place themselves in different worlds where they are asked to work with others and socially acknowledge the mutual benefits and challenges of a group effort; and
- vulnerabilities can be celebrated when students can pass, admit that they are not brave, ask for help, or state that they don’t yet have answers to questions.

Student Response Themes

The second set of themes listed below responds to story and learning frameworks as tools for measuring identity development through relationships based in social learning experiences. The first section speaks to **story and relationship as frameworks** and the second section addresses **supports and scaffolds** which make learning experiences, based in storytelling and identity, assessible for all.

**Story and relationships as frameworks for learning.** The “whats” and “so whats” of learning frameworks and relationship tied to story/identity suggest that:

- features of identity can be explored in a groups’ first days together using sentence starters and wishes, which can frame the direct investigation of a study over time as wishes are revisited throughout; and
- story, in text or video form, is a tool used by students to compare facets of their identity to the identifiers of another; and
- identity exploration in community with multiple means of representing understanding and focused supports can offer modeling, opportunities for discussion, and reflection; and
- an exploration of connections can encourage students to both recognize where they are disconnected from community, and how they can build connections with both place and people.
Accessible supports and scaffolds. Scaffolded learning experiences, based in student identity, will amplify the voice of learners who can showcase their abilities as themes outlined by accessible supports and scaffolds which suggest that:

- ongoing and responsive support, based on assessment of student needs, can encourage students to extend thinking and responses; and

- story presented in numerous forms encourages identity exploration: both reflective writing done individually and with personal support, and guided discussion and conversation within the learning community, and

- while most students can identify events, emotions, and experiences that challenge them, some students need ongoing support in imagining solutions; and

- students can relate individually to characters, events, and themes of stories, and thus educators must facilitate choice; and

- features of identity can be explored over time using sentence starters and wishes;

- a particular focus on wish(es) can articulate confidence in expression over time using coloured Post-it notes, lapbooks, conversation, and journals which provide an esoteric sense of how students articulate their thoughts and develop their own learning network (building a community and assisting in the construction of classroom culture); and

- learning experiences that encourage students to directly address challenges with hope can shift future outcomes and possibilities; and

- learning experiences inspired by stories (such as novels) can encourage the acknowledgement of significant others in our lives, all of which assists in the placement of student identity in relationship and community; and

- rubrics as a stand-alone method of self-assessment, although useful, may distract from the authenticity of what can be simply stated as an informed story; and
• reflective practice allows students to communicate their favourite forms of presenting story.

The results show that Grade 4 and 5 participants are prepared to receive complex instructions that promote varied levels of behavioral responses, and they can engage in student in practices that explore greater depths within the culture of learning. Findings and emergent themes summarized above indicate that participants can assume the role of storyteller as they surround themselves with a social learning culture that supports identity development inside and outside of the classroom.

Part Twenty-One: Summary of Case

During the weeks of this investigation, increased classroom supports were noted with improved access to technology, flexible timetables, the intermittent presence of two pre-service teachers, and the valued presence of an Education Assistant dedicated to supporting the needs of all participants in our learning community. Students were also supported with community narratives and diverse conversations as stories and topics pertaining to history, cultural arts, and conservation were explored. This was made possible by a special field trip to the Hand of Man Museum and several guest experiences with Indigenous storytellers and educators. Therefore, I give great thanks to my students for exposing their vulnerabilities as storytellers, the Indigenous keepers of knowledge for gifting our community with storied connections to local identity, the pre-service teachers for trusting the process, and Education assistants for placing trust in new learning experiences, for I know I would never have survived this experience without them.

As this study progressed, students welcomed each new day and diverse skill sets that supported storytelling as a vehicle for understanding and communicating identity. As Upstanders, bystanders, and other public and privately recognized states of being, participants proved that they could focus more on process and less on sameness, decorative projects, and products that might otherwise end up in recycling bins (Burvall, 2017). A focus on relationship, experience, difference, and readiness supported participants in their storied discovery of self, their connected relationships to others, and noted ties to community.
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And finally, my review of meaning based in case study and narrative analysis comes to a close with participant discourse validating the significance of identity construction in a Grade 4/5 classroom. Addressing the flavour of story and the ‘whats’ of identity-development, Darion states, “You give me a push in the right direction, I have never really shared, I used to keep it to myself. Now I see my point of view is important.”
Chapter Five: Discussion of Case

The anger inside *try’s to escape as I think

Of a beautiful landscape

I’m going through a rough patch in my life

Right now as *I’m also in a play as a cow

These colours represent me as a person as I

Shut the curtain.

