Spring 5-6-2016

21st Century Literacy: Blending the English 12 Classroom

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21ST CENTURY LITERACY:
BLENDING THE ENGLISH 12 CLASSROOM

by

Natalie L. Nelson

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Literacy Education

Hamline University
St. Paul, Minnesota
May 2016

Primary Advisor: Stephanie Reid
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To my colleagues: Thank you for always challenging me to ask questions and determine what is best for my students. To my Capstone Committee: Thank you for never failing to push me to do my best in and out of the classroom. To my students: Thank you for your willingness to try new things in my classroom.
“The role of a creative leader is not to have all the ideas; it's to create a culture where everyone can have ideas and feel that they're valued.”

Sir Ken Robinson
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Changing the Learning Process

In the world of education, two words seem to encompass the 2010s: technology and engagement. Students are being given access to a wide variety of technology provided by their schools. As our students have more and more experiences with this technology, educators are also being asked to learn more about how to use digital content and devices and in their classrooms to simply use the technology, not to enhance the entire learning process through the use of tools technology based tools and methods. It is important to monitor the ways that technology can create a new approach to education; however, it needs to be through methods that work. Each day there are new technologies being created that aid and assist teachers in developing digital learners within and outside of their classroom walls. We can no longer say that our classroom is one room with four walls. Our classrooms also extend into a digital world, where iPads, smart phones, computers, and other devices are key tools being used by our students every day. These take our students into other “classrooms” across a city, state, country, or world. Technology is changing education in diverse ways. I will be investigating one of these ways.
In an effort to teach through the use of these tools, I have become a student of technology as well. Each day in my classroom, students are encountering technology that helps them develop their learning in a different way. I would consider myself a risk taker when it comes to using technology in my classroom. I’m willing to try anything once as long as it enhances the learning goals for that day. Since I am constantly engaging with my students in more digital ways, I also have started to investigate how these tools can expand my own classroom outside of the four walls on a daily basis. The answers are no longer waiting for my students when they come into my room each day - the answers are in a million other places. They just have to be guided in the right direction. My constant search for the right tools to fit the core learning activities has become a key part of my lesson planning each week.

Because it is important to me to identify practices that work best for my students and with the level of technology I use in my classroom, I have researched the question: *How can the use of formative and summative assessments be used to understand student achievement and learning within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended environment?*

Curriculum in the secondary classroom, especially in English Language Arts, is changing based on the needs of the students. Teachers are beginning to ask why it is valuable to change instruction methods in order to meet the growing demands placed upon teachers and students by both the state of Minnesota and the United States.

**My Secondary ELA Experience**

I’ve always been a fan of the English Language Arts classroom experience. This probably is based on the great experiences that I had growing up. I had some fantastic English teachers: they engaged, they motivated, they inspired, and they were always
creative in their delivery. Plus, they were fun classrooms to be in! My English teachers from sixth grade to twelfth grade showed me characters, new worlds, grammar, spelling, and writing that shaped many of foundations in the ELA pedagogy. Thinking back to all those years, technology was never a significant part of my experience with these teachers. I did a lot of creative fun projects and applied grammar, Shakespeare, writing, and reading in so many different ways but it was never based around a technology tool. I typed papers or designed presentations for class, but none of my technology interactions moved past PowerPoint or Microsoft Word. But it was never needed. The engagement was there and I was enjoying these fun creative classes.

This enjoyment came to a screeching halt when I took Advanced Writing my senior year. This particular class was small, only made up of about 12 students, and we were the “cream of the crop” when it came to English class. We had just finished a semester of Creative Writing which had challenged us to reach new levels in our personal writing. This new class, designed to focus on classic literature while focusing on novel-based writing, was a challenging one. I struggled through the novels and I struggled to keep up with the writing demands. Three page essays, typed in Microsoft Word, on a critical analysis of the main character Piggy in Lord of the Flies nearly suffocated any desire I had to be an English teacher. The red ink my teacher smeared across my papers was never ending! I never felt like I understood what was going on, and she never gave more explanation than using more red ink. I was one of a few in a relatively small class, but I was what I would now consider an at risk writer. I didn’t understand the basic concepts of interpreting literature and translating that into a paper.
As I remember that frustration, I realize a few problems with my situation. First, I had never had to write an essay of this nature before twelfth grade. Literary analysis was lost on me. My students now would tell me to go to Sparknotes and find some clues on what to write about. But in 2005, Sparknotes was not well-known to me or my peers. Second, I didn’t have the basic learning goals of what I was supposed to know laid out clearly. I had a lot of red ink and a number over another number on the back, but nothing was laid out of what I should know and how to do it. Third, I didn’t ask for help. I was too embarrassed. I was in the “cream of the crop” class! Who asks for help when they are supposed to be smart?

Focusing back on changing instruction methods, I find that my situation can give me a lot of direction when it comes to analyzing the need for change. My own situation gave me insight into some clear issues that continue to be seen in the classrooms at my school and others across the country: a lack of rigor when it comes to writing and reading, no clear learning goals for students or for teachers doing the grading, and a one-size-fits-all instructional method.

**Student Teaching Bares All**

Becoming an English teacher seemed to be a natural fit for me after high school. After taking all my coursework to prepare for education, I entered student teaching with a lot of understanding that was surface level but no real understanding of how the education world worked four years post-high school. I was placed in two larger school districts starting with my high school teaching experience. My cooperating teacher was a veteran teacher who was flustered by her students’ constant inappropriate use of technology (mainly cell phones) in the classroom. I was only in her class for four weeks,
but in that short amount of time, I learned a lot about high school students and what motivates their willingness to learn in school.

I first discovered I had a knack for incorporating technology into classroom instruction when I was in this placement. Students were reading a novel in class and my cooperating teacher was giving them worksheets to complete while we were reading. I had recently learned about blogs and how to use them in the classroom so I asked her if I could use this with a group of students. She had me set up a blog for one class that asked a question about the text. They had to respond to the question with a paragraph response using the novel as support. Students set up the blogs, creating a username and password that we had on file. We watched as they worked through the process, answered the question, encountered and problem-solved through the tech issues, and finally were able to view other students’ responses. For 2010, this was a pretty unique approach to teaching a novel. My cooperating teacher loved it so much she asked me to put together a binder on how to do this so she could share it and keep using it for the rest of the school year. I was honored and proud to say that I had left something behind.

As I moved into my second placement, a middle school with a nearing-retirement male teacher, I was faced with new challenges. Not only are middle school students more in need of engagement when faced with sitting in a desk for eight hours a day, but they are also deeply in love with telling and hearing stories. My cooperating teacher was a master story-teller. He had closets full of costumes, daily lessons that we never got to for the sake of the story, and voices of all ranges to make each story that more real. Needless to say, I couldn't compete with that. The students were in love with their teacher. It didn’t
matter that he had an overhead, files of transparencies, and almost nothing on his computer. He loved teaching and the kids loved being his students.

This middle level placement, a 10 week stretch, contained a new unit that my cooperating teacher was being forced to teach due to the district implementing more standards into the curriculum. The textbook called it Oral Tradition; the texts included fables, tall tales, short stories, poems, and history. I could tell that this guy was ready to tell the kids the stories but I wasn’t sure what would happen after that. We settled on a deal: he could start the unit, tell the stories, and use all the materials I came up with after I was done. He let me teach the stories, help the students with the understanding, and give the final test. I wasn’t able to use as much technology in this setting as I had been in the previous experience but I did learn some remarkable things about the level of thinking 8th graders can do. We got them thinking about cultures by thinking about their own - from suitcases, to guitar cases, to I Am From poems, the students reflected on their own cultures while hearing great examples from my cooperating teacher.

As we read the stories from the textbook, I gave students graphic organizers and helped them start shaping their own personal narratives. My cooperating teacher loved to share his personal narratives as examples. Together we were able to engage - without the use of too much technology - and move past simply filling out a worksheet by teaching students how to write their own stories. It was a valuable lesson for me: I considered myself good with technology but I learned that it’s not just about technology. The core of the instruction still has to be there and students still have to be engaged with the right lessons. By going more “old school” I was able to find the value in the traditional while including some of the new.
The Newbie

After student teaching, I waited anxiously until the last few weeks of August before I landed my first teaching position. The first year of teaching for anyone is always the biggest scramble - literally my lessons were a scramble of reading *The Scarlet Letter* and trying to keep the juniors and seniors from just reading the short version on Sparknotes. Survival is the name of the game during year one. I learned a great deal from a new resource: the Internet. Teachers were starting to post, blog, share, and create tools for others to use. I didn’t have to reinvent the wheel; I simply needed to find the right places to get the right ideas. This has been a lesson I’ve carried with me since those first months in my classroom.

As the first two years of my teaching progressed, I found myself in different settings but with many great colleagues. They were willing to collaborate, share new ideas, update old curriculum, and teach me the basics of how to teach lessons on reading and writing. In my first observations, I was encouraged to learn more about how to teach reading. I was pointed to the book *I Read It, But I Don’t Get It* by Chris Tovani. The teacher that shared it with me encouraged me to help my students move into critical thinking with a text. I was asking questions that were basic, mundane, lower level, and dry. She challenged me to think of new ways of asking questions, teaching the boring old novels, and getting even seniors interested in reading the novel without relying on me for full understanding.

In my next position, I was then asked to teach reading interventions. Again I was encouraged by a few great teachers to think deeper, use new tools, and engage readers in order to help them understand the text. In one case, I remember starting another class
blog with my eighth graders to help them dialogue about a holocaust unit we were studying. Questions were asked, students who didn’t usually talk were involved, and I was encouraged to keep using new ways to get adolescents to think about what they were reading. I made a sign for my room that I still have hanging today: Reading is Thinking (from Kelly Gallagher’s Readicide). I also began using these small tools as quick formative assessments to determine if they understood what we were reading with Anne Frank. This seemed to help me see each kid, not just the large corporate group.

Finding My Footing

In those first few years, I started to ask questions about the level of student learning that can come from the use of technology and using to meet individual needs within the classroom. My students were beginning to be overexposed to using technology for the sake of technology and underexposed to the critical thinking that I had begun to include in my teaching when presenting a new way of completing a task. In my Response to Intervention (RTI) sections, students worked on computers daily to accomplish higher rates in reading fluency and reading comprehension. However, higher assessment scores were not achieved as I was expecting. Rather, students began to dread using the computers in the way they were designed to be used by the program. They wanted to play games or try out new features. These actions caused me to ask why students were apt to turn to what adults might see as “useless” activities.

In my first attempt to create a response for this questioning, I began to work with a group of about six teachers to write a grant for 30 iPads and a cart for the use in our classrooms. This was a large grant that required a lot of money, rationale, and time. However, after an interview process we were awarded the $21,000+ money to work
towards achieving our goal of getting kids engaged with technology and problem solving using a more personal approach. I was only able to access the technology a few times and those times were not enough to answer any of my questions about how to combine my students meeting their goals and the technology effectively.

First and foremost, there was (and continues to be) a large resistance to change with teachers that have been teaching for many years. As a younger teacher, there have been numerous times where I have taken a backseat on using an educational idea or practice because I was told that this too will pass and something else will come around. One example comes to mind of working with a social studies teacher on a strategy called Reciprocal teaching (Palincsar, 1986). He was required to have me do a lesson in his room since I was the building reading coach. I worked hard to use his textbook and the lesson he was going to teach so students didn’t lose any content. However, on the day I taught the lesson, he sat at his desk and graded papers the entire time, sharing with me later that he didn’t think this would last and that history information didn’t really change that much. “Why use reciprocal teaching?” he told me. “It seems useless.” Being younger and not fully prepared for this challenge, I took a step back from trying to get him to use the strategies. I wasn’t using technology and I wasn’t totally changing his entire curriculum. But the newness of the idea and the threat of having to do more work was something he saw as too challenging. I respectfully decided that those teachers weren’t the people to collaborate with and that there were so many stronger, creative, and dedicated teachers who were willing to collaborate with me on this teaching strategy.
Where Is This Headed?

In my current district, I was faced with the challenge of bringing the English Language Arts eleventh and twelfth grade curriculum into the 21st century. The curriculum was 30 years old and no consistent instructional practices were being used. There were two iPad carts of 30 available for use only when someone else didn’t need them in a classroom. I was excited about the opportunity to revisit the engagement that the blogging had brought to the student I had while student teaching. After some encouragement from my principal and curriculum coordinator, I began using the technology as much as I could while also working with a colleague to rewrite the curriculum based on more current novels, standards, and teacher practice. I started trying to give quizzes online which were still only supplementing activities that I could have continued to do on paper. I had many questions on how to move beyond isolated technology activities and how to develop more meaningful encounters each day as students were reading, writing, and discussing ideas and concepts in my English classroom. Other colleagues were not as concerned with these questions, so I began my study of technology and learning integration as a personal one.

As I progressed through my second year of teaching in this district, I was able to learn more from a math colleague about what it means to “flip”, or alternate the instruction in a classroom, through the use of technology. Could this offer me a viable solution? The flipped classroom, or using videos for lecture instruction and class time for student work and assistance, was a relatively groundbreaking method of instruction for my rural district. I tried a few videos myself but struggled with transferring the idea of flipped math to English Language arts curriculum. It wasn’t as seamless and didn’t make
as much sense to me due to fewer equations to be solved and reading and analysis in ELA. As I looked around on the Internet, there wasn’t a lot of research related to using technology to enhance and align with English Language Arts curriculum. Much of the information I found was about how to use technology sporadically in the curriculum which did not lend well to the idea of using technology to enhance the curriculum.

In December of 2013, I decided to get some help by observing somebody else, somewhere else. I visited a different district for a Digital Learning Day. I traveled to a larger school district about 45 miles away. This district was comprised of 10 schools in a southern suburban area adjacent to the Twin Cities. I was able to hear from science, math, French, and music teachers who were using technology to streamline their curriculum, and I talked to students who were learning in classrooms that used technology daily. They focused much of their change in instruction around a model called SAMR which stands for Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition (Puentedura, 2009). Using this framework of technology integration to change student learning and teacher instructional practice was a key focus of the work these teachers were doing within their curriculum writing. Their learning goals were solid, filled with similar learning goals that I wanted but outlined clearly and precisely. My mindset was changed on the possibility of marrying technology and curriculum in a high school. Was it possible in my classroom? Is this model beneficial to student achievement? What I was seeing before me that day was proving students were learning and being heard but was this possible for one teacher in a different district in a different subject area?

My hesitation was based on what I knew about the slow nature for positive change in my district. Change was not highly accepted and 21st century skills or
literacies were not seen as a priority in this community. Test scores were the focus. The summative was the goal. So how could I use what I had (curriculum, resources, and knowledge) to include what I knew could work? The need for change in instructional method was important so I felt it was time to make the change: my curriculum could be enhanced and my students engaged through the use of specific and helpful technology.

**Student Learning and Technology**

My basis for this study is strongly centered on the major ideas in my research question: student learning. With the nature of my job and my previous position in Response to Intervention (RTI) and reading intervention, I have developed an understanding of the value student autonomy can play in learning in reading and writing. This started back when I first read Chris Tovani’s book and continued to grow as I began to use the intervention curriculum Read 180 (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015). Many of the research behind this program was based on student engagement in reading, making content relevant and helping students to break down barriers they had in their reading progress. I see a deficit in my district and past districts of professional development work in motivation within literacy and writing. I have never been trained in my professional setting on how to engage learners in my classroom or how to use this engagement to increase their interest or ability in reading or writing. All I have learned has come from self-study and graduate level class work. In the three separate teaching environments I have worked in, there has been a lot of administration encouragement to use the technology teachers and students are given but very little support or education on how to use the technology to teach, instruct, inform, and increase academic skills.
Instead of viewing literacy and technology as separate parts of my job, I made it my goal to combine both of these into one focus: how can reading instruction maintain its integrity while also using the vast number of new tools developing each day to engage my students in these reading activities? This past school year, I began investigating how the iPads that each student has can become a tool for them to investigate, create, understand, and develop new ideas that come from the literature they are reading. Due to this constant desire to combine these, I have had more authentic reading experiences within my classroom than in the past five years I have been teaching. I am excited to see what further investigation will bring on the subject of enhancing reading and writing through the use of digital technologies in the classroom.

**The Growing Demands of Technology**

Through continuous assessment of my students and their use of technology within reading or writing, I have discovered many gaps in how they have learned to use the technology to solve problems they don’t understand or further their own reading and writing skills. Instead of asking a question or find a tool to help them, they will switch to a game or simply start declaring “the iPads are stupid.” My current district gave all classroom teachers iPads and a Learning Management System (LMS), components that add new dynamics to teaching adolescent reading and writing. Teachers in my district were required to use the LMS, Schoology, while students have their own personal iPad Mini that travels with them everywhere so they could have access to Schoology anywhere. Through these new initiatives, we were also encouraged to work on creating learning goals for our students on a daily basis.
In order to balance the growing number of demands for my classroom instruction while also incorporating standards into the curriculum, I struggled to find the perfect type of student learning goals in which the outcomes are not the technology itself but a tool used in order to accomplish higher levels of problem solving and literacy. I also struggled to balance the integration of student success and technology. With less state funding per year in my district this upcoming school year, I have inadvertently been asked to turn to the use of technology to help balance higher student to teacher ratios. This fall I had 60 students enrolled in my English 12 course with two sections of around 30 students in each. Because I had larger class sizes I had less time for each individual student and more demands on my instruction unless I started thinking outside the box.

In addition to planning and grading for that many students, I am also a part of a district where we have approximately ten different initiatives running simultaneously from standards-based grading to RTI to an enhanced learning initiative through the use of iPads. These create less time in my day with more tasks to accomplish. In order to give each student the attention he/she needs, I hope to begin working on how to use technology to help my given course load situation. This in turn will allow for more students to achieve the set out goals for the course.

Based on all of my experiences, both personal and professionally, I have concluded that my classroom has changed since I was once a student. Kids are in need of the same skills they once needed but they also need to know how live in the 21st century. By keeping my core instruction focused on important reading and writing goals and including technology as a tool, not the outcome, I used a blended learning format in my classroom. It included my skill set of using technology in the classroom, helped my
students use their own engagement to motivate their learning, and created a classroom of goal oriented collaboration for all learners even in a large setting. This model will benefit my instruction by keeping me focused on the essential outcomes and the learning goals while also benefitting my students by keeping them focused and informed on their skill progress in reading, writing, and 21st century skills.

Summary

In chapter one I have discussed my concerns centered on technology driving the curriculum in my school rather than the curriculum using technology as a tool to personalize learning. I have addressed my professional path of asking questions about technology and how it can change our classrooms in not only my school but other schools. Based on many factors, events, and people, I am asking the following active research question: How can the use of formative and summative assessments be used to understand student achievement and learning within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended environment? I have researched how educators can be using certain blended learning strategies and technology to help students understand their own learning outcomes, thus seeking to determine if this provides a more personalized learning opportunity.

In the next chapter, I identify what the research shows about blended learning. I also address how to design curriculum with technology as a tool to address certain gaps in the current classroom structure including 21st century literacies and student personalization. In addition, I investigate how reading and writing can become key student learning goals through the use of the SAMR model (Puentedura, 2009). Chapter three presents the methodology used in my curriculum writing and implementation of a
blended learning unit focused on formative and summative assessments to measure achievement within this learning environment. Chapter four presents the elements collected within the unit of study along with a summary of my research and findings from the four students within the unit. Chapter five presents final reflections, limitations, and ways to continue developing blended learning for students in my school.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Looking back at where I came from in my reading and writing journey, I shared the struggle it took to get the help that I needed and become the writer that I wanted to be. I had very little information available for my own use (mostly just a textbook) when it came to doing research or finding good examples online. As I progressed in my career, I discovered that more and more information was available for me to use in my teaching and for my students to use to help each other understand a text or improve a piece of writing. I didn’t have access to much immediate feedback when I was in high school: my teacher took my printed essay from me and gave it back in about two weeks. Now, my students can see me making comments on their papers in real time through editing tools online. My teacher didn’t have a standard for my work and just gave me a number. Now students have access to feedback from people across the world that tells them if something is “liked” or isn’t really the highest quality. My personal classroom instruction experience should always shape my current classroom instruction experiences in ways that can benefit students with more access to information, technology, assistance, and feedback than I ever did.
For my future classroom, I desired writing for classroom work to be as engaging and powerful as the feedback my students get online on their own personal writing. I set standard expectations for my students on what they should be able to do by the time they leave my classroom, so I set standard expectations for their understanding of a novel and ability to dig meaning from a text. I wanted my students to take control of their learning in real and meaningful ways; therefore, I made the outcomes clear and helped them understand the end goals. These pieces all fit together to help me answer my research question: *how can the use of formative and summative assessments be used to understand student achievement and learning within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended environment?*

This chapter is dedicated to research that enables me to answer my capstone question. The first major section explores what traditional classroom instruction looks like and how blended learning is a design effective for the 21st century classroom, including the use of formative and summative assessments. The second major section explains how motivation can help adolescent literacy, digital literacies and how to support students using them, and what writing looks like in 21st century instruction. The third and final major section describes the curriculum design for this unit of study which includes a discussion on differentiation and personalization, how to encourage student goal setting, core curriculum concepts such as formative and summative assessments and teaching practices, along with the design of instruction.

