Connected Reading

Teaching Adolescent Readers in a Digital World

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Principles
in Practice

READING IN TODAY'S
CLASSROOMS

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Reimagining Reading Instruction for *All* Students

Who am I as a reader?

As teachers, this is a question we may not ask ourselves very often. When we do, we might immediately think of our favorite kinds of text. Books. Magazines. Blogs. The literary among us might consider a favorite author. Shakespeare. Angelou. Patterson.

Texts and authors have, for good reason, dominated the teaching of English—and our definition of *reading*—for the history of our profession. Because texts came in only a few forms—namely, as printed, bound volumes and periodicals, whether magazines or newspapers—we spent the majority of our time focused on the words themselves. Even though the pages, fonts, colors, and figures used in these publications were all different forms of technology (as stated by Dennis Baron, "Writing itself is always first and foremost a technology, a way of engineering materials in order to accomplish an end" [2001, p. 71]), we very rarely, at least as readers, paused to think about the technology of print.

Then, a little more than a decade after the graphical interface of the World Wide Web rocked our vision of literacy, Amazon's Kindle hit the market in November 2007, and since then our reading lives have never quite been the same. In fact, the 2014 Pew study provides a snapshot of reading in the United States that indicates adults read in a variety of ways (Zickuhr & Rainie, 2014). Though most have not abandoned print reading completely, ownership of handheld devices for reading has grown, with more than 50 percent of adults owning either a tablet or dedicated e-reader.

With this changing landscape, embedded in the question of "who am I as a reader" are the old questions of *who* and *what* we read, as well as new questions of *where* and *how* we read. Turning the pages of a print book, browsing the Internet through mouse clicks, and interacting via fingertips on a tablet's touch screen all represent reading habits in a digital age that are mediated by technology in one form or another. The image in Figure 1.1, captured in the New York City subway by Kristen, shows just one moment in the lives of three readers: one with a magazine, one with a book, and one with a tablet. Similar pictures could be snapped in Troy's home when his children gather to read, one with a downloaded book on an iPad, another with magazines, and yet another with books.

Figure 1.1. Three readers in a New York City subway station.

More than three decades ago, Rosenblatt (1978) encouraged English teachers to think of the process of reading as an interaction between reader, text, and poem. Her transactional theory of reading suggested that we, as readers, had a distinct role in the process of making meaning. While Rosenblatt's approach remains relevant, in addition to the reader, text, and poem, today we must also consider the *device*. What opportunities do smartphones, tablets, e-readers, and computers afford readers? What constraints do they place on readers? How has the introduction of digital texts changed the process of reading?

Specific examples of this change include clicking on a word for its definition, highlighting a favorite passage and posting it to a social network, delving more deeply into a hypertext that demands participation, or downloading an ebook. All of these actions have changed the work we have to do as readers to comprehend texts. You've probably noticed these changes in your own reading, and you also might see how your students interact with digital texts. Although we know that the interaction between a reader and the text has always been a dynamic and contested space (and that texts are not inherently singular nor tied to only one meaning), in this era of digital reading we now must consider a shift to account for the changes in *how* we read. And with these shifts, we also must consider how we teach reading to adolescents.

Of course, paying attention to how teens read is not a new phenomenon. Over the past three decades, teachers and researchers have attended more and more to the specific needs of adolescent readers. From early calls in *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) to the seminal 1999 position statement from the International Reading Association (revised 2012b), numerous blue-ribbon panels, government reports, manuscripts, books, conferences, and workshops have focused on a variety of techniques to engage, support, and evaluate adolescent readers, including:

- Strategy-based approaches for comprehension (e.g., Beers, 2003; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Keene & Zimmermann, 2007; Tovani, 2000, 2004)
- A focus on young adult literature with relatable characters, situations, and themes (e.g., Cart, 2010; Hayn & Kaplan, 2012; Wolf, Coats, Enciso, & Jenkins, 2011)
- Immersive and interactive models of reading instruction such as literature circles and the reading workshop (e.g., Atwell, 2007; Daniels, 2002)
- A renewed attention to content area literacy, which has begun to shift toward disciplinary literacies (e.g., Daniels & Steineke, 2011; Daniels, Zemelman, & Steineke, 2007; Daniels & Zemelman, 2004; Fisher, Brozo, Frey, & Ivey, 2010; Fisher & Frey, 2011; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008)

Despite these significant efforts, the broad research literature on adolescent literacy has demonstrated a desperate need for English and content area teachers

to do even more. Noting the "crisis" type of mentality that permeates the discourse of documents like the Carnegie Council's report on adolescent literacy, "A Time to Act" (Carnegie Corporation of New York's Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2009), we—Kristen and Troy, as English educators, parents, and the authors of this book—are hesitant to reassert the claim of "crisis." However, we are also hesitant to ignore it.