— Darion

Introduction

The rough patches and colour communicated by student participants and witnessed by a teacher-researcher over time remind me that a classroom can be a safe place to explore self, others, and community (Crick, 2012). Whether it be in the beginning, middle, or end stage of a well-communicated story, one thing is clear: identity presented and examined as story will forever evolve (Connelly & Clandinin, 1996; Craig 2007; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). In a period following curricular reconstruction, this case study examined learning experiences based in storytelling and the development of student identity over time. It also explored student participants who connected their knowledge of self to the shared narratives within their community. In this case study, data presented by 13 student participants and a teacher-researcher, supported personally profound (BC Ministry of Education, 2018) learning experiences while embracing diversity within a Grade 4/5 classroom.

In the discussion which follows, six of the dominant and overlapping themes or claims to knowledge will be addressed. Each section will speak to the transferable values of my case study. This will include narrative-based learning experiences through a central novel; social learning features that supported student exploration of personal, social, and cultural responsibilities; and the identity-based outcomes maintained and supported by intrinsic and extrinsic values. In each section, recommendations for future research and/or learning (which may add value/contribute) will be made. Each section will close with a Haiku poem, written by student participants, to mark and remind our readers of the figured
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worlds (Holland, et al., 1998) which shaped and/or improved student’s awareness/understanding of identity-based exploration.

Theme One—Student Discourse

The projection of student voice and discourse within this case study supports current research that speaks to student identity development (Gee, 1990; Holland et al., 1998; Sarup, 1996; Sfard & Prusak, 2005) By encouraging students to articulate their core and curricular understanding of identity with growing confidence, students can marry thoughts of self to others and project a stronger sense of belonging. In response to altruistic thought and location of self within community, pre-adolescent students can reflect and expand on knowledge of self. Student discourse can also contain important features of identity such as memory and experience. Facilitators of learning can support student discourse by encouraging a social learning culture (Dewey,1938/1997; Vygotsky, 1986) that amplifies student voice and choice through storytelling experiences. Strong features of emotion can also be studied within Post-it notes, journals, and classroom interactions. To approach the subject of identity and discourse, teachers can encourage students to relate to characters from novels as individuals. They can also encourage students to speak, write, or dictate freely and openly with equal access to the supports of teacher, researcher, or Ipad. In closing, teachers and researchers must be mindful of what they aim to achieve, as some identity-based realities are difficult to communicate in words and in writing.

Funny, kind, sleepy

Daring, descent gamer, fun

Play *fortnite, cool

—Aiden

Theme Two—Depth and Engagement

The value of depth and student engagement within this case study supports current research (Crick, 2012), educational reform (Kaplan & Flum, 2014), and curricular guidelines (Province of British Columbia, 2018) that encourage students and educators to consider who they and how they aspire to engage within a community of big thinkers. Large pieces of this study have expanded on existing
knowledge of identity development by focusing on a study of process and student responses relating to engagement (Crick, 2012). Connected to different features of relationship, engagement encourages a student to explore their own thinking (metacognition) and who they can be. It also supports students who wish to share stories and be heard (McCarthey, 2001; Mitra & Serriere, 2012; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Layered responses can encourage students to explore features of identity beyond self, encompassing figured worlds (Holland, et al., 1998) and social learning experiences (Dewey, 1938/1997; Vygotsky 1986). To draw sophisticated and metaphoric thinking processes from student learners, teachers may consider engaging students in classroom conversations surrounding something as simple as a wish, as it can connect self to local and global communities. I recommend that teachers and researchers consider student needs and abilities without imposing limitations, as students can speak with depth when allowances are made. In this study I learned that layered prompts, time extensions, and patience contributed to new knowledge of how sophisticated thoughts can unravel with time.