**The Need for Blended Learning**

It is important to first establish the need for blended learning at the secondary level. The current model of education is archaic, based on a system created to
push students through grade levels in a factory-designed method (Robinson, 2011). This needs to change provided the technologies we are given today and the ways that students are communicating with each other on a daily basis. The classroom can no longer be used in the traditional “drill and kill” or “lecture-based” instructional design that it has been throughout the 20th century. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of the students that live in our ever changing world, we must address why the classroom needs significant reshaping.

The traditional classroom and the need for change. For as long as I was in high school and have been teaching high school, students operate in a very singular model throughout their four years there. All learning is driven by the instructor and specific instructions are shown on homework or worksheets that are usually handed out in class via paper. Students attend several core classes where one definition of mastery is determined (Teach for America, 2009). The instructor acts as the information giver and the students act as the information receivers. They must then show what they have learned on one final assessment before the teacher moves on to the next text. Letter grades are given depending on how well the student knew, retained, or showed the information to his/her instructor. The instruction methods have typically stayed the same for students in these classrooms.

English Language Arts instruction at the secondary level requires high levels of critical thinking and analysis through the use of reading materials and writing standards (Gallagher, 2015). Students should be able to read multiple levels of texts in a variety of forms and analyze themes, main ideas, vocabulary, and structure. Students should also be able to write a variety of narratives, informational, and argumentative essays that address
many content types and incorporate readings of both fiction and nonfiction (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2015). Due to this high level of critical thinking and writing, students need more help meeting these standards. The traditional classroom requires a change in approach in order to enhance student learning and engage the learner in higher level thinking.

To begin researching an alternative learning option for students in the 21st century classroom setting, it is important to understand why a new model is needed. One study that has emphasized the current state of student learning in high schools within the United States was done by Douglas Fischer (2009). Fischer’s published work “The Use of Instructional Time in the Typical High School Classroom” reveals that the work completed in a classroom over the course of a day is not meeting the needs of current students. The study was conducted in a suburban school with 1500 students. They attend a school with a five period schedule, are mostly Caucasian, and are from lower and middle class families. Fifteen teachers were observed while shadowing three 10th grade students throughout their day for a total of 2,475 instructional minutes. His study revealed the following amount of time is used (p. 171): Listening happened 48% (1188 minutes) via lecture or film or an average of 26.4 minutes per class per day. Waiting for the next task or activity took 17% (420 minutes). Whole Class Discussion was present for 13% (315 minutes). Independent work time was given for 7% (174 minutes) with math being the classroom with the highest amount of time given for work (15 minutes on average). Small group work consisted of 7% (168 minutes) with reading (6% or 152 minutes) and writing (2% or 58 minutes) taking up the least amount of time. Writing was happening for only 6.5 minutes per an entire school day.
This data provides a much-needed picture of the traditional classroom being used in the 21st century. Students are doing very little with their learning almost half of the class period. No interaction is used by students or teacher. This provides strong evidence that students are less engaged in the curriculum due to the need to simply listen, not engage with the curriculum the teacher is using. Other best practice methods, such as formative assessment (Black and Wiliam, 1998), or small checks to gather evidence for learning, should be used frequently in a classroom. Fischer’s (2009) data shows that formative assessment is being used rarely and the teacher may not have an accurate picture of what the students understand. The need for a change is apparent: students are not showing their understanding of large masses of content but rather being asked to memorize and regurgitate.

Fischer (2009) also observed that even less time was being used for instruction since teachers were not teaching from the start-of-class bell to the end-of-class bell. In a classroom with 50 minute instruction slots, teachers are only using about 45 minutes of that time if they aren’t using every minute they are given. Fischer also noted a strong absence of comprehension from students in the classes observed “as noted in several studies of student engagement, opportunities for students to collaborate, whether in cooperative groups or otherwise, provide learners with motivation, purpose, increased attention to tasks, and oral language development” (p. 174). This reveals that students are not being asked to engage with the instruction provided. Teachers are simply providing the information but asking their students to do very little with that information. Fisher adds that teachers need to fine-tune the instruction they given and keep their students
accountable for the information in a variety of ways. This will lead to a more engaged classroom with higher levels of thinking and understanding.

Fischer (2009) pointed to a need for change within the educational system in order to regain student engagement and encourage critical thinking throughout all classes. Fisher’s study reveals those gaps and provides room to reflect on options that would increase the number of minutes per day that are spent working on areas where students are increasing their learning and the rigor of those standards.

However, this doesn’t mean everything is wrong in a traditional classroom. Teachers can combine solid instructional methods with new capabilities of technology to provide more authentic student learning. This does mean change is needed in the traditional classroom in order to provide more learning for our students. Teachers should not abandon all instructional methods, but it is essential that they begin including new methods that provide them with information on every learner in order for all learners to find success. Best practices that need to be included in classrooms but with new methods of use are formative assessment, summative assessment, the use of learning goals, and writer’s workshop instruction. These practices will be investigated further in future sections of this research chapter.

**Looking to the future: re-envisioning the classroom.** The classroom needs to look different because our students are facing a different post-secondary future than previous generations. Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, stated: “Our schools must prepare all students for college and careers—and do far more to personalize instruction and employ the smart use of technology” (Schorr & McGriff, 2012, p. 37). This example shows that increased use of technology in purposeful ways can show student learning and
change the way teachers interact with the students in their classrooms. Technology is changing the way the workforce looks in the 21st century. Therefore, it is important that we prepare our students for work with and affected by technology.

Changes in classrooms can benefit many key players in the instructional programming we currently see: students, parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, administration, and communities (Schorr & McGriff, 2012, p. 38). These stakeholders in education are all impacted by the students that graduate from a local school district. Many schools in the United States are choosing to address the need for restructuring of the traditional classroom.

One demand that traditional classrooms are not meeting is that of digging deeper into a text to find more meaning. Students cannot simply be given answers by an instructor. It’s too easy to find basic information on the Internet now. Instead a teacher needs to be leading students to new ways to develop meaning from a text: a 21st century skill of critical thinking (Partnership, 2015). One method of doing this is through transmediation, or how to understand a concept and then analyze, synthesize, or evaluate the content (McCormick, 2011). This method of instruction can help students bridge the gap between the written words in a novel and what it means through the use of visualization and analysis. Simply filling in the blanks on a worksheet or filling in a bubble for an answer will not get students the critical thinking skills they need for the higher level thinking needed in 21st century jobs. McCormick shares that this transmediation can create new mediums for students to understand the material and “the relationship between the part and the whole” (p. 587). By creating new ways of viewing a text, students can see how one piece connects to another and understand the larger picture
which will in turn help them to engage with the larger ideas being presented in the text. Using this concept could transform classrooms into places of high engagement and high levels of learning.

**Blended learning and design.** The classroom design that is being researched as an alternative for 21st century learners is *blended learning*. According to the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) blended learning is instruction that “combines online delivery of educational content with the best features of classroom interaction and live instruction to personalize learning, allow thoughtful reflection, and differentiate instruction from student to student across a diverse group of learners” (Watson, 2008, p. 2). In other words, this learning model and reshape classrooms based on the needs of the student and involve them more in their own educational journey. This new approach to student instructional delivery is a combination of best practices within education and provides more information on learning to both the teacher and the student.

A definition of blended learning must also address the change in pacing and the timing of lesson delivery. According to the Innosight Institute (2012) blended learning is “a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home” (Staker & Horn, p. 3). Students in a blended learning classroom are building learner autonomy by being asked to do work on their own and manage their time while not at school; however, they are not simply asked to do this without support. The teacher becomes the facilitator, the guide, and the tutor for all students as they engage with the
material. As the specialist, the teacher knows how to help when a student gets stuck or manage the rate of instruction based on a student’s progress.

The Innosight Institute (2012), a nonprofit research foundation, also outlined four models of blended learning that vary the instructional approach as seen in Figure 2.1. These definitions are adapted from the Christensen Institute’s website, a partner with Innosight.

Figure 2.1: Four Models of Blended Learning

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In the Rotation model, students can attend stations, labs, flipped or individual rotations. Stations and labs operate in a similar pattern with students visiting a variety of new learning opportunities throughout a lesson. The flipped lessons occur with direction from the teacher with some work online and most work done during the class period. Individual rotation helps students work through a series of lessons in which they are being asked to show what they can do on their own.
In the Flex model, students are provided opportunities to be flexible with the learning environment. Some time is spent in the classroom while some time is also spent in a learning location of the student’s choice. This works for scheduled time but also gives students time to work on their own agenda items. The schedule is created by the student and then they complete the course individually.
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The Self-blended model, sometimes also known as a la carte, gives students the choice of when to visit with the teacher and when to work independently. The course is provided online or in a classroom setting but tutoring and instruction one-on-one is given when the student reaches independent learning points in the curriculum.

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In the Enriched-virtual model, students work mainly online but are required to meet with instructors at certain points whether as a whole class
or in a smaller group setting. Students can complete their work independently in a different setting. Students do not meet with a teacher every weekday; however, instructor meetings are not self scheduled and are required.

http://www.christenseninstitute.org/blended-learning-definitions-and-models/

As seen in each of these descriptions, each model has a unique structure that can work for different age levels or different schools. These models differ from the traditional model that is frequently used in 21st century classrooms because they keep frequent formative assessment at the forefront of every lesson while keeping the student and the teacher informed on student progress several times during each lesson. The lessons are given in a variety of ways instead of a one-stop-shop approach.

One quality that each model has in common is the fact that all four models maintain an online classroom (or an LMS) that is monitored by a teacher. A core curriculum is used to determine student proficiency and what learning goals they are meeting, whether this is outlined by the teacher face-to-face or placed on the online component for a student to watch, listen, or read (Innosight Institute, 2012, p. 5). Traditional classroom instructional lessons can be used throughout the change to a more 21st century model of learning. Students are still learning important information but what they do with it is changed.

Blended learning requires several key characteristics that may shift the way students are attending, learning, or participating in the classroom environment. NACOL
(2008) concurs by defining blended learning as the fundamental redesign of the instructional model with the following characteristics no matter the model: shift from lecture to student-centered instruction, increased interaction between students to each other, teacher, content, and outside resources, and integrated formative and summative assessments (Watson, p. 5).

Although formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998) has been a concept studied for many years, this traditional classroom instructional strategy can be redesigned through blended learning and the use of technology. Formative assessment is “a systematic process to continuously gather evidence about learning” (Heritage, 2007, p. 141). Teachers gather data consistently using student work to show whether they are grasping the concept being taught or struggling. This in turn shapes the instruction given to the student, the rate at which the student progresses, and have ownership over the learning outcomes (Heritage, p. 141). Student progress is improved through formative assessment use. Pellegrino and Quellmalz (2010) emphasize that formative assessment not only can help teachers monitor and improve progress, it can also help to give immediate feedback for students who need it the most.

Technology can play a huge role in the redesign of formative assessment which can in turn make room for more rich interactions and deeper thinking. Students and teachers now know what the learning is based on the formative assessment. As students begin to move past the basics with the help of formative assessment, Gullen and Zimmerman (2013) emphasize that formative assessment goals are the same as they used to be in a traditional classroom but the results and the feedback for students is more
immediate. Students then have a chance to connect, collaborate, and enrich their peers’ learning experiences based on this feedback.

To further support formative assessment, summative assessment plays a reactive role in how formative assessment is used. Summative assessment can determine the final outcome of a student's learning (Tong, 2011, p. E152). Because of its purpose as a final overall view of what a student knows, summative assessment can serve as a “literal summation of the content learned” when used with formative assessment (Cherem, 2011, p. 46). In other words, student learning is more authentic on a summative assessment when used with frequent formative assessment rather than being used as a guess of what students were supposed to get from the work done prior to the summative assessment. Summative assessment can greatly influence the success of a student based on how accurate they feel the assessment is. Therefore, this type of assessment can be dramatically changed based on the data the formative shows. Blended learning connects directly with both assessments because it can influence how frequently formative assessment is given and the models emphasize the student meeting the goals of the summative assessment autonomously before they must show their work on the final outcome (summative assessment).

**Student performance in a blended learning environment.** Blended learning can increase student achievement due to the change in methods of instruction. Connections Learning (2014), a virtual school program, shared that students perform better in a classroom that combines both online learning and face-to-face instruction. Instruction online is easily accessible and allows for less time wasted in the classroom. Face-to-face instruction allows for the teacher to aid the students with the greatest needs.
and enables the teacher to provide instruction to smaller groups of students. The combination of these two, rather than being used in isolation, gives more power to the students while also providing students with a solid classroom experience where they know they won’t disappear among their classmates.

Outcomes have shown positive results in various areas of implemented blended learning curriculum. Two case studies have identified results for students in postsecondary work and one case study identifies results for students at the primary or intermediate level. The first postsecondary study by Svenningsen and Pear (2011) revealed that in the computer assisted, blended program, students scored higher on the final exam (three critical thinking questions) than students in the traditional classroom environment. Students in a lecture based class showed less growth than the students who were in a blended environment. Students in the computer aided course also showed more growth from beginning of the course to the end than those in a non computer supported course when taught by the same instructor. This increase in achievement is because a blended course provides more feedback to a student in the process of developing critically thought answers than that of a traditional classroom with less feedback given to students.

Blended learning courses can benefit a student academically and in other educational ways such as attendance, teacher to student interaction, and discipline. Rosen and Beck-Hill (2012) completed a study of fourth and fifth grade students in a one-to-one learning environment with an adapted, enhanced critical thinking curriculum. The results of their study showed several outcomes: more than twice the number of individual teacher/student interactions were recorded than in control classrooms; unexcused
absences decreased by twenty-nine percent in the classrooms where curriculum changed to include the technology in meaningful ways; discipline issues decreased by sixty-two percent in the changed environment; instructional strategies were used more frequently in the non-traditional classroom. This study revealed that a change in the way the classroom was designed by using a program that embraced technology in meaningful ways showed growth and change in several areas of these fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Higher satisfaction rates were provided by teachers and students after the second year of implementation. Blended learning can help teachers and students become more satisfied with the learning environment and helps students stay focused on their own learning instead of other external factors.

Blended learning can incorporate many of the assessment strategies and learning goals that the traditional classroom has tried to include over the past century it has been used. However, through the use of digital tools, these strategies can transform how the classroom looks and what the teacher and student know about the learning taking place. To further identify the use of blended learning in an ELA classroom, it is important to also identify how assessment can look in literacy and writing.

21st Century Literacy Instruction

Due to the focus on reading within an ELA classroom, it is important to take into account what research has been done on integrating 21st century literacy skills into a secondary classroom and how it impacts student learning. The next few sections will share how adolescents are motivated when it comes to reading and writing, a definition of digital literacy and how it plays a key role in 21st century literacy, how to support the use
of digital literacy in classrooms, and what 21st century writing looks like in a classroom with traditional writing instruction through the use of apps and writers workshop.

**Motivating adolescent readers and writers.** To begin, it is important to look at best practices in adolescent literacy are essential to curriculum. According to the National Council of English Teacher’s Policy Research Brief (2007) on adolescent literacy, motivation is one of the four key dimensions to understanding how teenagers read. As a part of motivation, students also need to feel confident in what they are reading in order to build stronger academic reading skills (p. 4). NCTE lists two sub categories under what helps with adolescent literacy motivation: student choice and responsive classroom environments. This section will focus on the factors that can directly affect an adolescent’s lack of literacy skills, choice in what adolescents are reading, the use of multiliteracies in the classroom, and engagement with reading.

Evidence shows that reading can benefit a person’s education which, in turn, could affect his or her ability to contribute to society (Clark & Akerman, 2006). Most students, regardless of economic status would agree that reading is important. Clark and Akerman cite research that reveals a lack of literacy skills as a young reader can directly impact poor basic skills as an adult. Students who receive free and/or reduced lunch are more likely to enjoy reading less and are more likely to struggle with finding the motivation to read on their own. Clark and Akerman’s study reveals that there are numerous factors that can directly impact adolescents’ desire to read books for education or for pleasure. These factors can play a larger role in the adult lives of these adolescent readers.
Students thrive in reading environments that provide choice and reveal meaningful connections to their current life situations. The article “Assessing adolescents’ motivation to read” by Pitcher, Albright, DeLa, Walker, Seunarinesingh, Mogge, Headley, Ridgeway, Peck, Hunt, and Dunston (2007) shared the motivations of adolescent readers through the use of a reading survey and a conversational survey. Adolescents see themselves as two different types of readers: one in school and one out of school. The study also revealed that students read a variety of materials, also known as multiliteracies (p. 392). Students discussed their use of computers at home and how family and friends influence what they read. Students said that they enjoyed activities like literature circles, independent reading time, and book choice. They also identified teacher modeling as an area that many students in this setting identified as helpful.

Book choice was a major theme that many students said helped them enjoy reading. The study provided evidence that showed students are not making connections to school reading and home reading. Making this connection (home to school) is important to teenagers. Because students see their reading skills in two different ways (home or school), they often let this affect their work in the school environment. As students get older, they tend to disengage with reading (Pitcher et al. 2007). This issue needs to be addressed by teachers in today’s classrooms.

Teachers need to consider the purpose and interest of readers when selecting the readings and not just think about textbooks or whole class novels. Dalton and Grisham (2013) also agree that the teacher is the key stakeholder in determining the critical analysis and rigor that students will choose to reach. Engagement through a variety of 21st century tools can help students connect their understanding of informational texts
and fictional texts with their own interpretation of what the text is saying. These tools can include: retellings from a character’s perspective, audio recorded collaborative responses, video book trailers, illustrated letters in response to informational text, and multimedia posters. These suggestions can increase engagement in adolescent readers while enhancing their understanding and critical analysis of the texts they are using at school.

Adolescent motivation to read has a lot to do with student choice in what they read and how a teacher is engaged and connecting the reading to students’ real lives. However, it is also important to use the digital forms of literacy in the classroom as well. Many of the texts that students are reading are online and constantly changing. A focus on how to read these texts well can benefit 21st century learners.

**Digital literacies in the secondary classroom.** Including digital tools in the literacy curriculum can benefit students; it is important to use these tools to help supplement core reading instruction and not as the core instruction. Helping students be able to use digital literacy in meaningful ways can influence their motivation and desire to read. Smith (2015) defines digital literacy as “able to ‘read’ and ‘write’ in the digital realm, thus full digital literacy includes critical consumption and production of digital material [Hauge & Williamson, 2009]” (p. 191). Because digital literacy can increase how and what students read and interact with online, it is important to examine the key reasons for using digital literacy instruction in the classroom.

The first reason for using digital literacy instruction in the classroom is to expand students comfort level with comprehension online. Smith (2015) found a majority of students felt by being exposed to a digital project related to a digital text, they were increasing their overall digital literacy which helped them expand their comfort zones
about information read and understood online. Students are more willing to read content when it is in a relevant format to them: “Students also indicated increased interest in and engagement with the disciplinary content...” (p. 197). Smith’s work reveals that when students are asked to do hands-on work with something they read online, it can directly affect their understanding and evaluation of the text.

A second reason for using digital literacy in the classroom is that online tools can bring significantly more meaning to discussions on books or texts students are reading. Simpson (2010) examined the use of student journals, face-to-face discussions, online emails and posts, and books and how they work in collaboration with digital literacy. He found that students were still interacting with deep responses and extensive discussions when in a face-to-face environment but that online, student collaboration was more effective. The teacher’s core instruction was much more engaging when in the classroom as opposed to information simply given online. However, the benefits of being in an online community “adds an essential layer to the individual student's’ learning allowing them to experience different ideas and responses to literary texts from peers located in another time and place” (p. 128-129). This study emphasizes the need for more digital literacy experiences because students are more likely to work together in a digital environment with a digital text than if they were to simply have a one-dimensional text in front of them in a small group. This can enhance the classroom goals of peer collaboration to increase engagement with course content.

Being able to use digital literacies can have direct effects on students’ post-secondary work or education. Many students in the study by Tierney et al. (2006) saw the capabilities that they had developed with digital literacies which in turn led them to be
the primary choice for employers and the colleges they attended. Students were more likely to engage and collaborate online which pushed them to a new level of work in a classroom environment involving digital literacies. Students were also more likely to embrace new ideas and their own learning goals. It is apparent that this is centered on a shift in power to the learner rather than belonging to the instructor.