While many of these lines of literacy research and practice mentioned on page 3 take a sociocultural, constructivist approach—one that honors the lived lives of adolescents, including their skills, interests, and abilities—a considerable gap is emerging in the literature related to digital reading practices. Some researchers, such as Leu, Coiro, and their colleagues, have begun to look at the digital reading practices of adolescents by paying special attention to the types of strategies these students use when searching for and verifying information found on the Internet (Coiro, 2005, 2011; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004). Others, such as Kajder (2006, 2010) and Kist (2005), have considered broader literacy practices that adolescents employ as active online citizens, reading and writing a variety of texts. Still others have explored the uses of cell phones in school settings (Hyler & Hicks, 2014; Kolb, 2008, 2011; Nielsen & Webb, 2011), the power of blogging and other digital reading and writing tools (Beach, Anson, Breuch, & Swiss, 2008; Hicks, 2009, 2013; Richardson, 2010), and the effects that "digitalk" have had on adolescent literacies (Turner, 2009, 2012, 2014). These lines of thinking are important. However, with the advent of digital reading devices such as smartphones, tablets, and e-readers, even the digital practices documented in the work of these scholars have begun to change in the past few years.

Moreover, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) demand closer attention to *textual complexity* and *close reading*, two highly contested terms. Reading the CCSS, we see that definitions for these terms include phrases such as "sophistication of what students read and the skill with which they read," "a steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of text," "critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally," and "wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). Although there has been some confusion about the original intent of these terms, especially *close reading*, Shanahan (2012) notes that

> in the past, the usual practice was to read a text thoroughly a single time in a guided or directed reading lesson. However, the new standards require something different—that students read more challenging texts and engage in "close reading" lessons, in which rereading is a hallmark.

These concerns about close reading and text complexity have become the new currency by which reading programs and instruction are being measured. But this is not happening in an isolated, educational echo chamber.

Nowhere is rereading, attentive reading, or close reading more important than in the various digital contexts in which adolescents read on a daily basis, in part because, many argue, readers do not always read with the same level of attention they pay to nonprint forms. Most famously, Nicholas Carr once asked, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" (2008). Carr's book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (2010) furthered his exploration into that question, and *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future* (Bauerlein, 2008) answers that question with a resounding "yes." Even noted sociologist Sherry Turkle has critiqued our increasingly networked lives in her latest book, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011), arguing that the devices we use to mediate our relationships have had an adverse effect on our psyches. These concerns about distractibility, lack of ambition, and a general loss of intellectual engagement with a variety of texts and people can be found in many major media stories across the political spectrum.

We, along with other teachers, researchers, and journalists, are a bit more optimistic about the fate of reading in a digital age. Pushing back against this rhetoric of technological doom, other authors praise Internet technologies for their effect on human connectivity and the resulting collective intelligence. As Clive Thompson argues in his book *Smarter Than You Think* (2013), "Digital tools aren't magical pixie dust that makes you smarter. The opposite is true: they give up the rewards only if you work hard and master them, just like the cognitive tools of previous generations" (p. 73). It is the idea of a *mindful use* of technology that we find most important as adult readers who understand the influence that tools have on us as we make meaning of texts. In fact, as we have gathered data for this book, both on our own reading practices as well as on the reading habits of adolescents, we have redefined for ourselves the idea of "digital" reading. Digital tools, used mindfully, enable connections. Digital reading is connected reading.

We explore this view and specifically the concept of Connected Reading further in Chapter 2, but it is within this broader context that we view reading in a digital age. Simply put, Connected Reading is a model that situates individual readers within a broader reading community and acknowledges a variety of textual forms, both digital and print. These connections have always been present, especially for avid readers who visit libraries, join book clubs, shop at used bookstores, and talk about their latest reads with anyone who will listen. Yet the technology we now have both for reading and for connecting with others shows us, as parents, teacher educators, and researchers, that something is different. In short, we see that

readers are *connected* to one another in increasingly useful ways and that they make meaning of what they read in various ways through their connections.