_ Dirt trees, friends, biking._

_ Bruises, aching, bloody pain_

_ Accomplish big jumps_

—Jimmy

**Theme Three—Agency**

Storytelling experiences encourage students to locate self within states of agency. When they are encouraged to imagine and follow story-based events, students can propose solutions to problems. In this stage of learning, empathy and appreciation for others allowed students to consider their roles as potential agents of change. Competencies pertaining to *Positive Personal & Cultural Identity, Personal Awareness and Responsibility, and Social Responsibility* (Province of British Columbia, 2018, Core Competencies) can be attended to in other classrooms when students are asked to reflect, project their unique qualities, and contribute to their surrounding worlds. When students were encouraged to become agents of change, they demonstrated that they can unite a community by attending to proposals for a better future.
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\[ A \text{ big green jungle} \]

\[ Full \text{ of cool fun animals—} \]

\[ I\text{’m adventurous!} \]

—Donna

Theme Four—Comfort/Discomfort

The findings of this study support current research that explores public and private features of identity (Sarup, 1996). By exploring the ‘whats’ and ‘so whats’ of identity within a social context (Dewey, 1938/1997; Vygotsky, 1986), students learned how to express things that bring them comfort or might make them uncomfortable. At this point, I recommend that teachers and further research explore student learning that embraces vulnerability (Brown, 2006), as deep feelings embedded within private and public worlds (Sarup, 1996) can influence students’ ability or willingness to contribute to a storytelling experience. An approach to this type of teaching could include public acknowledgements of vulnerability. When facilitators recognize that vulnerability is a strength and a weakness, they can inform students that they have a right to pass, celebrate their bravery, model vulnerability, and acknowledge that there are not always answers to every question. During the course of this study I learned that students can be accommodated with flexible topics of conversation and writing opportunities that build on features of identity that are unique to the individual’s own interests. In closing, I encourage future researchers to explore how a student’s public identity is influenced by an audience, and how a private identity may differ.

\[ My \text{ name is } *\text{Jamie} \]

\[ Now \text{ I am eleven years old} \]

\[ And I feel perfect \]

—James

Theme Five—Story and Relationships as Frameworks for Learning

By connecting story and identity to curricular frameworks for pre-adolescent students, teachers and researchers can explore a group and its learning process over time. Using the concept of a wish,
sentence starters, flexible timetables, and multimedia, students can compare facets of their identity to others. Having access to multiple means of representing their thoughts and ideas, students can demonstrate their knowledge through continuous practice and reflection over time. I encourage teachers and future researchers to explore and share their knowledge about social learning process as it occurs in different groups and communities, in particular how it connects to the story of student development over time.

Being creative,

Paint splats all over paper.

What can we create?

—Jillian

Theme Six—Accessible Supports and Scaffolds

Ongoing and responsive supports connected to investigations of identity can encourage students to extend their thoughts and responses beyond rubrics and explore story over time. Features of identity can be explored using sentence starters, a wish, and cloze statements, using classroom conversations, lapbooks, coloured Post-it notes, journals, and technology. Student engagement can also be examined as features of UDL (Cook & Rao, 2018) are woven into classroom practices for the benefit of all learners.

This case study demonstrates how targeted supports within the RTI model (Hoover, 2011), with a particular focus of tier one and two, can be used to deliver core/curricular instruction and assessment for all students in a classroom environment, regardless of age, designation, or ability. In fact, features of the RTI model within this study demonstrated how strategic interventions can be extended to accommodate all members of a classroom environment. Within this case study, inclusive practices did not call for ‘more work’ as all students could gain access to learning through a universal support system. In fact, a guest observer looking to identify students by designation would likely struggle to identify explicitly defined needs and abilities at a glance, as the students in my classroom all benefited from tier one and two interventions regardless of designation, recommendations within learning plans, or observational assessments.
The principles and applied practices of UDL (Cook & Rao, 2018) highlighted within this case study encompass and promote engagement strategies that demonstrate how the needs of all students can be met in a scaffolded investigation of story and student identity within a classroom environment. Guiding from the side as a teacher-researcher, I explored multiple means of how a teacher-researcher can support student learning. Every student gained access to features of identity through a read-aloud novel, video, individual reading sessions, and group discussions, which nurtured personal and social connections. To some, this case study may provide a blueprint of how the educational goals of one teacher-researcher could encourage student responses, demonstration of knowledge, and emergent skill sets that can be developed over time. To others, the path of research may also investigate growth over time as a study such as this can provide exemplars of how all students can share their story with varied access points to engagements, representation, action, and expression.