**Digital literacy support.** Because literacy is becoming more dimensional in the 21st century and technology can influence the classroom to become a more mobile place, it is important to support students in their work with digital literacies. Students are encountering more types of literacies as well in different styles with their constant bombardment of text and information. They are frequently being introduced to *multimodal* literacies: this means that they are experiencing a variety of modes of communication in ways of print, audio, visual, shapes, colors, or recordings (O’Brien & Voss, 2011, p. 76). Students need help understanding these multimodal texts while also seeing many of these types of texts in the digital literacy format. They now work with new texts such as e-books, apps, and digital textbooks.

The first way students can be supported with digital literacies is through the use of online tools to help them point out critical information that they might want to come back to. Students have the ability now to mark and highlight, define and comment on texts that are in digital form (O’Brien & Voss, 2011, p. 77). These can then help them move towards collaboration with the digital text. After identifying an area they felt was important they can also share their markers with peers and help each other identify the critical parts of text while using digital tools.
The second way students can be supported with digital literacies is through the use of course management tools. Learning management systems are becoming more frequently used within the secondary classroom. These allow for more communications between students, students and teachers and even with just teachers (Schaffhauser, 2014). All of these relationships are designed to help students get more immediate assistance if they need it. By having one location online for students to do a variety of interacting, there are more ways for the student to get help than by simply having to wait to ask for help the next day during class time.

Finally, it is important to give students adequate time and affordances to interact with digital literacies. Affordances can be defined as “the specific disciplinary literacy practices or tools that mediate the relationship between students and learning goals” (Castek & Beach, 2013, p. 554). Affordances can be used in any content area, specific to that content area, to help students understand the goals they are completing by having time to practice the learning goal. In addition, this will help students understand both the content and the learning goal. Affordances can also be known as “positive enabling” (O’Brien & Voss, 2011, p. 75). Digital literacies and multimodal literacies can help students interact more frequently or understand more content due to their higher levels of engagement, but the goals of literacy comprehension are still maintained (Hutchison, Beschorner, & Schmidt-Crawford, 2012). Students need to be able to read the text first in order to gain understanding and move towards deeper learning. Therefore, digital literacies must not be used too quickly. Affordances can help students work through digital texts and become better at not only understanding, but also sifting through the information they are given.
These forms of support can ultimately help students to become better users of digital literacies. They must not simply be given a digital text and expected to use it the same as a traditional print text. Teachers must provide adequate support, time, and affordances in order to give students the best possibility of understanding these digital literacies.

21st century writing instruction. In order to understand writing in the 21st century, it is important to first look at the way young people and adolescents view their writing, skill levels, and tools. Writing platforms in the 21st century look very different than those used even 20 years ago. Students no longer engage in one dimensional writing on paper but instead are interacting in writing through a variety of new methods.

First, it is important to understand how adolescents view their own writing. Clark and Dugdale (2009) as a part of the United Kingdom’s National Literacy Trust researched the way young people view writing in today’s world through the different venues and in different settings. The surveys were given to 3001 students ages 8-16 in England and Scotland. Seventy-five percent of students acknowledged that they write regularly with sixty percent of young people believing that the computers they used helped them to create, concentrate, and encouraged them to write. Most students believe writing is an important skill for the future. About twenty-four percent of students owned a blog. Forty-nine percent of students thought that writing was boring. This study identified that there is not just one linear method of paper and pencil (62% of students write text messages in a day). Most students found that a computer was useful to enhance and improve their skills in writing.
Based on this information, it is important to determine some key factors to help motivate adolescent writers so that students feel that they are writing to increase their abilities and meet a purpose. Kelly Gallagher, in his book *Write Like This* (2011), establishes two premises to drive writing instruction: students should have access to real world experiences when writing instead of simply writing to teach a standard; students need genuine modeling to help them understanding what purposeful writing looks like without having them rely solely on the text (p. 8). Students will encounter many different writing moments in their futures, many that we cannot even predict. However, if teachers show them how to write proficiently and use mentor texts as examples for their work, students will be prepared for many of those situations. Gallagher finds that students will read and write more frequently and more proficiently when they have the opportunity to pursue their own interests (Gallagher, 2015, p. 210). This means that students will feel more drawn to writing when they feel it is something they will need and they are interested in. This can draw more students towards writing in many different ways and styles within the classroom.

As previously determined, student writing benefits from experiencing other high quality writing. Students must draw from other sources to develop as strong writers. DeCosta, Clifton, and Roen (2010) identify the need for peer collaboration in the English Language Arts classroom. When students speak or write, they draw on a variety of voices and influences to create their final product. The authors cite Vygotsky’s (1978) work on the union of social contexts with cognitive contexts and how this affects the learning of students and their peers (as cited by DeCosta et al, 2010, p. 14). These authors provide several examples of how to create collaboration in the classroom that can enhance the
writing of students by means of social media, collaborative strategies, and new techniques that require group collaboration to reach a final product. The authors define the term *new literacies* and observe that “although New Literacies is made visible…it is not primarily about the tools but what the tools allow students to do, what they allow them to create, and the ways they allow them to participate in various groups” (p. 19). The ultimate goal of incorporating digital writing platforms is to help students learn how collaboration can benefit the writing process.

In addition, social media can benefit student writing. These spaces assist students in understanding how to write for an audience. Pascopella and Richardson (2009) also stress the use and collaboration that can enhance the classroom discussions: the use of social networking and making connections through online spaces. This new variety of writing tools is causing students to branch out and create based on the needs of their audience and the different media available. The critical thinking that results from this collaboration and instruction can help them communicate with others more effectively and constructively.

One method that students can share writing via digital platforms is through *multiliteracies*. Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) define the term *multiliteracies*. The authors cite these four components which make up the term: technological literacy (computer use), visual literacy (seeing, decoding, and understanding images), media literacy: “access, evaluate, and create messages in written and oral language” (p. 284), and information literacy: “find, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information” (p.284). The authors expand on the idea of writing through one multiliteracy: digital storytelling. The writing process still revolves around many of the same traditional writing methods;
however, the story is then transformed into something more non-linear. This also gives the writer a broader audience through the availability of publishing the stories for an audience. Student writing can become more engaging for his/her audience while also combining many of the necessary components of the writing process.

**Authentic literacy assessment for new literacies.** When multiliteracies are brought into the classroom, there is a need for new types of assessment. Students will be creating and designing, evaluating and analyzing. A teacher must approach multiliteracies with new ways to critique, evaluate and give feedback to a student. As Jacobs (2013) points out, we must “acknowledge the social and contextual nature of multiliteracies but also include an operational or skills-based perspective.” New types of texts in the classroom require different ways of evaluating responses. If a student engages in an online discussion about a work of art, the evaluation must look different for that discussion response than if they worked to create the work of art.

Whatever method is used to assess these multiliteracies, students must be assessed using a range of Kalantzis, Cope, and Harvey (2003) call *new basics*. These components center on the learning that happens when new and unfamiliar texts are used with students for helping to gauge their understanding of a deeper topic. Kalantzis et al. (2003) emphasize these types of methods for assessment: “(a) project assessment to measure in-depth tasks, (b) performance assessment to measure the creative process, (c) group assessment to measure collaborative skills, and (d) portfolio assessment to document the student’s body of works.” Each of these assessment pieces can fit to type of multiliteracy in a generic yet specific manner. For example, a portfolio assessment can be used with a range of writing on different topics and in different content areas with different modes of
literacy used. But the writing can still be assessed using this method. Overall, authentic assessment is necessary for students but it needs to change in order to give them accurate feedback on their work.

Reading and writing in digital environments requires support for students and additional tools in order for students to engage their audiences. Classroom instruction needs to include strategies for reading online and writing online. Students in the 21st century are learning traditional skills but through different tools. This in turn should be adopted by classrooms which requires a change in the traditional classroom.

**Curriculum Design for a Blended Learning Environment**

The environment of an online and face to face classroom requires clear goals for the teacher and the student. With these learning goals in mind, students can move forward more autonomously with the knowledge of what is expected of them. All four models of blended learning require support from an instructor but the teacher must understand the goals that he or she wants students to meet. Therefore, strong curriculum design is needed for blended learning courses. This section will address the terms differentiation and personalization, making and meeting individualized student goals, the core needs of a curriculum that is blended, an overview of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (2005), and the model of curriculum design.

**The importance of differentiation and personalization to students within a blended environment.** Two practices must be included in the curriculum in order to fully embrace the blended learning student: differentiation and personalization. Learners come to the classroom from many different backgrounds, cultures, socio-economic levels, and an array of other prior experiences. Included in those are students who need more
individualized assistance in order to complete the difficult tasks teachers place before them. Blended learning can provide more opportunities for differentiation by understanding the student’s needs while personalization can help students feel the curriculum fits their learning needs. This section discusses both terms in depth and how blended learning can work synchronously with these instructional ideas.

Differentiation is a teacher's reacting responsively to a learner's needs and determining their instructional needs based on the information the student gives (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). Finding ways to provide a variety of paths to get to the same solution helps teachers incorporate more differentiation into their classrooms, particularly through the use of blended learning. North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) shares examples from several schools where students who are in credit recovery, a program where a student has a need for credit that they have previously attempted but did not earn credit for. Students who are at-risk, those who have some factor that is causing them to be in danger of not finishing high school which can highly affect their lifetime earnings, can benefit from alternative school structures (Watson & Gemin, 2008).

*Personalization* is a term used to describe the relationship of the teacher to the student in more digitized classrooms. According to Evan’s (2012) “A Guide to Personalized Learning”, in a personalized environment, students are given more freedom with how to meet the goals that they set. Technology is involved and helps to maintain the platform for students to design their learning programs. In a secondary setting, students typically have flexibility with how they work through individualized learning goals and they create the plans for themselves based on the curricula. Students need to be
working on standards-based career ready work that can be viewed by the student, the teacher, parents, and administration. This includes the use of formative assessments that can paint a valuable picture of learning before the summative assessments are given. This makes the learning more transparent and personalized to the student based on performance within the curriculum.

Personalization in today’s classroom involves giving every student an individual experience or programs based on who they are and what they need. The learning experience is individualized for all students at a school. Keefe (2007) shared that personalized learning started as a widely used term in the 1960s in college campuses where professors would provide a personalized system of instruction (PSI) for their students in lecture, writing, labs, etc. In the 1990s, National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) redefined personalization for students of all age groups: “a learning process in which schools help students assess their own talents and aspirations, plan a pathway toward their own purposes, work cooperatively with others on challenging tasks, maintain a record of their explorations, and demonstrate their learning against clear standards in a wide variety of media, all with the close support of adult mentors and guides” (Keefe, 2007, p. 219). NASSP wanted to clarify the definition of personalization because the increase in the technology teachers use can directly influence the learning processes of assessment, collaboration, and exploration. Therefore, personalization can become a positive outcome of using a blended learning program.

In the 21st century, instruction must be culturally relevant for the ever changing classrooms in the United States. Personalization can provide a more cultural learning experience for students. Keefe’s (2007) article on personalization focuses on the quality
and degree of interaction and personalization that teachers give students. This can keep both parties accountable and maintain a high level of rigor for students throughout a personalized learning experience. According to Keefe, there are several components involved in personalization in today’s culturally diverse schools such as a philosophy that is learner centered, an interactive learning environment to foster collaboration, and curriculum that is connected to real life.

Students respond positively to a personalized learning environment. The instruction is more focused on goals and meeting these goals during a given time period. The data collected on these goals can be done in a variety of ways through the use of technology. Moynihan (2015) adds that students are more responsive to a personalized environment by sharing new tools are providing teachers more ability to work with students both in and out of the classroom, both in small group settings and one to one environments. In addition this personalization can come through many venues available such as cloud computing, mobile learning, Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies, learning analytics, open content, and remote or virtual labs. Moynihan also finds that a personalized learning environment can individualize the learning if a student is struggling with a concept or ideas. The instruction can be adjusted to allow more time or less time on a subject depending on the level of mastery a student shows. This truly shows a new learning focus: the student needs are placed at the forefront of the classroom rather than the average needs of 30 students.

Differentiation can also benefit the individual student in a blended course. The needs of the 21st century student are also extremely different and involve many variables. An average high school timeline of four consecutive school years with eight months of
daily instruction may not fit the diverse landscape of students in a given district. NACOL (2008) provides three most common types of structures that most schools seem to offer in order to provide differentiation: supplemental services, alternative types of classrooms different from regular classroom structures, and restructuring of entire schools in order to help large groups of students that are at risk or in credit recovery.

Many programs are showing success with students that need higher levels of differentiated instruction: many contain an online learning component or are fully online. They determine that the flexible and self-paced nature of the courses causes these students to feel more successful about their progress. All programs require a portion of face-to-face time with a teacher or instructor. This gives the students expanded support to complete the tasks that they might have a harder time completing. This individual goal setting can provide support and structure that many 21st century learners need.

Providing differentiation for students at different levels can give more voice to students who may be hesitant to participate in a traditional classroom. Redekopp and Bourbonniere (2009) provide evidence that by blending learning for students considered reluctant speakers, teachers can engage reluctant discussants in making “valuable contributions to the process” (p. 35). Blogs and online discussions can help more students go deeper and be less afraid to voice their opinion. Through differentiating the instructional tasks, students are given more ability to discuss and share ideas openly as seen in the examples this article provides.

In a blended learning classroom, differentiation can add engagement to discussion platforms. When students feel that there are a variety of ways to reach one goal, they are more likely to stay focused on the task given. In a study by Martin (2013), participants in
two class sections of 12th grade English were asked to engage in discussions both in class and online. Students interacted differently online than in class. Students participated more often, the teacher participated less, going online provided more of an equal playing field where there were fewer social status implications with more geared toward the content and less towards acting or showing off. Students saw that the teacher was not the primary instructor in the discussion and they were more willing to step in and lead. This study concludes that students are more likely to engage in a discussion online and stay more focused than in a traditional classroom setting. Students are also more likely to talk with peers outside of their friend circle when engaged in a discussion online rather than in class.

In a classroom that blends both online instruction and face to face instruction, a focus on the individual student learning through differentiation and personalization is essential. The benefit of the blended learning model for students is that it is not centered around the curriculum or teaching methods, but rather on the students themselves and their own learning. Through a one credit course offered in New York City, Digital Literacies or DIG/IT curriculum, students work in a blended learning environment to complete the course (Nolan, Preston, & Finkelstein, 2012, p. 43). The course focuses on digital literacy, self-regulation and independence, and communication and collaboration. Results of this curriculum to help increase and differentiate instruction for digital natives show 79 percent of students who took this course believed they showed an improvement in their writing. Seventy-one percent stated they were able to use the Internet better for research and academic purposes (p. 46). Sixty percent believed this type of course had given them more creativity and ability to think outside the box when presenting (p. 46).
Overall, blended learning instruction in a course like the example can help students build their confidence through their awareness of what they can do online and how to become better online citizens.

**Individualizing student goals and outcomes.** One element of blended learning that is not a new concept is the use of goals and learning outcomes to drive student work and assessment. In order to understand how to set effective goals for the blended classroom and with students, it is important to understand the term goal setting and its components. According to Moeller, Theiler, and Wu (2011), goal setting is the “process of establishing clear and usable targets, or objectives, for learning” (p. 153). Goal setting uses these targets to determine if a student has met the expected outcome. These goals can be used in two ways: mastery goals and performance goals. Mastery goals are more intrinsic and help students to move towards self-regulated learning while performance goals are extrinsic and tend to cause students to place self-worth and ability levels within these goals (Moeller, Theiler, & Wu, 2011, p. 154). Both of these types of goals are used in the 21st century classroom; however, it is important to encourage students, when creating personal goals, to focus on mastery goals over performance goals. These goals can be met through the use of formative assessments.

Students need to participate in goal setting in the classroom. In a blended learning classroom, the goals are the core of the curriculum. It is important that students see clear learning goals in order to feel a part of the course work but that they also have the opportunity to create their own learning goals and summative assessments or they will not fully invest themselves in the learning (Moeller et al., 2011, p. 155). Sometimes student academic goals are not the primary focus when teaching adolescent learners. It is
important to connect student academic goals to personal and social goals in order for students to feel motivated to read or write in the English classroom (Potter, McCormick, & Busching, 2001).

It is also beneficial to share the assessment process with students. These are often based on the learning outcomes and goals of the curriculum; therefore, it is more beneficial for the student’s motivation if the assessment is clear throughout the entire process (Potter et al., 2001, p. 53). Goal setting can give helpful direction to the curriculum and make a clear target for the student to aim for. This in turn can help drive them towards the finish line - especially if the goal is driven intrinsically by the student rather than extrinsically by the teacher.

In the end, goal setting can be an extremely essential part of the blended learning classroom. Because so much of the coursework and outcomes are based on the individual student's ability to meet goals without a set pace given, the management and creation of goals can help the students see the skill set they need for success while also learning how to goal set for future academic and personal settings.

Core curriculum concepts. There are many examples of what to create and how to design a curriculum that both enhances the learning of 21st century students and creates higher levels of thinking that the standards required. This section addresses a framework for instruction in a blended classroom with more critical thinking and how digital apps can benefit the blended classroom instruction.

The first core concept that is important in a blended classroom is a solid framework of instruction. It is largely important to maintain key instructional strategies but allow students more time for practice, reflection, discussion, and collaboration along
the path towards mastering a skill. Boss and Krauss (2007) provide a framework for the content of any course that is highly centered on critical thinking and project learning. They provide eight essential learning functions to assist teachers with developing a stable curriculum centered on the learning not the tools. Five of Boss and Krauss’ concepts are directly applicable to the work for this capstone project.

Deep learning: When students are asked to find their own information online and do something with it, instead of information that has been sifted by the teacher, they are engaging in deeper learning. Boss and Krauss also state that students are engaged when “asked to navigate, sort, organize, analyze, and make graphical representations in order to learn and express learning” (p. 13). These functions can increase understanding of content.

- Expression of self, sharing ideas, and building community: Students are already expressing themselves daily in social media and other digital platforms. Schools need to use these to create societies within the classrooms for building each other up and advancing everyone’s skills in the content.

- Collaboration: Working together in an online setting can help students get to a different outcome than working together in the traditional ways like in class group work. Planning a project online, engaging in work over a digital platform, and giving feedback to each other before the final presentation can give students more ownership with a group.

- Research: Asking students to make sense of the information they are reading can be beneficial in any classroom. Using search engines or online
databases to organize information can help students to understand and filter what they need and don’t need.

- Project management: Students need to figure out how to plan a project or get to a certain place without the teacher doing all the work for them. By working through a certain platform to manage work or simply using a desktop to organize and save information for the final outcome can help students manage a project.

These functions combine to set the stage for students to work towards a final goal with confidence. Part of quality instruction and strong curriculum is creating an environment for students to feel a part of a collaborative goal (Boss & Krauss, 2007). This can be met through the use of Socratic Seminars, a concept strongly taught in AVID (2014) programs. This structure focuses on the use of questioning to develop ideas. There is no “right” answer, but rather students come to a conclusion together with the core of the discussion being based on a common text. According to AVID, “participants seek deeper understanding of complex ideas through rigorously thoughtful dialogue.” This can benefit students in many ways and can be used a highly valuable formative assessment tool. These discussions can reveal student understanding of a text and provide clarity for future sections of the text. Tredway (1995) establishes that Socratic Seminars can benefit students in a variety of ways including with literacy, inquiry, and ethics. The teacher also works as a facilitator and participant rather than a director or instructor. This in turn can help students gear themselves more towards questioning over getting the right answer.

Another key component that can benefit and build a strong blended learning classroom is the use of digital apps for both teacher and student (Hutchison, Beschorner,
Students have access to devices of all kinds in today’s schools. In my particular school, students have access to a personal iPad that is owned by the school. For the purpose of my setting and this research, I have chosen to narrow my research in this area to the use of digital apps on the iPad. Student work on the iPad with apps can help them respond to texts in new and unique ways (Hutchison et al., 2012). Apps can be downloaded to any device they are compatible with and are free or range in price from $1-$10 depending on the app being used (Apple, 2015). Apps used in regard to literacy range in uses. According to Hutchison et al., some apps are helpful for writing on documents, recording lectures or student responses, using pictures to display an idea, graphically organize an idea or concept, and many other ways. An iPad has a camera built into it which allows students to record or photograph many different activities they do in the classroom.