Though we know many readers who still enjoy the feel of a book in their hands, who complain about eyestrain from devices, and who do not like to read on-screen, we recognize that this is a key part of our reading futures. Or, as the National Writing Project argues, "Quite simply, *digital* is" (2010, p. ix). Because *digital* now defines spaces in which adolescent readers work on a daily basis, we wondered about *what*, *why*, and *how* teens read in their digital lives outside of school.

The Importance of "Digital"

Before we underscore the importance of digital forms of text, we view reading in the twenty-first century not as an either/or, but instead a both/and; we need and want students to read traditional print texts as well as digital texts. We are concerned, however, that the *digital* gets lost in discussions of reform, policy, and implementation. And, if we are being totally honest about it, we wonder if teaching students to read digital texts, specifically, has been marginalized in classroom instruction, too. Even our colleagues who use technology regularly and for purposeful learning in their classrooms have told us that, sadly, they don't spend much time teaching the skills needed for students to comprehend digital texts. For these reasons, we focus our examination of the NCTE policy research brief *Reading Instruction for* All *Students* on reading *digitally* and consider what the brief means for instruction when read from that lens.

A quick note before we dig into the policy statement itself. As collaborators who live in different parts of the country, we rely on digital tools to allow us to read, think, and write together. Our own literacy practices help us to understand the power of digital tools for connecting individuals, and throughout this book we share examples of our practices. Figure 1.2 is a screenshot of our annotation of the NCTE policy statement. It is interesting to note how this particular text came to us and—as one example of how we employ principles of Connected Reading—how we came to make meaning from it.

Like many of you reading this book, we are members of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and we first encountered this policy statement in print in the organization's September 2012 *Council Chronicle* magazine. At about the same time, we received NCTE's INBOX email newsletter with a link to the PDF. Thus, we had an initial encounter with the text, both in print and on screen. Then our relationship with the document changed. In November 2012, Cathy Fleischer, our editor, handed each of us a printed copy of the statement at our initial, exploratory meeting for this book. Having that photocopy in front of us

Figure 1.2. Our annotations of the NCTE policy research brief via Crocodoc.
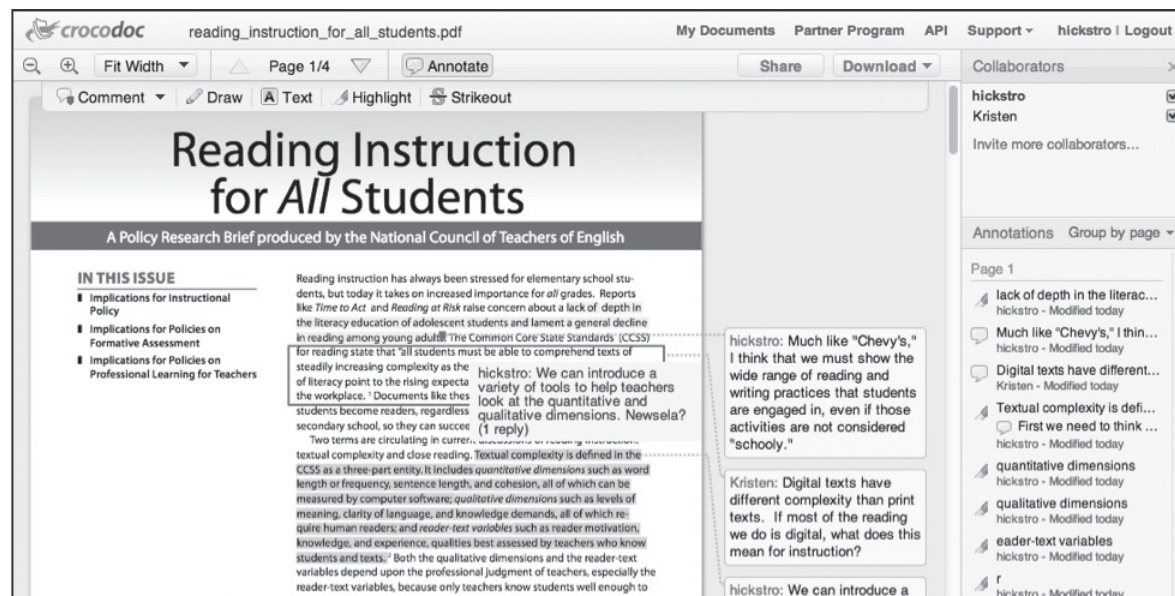
was helpful for the moment, and we each made some notes on our copies, yet we quickly turned our reading digital.