Moving forward, I hope that teachers and researchers will unite, walk together, and explore the different ways multiple forms of intelligence can be displayed and celebrated within classrooms. In addition to writing, future studies could provide further value to the field of inclusive education by facilitating and exploring opportunities that foster multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1985) and various forms of communicating knowledge, by providing more choice and considerations for creative methods of design where students can communicate features of identity through curricular and core competencies that support music, visual-spatial representation, logistical thinking, naturalistic exploration, technology, and movement.

*Fishing at sunset*

*Hearing fish splash and jumping*

* Sitting on the dock

—Carter

**Limitations of Case Study**

Before leading into the broader implications of this case study, I fully understand that it cannot be generalized. The knowledge generated within this case study is bound to learning experiences that
A WISH, A STORY, AND TELLING EXPERIENCES

occurred in my classroom in the fall of 2018. Generalized information is difficult to transfer as every facilitator, research, and group of participants is unique to features of their own figured worlds (Holland et. al., 1998). As a teacher, fan, and collector of storied data, I cannot deny that my findings are influenced by personal bias, my passion for messy learning, and my love of story.

Value of Case Study

Value for teacher-researcher. As a classroom teacher bringing my first case study to a close, I am quite familiar with the span of needs that lead to student/parent frustration and teacher burn out. However, this study far outweighed the shortcomings, as the reflective process reminded me that I must investigate ways to follow my passion for teaching/learning, work within my means, remain optimistic, and move forward with learners as needs and learning design allow. With a particular focus in special education, this study reminds me of how my learning pedagogy, largely supported by process-based blueprints (within findings), can support features of inclusive practices in the classroom. As plans of one groups’ learning journey rolled out in this particular case study, I am humbly reminded that differentiation does not require teachers to construct personalize learning packages for every learner in the classroom; it does however encourage facilitators of learning to personalize the experiences and plan for all. As a valuable method, I have a new appreciation for case study as it provided me with a great opportunity to study and reflect on the RTI process and how it connects to balanced educational decisions in my classroom. On a further note, it also outlined the decisions I make regarding curricular design and how I attempt to maximize student success with an identity-based curriculum.

Throughout this experience, the tapestry of student identity was woven into the fabric of stories waiting to be told, considered, and witnessed. I was incredibly proud of my students for their ability to respond to story in new ways. I am truly fascinated by the level of profound expressions that can be drawn from supported students who were willing to expand on the depth of self by attending to others, locating community, and amplifying voice. As I reflect on the shared experiences within this study, I extend my sincere gratitude as I am thankful for student effort, trust, and exposed vulnerabilities that have encouraged me to be an emergent storyteller in the field of research. Moving forward, I would suggest
that storytelling experiences can open many doors, and although teachers and researchers may not have all the answers, we do know that rewarding experiences often come from supported collections of stories where features of personal growth can be located through shared learning experiences embedded with the social comforts of a diverse community.

**Value for students.** The findings of this study demonstrate how tiered levels or access points to support can focus on a larger community classroom. Within a classroom, students of varying abilities demonstrated that differentiated models of self-expression can provide greater opportunities for students to rehearse and process their ideas with auditory or oral practice before expressing their thoughts in writing or in drawing. The findings in this case study contribute to improved student engagement as ministry designated identities became less visible and students learned to communicate personal features of identity despite reading, writing, social, or behavioural challenges. The value of this case study therefore exemplifies how student identity can be fostered and diverse needs can be supported in a classroom environment. The process leading toward the amplification of student voice is also valuable as students, with the support of learning facilitators, can demonstrate how read-alouds, videos, and multiple means of expression through drawing, tech support, and personalized learning can support student needs through UDL practices.