However, with all these capabilities, sometimes it can appear that the device is the focus of the work. Hutchison et al. (2012) argue for a need to use *curricular integration* with iPads (p.17) to help teachers meet learning goals already in place rather than simply using iPads for technology integration, or technology for technology's sake. In order to approach technology with this in mind, the author’s provided a process to help use the app while also meeting the learning goal. Each learning experience includes the following process: reading focus/skill, app, app description, and a description of literacy activities (Hutchison et al., 2012, p. 19). Based on this process, the authors found that students were able to prior knowledge of other digital literacies, collaborate to solve problems, differentiate assignments, use different languages, and more freedom to work anywhere on the activity (p. 22-23). This research provides strong evidence that if clear
learning goals and outcomes are identified, apps can assist in helping students reach these learning goals. New literacy skills can be a focus of the work done with apps while incorporating the learning goals of traditional literacy instruction.

I have chosen to narrow the use of the apps for my instruction in this unit to a few selected apps that are designed for students to create a final product as an outcome. This type of environment, sometimes labeled as *content creation*, makes “the student less of a usual consumer and more of a producer or creator of content” (Creative Classrooms Labs, 2013). Therefore, students not only take in the information but are also using the information to design something new and different, depending on the student. This can be done through thousands of apps that Apple has developed in the iTunes store (Apple, 2015) or through other online avenues. The apps I have chosen to work with include those provided by my district that students are given profiles to use such as Google Docs and Schoology. The other apps were based on the learning outcomes and assessments designated in the curriculum (see Appendix D). I was able to learn about using these specific applications at various workshops I have attended such as the Digital Learning Day mentioned in Chapter One and through information from the TIES (Technology and Information Educational Services) conference. In addition, the website Edudemic, a website designed to help connect education and technology. The chart in Figure 2.2 shows the app, a description, and a link to the page that describes the function of the app within the classroom. The apps I have chosen to use are all age appropriate for twelfth graders and provide space to show evidence of their learning. I have used all of the apps personally or professionally therefore the descriptions are based upon my own experiences with using the app.
In summation, these core concepts are important to setting up a quality framework for a blended learning classroom. Students are able to work through curriculum while incorporating certain skills both in class and online such as collaboration, content creation, designing final products, and getting feedback from peers and the instructor. In addition, students can use apps on iPads to develop their traditional literacy goals and to build new literacy skills. These frameworks can help develop the blended classroom to help engage students and move into further critical thinking of literacy.

**Curriculum design: backwards planning.** The curriculum design for an English Language arts classroom that would best fit a blended learning unit and 12th grade students is found in the book *Understanding by Design* by Wiggins and McTighe (2005).

**Figure 2.2: Apps for Content Creation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>App Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Edudemic Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Creation Apps:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PicCollage</td>
<td>This free app designs collages of pictures. The student can import pictures from his/her device or use images within PicCollage. The final image can be exported and posted on another site. The posters range from 1 picture to 9 pictures and some include places for words.</td>
<td>TIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wordsalad</td>
<td>This free app designs word clouds. Students can copy and paste or type in words or phrases. The cloud is then designed based on the repetition of words - bigger words have been repeated a lot and smaller words not often. Different colors and designs can be chosen.</td>
<td>Word Clouds in the Classroom: <a href="http://www.edudemic.com/5-ways-use-word-cloud-generators-classroom/">http://www.edudemic.com/5-ways-use-word-cloud-generators-classroom/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bubbl.us</td>
<td>This free app is designed for mind mapping. Students can add bubbles to develop a concept and can change the colors of the bubbles. The final product can be exported.</td>
<td>Mind mapping: <a href="http://www.edudemic.com/5-ways-to-keep-creativity-alive-in-english-class/">http://www.edudemic.com/5-ways-to-keep-creativity-alive-in-english-class/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Processing/Collaboration Apps:</td>
<td>Schoology</td>
<td>Google Docs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This learning management system creates an online classroom. The teacher can post or create assignments, discussions, rubrics, tests, quizzes, pages, videos, links, and a wide variety of other tools. Students have access to these tools with their own profile. Grading can be done right on Schoology.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This collaboration and writing tool is designed for not only written creation but collaboration via comments, chats, videos, and sharing for editing in real time. This is part of the Google Drive family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When using this template, backwards design, the curriculum starts with the learning, not the teaching. Students are focused on the desired outcomes of the learning and what the desired results and summative assessments will be. Throughout the unit, formative assessments are given to determine the level and outcomes the student is working at; these determine the areas where improvement needs to be made before the summative assessment.

Through this method, student outcomes can be more aligned to skills and identified learning goals rather than if they can accomplish or organize a certain task. McTighe and Kief (2003) published a summary of studies that have supported the Understanding by Design method. A study by Smith, Lee, and Newmann (2001) revealed that curriculum designed in this manner can minimize the gap between high and low performing students. It can also benefit students at both ends of the spectrum in a classroom. McTighe and Kief (2003) also reported students were studied on their work towards a standardized test assessment. They found that all students benefit from higher
quality assessments that show authentic learning which in turn benefit a student’s test scores.

Figure 2.3 Stages of Planning in Backwards Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Traditional Planning</th>
<th>Backwards Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>What literature do I want to (or am I required to) teach?</td>
<td>What enduring understandings about literacy and life inform the standards at this grade level and will engage my particular students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>What literary terms does this work lend itself to teaching? What activities would be fun/interesting/useful/engaging with this literature? What standards do I address when I teach students this work?</td>
<td>What evidence would enable me to reliably infer that students have uncovered those understandings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>How should I test that students have read and understood the literature? What kinds of writing do we have to do?</td>
<td>What skills and knowledge do students need to develop in order to successfully produce that evidence? What resources (e.g. literature) and activities will help students develop that knowledge and those skills?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, students using backwards design curriculum complete work that is higher rigor and less information recall based. This is creating a higher level of outcome in a variety of schools with different needs and financial situations. Figure #.# shows the chart of traditional curriculum planning versus the backwards design curriculum planning. This curriculum framework helps students see the outcomes of their learning from the beginning and asks them to show not what they know but what they understand based on the work they have completed throughout the unit. This focuses the skills on the essential outcomes for the learner, not the teacher. Blended learning curriculum is a goal oriented method of instruction; therefore, backwards design instruction is the most beneficial fit to this type of instruction.

In addition to focusing on backwards design, I also chose to focus my assessment work on meeting the higher levels of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (2005). This system of curricular alignment, created by Norman Webb from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, encourages focus on the verbs used in assessment to determine true learning.
from students. This work is included in much of the Common Core state standards. The shift in thinking from assessing lower level (Level 1) recall work to higher level work (Level 4) creation and design was intended to enhance the alignment of expectations (Webb, 2005). By incorporating higher levels of depth of knowledge, more authentic assessments determine student learning.

**Summary**

In this chapter I have discussed the need for a change in the traditional classroom model through the use of blended learning focused on the research question, *How can the use of formative and summative assessments be used to understand student achievement and learning within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended environment?* I have shared research on how to motivate adolescent readers and writers in the 21st century and how to support digital literacy instruction in the classroom. This chapter includes information on assessing new literacies. Finally, I shared the importance of differentiating and personalizing instruction in a blended classroom while including students in learning goals. The chapter ended with information on core curriculum components for blended learning and the curriculum format I will be using.

Chapter three describes the model and design of a curriculum including literacy and writing through a blended learning model. I included a detailed outline of my curriculum components I used along with qualitative data on students that work in the blended learning classroom. In chapter four I shared the outcomes of implementation and the results from monitoring formative and summative assessments. In chapter five I discussed what I have discovered from this research and what I have learned about blended learning in the 21st century classroom.
CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Introduction

The traditional classroom instructional model being used in many schools today, including my own, has room for change (Fischer, 2009). Students in the 21st century are learners that need to be engaged in daily lessons and prepared for an ever-changing world (Smith, 2015). Teachers need to begin frequently assessing students in real time, using tools that can provide students with accurate ways to show learning, and prepare lessons focused on clear goals that were accomplished (Pellegrino & Quellmalz, 2010; Gullen & Zimmerman, 2013). Throughout my own learning, the most important things I have learned have involved my own engagement through experiences.

My English 12 students are close to encountering new real world experiences as they graduate and move forward with the post-secondary world. It is important to help them understand how to engage with the world they encounter and how to be problem solvers for the many different experiences they will have. Through the use of technology tools and curriculum that engages and informs the learner on his or her progress, I have hoped to increase my students’ understanding and also helped them become more autonomous learners through the research question: How can the use of formative and
In the previous chapter, I discussed the research that has been done surrounding the concept of blended learning (Watson, 2008; Connections Learning, 2014; Boss & Krauss, 2007; Wehrli, 2009). I also examined the ways technology has become an important part of student learning yet should not be the focus of the curriculum. Students need to have professional experience with using digital literacies, which should also include a wide variety of multimodal literacies, and students need guided exposure to new literacies that they will need to understand and work with in their future careers. These pieces are important to 21st century skills and beneficial elements of curriculum instruction in the secondary classroom (Clark & Akerman, 2006; Pitcher, et al., 2007; Dalton & Grisham, 2013; Bond, Bresler, 2006; Pascopella & Richardson, 2009). Using the research conducted on the use of the technology to better instruction and the how curriculum can become more suited to 21st century learners, I created a unit of curriculum to implement in my English 12 course.

This chapter outlines the curriculum development and implementation approach I have taken to create a unit within my English 12 classroom that combines 21st century literacies and blended learning to help increase student engagement and learning seen through clear goals. In this chapter, I share my research setting, methodology, the participants involved, unit outcomes, qualitative data forms, digital tools used within the unit, and my plan for analysis of the work within the unit.
Action Research

The research I conducted is considered action research in literacy instruction because I gathered information on how I teach and how well my students learn in order to gain insight into a potential positive change in my school environment (Mills, 2014, p. 8). This research project began with curriculum design that included literacy goals (reading, writing, speaking/listening) followed by research that was qualitative. Because the goal of this research project was to see individual student growth through alternative classroom methods involving technology (blended learning structure), identifying a few select students was more effective than gathering quantitative data of a large group.

Qualitative data, or the collection of data that is “experienced-based” such as journals or recordings (Mills, 2014, p. 83), helped to determine more systematic observations within the classroom rather than quantitative data, or “numbers-based” data (Mills, 2014, p. 83). This was also considered an action research capstone by focusing on a particular strategy and by working in my classroom to implement the strategy in order to gather data. I observed the selected students’ work on formative assessments and how it correlated to their final work on summative assessments. My own reflections in a research journal were observed to determine how effective the learning goals and daily online or face-to-face instruction affected the learning outcomes.

Through the collection of qualitative data, I used this form of data collection in order to draw a conclusion and interpret results. This type of research fits my curriculum the best due to the unit’s formative and summative assessments and the need for evaluation of this method of instruction for further use.
Setting

I currently teach a combination of eleventh and twelfth grade classes at a high school in a third tier suburban school district located outside of a metropolitan area. This district consists of approximately 1700 students within one high school - junior high combination school, one intermediate school, and one elementary school. Within this district 94% of students are Caucasian, twenty five percent of adults have obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher, and fifteen percent of students receive free or reduced lunch. According to the Minnesota Department of Education (2014), seventy percent of students who graduated from this high school enrolled in higher education within 16 months of graduation.

The high school where I teach serves approximately 550 students from grades seven through twelve. There are 27 teachers that work in the high school. Student demographics at this high school have not changed drastically within the past ten years. Population has increased and stagnated with the rise of the economy and then the 2009 housing downturn. The high school maintains an administrative staff of one principal and an assistant principal.

In order to assist students at all levels of academic performance, the school provides interventions to students through the use of paraprofessionals using structured behavior and academic interventions. There is a team of high school teachers that meets twice a month to discuss student concerns, develop individual student interventions and determine further needs assessment required. Besides offering students interventions, the school district has also provided individualized opportunities for digital literacies through an enhanced learning initiative (ELI) with iPad Minis. This was a district-wide initiative
which seeks to include technology into every student’s education through providing an individual device to each student. The district has provided this digital tool to all students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

In addition to this tool, students are also participants in an online learning management site called Schoology. This site allows for students and teachers to engage in work both inside and outside the classroom instead of simply being able to access teachers or work during a school period or day. The use of the site was not mandatory during this first year of implementation. Students were provided a school email address through Google Apps for Education and encouraged to utilize this as a primary tool for instruction and homework.

At the senior high level, students are required to graduate with 42 credits. They must pass four years (eight credits) of English Language Arts, four years (eight credits) of Social Studies classes, three years (six credits) of science classes, and three years (six credits) of math classes. In addition to this required work, students can choose to engage in fine arts and electives. They are required to take four credits of physical education and one credit of health. Within the school day, students are given the opportunity to enroll in study halls or to become a teacher’s assistant during an open period.

Grading in these courses is subjective to the teacher and many courses, if taught by different teachers in different sections, are not aligned to teach the same work. Junior and senior students are able to enroll in part time Post Secondary Education Opportunities (PSEO) through technical, colleges, and university schools in the area to fulfill both high school and college credit. The high school offers at least one college in the schools (CIS) option to seniors for college credit to those who qualify and are
accepted to the collaborating universities that the teachers work with. Some of these classes include CIS Composition, CIS Political Science, CIS Biology, and CIS College Algebra. In some departments students are required to take a prerequisite to take the CIS class; in others, they are open to taking the course if they are a junior or a senior. This high school also provides opportunities through a neighboring district. Students are bused to the district for two hours in the morning to take more career readiness courses. These courses require no prerequisite and are open to all Junior and Senior students.

In addition to the digital tool of iPad Minis, the coursework requirements, and the demographics of the school itself, it is important to address the setting of the academic rigor. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, only 38% of students are on-track in making progress towards college readiness. This number has been declining since 2011. In performance measured by the MCA III testing data, 43.7% of students in 2014 met or exceeded standards in math, 67.8% of students in 2014 met or exceeded standards in reading, and 52.6% of students in 2014 met or exceeded standards in science. Graduation rates have risen from 89.3% in 2010 to 93.3% in 2014. According to several survey questions provided by the MDE Report Card site, 80% of eleventh grade students are engaged in class all or most of the time, 69% of eleventh grade students feel that they learn useful things at school, and 83% of eleventh grade students felt that they cared about doing well in school all or most of the time.

**Curriculum Overview and Implementation**

I designed a blended learning unit plan collecting data qualitatively. I designed curriculum for a six week dystopian unit in a 12th grade English Language Arts classroom. The unit included multimodal literacy strategies applied to the novels *1984* by
George Orwell and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. It also incorporated applying themes and central ideas to modern day life through ongoing essays for students to make connections to these novels. Key components of the unit involve: clear goals for students and me to use while the unit is in progress; student engagement by using key terms in the goals to guide instruction for authentic assessment; student and teacher monitoring of formative and summative assessments; and teacher research journals to help track my implementation of blended learning. I used texts I have used previously in my English 12 course; however, I modified the instruction in order to include backwards design (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005) and the use of goals and goal setting. Students engaged in formative assessment frequently in order for me to monitor progress. These included multimodal and digital literacies to help students show their learning in a variety of ways. Students also showed their knowledge and application of skills through summative assessments. These were given only after thorough support was given by the instructor and the students were ready to show their learning. Overall, the goals, instructional strategies, various new literacies, and multimodal literacies combined to create a blended learning model of instruction in my classroom.

I chose this unit to develop as a blended learning unit because it incorporated so many avenues for using Boss and Krauss’ (2007) structure for assessments. Students were able to do the reading independently but if they needed support they worked with me and were less likely to slip away from the reading. Students were more likely to contact me online and get questions asked more quickly in writing which helped them remember the answer as they moved forward. This unit also involved a lot of autonomy which was also the focus of the two novels used in unit: both main characters were
struggling with becoming their own individual and making choice about that. This tied in well with the blended learning methods outlined by Innosight (2009).

One literacy component that students are expected to be able to do by grade twelve is track the character development and symbolism (Common Core, 2015). Both are part of a segment of the writing assessment. Students chose a character from their novel to track and uncover information about them. They were asked to do one formative assessment on their character. Rather than using traditional worksheets or reading quizzes, these activities focus on increasing student digital literacy and encouraging them to expand their comfort zones in online work. Smith (2015) emphasized the importance of doing hands-on work with literature. This unit is filled with many interactive reading activities that are supported by the online classroom and the in-person instructor.

Another component expected of students in grade twelve is applying and investigating symbolism (Common Core, 2015). This means students had to pay attention to the variety of symbols in the novel. They completed one formative assessment on a symbol.

Students were asked to do two writing pieces throughout the course of the reading. The first component was a group of essays connecting four events in the novel to four current news articles. Students were given a sample article for the first item of comparison. Students were required to cite quotes within the novel that show the four events. They also cited quotes within the nonfiction current event article that parallels to these events. Each essay was to be 250 words in length (about one page). Students submitted their writing and their articles together on the class LMS Schoology at the end of the novels.
Students were also asked to create a presentation answering a self-generated question they identify using evidence from the literary elements and the class discussions. This question was to address a key idea in the novel they read and include evidence from the text, evidence from outside credible sources, and evidence from modern day events. Students shared these presentations in front of the class using a digital tool of their choice. Options for presentation tools were provided by me and were to avoid any stagnant presentation tools (i.e. PowerPoint, Google Slides, or Keynote). This final writing element was written first and then a presentation was created. A draft of the presentation writing was submitted with the final presentation.

In addition to reading and writing, students were required to engage in a variety of discussions. I chose to use student discussion to help reflect student progress. Simpson (2010) stated that students engage in more meaningful ways by allowing peers to build on each other’s ideas and encourage more open thinking classroom environments. Because of the balance needed based on Simpson’s work, I created discussions online while also allowing students to participate in Socratic Seminars in class after each section of reading as well (AVID, 2014). This combination benefited all learners: those highly engaged while in a group discussion or those less engaged that work well online.

Online peer discussions served as a primary formative assessment for students throughout the novel. They were required to participate within their novel groups online, asking three critical questions about the section of their novel. Student feedback during the in-class discussions was a key part of evaluating these questions. They also used these questions to create self-generated questions to answer later on in the unit.
Participants

I conducted research with four students in my 12th grade English Language Arts students. This class had a designated 48-minute class period which occurs before lunch. Students enrolled in this course, titled Academic Writing and Literature, because they plan on attending a four year post-secondary school and wanted further preparation for reading and writing in a college setting. They also were given a choice to take a more technical English Language Arts course titled Global Communications; however, this course was designed for students attending technical schools, the military, or entering the workforce.

The course was made up of primarily higher Lexile texts and essay writing. The skills include higher levels of Webb’s (2005) vocabulary focusing on Level Three and Four products. My primary goal was to help give them confidence with the expectations next year in a college setting. The curriculum has typically revolved around a World Literature textbook; however, in recent years, this changed with the transition of 21st century literacies into the classroom. The class has participated in essay writing prior to this unit. They have written an autobiographical essay in a traditional model of writing, editing, and online submission. They also have written and designed several college admission essays to benefit their application processes. Overall, literature was not the focus at the beginning of the school year. There are 71 students enrolled in the course, with 29 in a section from 8:30-9:19 and 31 in a section from 11:18-12:05.

Choice of participants. I have compared the qualitative work of four students, two from each section, to determine individual growth and development. Each student was chosen for his/her ability to read proficiently, write proficiently, and maintained a
strong work ethic throughout this English class and previous English classes. Each student was selected at random and then verification of the previous information was monitored. In the following section, I describe each student’s physical characteristics, personality, reading level, and what I know of their background. Each student was given an alias for the purpose of this study in order to protect his or her identity.

**Case study participant John (Student A).** The first case study participant was a mentally and physically strong 18 year old male. John participates in football and year-round weightlifting. He works hard at everything academically and extracurricular. John frequently interacts with his peers in positive ways, never embarrassing himself or others while seeming to enjoy high school. John’s parents are both Caucasian. He is the youngest child with one older brother who graduated from the same high school in 2013. Overall, John’s home life seems very stable.

As a student, John’s strengths lie in math and science. He is very interested in subjects such as history, biological sciences, and applied math. He is typically the first to submit assignments that are due and frequently apologizes for small things, such as turning in an assignment incorrectly or asking a question. It is not rare to hear him say, “Sorry to interrupt, but…” John reads at a high school level and has an interest in any new topic that he may not know much about. John’s comprehension is strong and he independently interprets and uses facts in his writing and questions. He contributes to the class discussions we have had so far this year and asks helpful questions frequently during class.

John’s future plans are to attend a four year school although he has not decided upon a university or college yet. His ACT test scores are not advanced but will benefit
him in his college selection. John has pursued higher level courses and is currently taking College in the Schools courses in Economics, Biology, and Calculus. He is in my 4th hour English 12 class.

**Case study participant Kate (Student B)** The second case study participant was a quiet and pensive 18-year-old young woman. Kate works at a store in town and spends a lot of time with close friends. She is hard to get to know but is frequently the first in my room each morning with a smile and a hello greeting. Kate does not engage in conversation with many of her peers in class but gets along well with anyone she is required to interact with. Kate’s parents are both Caucasian. Kate has an older brother but doesn’t speak about him at all. Overall, Kate’s home life seems very stable.