Again, because we are distant collaborators (though we admit that, even if we were in closer geographic proximity, we would choose to use this tool for a variety of reasons), we moved a version of the policy statement onto Crocodoc (http://personal.crocodoc.com). We share Figure 1.2 to demonstrate this one tool used for our shared reading to make a more powerful point: reading need not be isolating. We used Crocodoc both to add personal annotations as well as to engage in dialogue around the policy statement. Crocodoc was not the only tool we could have chosen, of course, but for this particular task, at that particular moment, it allowed us to be connected readers in many useful ways.

The National Writing Project (2010) made this point in relation to digital writing, an act of production that refers to "*compositions created with, and often times for reading or viewing on, a computer or other device that is connected to the Internet*" (p. 7, emphasis in original). Likewise, reading can be an act of collaboration. Readers frequently discuss reading when in face-to-face conversation with one another, often as a pre-, during-, or postreading act. Why not work online throughout the process? Collaboration can happen across distance and time in a way that was not possible before the introduction of digital tools, highlighting the social, connected aspects of reading. This is what Figure 1.2 represents: a shared, collaborative read-

ing experience that could not have happened without digital tools. This is the heart of Connected Reading and what we hope you will carry with you from this book into your classroom.

We now invite you to read, or perhaps reread, NCTE's policy research brief *Reading Instruction for* All *Students*, included at the front of this book (and hereafter occasionally cited as *RIAS*; all page citations map to the brief's page numbers in this book). Then we share our thinking about key components of the statement and how these ideas inform the rest of the book.

Our Reading of *Reading Instruction for* All *Students*

> Preparing students to read complex texts effectively is one of the most important and most challenging responsibilities of schools. With research-based support from policymakers and administration, teachers can enable students at all grade levels to comprehend, draw evidence from, and compare across a wide variety of complex texts. (*RIAS*, p. xiv)

The final words of the policy statement articulate what Kristen's mentor, Michael W. Smith, would call "the heart of the matter." As one of the foundational pillars of literacy, reading instruction must focus on multiple goals: developing comprehension, analysis, and comparative skills. The introduction to the document suggests that building these skills is more important than ever before in order for students to "succeed in the information age" (p. xi). We agree, and we offer here our interpretation of the brief through the exploration of six key ideas: (1) text complexity, (2) student readers, (3) close reading, (4) implications for instructional policies, (5) implications for policies on formative assessment, and (6) implications for professional learning for teachers. Though we acknowledge that multiple conversations may evolve from readings of this brief, we narrow our analysis to what the statement means when we think about *digital* reading, or reading text on a screen.

Component 1: Text Complexity

"Text complexity" is a popular phrase that may be echoed in staff development sessions and conversations about policy without much consideration for what the term actually means. The CCSS define *text complexity* in three parts: (1) qualitative dimensions, (2) quantitative dimensions, and (3) reader and task considerations (CCSS Initiative, 2010, Appendix A, p. 4). As we consider text complexity, we focus on the first two of these components in order to make clear the distinction between digital and print versions of texts and to explicitly counter recent interpretations of textual complexity under the CCSS that have omitted differences among students

and the various contexts of readers. We discuss students as readers as a separate component of the policy brief.

As teachers of English who believe that reading is an active process by which individual readers make meaning through their interactions with a text and other readers, we have been somewhat baffled by suggestions that students read in terms of "Lexile levels" and that Lexile levels are a fail-safe indication of text complexity. The idea that *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, as great a book as it is, has more text complexity than a book by Ray Bradbury is, well, ridiculous (Miller, 2012). This argument about Lexile levels is not new (see, for example, Krashen, 2002), yet the overwhelming perception of text complexity as described by advocates for the CCSS is based in quantitative measures of a text. The policy brief helps us to understand why there has been this shift in view away from decades of research that supports other forms of reading assessment beyond Lexile levels.

As we read the policy statement and delineate between *quantitative* and *qualitative* dimensions of the text, we wonder how the authors of the CCSS considered (or, more likely, failed to consider) digital texts when defining *text complexity*, and we fear that interpretations of the standards have negated screen-based texts that provide possibilities for interaction that lead to multiple paths for a reader. How are embedded videos measured in terms of Lexile levels? When a student moves from one webpage to another via a hyperlink, what quantitative dimensions should be measured? Can we measure multimodal texts in the same ways we measure print-based texts? Probably not, because only the reader knows the path that he or she will take, and that is a path constructed during the reading process. We cannot prepare multiple-choice tests for authentic digital reading.