**Value for the field.** The findings of this study can be transferred to the studies on identity development in schools, investigations of how inclusive learning opportunities can be achieved, and/or how the ‘whats’ of teacher knowledge contribute to the ‘sowhats’ of UDL and RTI. This study demonstrates how teaching/learning practices inspired by a well-told story (Applegate, 2017) can support future learning frameworks, encourage social connections, and provide student volunteered exemplars of how curricular achievement can be modelled in BC.

**A Conclusion for Stories Without End**

Knowing that a singular study can only represent one of many chapters, the development or study of identities can be understood as a continuous life story (Esteban-Guitart, 2012), as much can be learned from a case study that explores features of self, others, and community. It is my wish that new research
A WISH, A STORY, AND TELLING EXPERIENCES

based in knowledge construction, teaching, and learning practice can shed new light on voluntary stories
based on lived and told experiences. Literature in the field also reminds teachers, researchers, and
students that stories of knowledge can be told and retold as they relate to and complement the
accompanying narratives within their community. As research and story continues to open doors to future
learning, identity-first curriculum may become tangible and real for others. As this study and summary of
learning comes to a close, my wish is that storied artifacts of learning can be used and honoured as
students of life and learning are continuously encouraged to connect the knowledge of self to the shared
narratives among community.
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Olson, E. [Erin Olson@eolsonteacher]. (2018, August 20). # I asked students to respond to: If I'm angry, please... If you're proud of me, I hope you... When I'm not in school, my responsibilities include... I hope this class is a place where... I hope we don't... I respect teachers who... Their responses provided valuable insight. #1st5days [Twitter post]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/eolsonteacher/status/103167086375085568


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Appendix A-1

Assessment Student Self-Assessment Rubric (Positive Personal and Cultural Identity)

Name: ___________________     Date: ___________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can use storytelling to amplify</th>
<th>Continuous evoking</th>
<th>Continuously evoking</th>
<th>Continuously evoking</th>
<th>Continuously evoking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Personal &amp; Cultural Identity</td>
<td>Getting started with myself</td>
<td>Diving deeper within myself</td>
<td>Exploring the next depth of myself</td>
<td>Exploring the advanced depths of myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating to the following topics of growth and their relationship to me and my understanding of self, others, and community</td>
<td>My story can....</td>
<td>My story can...</td>
<td>My story can...</td>
<td>My story can.....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships &amp; Cultural Context</th>
<th>describe family and community</th>
<th>identify different groups of belonging</th>
<th>explain my understanding that identity is made up of interconnected aspects such as life experiences, family history, heritage, and peer groups</th>
<th>explain my understanding that learning is continuous and my concept of self and identity will continue to evolve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Values &amp; Choices</td>
<td>tell what is important to self</td>
<td>explain personal values and how they affect personal choices</td>
<td>tell how important aspects of personal life have influenced personal values</td>
<td>explain my understanding that personal values shape personal choices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Personal Strengths & Abilities | identify my personal characteristics | describe & express personal attributes, characteristics, and skills | reflect to personal strengths and identify potential as a leader in community | explain my understanding as I continue to develop new abilities and strengths that help me meet new challenges |

Table 2.0 Rubric created from provincial guidelines. Students used this rubric to guide skills and reflections based on storytelling ability. This rubric was used as a tool for learning and reflective practices relating to the development of Positive Personal and Cultural Identity. (Province of British Columbia, 2018)
### Assessment Student Self-Assessment Rubric (Social Responsibility)