As a student, Kate’s strengths lie in creative writing and art. She is less interested in science and math; she is currently pursuing more classes in photography. She works hard at what she doesn’t excel in: she is taking another year of advanced chemistry to help her with her skills. Kate is an excellent artist and is interested in computer artwork. She has art pieces frequently on display in the library and hallways. Kate reads at a high school level and has a strong interest in creative writing pieces. Kate’s comprehension is strong but she struggles with taking tests. She contributes to the class discussions when forced but does not talk much in class.

Kate’s future plans are to attend a community college although she has not decided upon a university or college yet. Her ACT test scores are not as high as she would have liked but she attributes this to her weak test taking skills. Kate is an advanced art student but maintains her own in the required coursework in core subjects each year. She struggles the most in math courses and has needed help to meet state standards in
those courses. English appears to be her strong suit. She is in my 1st hour English 12 class this year.

**Case study participant Kevin (Student C)** The third case study participant was easy going 18 year old with a sense of humor and well liked by his peers. Kevin runs cross country, works on the yearbook, lifts weights after school, acts in the fall play, and has a close group of friends. He works hard at things he likes to do which include video games, technology, photography, and social media. Kevin frequently likes to talk with his peers about current events and, along with his friends, he likes to visit the Reddit website to engage in and learn more about what is going on in the world around him. Kevin’s parents are both Caucasian. He is the youngest child in his family by many years; he has a sister that is several years older than him and has children of her own. Overall, Kevin’s home life seems very stable.

As a student, Kevin’s strengths lie in math. He is very interested in science but he struggles to keep up with the workload high school brings. He is frequently missing assignments due to extracurriculars or simply forgetting. John reads at an upper high school level and has high levels of background knowledge for most nonfiction texts he encounters. Kevin’s comprehension is strong, allowing him to use text evidence to support his answers on a regular basis. However, he frequently forgets to complete all directions on assignments because he is in a hurry or didn’t read carefully. Kevin contributes to the class discussions we have had so far this year and asks helpful questions frequently during class.

Kevin’s future plans are to attend a four year school although he has not decided upon a university or college yet. His ACT test scores proved helpful for his pursuit of a
college degree: he scored high in both reading and English portions of the test. Kevin has pursued higher level courses, enrolling in Honors English 11 and Honors World History during his junior year. He is currently taking College in the Schools courses in Economics and Biology. He is in my 1st hour English 12 class this year.

**Case study participant June (Student D)** The final case study participant was a vocal and boisterous 17 year old young woman. June is highly involved in the dramatic arts including fall play, winter one act play, speech, and school choir. She is an excellent vocalist and has a strong personality on stage. She works hard at these things and is dedicated to excellence in theater. She is friends with many other students involved in drama and enjoys the adventures and variety they can bring. June’s parents are both Caucasian. She is the youngest child in her family with two older sisters who both graduated from the same school. Overall, June struggles with maintaining consistency in her life. She is on a 504 plan for anxiety with school. Her work is frequently late due to this and she struggles to keep up with daily work completed in class. She is very hesitant to ask questions but very vocal about her opinions on certain topics. Her home life is challenging and she receives counseling on a regular basis.

As a student, June’s strengths lie in speaking during class. She struggles in math and science but does well in more discussion based classes such as history and English. She is frequently missing assignments due to extracurriculars or simply forgetting. June reads at an upper high school level and has high levels of background knowledge for most nonfiction texts she encounters. June’s comprehension is strong, when she completes the reading, which helps her to do well on tests or presentations. However, she struggles to keep up with course readings and writings. June contributes to the class
discussions we have had so far this year and, on a few occasions, asks helpful questions during class.

June’s future plans are to attend a four year school in vocal or theater performance. Her ACT test scores proved helpful for her pursuit of a college degree: she scored high the English and writing portions of the test and achieved an average score on the reading portion. June has pursued higher level courses, enrolling in Honors English 11 and Honors World History during her junior year. She is currently taking College in the Schools courses in Economics and two online classes. She is in my 4th hour English 12 class this year.

**Human Subject Approval**

I received approval of this curriculum planning and implementation capstone from the Masters of Arts in Literacy Education (MALED) Human Subject Committee. Participation in these studies and observations was voluntary and students understood that their identities remained anonymous. The four students observed in the sections of English 12 were permitted by their parents to participate in the observations. The school district and building principal also approved this research to be done in the English 12 classroom.

**Curriculum Development Process**

Throughout this unit, I plan to use a blended learning format in combination with Common Core reading, writing, and speaking/listening goals to help my students become better at making connections to literature, actively discussing what they are reading, master their ability to identify theme, symbolism, and analyze characters’ choices, and finally be able to create a question based on the themes, symbols, and characters, research
the question, synthesize the research, and present their information to their peers. The core components of this unit, formative and summative assessments, determined if students have successfully accomplished the learning goals within this blended learning format. Backwards Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) was followed for the curriculum. The template for the unit by unit design within backwards design curriculum can be found in Appendix A.

For this unit, students were asked to choose a novel to read under the genre of dystopian literature. Research shows that students are more likely to enjoy reading when they get to engage in choice or collaboration (Pitcher et al., 2007). The two choices for reading are 1984 by George Orwell and Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury. In order to assist with determining levels for student reading, I referred to the Lexile level of each novel. According to Scholastic, Lexile levels are “it is the measure of how difficult a text is OR a student’s reading ability level” (Doman, 2016). 1984 has a higher level Lexile for students who are prepared to read a more rigorous and complex novel. Fahrenheit 451 is a lower level Lexile with similar concepts and ideas to 1984 but requires less rigor in reading for students who struggle to independently understand a novel with confidence. Both novels enhanced cultural understanding of societal norms and expectations which helped students understand more about their citizen rights. Clark and Akerman (2006) emphasized that this literacy understanding can help adolescents become better members of our future society.

I have designed three blended learning formative assessments and two blended summative assessments that show the incorporation of literacy, writing, technology, and blended classroom instruction. Within my research question, I was determining if these
tools and methods can work together effectively in a classroom to increase student learning. As I cited in Chapter 2, Boss and Krauss (2007) encourage eight key components for a project-based instruction assessments. I have based my curriculum on five of the eight elements: deep learning; expression of self, sharing ideas, and building community; collaboration; research; and project management. In addition, Dalton and Grisham (2013) emphasize the role of the teacher in determining critical analysis and rigor within the curriculum. Students need teachers to help them analyze deeper levels of meaning in order to help them reach those higher levels of Webb’s (2005) cognitive understanding. My formative assessments focused on reaching level three and four of Webb’s understanding in order to increase student learning on summative assessments. This advanced my research question by teaching my students to reach for higher levels of application and understanding in the novel they chose to read.

One cornerstone of blended learning instruction, as determined by NACOL (2008), is effective assessment. Based on this, I have chosen to focus my research around formative and summative assessments within this unit. I have also designed one blended discussion formative assessment (digital collaboration) in order to determine engagement on a digital platform while discussing with peers. During each assessment, students were asked to complete tasks through blended learning: they worked in a digital platform to create a product or element that shows their understanding of the text they had chosen to read. By using effective assessments, I hoped to determine that even while in a new learning environment of blended learning, students still understood and were able to determine their level of success with understanding. This in turn determined the increased level of student learning that happened during the unit.
While doing this they also were interacting with me via in-class work and online work. Peer interaction was a combination of in-class and online. Providing this framework for instruction kept students aware of their proficiency and the learning goals (Innosight Institute, 2012). In the next few sections, I explain the time frame of delivery of blended formative assessment and blended summative assessment, apps to be used, how the assessment were evaluated, and the rationale for creating these assessment within this unit. How I plan to evaluate if this type of assessment was successful is included in the final section of this chapter.

**Time frame.** The unit was four and a half weeks long, taking place from Monday, October 26 through Tuesday, November 24, 2016. During this time, students had work spaced out in order to assess writing and discussion skills during each of the three sections found in each of the two choice novels. During part one, students were asked to complete the character picture collage formative assessment and began posting in online discussion format. During part two, students were asked to complete the symbolism word cloud formative assessment and continue posting in the online discussion format. During part three, students were asked to create a bubble map on a theme or lesson as formative assessment and post concluding questions in the online discussion format. Throughout the novel students were periodically asked to post discussion questions online with their peers while doing the required reading. Two separate groups were created for each of the assigned books.

The first summative assessment, the written essays, was introduced after completing part two. The second summative assessment, the self-guided question presentation, was introduced at the conclusion of the novel. Final presentations were in
class during the final week of the unit. The activities chosen were designed in order to help students make deeper connections with both informational and fictional texts, a skill that correlates strongly with engagement (Dalton & Grisham, 2013). A chart of these assessments can be seen in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Formative and Summative assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online or In-Class</th>
<th>Formative Assessment (FA) OR Summative Assessment (SA)</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online &amp; In-Class</td>
<td>FA #1: Character Picture collage</td>
<td>Trace the development of the character through his/her choices or interactions. Design a picture collage showing visual tracking of these choices and include a written reflection. Assigned: in class Friday, October 30 Due Date: in class Monday, November 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>FA #2: Word cloud on symbolism</td>
<td>After reading part two of the novel, identify a symbol. Research what the symbol is and identify a few possible meanings. Reference page numbers and include portions from all of part one. Organize a word cloud using key words from these phrases. The words the student chooses to emphasize should be based on the student's reading of the novel. Assigned: in class Friday, November 6 Due Date: online Monday, November 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online &amp; In-Class</td>
<td>FA #3: Theme Bubble Map</td>
<td>After reading the final portion of the novel, investigate what bigger lesson or theme the author is trying to teach us as the readers through this symbol. Develop a bubble map with the author’s lesson in the middle; continue branching out with how the symbols are seen connecting us to that message. Assigned: in class Thursday November 12 Due Date: in class Monday November 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA #1: Dystopia Today Essays &amp; Articles</td>
<td>Essays connecting 4 events in the novel to four current news articles. Students were given a sample article for the first item of comparison. Students were required to cite quotes within the novel that show the four events. They must also cite quotes within the nonfiction current event article that parallels to these events. Each essay was to be 250 words in length (about one page). Assigned: in class Thursday November 5, November 11, November 12 Due Date: online Thursday November 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA #2: Self Created Question Presentation</td>
<td>Create a presentation answering a self-generated question they identify using evidence from the literary elements and the class discussions. This question must address a key idea in the novel they have read and include evidence from the text, evidence from outside credible sources, and evidence from modern day events. Students shared these presentations in front of the class using a digital tool of their choice. Assigned: in class Thursday November 12 Due Date: in class Monday November 23, Tuesday November 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA Ongoing Discussion Groups</td>
<td>Write at least 3 questions you have for each section of the novel. Assigned: in class Tuesday October 27, Monday November 2, Friday November 6 Due Date: online Friday October 30, Thursday November 5, Wednesday November 11, Thursday November 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Apps to be used.** Each of these assessments was provided to students in the online classroom, Schoology. Hutchinson et al. (2012) argued for the integration of applications into the classroom work. By using an online platform, my goal was to curricularly integrate the use of technology into the curriculum developed. Students were able to view the assessment and determined the grading requirements that were posted on
each formative and summative assessment. Students had equal time in class and out of class to work on completing the formative assessments. These tools were used for the design of content creation, the term coined by Creative Classroom Labs (2013), to enhance the learning work done by students. These types of designed assessments were used on applications rather than traditional assessments done in the classroom. Those used include PicCollage, Wordsalad, and Bubbl.us. These apps (see Appendix E) were all new to students but they were all age appropriate with very little required for a student to start using the app functionally.

Students were already well adjusted to apps previously mentioned in the Chapter Two for ongoing work with the essays: Google Docs, Google Folders, and Schoology (see Appendix F). However, they did need to search using a web browser to help them find current event articles. For SA #2, students were allowed to use a presentation app of their choice. Because they were seniors, I did not allow the use of a stagnant presentation tool (i.e. PowerPoint, Google Slides, or Keynote) in order to increase the level of Webb’s in the assessment (2005). Discussions were done in Schoology.

**Data Collection Methods**

I collected qualitative data through formative assessments, summative assessments, and research journal observations. My data was collected from four students in two sections of the English 12 course.

**Student samples (formative and summative).** Examples are provided from students from each of the assessments described. Student samples of the literacy components are provided to qualitatively show the level of Webb’s (2005) levels of questions that are being reached. These samples include one for each of the four students
being observed for a total of twelve formative assessment samples. The writing samples of the essays and the self-generated question final presentation include one for each student for a total of eight summative samples. Samples of the course discussion questions are seen from the point of view of the four students being observed.

**Evaluation of assessments.** Students were evaluated on both formative and summative assessments. I also gave them an informal evaluation of how they were working in the blended learning environment. This did not affect the student’s academic grade.

- I tracked formative assessments by evaluating them on a proficiency rubric. They received the grade in the category that seemed to show their understanding of the task and how it showed their learning. Their formative scores were not as heavily weighted in their grade (10%).

- I tracked summative assessments by evaluating students on a proficiency rubric. The standard or goal they were to meet was on the left side and various descriptors followed. These were weighted more heavily in their grade (90%).

- I tracked blended learning progress by using a large chart (see Appendix B). Students were given a check mark if they showed proficiency in the activity. If no work was turned in or the work was below proficiency, the box was highlighted in blue. This was a signal to the student that the blended learning, or the autonomous work time, was not going well and that I was going to help them get back on track. This involved a one to one
meeting and usually a day in the classroom working with a small group of peers and the instructor.

Through these tools, I hoped to determine that the students’ abilities were enhanced using the data of formative assessment to increase their summative work. I also hoped that this student blended learning model would produce student participation in discussions and that through the use of formative assessment, student participation would increase over the course of the unit. Both Redekopp and Bourbonniere (2009) and Martin (2013) determined success with more online additions to class discussions and I hoped to see similar results. This work also determined if the outline of the blended learning course was helpful or a hindrance to student work based on the informal blended learning assessment given with the chart. I evaluated the data on the rubrics to determine if an increase was seen in student work throughout the unit. I wanted to see if formative assessment work through use of the apps correlated to higher performance on the final summative assessments.

**Research journal.** As the facilitator of learning and the creator of the curriculum design, I participated in once-daily reflection through an instruction journal (see Appendix C). The template I used for the journal included daily observations of student work in the blended environment and in formative and summative assessment. In addition, I observed feedback by students in the classroom on the work they were doing. By staying focused on these sections, I was better able to reflect on the function of the curriculum while also noting the activity of the students participating either online or in class. These annotations better assisted in reporting on what was going on during the unit along with reflecting on the goals to be met: to increase student learning through a
blended learning program. These journals were kept secure in my desk, locked and safe from student or adult access.

**Data Analysis**

Through the use of my data I hoped to evaluate the reading, writing, and discussion skills of my students throughout a unit designed with embedded blended learning and digital tools. Student understanding was documented through higher Webb’s (2005) level tools that students have to create in order to show comprehension. I used data from my student work, formative data, summative data, and research journal to gather information and considered how this method of instruction benefits students when implemented in a twelfth grade English Language Arts classroom.

I analyzed several sub-themes throughout the unit of blended learning. I determined if student learning is present through the following:

Blended learning allows for more quality time than the traditional classroom for students completing the work (Connections Learning, 2014): I hoped that through this new model, students have no issues creating these higher levels of work because they are provided with the time to do the work in an environment that works for them.

Personalized learning allows for more student-teacher meeting time: Keefe (2007) identified that personalized learning can increase the degree and quality of interaction between student and teacher. I hoped that through this model, students were able to get more individual assistance and class time would be more effective for all learners.

Differentiated instruction allows for all students to find success determined through rate of failures during the determined unit: In the past, I have struggled with students not completing work and then doing very poorly on the summative assessment
because they are not reading or completing the practice work for the final test. With this unit, I hoped that each student would show growth in his or her own learning: through the choices and variety of assessment students had clear markers that showed the learning from start to finish. This told unique story for each student. Through the personalized learning that is available through a blended classroom (Watson, 2008; Evans, 2012; Moynihan, 2015), I hoped to help each student to observe the story of learning through the use of effective formative and summative assessment.

Through the research I collected, I studied the sub-themes presented in order to determine if the students benefited from the use of blended learning to enhance literacy skills within the unit.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the unit plan I designed around literacy strategies that increase rigor in the English 12 classroom while I have also addressed how these areas are presented in digital platforms that incorporate a blended learning format for students. Student formative and summative assessments were presented that incorporate digital learning and deeper thinking (Boss & Krauss, 2007) on texts that were read and analyzed. Research methodology was discussed and data collection was described. All of this work contributed to the answer for my research question, *how can the use of formative and summative assessments be used to understand student achievement and learning within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended environment?*

Chapter four outlines the curriculum within this unit of study along with qualitative and research journal observations collected throughout the study. In addition,
chapter four also shares the stories of the students than I collected qualitative data on and how they were able to show learning through the use of the assessments. I also evaluated themes that were brought to the surface as the formative assessments were given and the final summative assessments were completed. Chapter five summarizes what I have discovered about student achievement and blended learning along with how this unit was impacted by the use of literacy strategies and digital learning. In chapter five I summarized my journey throughout this research process.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

In an effort to make changes and adapt my classroom instruction to the 21st century, I have used my own educational experiences in a traditional setting along with the evidence in chapter two provided by various authors (Svenningsen & Pear, 2011; Evans, 2012; Martin, 2013) and institutions (NACOL, 2008; Innosight Institute, 2012; Connections Learning, 2014) on the structures of blended learning to bring this change about in my own teaching and instruction. This concept of integrating technology to provide individualized instruction to students while still providing them face to face time with a teacher can provide many benefits to a classroom of large class size with students of varying levels (Moynihan, 2015). Bringing true change to my classroom involved monitoring and observing students that are of varying levels to see how they perform in a blended class setting. The experience provided a genuine glance into the work of a high school senior and how they managed time to perform the learning tasks provided for them through the instructional tasks I created.

In chapter two I expanded on work on the importance of formative assessment (Gullen & Zimmerman, 2013; Heritage, 2007; Pellegrino & Quellmalz) and summative assessment (Tong, 2011; Cherem, 2011), along with why higher rigor assessments are
needed with literacy skills (Dalton & Grisham, 2013; Hutchison, Beschorer, & Schmidt-Crawford, 2012). Combining the use of these types of assessments provided a strong backbone for the curriculum written for English Language arts novel unit that incorporated writing. Writing assessment was essential to create carefully since many adolescent writers need strong support and exposure to real world writing situations (Gallagher, 2011; Kalantzis, Cope, & Harvey, 2003). The final component highlighted in chapter two that was essential to the outcomes addressed in this chapter was the performance of an adolescent in a blended learning classroom. These programs have been documented in several environments and have shown positive outcomes for those students who have participated in classrooms that include technology and frequent assessment monitoring (Watson & Gemin, 2008; Martin, 2013).

In chapter three, I outlined the setting and participants of the research curriculum, including the school setting and the four students: John, Kate, Kevin, and June. I then outlined the curriculum development, the time frame, the formative and summative assessments, and the apps I used. In this chapter, I analyzed the curriculum used, the research I gathered from the action research completed with my four students’ artifacts, my reflections on the use of formative and summative assessments, and analyzed student attendance versus the performance on the assessments during the unit. All of this was completed with the ultimate goal of answering the research question: How can the use of formative and summative assessments be used to understand student achievement and learning within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended environment?

Data was collected in twenty-one class periods of forty-eight minutes. These twenty-one days were placed during the second quarter of the school year. The data
analysis in this chapter is organized in the narrative chronological order. The narrative is divided into sections by the sub-themes of the curriculum writing process, the curriculum implementation, and the curriculum assessment. Each section includes descriptions of the assessment being focused on (formative or summative), the feedback given to the identified students (in class or online), and my reflections on the formative assessments, including the effectiveness and the use of these in the student summative assessments. Throughout the data analysis, I examined common themes and challenges that were identified as students worked through the blended unit with a focus on formative and summative assessment.

**Introduction to Assessments**

Before launching the unit on dystopias, it was important to define the key vocabulary for this unit: dystopia, theme, characterization, and symbolism. Students created flashcards for each of these terms while participating in a class discussion. Once these pieces were in place, students were able to move forward with determining how these key elements work together to create a larger concept that applies to today.