RIAS reminds us that both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of a text are important. We believe that quantitative dimensions of textual complexity, as measured by Lexiles (flawed as they are), speak more to individual texts that are read in a linear fashion. Because of the networked links embedded in many digital texts, digital reading is rarely linear reading, and the choices a reader makes may require knowledge demands beyond those needed to comprehend print texts. For digital texts, qualitative dimensions—including links to additional content and multimedia embedded in the original text—are even more important to comprehension, and thus we need to complicate what is meant by the words *text complexity*, particularly those commonly used quantitative measures.

Component 2: Student Readers

The policy statement makes it clear that student readers vary in their experiences, knowledge, motivation, and text expertise. These youth read a variety of texts—from linear, print books to multimodal and hypertexts—that span disciplines and

engage their interests. In many ways, the policy statement stands in stark contrast to the CCSS in which teen readers, in particular, are pigeon-holed. Even though the CCSS focus on reading a variety of texts across disciplines, the list of canonical texts in the CCSS appendix limits the types of literature that might be read. By neglecting interest-driven reading, a powerful motivator for adolescents, and especially by forgoing significant conversation about reading done in digital spaces, the writers of the CCSS have made some assumptions about adolescents in a digital age, and we believe *what* and *how* teens read in digital venues is an area of research that has been neglected.

Component 3: Close Reading

Again, definitions of *close reading* vary. Lehman and Roberts (2014), for instance, describe close reading as "careful meditation on texts" (p. 3) and remind us of the roots of close reading. They argue that "reading closely, then, was the process of trying to tune out everything else while looking at the style, words, meter, structure, and so on, of a piece of writing—letting the text itself shine through" (p. 2). While paying particular attention to the text, and highlighting this one aspect of New Criticism as a literary theory, close reading in this sense suggests that we can draw meaning from the words on the page without making connections to other texts or our own prior knowledge.

Timothy Shanahan describes it this way:

> Close reading requires a substantial emphasis on readers figuring out a high quality text. This "figuring out" is accomplished primarily by reading and discussing the text (as opposed to being told about the text by a teacher or being informed about it through some textbook commentary). Because challenging texts do not give up their meanings easily, it is essential that readers re-read such texts (not all texts are worth close reading). (Shanahan, 2012)

Additional definitions of *close reading* include "disciplined reading . . . with a view to deeper understanding" (Brummett, 2009, p. 9) and attending closely to the interactions among personal thoughts, the responses of other readers, and "close attention to the text" (Beers & Probst, 2012, p. 37). The policy brief explains that the term itself is "highly contested" (*RIAS*, p. xii), yet we recognize that *close reading* has entered our instructional lexicon, and we must address it in productive and responsible ways.

The policy statement offers this advice: "Close reading has been proposed as *the* way to help students become effective readers of complex texts, and it can be useful, especially *when used alongside other approaches*" (*RIAS*, p. xii, emphasis added). We have highlighted words in this excerpt from the policy statement that capture

both the essence of the problem of close reading in conversations about reading instruction, as well as the solution to this problem that is presented by the brief. Educational debates often present themselves as either/or dichotomies: whole language vs. phonics; fiction vs. nonfiction; writing across the curriculum vs. writing in disciplines. As we have learned time and again, these debates are rarely either/or, and answers are most often contextualized, lying somewhere on a continuum.

The research brief points out that close reading has—at least in popular discourse—become *the* answer to questions about how to teach students to read complex texts. But as with all instruction, there is not one correct answer. Rather, the policy statement reminds us that close reading is one of many tools teachers can use to help students improve their comprehension, analysis, and comparative skills.

We find this reminder particularly important when considering digital texts. If, as the brief states, "close reading is aligned with the text-based approach" to reading and "it encourages students to see meaning as one right answer to be extracted from the text" (*RIAS*, p. xii), we wonder how we *could* do a close read on a digital, hyperlinked text. In some ways, many digital texts continue infinitely, each one connected to another through a vast network of links. These kinds of texts invite individual exploration. Readers follow their own paths. Furthermore, the vast amount of linked text requires skills of sifting and sorting of information simply to decide where and when a close reading is required. Are these skills part of a close reading process? Is participation—including reading, sharing, and connecting—required in order to closely read digital texts?

Conversations about close reading make us uncomfortable because they often focus solely on print-based, linear texts. As the authors of the brief suggest, "By itself, then, close reading cannot ensure that students will develop deep understandings of what they read" (*RIAS*, p. xii), particularly, we would suggest, when they read digital texts.