**Name:** ____________________  **Date:** ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>I can use storytelling to highlight the socially responsible elements of my identity when I...</strong></th>
<th><strong>Continuously evolving</strong></th>
<th><strong>Continuously evolving</strong></th>
<th><strong>Continuously evolving</strong></th>
<th><strong>Continuously evolving</strong></th>
<th><strong>Continuously Evolving Ultimate Depth</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting started with myself</td>
<td>Continuousy evolving</td>
<td>Exploring the next depth of myself</td>
<td>Exploring advanced depths of myself</td>
<td>Exploring my most advanced depth of self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My story describes how...</td>
<td>My story will describes how...</td>
<td>My story describes how...</td>
<td>My story describes how...</td>
<td>My story describes how...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Contribute to community and care for the environment</strong></th>
<th><strong>Solve problems in peaceful ways</strong></th>
<th><strong>Value Diversity</strong></th>
<th><strong>Build Relationships</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>with support, I can be part of a group</td>
<td>I can solve some problems independently and identify when to ask for help</td>
<td>I can explain when something is unfair</td>
<td>with some support, I can be part of a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can participate in classroom and group activities to improve the classroom, school community, or natural world</td>
<td>I can identify problems and compare potential problem-solving strategies</td>
<td>I can advocate for others</td>
<td>I can be kind to others, can work or play co-operatively, and can build relationships with people of my choosing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can participate in classroom and group activities that make my classroom, school, community, or natural world a better place</td>
<td>I can identify problems, consider alternatives, and evaluate strategies</td>
<td>I can make actions to support diversity and defend human rights, and can identify how diversity is beneficial for my community, including online</td>
<td>I can identify when others need support and provide it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can identify with personal actions and the actions of others to affect my community and the natural environment and can work to make positive change</td>
<td>I can clarify problems or issues, generate multiple strategies, weigh consequences, compromise to meet the needs of others, and evaluate actions</td>
<td>I can build and sustain positive relationships with diverse people, including people from different generations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can analyze complex, social or environmental issues from multiple perspectives and take thoughtful actions to influence positive and sustainable change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Table 2.1** Rubric created from provincial guidelines. Students used this rubric to guide skills and reflections based on storytelling ability. This rubric was used as a tool for learning and reflective practices relating to the development of **Social Responsibility**. (Province of British Columbia, 2018)
## Appendix A-3

### Assessment Student Self-Assessment Rubric (Personal Awareness and Responsibility)

Name: _______________     Date:______________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuously evolving</th>
<th>Continuously evolving</th>
<th>Continuously evolving</th>
<th>Continuously evolving</th>
<th>Continuously Evolving Ultimate Depth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting started with myself</td>
<td>Exploring the next depth of myself</td>
<td>Exploring advanced depths of myself</td>
<td>Exploring my most advanced depth of self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My story describes how...</td>
<td>My story describes how...</td>
<td>My story describes how...</td>
<td>My story describes how...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Self-Determination

**I can use storytelling to highlight my understanding of Personal Awareness & Responsibility as it relates to my sense of Continuously evolving.**

- My story describes how...

**Getting started with myself**

- I can show a sense of accomplishment and joy
- I can celebrate efforts and accomplishments
- I can advocate for self and personal ideas
- I can imagine and work towards change in self and the world
- I can take the initiative to inform self about controversial issues

**Exploring the next depth of myself**

- I can sometimes recognize emotions
- I use strategies that help me manage my feelings and emotions
- I can persevere with challenging tasks
- I can implement, monitor, and adjust a plan and assess the results
- I can take ownership of my goals, learning, and behaviour

**Exploring advanced depths of myself**

- I can participate in activities that support my well-being and tell/show how they help me
- I can take some responsibility for my physical and emotional well-being
- I can make choices that benefit well-being and keep myself safe in my community, including online interactions
- I can use strategies to find peace in stressful situations
- I can sustain a healthy and balanced lifestyle

**Exploring my most advanced depth of self**

- My story describes how...

---

Table 2.2Rubric created from provincial guidelines. Students used this rubric to guide skills and reflections based on storytelling ability. This rubric was used as a tool for learning and reflective practices relating to the development of **Personal Awareness and Responsibility**. (Province of British Columbia, 2018)
### Tally Chart: Development of Identity through Storytelling

**Lesson Title:** ________________________________

**Indicate Classroom Discussion Format (Oral Storytelling) or Journal Format (Storied Text)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Number &amp; Name</th>
<th>Reference to <em>self</em></th>
<th>Reference to <em>self</em> in relationship to others</th>
<th>Reference to <em>self</em> in relationship to community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
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<td>#16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 Created to track storytellers’ growth. Identity-based references continuously tallied for reporting and data collection focused on classroom participants’ references to *self, others,* and *community.* (Expanded to 23 to accommodate the number of students).