**Launch.** To introduce the unit, I began by showing students a five minute video that talks about the idea of the hero and how literature has changed in the modern era to include the anti-hero: a person who does not necessarily come out the “winner” at the end of the story but rather does something to defy the societal norms with no apparent reward. Both main characters from the novels they were reading were mentioned (Guy Montag, *Fahrenheit 451*, and Winston Smith, *1984*). This video then led to a discussion on what other characters they are familiar with in today’s literature that play the role of an anti-hero rather than a hero. This in turn led us to further discussion on the topic of a dystopia.
After this discussion, I then handed out a sheet on the concept of a dystopia (see Appendix H). The following elements were included on this sheet: characteristics of a dystopia, types of dystopias, and dystopian protagonists. Students were then asked to brainstorm and write down one character they know that has one of the character traits listed on the sheet. This activity led them to applying some of the terms we talked about at the beginning of the lesson to their own modern understanding of the terms. After this, I knew that the classes were prepared to start reading about a dystopia.

**Book choice results.** Following the launch lesson, the following lesson included an overview of both texts: what the characters deal with, the time period, and the main conflict within the story. Students were then given data from multiple assessments they have taken to help them frame their choice of novel. This assessment data included ACT Reading score, MCA Reading score, and a Lexile level provided to our district by the state based on the MCA Reading score. After handing each student this information, I reminded students that these numbers are not current, might not be accurate, and were not the final statement on the book they chose. I shared with them that I felt every scholarly book choice must be an informed decision and that I had given them information on the books and their own reading levels. According to Pitcher et al. (2007), book choice is a major factor on whether or not students will enjoy the book. With this in mind, I encouraged students to choose the book that they feel most comfortable reading based on the evidence provided to them but also to choose the book they felt most drawn to in regards to plot line. Most students were aware of these scores and accepted the data with confidence.
I then asked them to write their choice of book on the same paper. They turned these into me. I then looked through them. Before the following class period, I talked with a few students who had chosen books about why they had done so. Many were drawn to the plot line and it turned out that was the book they wanted to read. The students I was observing chose the following books. I asked them for a rationale and most gave me a brief but informative answer.

**John: Fahrenheit 451.** John believed that *Fahrenheit 451* was the best choice for him because he felt that he was interested in the concept of burning books. He also felt like he wasn’t ready to take on the more challenging book because he was overwhelmed with school work from other classes. This book, he felt, was a good fit for him.

**Kate: Fahrenheit 451.** Kate chose *Fahrenheit 451* because she felt that it sounded the most creative. She also told me that she believed she wasn’t a strong reader so this book appeared to be the better choice.

**Kevin: 1984.** Kevin chose *1984* because he felt that it was a good book for him. He said that he had read more challenging books last year in my Honors English 11 class so he knew this book was better for him. He also said he had heard of the concept of Big Brother and wanted to know what that was all about.

**June: 1984.** June chose *1984* because she felt that she was a strong reader. June also cited her work in my Honors English 11 class. She said that she felt she enjoyed reading and knew she would enjoy the plot line because it sounded like an interesting book.

**Book choice outcomes.** The evaluation of the book choices presented some common themes from students. Most of the students I was observing said they felt that
the book was at their level of reading. First, this reveals that students need to feel they can do the reading independently in order to have success with the novel. As shown by National Council of English Teacher’s Policy Research Brief (2007), students were concerned about how they would be able to meet the challenge of the book being given to them which shows an understanding that they know what it is like when a book is too hard. Secondly, these choices revealed that students like to have a choice when reading. This reaffirms the evidence that Pitcher et al. (2007) shared on how choice is important to the enjoyment of the reader. Students felt they were given a choice and that led them to be intrigued about the story line and provide evidence for their choice in the novel. This gave them some feeling of personalization while only having had two days within this unit.

**Blended Learning and Curriculum**

After the curriculum was established (see Appendix D), student work time was taken into consideration for the unit. As following with blended models that describe the enriched-virtual model (Innosight Institute, 2012). Students met with me for at least three of the weekdays and were allowed one to two days a week to decide how to use their time. They were given flexibility with the how and when they completed the reading so these days were called “flex” days. Students were able to use the flex days on their own if they completed the work during the previous flex days. Therefore, there was usually an average of four to six students present in class on flex days. The schedule for the unit is seen in Figure 4.1.
Research Journal Observations: Getting Started

For this section of the unit, the primary focus was reading part one and asking three questions online. The final activity for the section was Formative assessment #1.

There were several observations that I made during this time frame, October 26 - November 2, on student work on the novel and the first formative assessment.

Figure 4.1: Blended Learning Unit Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1984</th>
<th>Fahrenheit 451</th>
<th>October/November 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 26</td>
<td>Intro to Assigned Book into Socratic Seminars</td>
<td>October 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2</td>
<td>FA 1 Due Socratic Seminar Response Due (SA)</td>
<td>November 3 (Flex Day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 9 (Flex Day)</td>
<td>Online Draft Group FA 2 Due</td>
<td>November 10 (Flex Day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 16</td>
<td>Socratic Seminar Response Due (SA) FA 3 Due Article Work Time</td>
<td>November 17 (Flex Day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 23</td>
<td>SA 2 Presentations</td>
<td>November 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 26</td>
<td>NO SCHOOL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 27</td>
<td>NO SCHOOL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the first day of the unit I commented “Kids are overwhelmed with the reading.” This was the first day of the unit; many students by 12th grade seem to have some apprehension when it comes to reading a novel no matter what the choices. Because of this apprehension, I made some adjustments right away at the beginning based on the reactions to the literature. Monday and Tuesday were in class days where students began
the unit and had time to read in class. They were also assigned online discussion groups where they should post three questions they have while reading. I “encouraged post-its while reading to help find quotes/questions” on Tuesday.

Specific comments about each student were made: two students (June and Kevin) seemed to have had a harder time focusing on the novel during reading time. At the end of class on Tuesday, I discussed what to look for while reading and some tips on how to read in a blended class work time. I observed “many used audio book” and “many were receptive to reading tips when at home or elsewhere.” However in another hour of the day I observed “read, many were unfocused” and “seemed annoyed by the reading assignment and no desire to try.” During the first flex day, John, Kate, Kevin, or June were not present in class. On Friday, we had our first in class discussion. Based on the discussions, John and June were very prepared for the discussion and participated heavily. Kate and Kevin did not participate much but did respond to classmates.

**Formative Assessment #1: Students’ Understanding of Characterization**

Formative assessment #1 (PicCollage) was completed after the end of part one in each of the novels. Students were able to participate in a Socratic Seminar (AVID, 2014) before this assignment in order to use questions to help their understanding of the novel. Basic instruction on characterization was used. Students were asked to watch an online video about characterization as instruction for the work. Then they were asked to complete the work on PicCollage about the character to show their knowledge of characterization (see Figure 4.2). This visualization of the text is an effective way to engage them in the reading while synthesizing their learning (McCormick, 2011). A
A typical response that did not show proficiency indicated that the student didn’t understand the concept or didn’t watch the instructional video.

**John.** On the first formative assessment for the reading of part one in the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, John completed the PicCollage using characterization on time. This was due by class time on Monday, November 2, submitted online (see Figure 4.3). John’s Figure 4.2: Formative Assessment #1 - Character PicCollage

### Character Picture Collage

**Due:** Monday, November 2, 2015 at 11:25 am

Trace the development of the character through his/her choices or interactions. Design a picture collage showing visual tracking of these choices and include a written reflection. Use the app Pic Collage to help design your picture collage. A template with 5 image slots must be used.

*Posted Wed Oct 14, 2015 at 12:09 pm*

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<tr>
<td><strong>Task Descriptor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Formative Assessment Description:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Your work demonstrates knowledge about the story and applies it to the task. No errors or mistakes and great attention to detail. All task requirements are present but are done with excellence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Your work demonstrates knowledge about the story. A few errors or mistakes (no more than 2). Task requirements are present but no application added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Your work is lacking in knowledge about the story. Many errors or mistakes (no more than 5). Task requirements are not all there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Your work lacks information and knowledge on the reading. Your work is unoriginal or incomplete. Too many errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td>You didn’t do this assessment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total pts: **4**

- Pic Collage Tutorial
- Pic Collage App

John’s PicCollage was based on the character of Guy Montag in the novel so far. John included evidence about his PicCollage as well:
The picture of the fireman resembles Montag being a happy fireman. The picture of the burning books resembles what he does as a fireman and what he thought was right. The middle picture is when he met Clarisse and she started talking about things in the past, that made him think about his actions he has made. The picture of the robber is when Montag started taking books, even though he could go to jail for that. The picture of the guy reading represents when Montag decided to start reading the book to see why there were so bad.

John received a score of 2 out of 4 on his PicCollage. His ability to identify elements of characterization for a particular person was developing. As shown in his writing, it is clear that he doesn’t understand the difference between plot events and characterization. I left a comment for him in his work to help him rethink his PicCollage: “These are clear events, but what do these show about Montag the character?” He wasn’t able to show proficiency in his ability to use characterization in the novel.

Kate. On the first formative assessment for the reading of part one in the novel Fahrenheit 451, Kate completed the PicCollage using characterization on time. This was due by class time on Monday, November 2, submitted online (see Figure 4.4). Kate’s collage was based on the character of Guy Montag in the novel so far. Kate included evidence about her PicCollage as well:

Montag finds a book that he flips through before he throws it in the fire with the other books him and his firemen buddies are burning as he wonders what is so amazing about these book that the old lady is willing to burn with them leaving himself watch the house burn before they leave to go back to the firehouse [sic].
Figure 4.3: John’s Formative Assessment #1
Mentag finds a book that he flips through before he throws it in the fire with the other books. Him and his firemen buddies are burning as he wonders what is so amazing about these books. The old lady is willing to burn with them, leaving himself to watch the house burn before they leave to go back to the firehouse.
Kate received a score of 2 out of 4 on her PicCollage. Her ability to identify elements of characterization for a particular person was developing. As shown in her writing, it is clear that she doesn’t understand the difference between plot events and characterization. I left a comment for her in her work to help her rethink her PicCollage: “What do your images show about Guy? What traits are we seeing that show characterization?” She wasn’t able to show proficiency in her ability to use characterization in the novel.

**Kevin.** On the first formative assessment for the reading of part one in the novel *1984*, Kevin completed the PicCollage using characterization on time. This was due by class time on Monday, November 2, submitted online (see Figure 4.5). Kevin’s collage was based on the character of Big Brother in the novel so far. Kevin included evidence about his PicCollage as well:

I chose the security cameras because Big Brother is always watching. Everywhere in 1984, people are being watched through telescreens. I chose the red person in front of the blue people because it represents Big Brother leading the people. He leads the people and most of them listen to him. I chose the coins and the telescreens because it shows that he appears everywhere. He is on posters and newspapers so his face can be everywhere. I chose the top from Inception because in the movie, the top represents if Cobb is in reality or fantasy. This represents big brother because no one knows that he actually exist [sic] since it's just a picture that appears on the telescreens. He could be a real person or someone that is made up.
Kevin received a score of 4 out of 4 on his PicCollage. His ability to identify elements of characterization for a particular person, in this case, a figure, was advanced. He was able to identify images that aligned with his descriptions.

**June.** On the first formative assessment for the reading of part one in the novel *1984*, June completed the PicCollage using characterization late. She didn’t complete the work until Sunday, November 8th. This was due by class time on Monday, November 2, submitted online (see Figure 4.6). She sent it to me in an online message within Schoology. June’s collage was based on the character of Winston Smith in the novel so far. June included evidence about her PicCollage as well:

The zipper represents how Winston must keep his lips zipped so not to give away that he is rebel. The notebook with the writing represents what Winston was writing earlier in part one. The gilded frame is symbolic of Winston because just like the frame, Winston is one way on the inside but presents himself completely different on the outside. The middle picture is a perfect representation of what is going on in Winston's head during part one, and the picture on the right shows how Winston is different from everyone around him.

Even though the work was late, June received a score of 4 out of 4 on her PicCollage. Her ability to identify elements of characterization for a particular person was advanced. She was able to identify images that aligned with her descriptions.

Two key ideas are revealed when analyzing this formative assessment. First, it is apparent that the students reading the more challenging book were able to complete the work focused on characterization with higher achievement than the students reading the easier book. Students struggle with drawing conclusions about the characters and instead
chose to write a summary of the character’s actions in the story. This common misconception with characterization was one that was shown clearly by two of the students. These two students are not as strong readers as the two students who took the more challenging book and were able to draw conclusions about the character.

Figure 4.5: Kevin’s Formative Assessment #1
Figure 4.6: June’s Formative Assessment #1
Characterization Outcomes

Second, formative assessment instructions are just as important as the formative assessment itself. Students may understand characterization but the work described in the assessment may not be clear to them. This reveals the need for very direct instruction on not only the topic but also the task when working with an online environment as well. Students were very capable of using the PicCollage app, but two of these students were not able to identify evidence to reveal character traits of the main characters. Students may have more reading to do when working in an online setting so they struggle even further from reading the book and reading the instructions online. This shows the importance of student outcomes becoming altered based on false assessment factors. Smith’s (2015) works supports the expansion of literacy when reading material online. In relationship to this evidence, I was not assessing them on their ability to read directions, but this assessment may have inadvertently shown this outcome instead of the assessment of characterization. The directions piece was then analyzed on other assessments as well. One result of this assessment showed that students may need to be more prepared to ask more questions online or in person when faced with this type of instructional model.

Research Journal Observations: The Challenging Middle

For this section of the unit, the primary focus was reading part two and asking three questions online. The final activity for the section was Formative assessment #2. I made observations during workdays and during Socratic Seminar discussions from November 3 - November 9. On Tuesday, I observed “I have found if I sit in the middle of the room during blended days, students are more likely to approach with questions and/or work on assignments/reading.” If I took the traditional method of sitting at my desk,
students did not approach me or feel the need to be on task. Overall during the two workdays this week, June had to attend class during flex days because she was not able to complete formative assessment #1 on time.

On Wednesday, I had a substitute during both class hours because I was attending a conference on blended learning in a nearby district. The sub notes included a list of students that needed to present. The substitute wrote “All were present and appeared to be working.” I also had students that sent me messages on Schoology during the day I was gone with questions on the next day’s Socratic Seminar. Thursday was the second Socratic Seminar on Part 2 of the novel. John participated 17 times in the discussion, Kate did not participate at all, Kevin participated five times, and June participated 14 times. All four students were present on Friday when we covered symbolism and how to use the Word Salad app. I also finished introducing the first summative assessment and gave all students the second required article for their essay writing. We talked about the themes that each article addressed. The second formative assessment was due on Sunday at midnight online. All four observed students turned in the assessment on time.

**Formative Assessment #2: Students’ Understanding of Symbolism**

Formative assessment #2 was completed after the end of part two in each of the novels. Students were able to participate in a Socratic Seminar before this assignment in order to use questions to help their understanding of the novel. Basic instruction on symbolism was used. Students were asked to watch an online video about symbolism as instruction for the work. Then they were asked to complete the work on Word Salad about a symbol they saw in the novel using evidence to support the design of their word cloud (Figure 4.7). This assessment was due before midnight online on Monday,
November 9th. A typical response that did not show proficiency indicated that the student didn’t understand the concept or didn’t watch the instructional video. Below is an explanation and example of how each student was able to complete the assessment.

**John.** On the second formative assessment for the reading of part two in the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, John completed the Symbolism Word Cloud on time. John’s word cloud was based on the symbol of light in the novel so far. John included evidence about his symbol from pages 78 and 79 of the text:

“Nobody listens any more. I can't talk to the walls because they’re yelling at *me*. I can’t talk to my wife; she listens to the *walls*. I just want someone to hear what I have to say. And maybe if I talk long enough, it’ll make sense. And I want you to teach me to understand what I read.”

“You’re a hopeless romantic,” said Faber. “It would be funny if it were not serious. It’s not books you need, it’s some of the things that once were books. The same thing *could* be in the ‘parlor families’ today. The same infinite detail and awareness could be projected through the radios and televisions, but are not. No, no, it’s not books at all you’re looking for! Take it where you can find it, in old phonograph records, old motion pictures, and in old friends; look for it in nature and look for it in yourself. Books were only one type of receptacle where we stored a lot of things we were afraid we might forget. There is nothing magical in them, at all. The magic is only in what the books say, how they stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us. Of course you couldn't know this, of course you still can’t understand what I mean when I say all this. You are intuitively right, that's what counts. Three things are missing.”
Figure 4.7: Formative Assessment #2 Symbolism Word Salad

Symbolism Word Cloud

Due: Friday, November 6, 2015 at 11:59 pm

After reading part two of the novel, identify a symbol. Research what the symbol is and identify a few possible meanings. Reference page numbers and include portions from all of part two. Organize a word cloud using key words from these quotes. The words you choose to emphasize should be based on your reading of the novel. This image will be used in our next discussion.

Use the app Wordsalad to create your word cloud. A quote/page # chart should also be included in your submission.

Posted Sun Aug 16, 2015 at 6:14 pm

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<td>0</td>
<td>You didn't do this assessment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total pts: 4

🔗 Word Salad App Tutorial
🔗 Word Salad App

John received a score of 4 out of 4 on his Word Cloud. His ability to identify a symbol using evidence to support the symbol was seen in the text example and the variety of items he included in his cloud. As shown in his writing, it is clear that he understands the item that he is looking for as representing the main character Montag, the Bible, books, and truth. He was able to show advanced proficiency on this assignment.
Kate. On the second formative assessment for the reading of part two in the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, Kate completed the Symbolism Word Cloud on time. Kate’s word cloud was focused on some selections from the text on the Salamander, the vehicle that brings them to the fires. June included evidence about her word cloud as well:

Page 105: “They rounded the corner in thunder and siren, with conclusion of tires with scream of rubber, with a shift of kerosene bulk in the glittery brass tank, like the food in the stomach of a giant, with Montag’s fingers jolting off the silver rail…” Page 106: “The Salamander boomed to a halt, throwing men off in slip sand clumsy hops.”

Kate received 4 out of 4 on her word cloud. Her ability to use evidence to identify a symbol in the novel is advanced. She was able to identify two locations in the book where the text showed this example. Her evidence showed the connection that the Salamander was related to the firemen putting out fires with kerosene.

Kevin. On the second formative assessment for the reading of part two in the novel *1984*, Kevin completed the Symbolism Word Cloud on time. Kevin’s word cloud was centered on the concept of the paperweight that was destroyed at the end of part two. Kevin identified the key characters that were involved with the paperweight and a few ideas such as “interesting”, “thought”, or “history” to develop the concept. However, it wasn’t clear what he felt the symbol represented. He included a quote with his cloud: “Pg 145, ‘Its [sic] a little chunk of history that they’ve forgotten to destroy.’”
“Nobody listens any more. I can’t talk to the walls because they’re yelling at me. I can’t talk to my wife; she listens to the walls. I just want someone to hear what I have to say. And maybe if I talk long enough, it’ll make sense. And I want you to teach me to understand what I read.”

“You’re a hopeless romantic,” said Faber. “It would be funny if it were not serious. It’s not books you need, it’s some of the things that once were books. The same thing could be in the ‘parlor families’ today. The same infinite detail and awareness could be projected through the radios and televisions, but are not. No, no, it’s not books at all you’re looking for! Take it where you can find it, in old phonograph records, old motion pictures, and in old friends; look for it in nature and look for it in yourself. Books were only one type of receptacle where we stored a lot of things we were afraid we might forget. There is nothing magical in them, at all. The magic is only in what the books say, how they stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us. Of course you couldn’t know this, of course you still can’t understand what I mean when I say all this. You are intuitively right, that’s what counts. Three things are missing.
Kevin received a score of 3 out of 4 on his word cloud. His ability to identify and prove symbols in the novel was proficient but not advanced. As shown in his writing, it is clear that he while he did understand the concept of a symbol that needs to represent something in the book, he wasn’t able to clearly make the connection between the text and the image he created. He wasn’t able to show advanced proficiency in his ability to identify symbolism in the novel.
June. On the second formative assessment for the reading of part two in the novel *1984*, June completed the symbolism word cloud on time. June’s word cloud was centered on the concept of Winston and Julia although it wasn’t clear which was more important. June did not include any evidence with her word cloud and her word distribution did not reveal any clear symbol she saw in the novel. There were many objects and character names present but she didn’t make one stand out as an obvious symbol.

June received a score of 2 out of 4 on her word cloud. Her ability to identify and prove symbols in the novel was developing. As shown in her image, it is clear that she doesn’t understand the difference between symbols and characterization. She wasn’t able to show proficiency in her ability to identify symbolism in the novel.
Symbolism Outcomes

One key idea was apparent after viewing this assessment: past work with a skill results in higher levels of performance on the formative assessment. Twelfth grade students have done work with symbolism in the past. This was a great example of how students have interacted with this literary concept before and understood that symbols come from evidence in the novel that was not directly stating the symbol. It is helpful for me to know this information and understand that identifying symbols. However, if I were to revise this activity for the next time I teach this, I would pre-assess these terms to see which appears to be review work from a prior year.