Component 4: Implications for Instructional Policies

In our conversations with fellow teachers, we often see a divide between print and digital literacy, and we personally believe the CCSS do not go far enough to transform understandings of literacy to align with the real demands of college and the workplace today. However, as we consider the list of instructional strategies in the policy statement, we are encouraged. NCTE, as it always has, continues to push toward more engaging, inclusive, and interpretive methods of teaching. We summarize their suggested strategies here:

- Recognize the role of motivation
- Engage in performative response
- Read multiple texts
- Foster engagement
- Encourage choice
- Demonstrate differences in digital and visual texts
- Connect reading and writing
- Develop meaningful discussion

Rather than simply imparting the meaning of a text on students, the strategies here confirm what decades of research have shown about the moves that effective teachers of reading make for and with their students. As the word cloud in Figure 1.3 shows, all the language from the policy statement's bullet points that focus on instructional strategies add up to indicate that students are at the center of instruction.

We also see embedded in these points a number of references to Connected Reading of digital texts that acknowledge the shift society has made. And when shown in such a stark manner, we see great potential for teaching Connected Reading practices and for engaging all readers using digital tools.

Figure 1.3. Word cloud of implications for instructional practice from NCTE's policy research brief *Reading Instruction for* All *Students* (created with Wordle.net).

Component 5: Implications for Policies on Formative Assessment

By the time this book is published, it is most likely that the PARCC and SBAC assessments will have become the default standardized tests in your state; even if your state is not participating in the CCSS adoption, your students will still likely be taking their reading tests on a computer.

We want to be clear here. From what we have seen of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) model assessments, these are not tests of digital reading, at least not as we define digital, Connected Reading in this book. Nor are these tests representative of formative assessment of reading as it is defined in the NCTE policy research brief. The brief makes clear that formative assessment focuses on process and on identifying strengths and areas for improvement of individual novice readers. Tracking Lexile levels and comparing reading scores to an arbitrary line of proficiency do little to connect assessment and instruction, a link important for both formative assessment and the development of readers. Still, we believe that digital tools have potential to make formative assessments possible by providing immediate feedback to readers and teachers. We discuss many of these tools in this book and demonstrate how to use these tools in ways to support Connected Reading, not just proficiency testing.

Component 6: Implications for Professional Learning for Teachers

The policy brief closes with implications for professional learning that highlight the need to focus on research-based practices, as compared to policy-driven reactions. The suggestions underscore the importance of context in reading. We agree that context is always important; we argue that digital contexts must be included in these conversations. This book is our attempt to expand the professional conversation about reading instruction to include the reading of digital texts. To meet students where they are and to help them become critical readers of various kinds of texts, both print and digital, teachers must understand the out-of-school reading practices in which their students engage. We cannot assume that adolescents today are "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001) who naturally gain close reading skills on a screen. Most of the teachers with whom we have worked would agree: a smartphone does not a smart reader make. We need to understand *what* it means to read digitally, *how* students read, and *why* they choose the digital texts they do in order to help them develop their comprehension, analytic, and comparative skills.

Our Approach in This Book

As you can see, our reading of the policy brief raises questions for us, and we come to this task with a broad interest in teaching reading. We are, after all, teachers of

English, lovers of fiction and nonfiction, poetry and prose. Both of us find pleasure in reading to our own children and in teaching teachers how to better teach literacy practices to their students. We are also writers who care deeply about the connections between reading and writing, particularly in a digital age.

Additionally, we approach our questions as qualitative researchers, and over the past year we have drawn on appropriate methodological tools and dispositions to explore the digital reading practices of adolescents. We have worked closely with teachers whose classrooms (grades 7–12) are highlighted throughout this book. We have each taught lessons on digital reading, described in Chapters 5 and 6, in these classrooms. We have collected more than 800 responses to a survey that we created on digital reading habits, and we have interviewed twenty-three adolescents about their reading practices.

Our field research has generated lots of data, and the stories you will read in this book are our best attempt to paint an accurate picture of what is really happening with teachers and students in a variety of contexts. We provide a more detailed description of our research method in Appendix A. But it is important to articulate our stance related to technology—and specifically teens' access to digital devices and the Internet—before we dive into the chapters. We modeled our Digital Reading Survey (see Appendix B) on the "Teen Parent Survey on Writing" used by the Pew Internet & American Life Project for their work related to *Writing, Technology and Teens* (Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008). The Pew survey asked questions about the kinds of devices that teens possessed five years ago, including dial-up modems. Pew, of course, has updated its surveys and results since then, and we report their updated data, as well as our own, in Table 1.1 in the following section.

