Sabbatical Report  
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November 27, 2007

New Literacies: Domains of Expertise in the Integration of Technology and Literacy  
A Connecticut Association for Reading Research Investigation

Abstract of Sabbatical Proposal
This proposal is a request for time to conduct a study as Research Chair on behalf of the Connecticut Association for Reading Research that focuses on new literacies in the state of Connecticut. This survey research to be conducted 2006/2007 will gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative data to investigate domains of expertise in the integration of technology and literacy in a sample of high school teachers across educational reference groups who teach in the content areas of the English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Technology, Media Specialists within the state of Connecticut. The study will focus on teacher understanding, value for, proficiency, and preparation and needs in teaching new literacies to inform public policy and support Connecticut’s agenda to prepare high school students in an information age. SPSS will be used making use of descriptive and correlation statistics, along with a content analysis of qualitative data.

Purposes and Objective of Sabbatical and Study:
The purpose of the study was to examine how high school teachers across educational reference groups who teach in the content areas of the English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Technology, Media Specialists within the state of Connecticut understand the new literacies (Coiro, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004) of the Internet and other Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the role of the new literacies in the integration of literacy and technology, and the instruction of the new literacies. The main objective for my sabbatical leave was to move CARR’s research forward by collecting data and by conducting a preliminary data analysis. This objective was out of sync with the actual semester in which I was granted the leave. By the time I began my work the data had already been collected, and so I picked up from that point to move the project forward. I am pleased to report my accomplishments of data analysis, the completion of a written report, and a presentation to be disseminated at the National Reading Conference, December, 2007.

An extensive qualitative analysis of open-ended items was conducted with over 100 categories generated, and defined across survey questions. In order to do this, I received two full days of training in using NVivo software in Boston, Massachusetts in March 2007 and was able to secure software from CARR to support the analysis. Informal preliminary analysis without the software had begun prior to the training, however, once I received the training I realized that I had to put the data into an analyzable format. This entailed hours of entering data into the software in the correct format for analysis. While I received some department support from our graduate student, I compensated students for data entry so that I could begin the analysis in a timely way. Once data entry was completed, I began the labor intensive process of examining open-ended responses across several questions for each of the 465 participants.

I analyzed data by sub groups, groups and by question and in the process engaged in a recursive process of category generation. In this process I looked at relationships among categories. For example, I discovered that the supports and challenges to the teaching and learning of new literacies were often one in the same. When they were present, they were a support, and when they were not present, they posed major challenges. For each analysis by sub groups, groups and by questions I wrote a narrative describing the major findings, comparing and contrasting differences within major groupings and across major groupings as well as by question. Definitions that encompassed the categories across questions were created with examples exemplifying the category.

At this point the quantitative data had been analyzed and the job of integrating qualitative and quantitative data began. This involved considering how the information interfaced in order to make sense of
the findings. My colleague and I summarized our respective results. Given the nature of qualitative analysis this was a major undertaking. We then looked at our results in detail in order to see how the data converged and diverged. From this analysis I wrote a discussion of findings and recommendations. This entailed going back to the professional literature and making connections between what we found and what other researchers found. Based on this analysis a PowerPoint presentation for the dissemination of our findings at the National Reading Conference was created. The full report of the project is not yet complete because we still have to revisit and refine our literature review to better integrate the research in this section, however the Summary Report is completed.

This sabbatical provided an important learning experience for me and addressed many areas at once: 1) It served as professional development for me. Not only was I able to learn to use NVivo Software for the sabbatical research, but I have the opportunity to bring my knowledge and experience to future projects. 2) It enhanced the knowledge base of Connecticut High School Teachers (English, Social Studies, Reading and Language Arts, Technology Educators, and Media Specialists) teacher proficiencies and needs in professional development for new literacies. It is hoped that will serve to inform policy and further research. 3) It was a service project to the Connecticut Association for Reading Research. The time that CCSU provided of this project allowed my colleague and me to further this organization’s research agenda.

Although the work on this project was labor intensive and was done prior to, during and well beyond the sabbatical time frame into this current semester, it was satisfying work. I thank CCSU for the allowing me to use my time so well.

REFERENCES