A second key idea was that students were able to complete higher levels of achievement after learning from the first formative assessment. Gullen and Zimmerman (2013) revealed that faster results can be given by providing students online feedback on formative assessments to help them make changes for the following activities. The two students that struggled with understanding what to do on the first assessment learned
from it and changed what they did for the second assessment. This showed growth and creation of higher levels of work from both of these students.

**Research Journal Observations: The Final Chapters**

For this section of the unit, the primary focus was reading part three and asking three questions online. The final activity for the section was Formative assessment #3. Journal notes were taken from November 10 to November 16. All four observed students completed the questions online for the discussion on Wednesday. I tried something different with this Socratic Seminar. *Fahrenheit 451* readers were present in class on Wednesday for a more “private discussion” with no observers. *1984* readers were present in class on Thursday for a more “private discussion” with no observers. I observed “Today’s group discussion had slightly more participation which could be due to a lack of audience observing or because this is the 3rd in-class discussion.” On Wednesday, John and Kate were present for class. John participated 25 times in this discussion, asking at least four questions and prompting his peers numerous times. Kate participated three times total. I observed she had “great evidence and questions but no responses during the in class discussion.” On Thursday, Kevin and June were present for class. I observed “many students commented that the additional day was helpful and more were glad there was no audience today.” Kevin participated six times total during the discussion and I observed “great use of evidence but few responses.” June participated twelve times during the discussion and I observed “great responses but few questions.”

After each discussion I assigned the theme formative assessment since we were finished with both novels. This was due on Monday since there was not school the following day (November 13). On Monday, John, Kevin, and Kate turned in the theme
task on time. June did not turn this task in on time. During class I modeled a good essay in response to the articles that I assigned students (they had all three required articles at this point). We reviewed what it looks like to “claim what you are arguing or connecting” and “state evidence from book or article” and how to use MLA in-text citations. Many students took pictures of the example that was presented on the board. I hand-wrote an example of how to write a good paragraph using the book and the article. John assisted me in writing these using evidence that he had starting gathering for this summative assessment.

**Formative Assessment #3: Students’ Understanding of Theme**

Formative assessment #3 was completed after the conclusion of each of the novels (see Figure 4.13). Students were able to participate in a Socratic Seminar before this assignment in order to use questions to help their understanding of the novel as a whole.

Basic instruction on theme was used. Students were asked to watch an online video about theme as instruction for the work. Then they were asked to complete the work on Bubbl.us about a theme they saw in the novel using evidence to support the design of their mind map. This assessment was due before midnight online on Monday, November 16th by the start of class. A typical response that did not show proficiency indicated that the student didn’t understand the concept or didn’t watch the instructional video. Below is an explanation and example of how each student was able to complete the assessment.
On the third formative assessment for the reading of part three in the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, John completed the Theme Bubble Chart on time. John’s mind map was centered on the theme “Corruption of society begins with fear of evolving knowledge.” John identified supporting elements of this theme as “Books”, “Fire”, and “Light”. He mentioned specific events in the novel where each element of the theme was seen with a
character such as Clarisse or Mildred. Each new idea was supported with at least two items.

John received a score of 4 out of 4 on his mind map. His ability to identify and prove a theme from the novel was advanced proficiency. As shown in his writing, it is clear that he did understand the concept of a theme that needed to represent something in the book while using evidence from what he read to prove it.

Figure 4.13: John’s Formative Assessment #3

Kate. On the third formative assessment for the reading of part three in the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, Kate completed the Theme Bubble Chart on time. Kate’s mind map was centered on the theme “Phoenix.” Kate identified supporting elements of this theme as “rebirth of humankind”, “bombing of the city”, “running from the realization” and “rises out of its self over and over again”. She mentioned larger ideas that stemmed from the concept but that were not all specific to the novel. Her four core ideas were supported
with generalizations, while only three branches mentioned the book’s specific characters or events.

Figure 4.14: Kate’s Formative Assessment #3

Kate received a score of 2 out of 4 on her mind map. Her ability to identify a theme that applies to both the characters and the readers was developing. Her idea she used for the map is a symbol that represents something in the book. I included feedback on her assignment submission: “A theme would be ‘hope rises out of all ashes.’ The phoenix is more of a symbol.” As shown in her examples, she is not proficient at using evidence to prove her concept is a theme. It is clear that she did not understand the concept of a theme that needed to represent something in the book while using evidence from what she read to prove it.
Kevin. On the third formative assessment for the reading of part three in the novel *1984*, Kevin completed the bubble chart on time. Kevin’s mind map was centered on the theme “Control by the government.” Kevin identified supporting elements of this theme as “Language”, “Telescreens”, and “Big Brother”. He mentioned specific events in the novel where each element of the theme was seen with a character including at least one specific quote from the novel, “Big Brother is watching you.” Each new idea was supported with at least two items.

Kevin received a score of 3 out of 4 on his mind map. His ability to identify a theme that applies to both the characters and the readers was proficient but not advanced. His idea he used for the map is not a general idea that applies to all citizens of our country today. I included feedback on his assignment submission: “What about control by the government?” As shown in his examples, he is proficient at connecting ideas together to support the central concept. All his ideas and supporting evidence were connected to the book and showed direct relationships to the developing theme.

June. On the third formative assessment for the reading of part three in the novel *1984*, June completed the Bubble Chart on November 24th, 8 days after the assigned due date and after the majority of work for the novel was completed. June’s mind map was centered around the theme “The Party and Big Brother control reality and the past to dominate the citizens on [sic] Oceania.” June identified supporting elements in her map as specific events that lead to the center concept. She mentioned specific events in the novel where the characters are affected by Big Brother. Each new idea was supported with at least two items. There was a lot of detail in her mind map.
Figure 4.15: Kevin’s Formative Assessment #3
June received a score of 2 out of 4 on her mind map. Her ability to identify a theme that applies to both the characters and the readers was considered developing. Her idea she used for the map is a main idea rather than a theme. I included feedback on her assignment submission: “Remember that theme is a universal idea that applies to us and the book. Work on developing that center concept.” As shown in her examples, she is not proficient at using evidence to prove her concept is a theme, but she is proficient at providing main idea. It is clear that she did not understand the concept of a theme that needed to represent something in the book while using evidence from what she read to prove it.

**Theme Outcomes**

After viewing the data on theme, there are several key concepts revealed here about student understanding of theme and student behavior in an online class. The first idea this reveals is that higher responsibility and achievement outcome is present with literary terms and other vocabulary as students progress through grade levels. Theme has been explained in different ways as students pass from grade level to grade level. By the time they are seniors the idea of theme has become an independent learning goal expectation, more than what it was in 7th grade. If students did not study the term as a 12th grader should use it, they could have used a version that they heard before that hasn’t expanded. For example, John and Kevin were able to share themes that applied to both the book and us. Kate was able to again identify a symbol but not a theme; this reveals that she may not have scaffolded her understanding by watching and reading the instructions on theme. This means that her level of work did not increase because she assumed the idea was one she knew.
The other key idea that is shown in this assessment is that student behavior can affect their achievement on the assessment. For example, June turned in her assignment eight days after it was due. This could have directly impacted her ability to do the work correctly because she was in a different place in the curriculum. The instruction provided to her within the curriculum could have thrown her off when she went back to the activity a week and a half later. This reveals that the timeliness of completing assignments in a blended classroom is important because the work is changing and developing in direct relationship with level of rigor the teacher is providing students, which in turn can affect
students’ late work. This reveals that student performance on formative or summative work may not increase after deadlines pass.

**Formative Assessments Overview**

Overall the formative assessments were as follows in Figure 4.17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Kevin</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characterization</td>
<td>FA1: 2</td>
<td>FA1: 2</td>
<td>FA1: 4</td>
<td>FA1: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolism</td>
<td>FA2: 4</td>
<td>FA2: 4</td>
<td>FA2: 3</td>
<td>FA2: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>FA3: 4</td>
<td>FA3: 2</td>
<td>FA3: 3</td>
<td>FA3: 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results were interpreted and used in a variety of ways. First, this reveals that the first formative assessment can be the most challenging in a combined online and in class setting. Students had a hard time with the first concept, which was supposed to be the easiest. This could be because of directions or a lack of knowledge. This assessment did not separate the two. Simpson (2010) expanded on this idea by emphasizing that the student’s depth of responses was different in an online discussion than in person. However, Simpson added that sometimes the level of work was better when a student was asked to write or create in a face-to-face environment. In my research it appears that there were times where the instruction was more accessible and engaging but that the individual learner’s work was not as accurate as it would have been in a face-to-face classroom.

Second, students need more information from a reading in order to do better work with evidence on a formative assessment. This shows confidence in the material and the
online setting. The evidence provided by students was more high quality. Hutchison, Beschorner, and Schmidt-Crawford (2012) supported this outcome when they discussed the need for students to first gain understanding and then utilize the digital literacies and multimodal literacies that are available. Moving too quickly into assessment online could potentially stifle the learning work. In my unit, students had been reading more of their books and were able to share more information on how the symbol was playing out in the book.

Finally, this work reveals a weakness in 12th grade students’ ability to apply theme. Students needed more review with this concept before it was assessed. Students struggled with identifying a theme successfully and providing evidence to prove it. A one-time instruction and assessment, especially in an online format, should not be done with more challenging concepts. Balancing the differences between instructional practices common to a traditional classroom (infrequent formative assessment which jumps too quickly to summative assessment) with those of a newer classroom model of blended learning (frequent formative assessment throughout the lesson) can present challenges (Innosight Institute, 2012). I feel that because of this outcome with this assessment, I would teach them more frequently and assess a few more times using formative measures before asking them to compare themes in the summative assessment (articles and essays).

**Research Journal Observations: Turning Thoughts into Written Analysis**

For this section of the unit, the primary focus was completing the summative assessment #1 and submitting the work digitally. Journal observations were made from November 17 to November 19. John completed his this day and submitted the work.
When he finished, he came and check with me to make sure he submitted it correctly (in Google Docs). June was in class due to missing work (Formative assessment #3).

Wednesday was a flex day. I made the decision to have a required class on Thursday based on the number of questions I was receiving on the work due that day. On Wednesday night I held an online “forum” for students to participate in with questions from 8pm to 9pm. I then used these questions to help students the following day. I observed: “I also did an informal check at the beginning of class: 1. How much is done 2. 1 question you have. Many students had questions about how to write using evidence or cite in MLA.” The summative assessment was due at midnight Thursday. John was the only one to turn in the assessment on time of the four observed students. Kevin and June were participating in the fall musical which had its first performance on Thursday night. They were not able to complete the work until the following week.

**Summative Assessment #1: Students’ Written Connections of Major Themes**

Summative assessment #1 was completed after students were finished with the novels. Students were able to participate in a Socratic Seminar before this assignment was due in order to use evidence from discussions to help their understanding of the bigger ideas that apply to us today. At least three of the articles were provided to students in staggered time frames.
The first article was given to students after the first part of the novel was completed. The second article was given after Part Two. The third article was given the day of the final Socratic Seminar. A chart of articles is included in Appendix I. Students were asked to find an additional fourth article to show their ability to find another connecting idea to the dystopian novels. Then they were asked to complete the essays, using MLA citation methods, and submit them in a digital format. This included digitizing the articles that they read. This assessment was due before midnight online by Thursday, November 19th. The rubric shows the state standards that were addressed with
this assessment: Writing Standards 4, 6, and 8 along with Speaking and Listening Standard 2. A typical collection of essays that did not show proficiency indicated that the student didn’t make connections to the novel, use effective writing efforts to develop the concepts they connected, or the student struggled to do more than simply summarize the articles they were given. Evidence from both articles and novel were required. I focused most closely on the standard assessing students’ ability to make connections and point out essential information from the articles and the book.

**John.** John scored in the proficient levels on three of the four standards assessed. He was developing on the standard assessing connections. He struggled with the use of reasoning to explain his evidence that he provided in the essays as seen in Essay 2, 3, and 4. This was why he received a score of 2 or developing. Each of his essays demonstrated a use of evidence but some evidence included no clear connection to the ideas he focused on throughout the book. These components were essential to the standard which was asking students to make connections between two texts. Overall, John’s summative assessment showed writing style and source use, but he needed more connections as seen in how he used the evidence he did provide to connect *Fahrenheit 451* to the current event articles.

**Kate.** Kate scored in proficient, advanced, and developing the four standards assessed. She was developing in two standards on the assessment. For the standard assessing her on connections, she struggled with the use of reasoning to explain her evidence and providing solid evidence to relate the book to the articles. As her essays progressed, her use of evidence diminished as seen in Essay 4. This was why she
received a score of 2, or developing. Each of her essays demonstrated a use of evidence but some evidence was unclear to the connection or specific references to the text. Kate

Figure 4.19: John’s Summative Assessment #1 Rubric

also received a developing score in the use of sources and MLA citations. Overall, Kate’s summative assessment showed effective writing style and use of technology, but she needed more use of evidence as seen through her use of quotes. This could have been due to a lack of focus on this assessment; Kate turned in her essays late, submitting them on December 9th.

**Kevin.** Kevin scored in the proficient levels on two of the four standards assessed and advanced levels on the other two standards assessed. Each of his essays demonstrated
a use of evidence to prove his connections. In addition, he also showed proficiency in his ability to use sources and cite information in MLA. Overall, John’s summative assessment showed writing style and source use, with a proficient ability to use and develop clear connections from the book to the articles. Kevin’s stronger background in writing having taken a harder English course previously may have contributed to his higher scores; however, it is important to note that Kevin turned in this assignment late, submitting it on December 9th.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summative Assessment #1: Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>W4 Writing Style</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W6 Published Product</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W8 Sources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation (MLA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SL2 Connections/CERs/ICE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate multiple sources of information in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
June. June scored in proficient, advanced, and developing in the four standards assessed. She struggled with the use of clear connections and explanations to explain her evidence that he provided in the essays. This was why she received a score of two, or developing. The use of evidence and clear connections was essential to the nature of the standards which are asking students to make connections between two texts. June also proofread her papers for the most part and was proficient in writing style for purpose and task. In addition, she was proficient in her use of technology to submit the assignment and complete the writing. She struggled to show success with MLA citations. Overall, June’s summative assessment showed writing style and the use of technology efficiently,
but she needed more connections as seen through her use of quotes in the essays. June also had a strong background in writing; however, June turned in her essays late, submitting them on November 29th.

Figure 4.22: June’s Summative Assessment #1 Rubric

**Summative Assessment #1: Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W4 Writing Style</th>
<th>4 Advanced</th>
<th>3 Proficient</th>
<th>2 Developing</th>
<th>1 Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td>4 Advanced</td>
<td>3 Proficient</td>
<td>2 Developing</td>
<td>1 Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W6 Published Product</th>
<th>4 Advanced</th>
<th>3 Proficient</th>
<th>2 Developing</th>
<th>1 Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.</td>
<td>4 Advanced</td>
<td>3 Proficient</td>
<td>2 Developing</td>
<td>1 Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W8 Sources</th>
<th>4 Advanced</th>
<th>3 Proficient</th>
<th>2 Developing</th>
<th>1 Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; Integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation (MLA)</td>
<td>4 Advanced</td>
<td>3 Proficient</td>
<td>2 Developing</td>
<td>1 Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL2 Connections/CERs/ICE</th>
<th>4 Advanced</th>
<th>3 Proficient</th>
<th>2 Developing</th>
<th>1 Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrate multiple sources of information in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.</td>
<td>4 Advanced</td>
<td>3 Proficient</td>
<td>2 Developing</td>
<td>1 Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tying the Formative to the Summative Assessments

Overall students performed in the following ways on the first summative assessment in Figure 4.23. The data reveals the following ideas on blended learning and instruction. First, lower understanding of a skill resulted in lower achievement on this summative assessment. Students that do not understand characterization did not do well drawing personal connections to a text. John and Kate both struggled with the first
Figure 4.23: Overall Summative Assessment #1 Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Kevin</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Style (online)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing (online)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources (in class)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections/Application to Us Today (in class FAs)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Formative assessment on characterization. Instead of describing how certain things the character did showed an aspect of their personality, they summarized the events involving the character. This led to them also simply summarizing some of the articles that they read, not drawing connections. This was a skill that required multiple levels of thinking and they needed more practice with this before the summative assessment.

Second, students that did not show a strong understanding of the text were not able to show a strong understanding of the text through analysis. Students that struggled to provide evidence in the formative assessments also struggled to provide strong evidence in combination with reasoning on this summative assessment. Kate and June received formative scores of a 2 on at least two of their formative assessments. These assessments all asked for students to use evidence in their writing. Since Kate and June did not use evidence on at more than one of the formative assessments, it could be concluded that without practicing the use of evidence and explaining it in relationship to the topic, these two could not have developed a strong understanding of how to use evidence to support a topic or claim. Frequent formative assessment provides for adequate work on the summative assessment which is supported in similar conclusions.
drawn by Cherem (2011) and Tong (2011). The work these two did not show in their formative assessments should have been instructed further so that the summative assessment was a summation of accurate work, not a summation of inaccurate work.

Finally, students’ varying, yet consistent, achievement levels revealed more need for frequent formative assessment. Students’ theme work was important to this assessment which reveals a higher level of need for instruction in theme. The assessment students struggled with the most was formative assessment #3. This work on theme revealed that students need more practice with identifying a theme in a text and supporting it with evidence. In the summative assessment I gave them, they were then asked to take themes they saw throughout and use evidence to support this theme appearing in two texts. Unfortunately this did not support the work done by the students and they struggled to articulate this in their writing. More practice and learning work was needed in theme before students were prepared for the summative assessment. This conflicts with the evidence provided by Svenningson and Pear (2011) who claimed that students in an online class were able to perform better on a final text than those in a traditional classroom environment. The authors claimed that frequent feedback by the teacher aided the students in their success; however, feedback alone cannot make student gain. Additional structures and support must be given to students who lack grade level skills in recognizing theme.

**Research Observation Journals: Drawn Conclusions about the Readings**

In the final section of observation notes, I focused on the second summative assessment presentations from November 20 through November 24, the end of the unit. I had all students attend class on Friday in order to help them answer questions on their
assessment and question-creation. Most students were able to use questions they had brainstormed while reading or had heard during Socratic Seminars. They had to get their questions approved by me before moving forward with the presentation. This helped them to start in the right direction. I noted that John, Kate, and Kevin used their time well while June used her time adequately. She was behind with work so she was working on missing work. On Monday, half of the class presented each hour. John and Kate presented their questions to the class. One Tuesday, the second half of the class presented each hour. Kevin and June presented their questions to the class. The presentations were only to the half of the class presented. This helped the presentations to be less stressful and also allowed for more flexibility for students to choose to get the project done early or late (by one day).

**Summative Assessment #2: Students’ Application of Characterization, Theme, and Symbolism**

Summative assessment #2 was completed during the final days of the unit. Students were able to use questions from the Socratic Seminars to find a question that they could answer to apply and develop the characters, concepts, ideas, or themes in the books (see Figure 4.24). Students’ questions were approved by me when they decided on which question to investigate. Students were asked to create a visual part of the presentation so that we could see what evidence they were providing us. This assessment was due in class presentations on Monday, November 23 and Tuesday, November 24. A typical response that did not show proficiency indicated that the student didn’t use evidence to help answer the question or the student didn’t provide enough information on
the answer to the question. Below is an explanation and example of how each student was able to complete the assessment.

Figure 4.24: Summative Assessment #2 Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RII Reading Evidence</th>
<th>4 Advanced</th>
<th>3 Proficient</th>
<th>2 Developing</th>
<th>1 Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.</td>
<td>4 Advanced</td>
<td>3 Proficient</td>
<td>2 Developing</td>
<td>1 Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W2 Explanations &amp; Key Points</th>
<th>4 Advanced</th>
<th>3 Proficient</th>
<th>2 Developing</th>
<th>1 Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.</td>
<td>4 Advanced</td>
<td>3 Proficient</td>
<td>2 Developing</td>
<td>1 Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**John.** John’s self-created question was “What if the world as you understood it was turned upside down, like what is happening to Montag, would you make the same decisions to search for the truth or keep living your life?” He chose to use Emaze, an online presentation tool, to share his information (see John’s slides in the Appendix G). He presented on Monday, November 23. As part of his response to the question he presented, he shared his own personal reaction to the question: “I would search for the truth like Montag because I would like to know what the government is hiding from society. I wouldn’t like to keep living my life because I feel like I’m living a lie.” This shows personal connections to the ideas found in the novel. John then provided three examples from the text where the character Montag makes decisions about how to handle the information he is learning about. These three quotes all connected to the question portion on searching for truth. To conclude, John addressed his theme he worked on for
his formative assessment #3. He included the bubble map that he created for the theme “Corruption of society begins with fear of evolving knowledge.” This shows his ability to create a connection between his connections and the theme within the novel. He added that “The ideas in the novel reveal Montag creating a path to discovering the truth and wanting to do something about it. This is shown through books, light, and fire.”