Do My Students Have Access to the Internet and Devices?

We have both worked with teachers in a variety of contexts, especially in conferences and workshops, and we are often reminded of their concerns about students' access to technology, both inside and outside of school. In fact, access to technology is one of the biggest "yeah, but . . ." reasons we hear for teachers being unable to implement digital literacies into their classrooms. We have argued recently that, as a profession, we need to move beyond these hesitancies to consider the implications (and consequences) of *not* teaching specific skills of digital writing and digital reading (Hicks & Turner, 2013). We recognize that, for some students, the digital divide is still very real. Yet, as Pew Internet data have demonstrated and our research confirms, a vast majority of students do indeed have access in some way. Throughout this book, we highlight the voices of individuals, as well as shared statistics of the larger group that we surveyed.

We distributed an electronic survey to middle and high school students in the states of California, Michigan, New Jersey, and New York. We admit we did not collect a randomized, representative sample in the statistical sense since we were working with students in the classrooms of teachers we knew. In this sense, we see the limitation of our study. Still, we want to make clear that these students come from a variety of schools and a variety of backgrounds: rural, suburban, urban; lower-, middle-, and upper-class incomes.

Of the 804 respondents to our survey, 76 percent say they use the Internet several times a day, and another 11 percent report using it about once a day. In total, 87 percent of the students use the Internet *every day*. The remaining 13 percent use it from one to five times a week. This Internet use is not surprising in light of the fact that 94 percent of students access it from a wireless or mobile device, which they, presumably, carry with them much of the time. In fact, these teenagers have many devices, as shown in Table 1.1.

Given the large number of students who report that they own wireless handheld devices, we were interested in the breakdown of these data, particularly for those students who do not access the Internet daily. Of the 13 percent who said they do not access the Internet daily, 69 percent said they access it the *most* at home, indicating that their homes do have either wireless or hardwire connections even if they are not using them daily. Also of that same 13 percent, 55 percent reported owning a smartphone. Of those who do not own a smartphone, 65 percent own a wireless handheld device.

Table 1.1. Device Ownership of Teenagers for Connected Reading Sample Compared to Previous Research from Pew Internet & American Life Project

	Connected Reading (data we collected from 2013: 804 teens)	**Pew Study** (data from 2012: 802 parents and 802 teens
Daily Internet Use	87%	95%
Mobile Phone	84%	78%
Smartphone	71%	37%
Internet-Enabled Handheld Device (e.g., iPod Touch)	71%	N/A
Laptop or Desktop at Home	77%	93%
e-Reader	21% dedicated e-reader 45% Internet enabled	N/A

To take a different look at these statistics, imagine that you have 100 students on your roster throughout the day. To begin, 87 of them can and do access the Internet daily on a variety of devices. Another 7, though they do not go online daily, own a smartphone and, while it isn't quite the same as having a laptop or tablet that allows them to see a larger screen, they do have access either through their cell provider or open wireless networks. (At this point, 94 total students have access.) Four more have a wireless-enabled device that can also be used on open wireless networks such those as at malls, restaurants, and libraries. Now we are at 98 total. The remaining 2 students, according to our data, access the Internet at someone else's home or from a public library. From our survey results, it appears as though all 100 of your students would have some kind of regular access to the Internet, even if it is not on a daily basis at home.

We know there are outliers to these data and that for some students access is an issue. But now that we can report with our own data that the Pew numbers cited in Table 1.1 are accurate, we feel that teachers' concerns that they "can't expect students to do work online" can be lessened, if not completely abated. Therefore, it bears repeating: more than two-thirds of our students have access to the Internet via mobile phone. Nearly nine out of ten report using the Internet at least once every day. We can and should expect students to use the Internet by teaching them the digital literacy skills necessary to use that access in smart, academically appropriate ways. So we approach this book with the belief that issues of access can—and must—be overcome. The data bear it out: students have access to the Internet. But does our mindset about teaching with the Internet align with the data? Teaching your students to be Connected Readers will help them make the case for why they should spend their time online engaging in texts and sharing their ideas with others.

Overview of the Book

Like all the books in the Principles in Practice imprint, the chapters here delve deeper into an NCTE policy statement. In particular, we aim to accomplish at least three goals as we examine *Reading Instruction for* All *Students*.

1. To further unpack the policy statement by providing real examples of what teachers are teaching and students are doing as readers
2. To explore the idea of digital reading and to offer a model of Connected Reading that has developed from our analysis of what readers in digital contexts do
3. To provide, as accurately as possible, a series of snapshots of who adolescent readers are and how they select and respond to texts, both in school and out, as reading practices shift to more and more digital devices

We begin in Chapter 2 by rethinking reading in a digital age. We share our model of Connected Reading and outline how other theory and research contribute to our thinking.

In Chapter 3, we offer reflections on our own reading practices, coupled with profiles of a few of the students we interviewed. Through these glimpses into readers' worlds, we articulate (1) the kinds of digital texts that readers encounter and (2) the practices that readers of digital texts engage with.

Chapter 4 further explores the model of Connected Reading through the readers in our study. Reporting data from both the interviews and the survey, we paint a portrait of adolescent readers' complex reading practices as influenced by digital devices, as well as their relationship with print media.

As our research uncovered unequivocally, print texts still exist and still have value in our students' reading lives. In Chapter 5, however, we offer ideas for teachers to augment instruction of print texts using digital tools to develop Connected Readers. We highlight the work we did with teachers and their students over the last year, focusing specifically on using Connected Reading principles to support classroom instruction with print-based texts.

Chapter 6 looks closely at developing Connected Reading practices with digital texts, and again, we share lessons that we developed with teachers and taught to their students.

Chapter 7 reflects once again on the policy statement, considering implications for Connected Reading instruction and assessment.

Finally, in Chapter 8 we suggest that an inquiry stance is needed to fully realize and implement Connected Reading instruction.

Also, as we mention later in the book, you can find our companion wiki site containing additional resources and discussions available at http://connectedreading.wiki spaces.com (see Figure 1.4). If you are using a mobile device, you can scan this QR code and go directly to the wiki. In the writing of this book—even during final copyediting—we learned of new tools that would be useful for both readers and teachers alike. Our wiki showcases resources that become available even after the book has been printed.

We also want to make it clear that this book aims to offer a critical, careful look at the benefits and drawbacks of digital reading. We hear terms such as *digital natives*, *millennials*, and *screenagers*, and we wince just a little bit. These terms, as all stereotypes do, very much oversimplify an entire generation of students. Yes, as many surveys, including our own, demonstrate, the vast majority of these students have smartphones, tablets, and varying yet usually adequate Internet access. These readers are diverse, however, and they range in their engagement, their connected-

ness, and their digital reading practices. You, as their English teacher, are a key link to helping them comprehend, respond to, and critique digital texts, just as you have always been for print texts.

We do not buy into the dominant narratives circulated in the media about a literacy crisis, yet we do acknowledge that we have many kinds of readers in our classrooms, all of whom are wonderfully complicated adolescents, each with his or her own interests, needs, and, preferences for when, where, what, why, and how to read. You know these students too, and you understand that we must teach them how to read, not simply expect that they can read. While some excel, many do not, and our work is helping them become better readers. Similarly, some of our students are Connected Readers, and we appreciate what they have shared with us in this study. However, many are not, and we hope that this book offers you guidance as you begin teaching Connected Reading in your own classroom.

Figure 1.4. Homepage of the Connected Reading wiki.

"Digital tools, used mindfully, enable connections. Digital reading is connected reading."

As readers of all ages increasingly turn to the Internet and a variety of electronic devices for both informational and leisure reading, teachers need to reconsider not just *who* and *what* teens read but *where* and *how* they read as well. Having ready access to digital tools and texts doesn't mean that middle and high school students are automatically thoughtful, adept readers. So how can we help adolescents become critical readers in a digital age?

Using NCTE's policy research brief *Reading Instruction for* All *Students* as both guide and sounding board, experienced teacher-researchers Kristen Hawley Turner and Troy Hicks took their questions about adolescent reading practices to a dozen middle and high school classrooms. In this book, they report on their interviews and survey data from visits with hundreds of teens, which led to the development of their model of Connected Reading: "Digital tools, used mindfully, enable connections. Digital reading is connected reading." They argue that we must teach adolescents how to read digital texts effectively, not simply expect that teens can read them because they know how to use digital tools. Turner and Hicks offer practical tips by highlighting classroom practices that engage students in reading and thinking with both print and digital texts, thus encouraging reading instruction that reaches all students.

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Troy Hicks is an associate professor of English at Central Michigan University. A former middle school teacher, he has written numerous books on digital literacies and collaborates with K–12 colleagues to explore how they implement newer literacies in their classrooms.