John scored 3 out of 4 on his use of reading evidence. The evidence that he used was good but in order to score a 4, he needed to use more than 3 pieces of evidence. However, a score of a 3 shows that he is proficient in his ability to use evidence when responding and making connections to a text. He scored 4 out of 4 on his ability to explain and elaborate on his key points. I saw clear reference to one of the literary terms that we discussed in class. He was also able to make connections between himself and the text.

**Kate.** Kate chose to respond to the following question: “Are we turning into the public in *Fahrenheit 451*? Why or why not?” She chose to use Prezi, an online presentation tool, to share her information (see Kate’s slides in the Appendix G). She presented on Tuesday, November 24. As part of her response to the question she presented, she shared her own personal reaction to the question: “I believe that we are.” She continued to elaborate on how movies that we see today are not based on works by any of the authors mentioned in a quote on page 83 (Piradello, Shaw or Shakespeare). She also stated “I’m sure most schools have stopped teaching Shakespeare or learning about him because we’re so into technology and a computer to basically do things for us [sic].” Kate then provided examples from the text where the characters use technology to do things for them that wouldn’t mean they would need to do extra learning or work. No
specific quotes were used, just text referencing. To conclude, Kate referred back to the public, like us, not needing to pick up books like in Fahrenheit 451. She was able to make basic connections but her use of evidence to prove this connection was not strong. She made no reference to the literary terms we focused on during this unit: theme, characterization, or symbolism.

Kate scored 2.5 out of 4 on her use of reading evidence. The evidence that she used was from one section of the reading but in order to score a 3, she needed to provide evidence from at least 3 specific in the text. She scored 3 out of 4 on the explanation and key points stems from her ability to make connections to the text. No specific real world examples were given of how we use technology instead of reading; however, Kate showed that she can draw connections to what the characters are experiencing to what we experience as a society today in regard to our relationship with technology.

Kevin. Kevin’s question for the final summative assessment was “How is language important to our definition of freedom?” He chose to use Prezi, an online presentation tool, to share his information (see Kevin’s slides in the Appendix G). He presented on Tuesday, November 24. As part of his response to the question he presented, he shared a connection to the question: “In the United States our freedom is very important to everybody.” This shows application of the ideas found in the novel to our own society. Kevin then provided two examples from the text where the characters experience moments where language reveals its value or threat. These quotes connected to his first point but he did not clearly elaborate on how they showed the importance of language to us today. Kevin then addressed a second important connection: “Another important part of our language is to choose whatever language we would like to speak.”
He included a final quote on the main character writing about how his thoughts can get him in trouble. He ended with a final statement on how thinking could get this character in trouble and “getting punished for it would not be good for anyone.”

Kevin scored 3 out of 4 on his use of reading evidence. The evidence that he used was good but in order to score a 4, he needed to use more than 3 pieces of evidence. However, a score of a 3 shows that he is proficient in his ability to use evidence when responding and making connections to a text. He scored 2.5 out of 4 on his ability to explain and elaborate on his key points. I saw connections made to the United States today; however, these were not clearly related to what the book was revealing. This showed that he struggled to draw conclusions from themes present for both the reader and the characters. Kevin attempted to draw this conclusion on the final portion but this was not present with all the points he presented.

June. June asked the following question for her summative assessment: “Do the three slogans exist in our world today?” She chose to use Emaze, an online presentation tool, to share his information (see June’s slides in the Appendix G). She presented on Monday, November 23. As part of her response to the question she presented, she shared how each question is present in our world today. Each slogan was presented and evidence from the novel was provided using notes June had prepared for use during the presentation. After each slide about the novel, she presented information on how this was present in our world today. These examples included the United Nations, President Obama, convicted felon rights, and September 11th. June provided specific evidence five places in the book. These examples are included with the slides. These quotes all connected to the question portion how each connection to today is applicable. To
conclude, June addressed several themes present throughout the novel that are themes in our world. She included evidence to support these themes. This shows his ability to create a connection between her connections and the themes within the novel. She concluded by addressing all statements: “These slogans: All true statements because the Party says they are true, even if contradictive; Make it easy to have control over truth and reality.”

June scored 4 out of 4 on her use of reading evidence. The evidence that she used was extensive in relationship to her question and key ideas. A score of a 4 shows that she is excellent in her ability to use evidence when responding and making connections to a text. She scored 3 out of 4 on her ability to explain and elaborate on her key points. I saw references to current events discussed in class but she struggled to draw personal connections to these themes; no specific references to theme, characterization, or symbolism were mentioned.

**Student Growth and Work Level on Summative Assessments**

Overall, students performed in the following ways on the summative assessment in Figure 4.25.

Figure 4.25: Overall Summative Assessment #2 Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Kevin</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Evidence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanations &amp; Key Points</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two key ideas were present after viewing the results of this summative assessment. First, students showed more achievement in making connections through the use of a visual/verbal tool than through writing. At least three of the four students were
able to adequately elaborate on their ideas when they were presenting this information. Their ability to do this using a visual tool and preparation for the presentation was higher than their ability to articulate themselves in an online setting. However, they were also able to use the visual as a strong form of evidence that they understood central ideas in the novel as seen by the connections every student was able to draw. Even though one was not strong, they all provided some connection to the ideas in the text whether it was personal or overarching for our society today.

Second, students showed higher levels of understanding through use of evidence when responding to a specific question and the expectations were outlined clearly. At least three of the four students provided proficient use of evidence when discussing their question for the class. Kate provided evidence but it was not sufficient to the expectations required for the assessment. Overall, John, Kevin, and June were the strongest when it came to the use of evidence to support their themes within the novels. This showed that the practice with using evidence throughout the novel in formative assessments was beneficial practice for most students.

**Research Observation Themes and Outcomes**

While conducting this action research, I was investigating the question, how can the use of formative and summative assessments be used to understand student achievement and learning within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended environment? In order to answer this question, significant research was done to address the major areas mentioned within this question. This literature review in chapter two revealed several important elements to address.
The first section of chapter two addressed how blended learning and strategies like formative and summative assessment can be an effective design for the 21st century (NACOL, 2008; Innosight Institute, 2012; Gullen & Zimmerman, 2013; Cherem, 2011) proven through studies done by Connections Learning (2014), Svenningson and Pear (2011), and Rosen and Beck-Hill (2012).

The results of my research addressed the relationship of formative assessment to summative assessment results (NACOL, 2008; Cherem, 2011). One observation showed that a lower understanding of a skill in the formative assessment resulted in lower achievement on the first summative assessment. In addition, a later observation revealed students that did not show a strong understanding of the text in the formative assessments were not able to show a strong understanding of the text through analysis. This work concurs that when formative assessments are linked to summative work, the outcome is a “literal summation of the content learned” (Cherem, 2011, p. 46). The outcomes presented by the students were in alignment with the work they did throughout the unit. Formative assessment paints a valuable picture of what students’ final outcomes will look like. However, in order to show significant change and tracking of growth (Pellegrino & Quellmalz, 2010), another observation proved that students’ varying, yet consistent, achievement levels revealed more need for frequent formative assessment. With more frequent formative assessment comes more feedback (Heritage, 2007) which can in turn help shape the outcome in a better and stronger way for students when they arrive at the summative assessment. This work was benefitted by a digital classroom because information was easier to track and students were able to access all information in a timely manner for use on future assessments.
The second section of chapter two addressed motivation and adolescent literacy (NCTE, 2007; Clark & Akerman, 2006; Pitcher et al., 2007; Dalton & Grisham, 2013), the use of digital literacies (Smith, 2015; Simpson, 2010; Tierney et al., 2006), and student support with using them (McCormick, 2011; O’Brien & Voss, 2011; Schaffhauser, 2014; Castek & Beach, 2013; Hutchison, Beschorner, & Schmidt-Crawford, 2012) in addition to writing in the 21st century (Clark & Dugdale, 2009; Gallagher, 2011; Gallagher, 2015; DeCosta, Clifton, & Roen, 2010; Pascopella & Richardson, 2009; Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009) and its accurate assessment (Jacobs, 2013; Kalantzis, Cope, & Harvey, 2003). The results of my research observations focused on student book choice addressed much about motivation and the connection to adolescent literacy. One observation revealed students need to feel they can do the reading independently in order to have success with the novel; another observation showed that students like to have a choice when reading. This is supported by many sources in my literature review (NCTE, 2007; Clark & Akerman, 2006; Pitcher et al., 2007; Dalton & Grisham, 2013). Student motivation when reading has much to do with the choices they make in regards to text and text complexity. With the additional ingredient of confidence they can accomplish the reading, these students showed they felt they could do the reading; therefore they would be successful. This played such a huge role in the outcome of the readings that much of what students did at the end was actually established by their own motivation at the beginning.

In addition, digital literacy and the instruction surrounding it turned out to be a contributing factor with the resulting observations I made in regards to these tools. The
observations I made revealed that the first formative assessment can be the most challenging in a combined online and in class setting. Adjusting to new and various types of reading and writing in “the digital realm”, or digital literacy (Smith, 2015) was a significant factor for these students. Because of this, the first time I assessed students, they were met with many forms of literacy that they may not have had significant exposure to in previous areas of study. Smith’s work also revealed that when students are asked to do hands-on work with something they read online, it can directly affect their understanding and evaluation of the text.

To add to this research done by Smith, students in my own research showed more achievement in making connections through the use of a visual/verbal tool than through writing. In the final summative assessment, students were able to speak and address their questions and connections more clearly through the use of a visual aid than they were able to organize and write in an essay. This reveals the use of affordances, or the “specific disciplinary literacy practices or tools that mediate the relationship between students and learning goals” (Castek & Beach, 2013, p. 554) helped students understand what the goals of the assessment were. The affordances of the technology they were using while presenting helped them to get their ideas across with more confidence which in turn helped them meet the learning goals of the assessment. This revealed higher levels of achievement.

However, students need more information from a reading in order to do better work with evidence on a formative assessment. With more information and different types of information being given to them, both through information and instructions, students were experience multimodal literacies as well (O’Brien & Voss, 2011). These
modes of communication changed the way that they were familiar with getting directions or information. Students had to have stronger support with identifying the critical information that they were being exposed to. This was something that was lacking in my classroom work. I was not prepared for the level of support these students would need in a combination online and in-class environment.

To continue with the idea of offering stronger support to students interacting with an online classroom, I made several observations that connected to this concept. First, formative assessment instructions are just as important as the formative assessment itself. Students need support to help them understand the texts they are reading online. They may be more engaged but the goals of the literacy comprehension are still the same, if not more important (Hutchison, Beschorner, & Schmidt-Crawford, 2012). The tools needed to define, comment, mark, and highlight (O’Brien & Voss, 2011) are more important when they are also trying to show their learning on a formative or summative assessment. An online classroom also acts as an online community. This in turn should benefit students more because they can ask more questions and get more responses from peers. However, they need to know how to do these things to take advantage of what the online community has to offer (Schaffhauser, 2014). This feedback response was apparent in another observation I made that students were able to complete higher levels of achievement after learning from the first formative assessment. After offering more support both in class and online I was able to see clearer results from the students based on their understanding of the text we were reading in class, not the texts I had posted in the online classroom. This was seen in the observation that students showed higher levels of understanding through use of evidence when responding to a specific question and the
expectations were outlined clearly. Their ability to read and understand, use and interact with digital literacies was increased by the end of the unit; therefore, the final summative assessment gave the most authentic learning results for these students.


The results of my research observations focused on how simple forms of differentiation provided more individualized results which lead to a more personalized approach with students. One outcome I determined was that students reading the more challenging book were able to complete the work focused on characterization with higher achievement than the students reading the easier book. By seeing that students who had chosen books they felt matched their reading level were struggling with characterization, I was able to see their responses to characterization work were more creations of summaries of events. This helped me be more responsive to the learner's needs and instructional levels so that I could provide them more effective feedback (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000), as seen in the section on Formative Assessment #1.

In addition to differentiation, I was also able to tell what type of experience students had with work before they came to my classroom and worked with these skills. In my outcomes I observed that past work with a skill results in higher levels of
performance on the formative assessment. Students who have had practice with a skill many times before 12th grade were more able to produce higher levels of digital literacy examples than students that had not practiced as much. This was seen in the examples I provided in Formative Assessment #2. Student symbolism examples were stronger because they knew what it took to achieve mastery based on past recent and more long term feedback in regards to these learning goals (Moeller, Theiler, and Wu, 2011). This revealed a stronger grasp on not only the concept but more practice with the formative assessment since one had already been completed.

Finally, personalization was observed as I saw that student behavior can affect his or her achievement on the assessment. Moynihan (2015) found that students were more responsive in a personalized learning environment. With fewer days where students were in a classroom having to deal with other student behaviors, there was more opportunity for students to have to work in a setting outside of the classroom where other behaviors could be a factor. For example, when choosing between completing an assignment and having to get a few extra minutes of sleep because of a rehearsal the night before, students do what instinct tells them should come first. Decision making with a blended classroom and goal setting with the learning goals established allows for the student to be at the forefront of the learning and the pacing of the work (Moynihan, 2015). In the case of several of my students I observed, this was a struggle. They had many priorities outside of school so being in a situation where they got to choose between school and extracurriculars, students chose the later as demonstrated by the on-time completion rate of Summative Assessment #1. The support needed in these online environments comes from the help of the teacher (NACOL, 2008).
The support I was able to give was beneficial to these students and with this support, they were able to complete all tasks by the time the unit was completed. This proves that some students need alternative types of learning situations to help them accomplish their goals, but in the end, many do and did accomplish their goals with the support of the instructor, as per a successful blended course model. This motivation, using support in combination with online tools to benefit the learning goals and monitoring (Potter, McCormick, & Busching, 2001), was extremely beneficial for the students in my classes that I observed.

**Research Observation Sub-Themes**

The reflection journals were helpful for me to make observations about the class work and progress in general. However, it was difficult to encompass all learners into this observation sheet. I would have loved to have a sheet for each student to monitor their work and observe what they felt like they were doing while in this unit. In addition, I felt that very little of the information I observed was academic: the majority appeared to be behavioral. This in turn made me reflect on the outcomes that the research journal helped reach:

Initially, I stated that a sub-theme I wanted to observe was that blended learning allows for more quality time than the traditional classroom for students completing the work: I hoped that through this new model, students have no issues creating these higher levels of work because they are provided with the time to do the work in an environment that works for them. After completing the research journal, I discovered that “quality time” varies depending on the student. The work that was created and shared in this chapter shows some of the ability of the students I observed but for the most part, it also
causes many questions to be raised about how much of the grading was based on ability and how much was based on information they found elsewhere or behaviors that affected their work. The behaviors observed in the research journal were for the most part accurate for each student based on their academic career. John is not the strongest student but he works hard to follow directions and never makes the same mistake twice. Kate is a quiet student that won’t ask questions and will just get the answers wrong because of that. Kevin is very distractible and could do better work if it wasn’t for his inability to follow through with his goals. June struggled with time management and stress; therefore, many other factors affect her work rather than providing an accurate assessment of what she is doing.

A second sub-theme I wanted to observe was that personalized learning allows for more student-teacher meeting time: Keefe (2007) identified that personalized learning can increase the degree and quality of interaction between student and teacher. I hoped that through this model, students were able to get more individual assistance and class time would be more effective for all learners. While my observation journals did not show specific information about conversations with students from the whole class, I made the observation that there are students that benefit from being in class daily. The consistency and smaller class size allows for them to make time to ask the questions they need answered. The casual, less formal class time gave them a quiet place for them to get work done that might have been missing.

However, even in the required structured environment there were still issues. There were some students that, even if I was sitting right next to them, they would not accomplish the work set out before them due to other factors that I could not control.
Unfortunately, these flex days also had an enormous control on students getting work done, no matter the quality. I was able to sit next to students and assist them with missing work but if students did not do the work in a quality manner they were often simply satisfied with the lower grade rather than the zero grade because they didn’t do the work. The quality versus quantity mentality is something that was difficult to combat in the mind of a 12th grade student.

A final sub-theme I hoped my research journals would address was that differentiated instruction allows for all students to find success determined through rate of failures during the determined unit. With this unit, I hoped that each student would show growth in his or her own learning: through the choices and variety of assessment students had clear markers that showed the learning from start to finish. Through the personalized learning that is available through a blended classroom (Watson, 2008; Evans, 2012; Moynihan, 2015), I hoped to help each student to observe the story of learning through the use of effective formative and summative assessment. Because of the formative assessments and summative assessments clear tracking throughout this unit, many students were able to see the results of their work very quickly after they completed it.

In addition, the individual picture of their learning made conversations with parents at conferences much easier because I was able to share with them specific things that students were having issues or successes with. For example, one parent asked why a student continued to get less than four work on his or her formative assessments and I was able to share that he needed to use more evidence in every assessment. This was
something specific that made the conversation more valuable rather than sharing that he or she wasn’t able to get work simply completed.

The completion rate of work during this unit was much higher. I had few zeros which allowed me to get a better picture of what students are doing in the class. The unique story for each student did cause more work for me though. With the higher level of work, I was asked to do significantly more amounts of work due to the levels of feedback needed for each student that did not understand the concepts we discussed. This made for more work done during my prep period and before or after school. However, each of the four students I observed was successful in completing the unit. They each have areas to continue working on; however, I know that these students were able to interact and analyze the text based on evidence I collected throughout the unit.

**Summary**

After documenting, reflecting, and analyzing the formative and summative assessments within a blended learning unit, I was able to identify some clear outcomes from this unit based on the information provided for me from the observed students and research journals. Several assessments were used to analyze the understanding and the behaviors of students in this unit. Each section on the assessments covered the students observed and their unique work during the unit that led them to a more personalized experience within the English Language Arts classroom. I was also able to critically evaluate the strategies used within blended learning to analyze their purpose and benefit to a 12th grade classroom. I concluded that many of the assessments and discussions created a more authentic picture of what a student understands while working through a blended learning unit. However, this also revealed that this was only a starting point and
that many changes should be made to the structures in a non-traditional classroom to create an even more authentic learning picture for each student.

In chapter five, I developed conclusions about my research question, how can the use of formative and summative assessments be used to understand student achievement and learning within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended environment? I summarized my key findings of my action research, focusing on how the implementation of blended learning in combination with formative and summative assessment aligned or deterred from the outcomes suggested by the literature review. I then discussed the implications of my action research for teachers, students, and my own teaching. Next I addressed the limitations of my research. Finally, chapter five presents possible future research on the topic of integrating blended learning into the classroom.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

Introduction

My students learned reading and writing the same way I learned reading and writing: modeling and practice. My high school, college, and student teaching experiences shaped how I tend to instruct reading and writing to my students. However, they are going to have to use these skills in different ways, for jobs that have not been created. My job has changed from one of conveyor of knowledge to one of leader in critical thinking. As acknowledged by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning website, I need to change my direction to become a teacher leading students to new ways to develop meaning from a text: a 21st century skill of critical thinking (P21, 2015). This critical thinking can only be practiced by ensuring that students are learning skills and how to use them to solve problems. The goals of my blended learning unit were very similar to those of the Partnership for 21st Century Learning.

In order to prepare my students for a new world, I created curriculum to help them think about and apply the ideas they were reading about. This stemmed from core ideas identified in my literature review: blended learning instruction requires strong formative and summative assessment (NACOL, 2008), frequent teacher monitoring (Innosight Institute, 2012; Rosen & Beck-Hill, 2012), and personalization for each student (Evans,
2012; Keefe, 2007) in order for the program to successfully help students within a blended class.

In chapter three I outlined this unit, including the use of formative and summative assessments that were used to determine if a new instructional model, blended learning, can enhance a 12th grade Language Arts class. In chapter four, I described the results of my action research, including student reactions to formative and summative assessments within a blended learning environment, major themes in student understanding or misunderstanding, and the effectiveness of the curriculum unit in supporting student content knowledge and literacy skills.

In this chapter, I relate my major findings and synthesize my learning as it relates to my research question, how does the use of formative and summative assessments within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended learning environment impact student achievement and understanding? The chapter begins with an explanation of the key findings from my research. Then, the implications of my research for students, teachers, and the education of future students are discussed. Next, the limitations of my research study are examined. Finally, possible future applications and research opportunities related to the topic of blended learning literacy units focused on formative and summative assessment are explored.

**Key Findings**

After completing the blended learning unit and after analyzing the assessments done by the students I observed, I have drawn four primary conclusions. The first conclusion is that blended learning instruction and curriculum design is more challenging for teachers than the traditional. The second conclusion is that instruction in a
A blended unit requires clear instructions and strong student support. The third conclusion is that formative assessment in a blended environment needs to be frequent and authentic. The final conclusion is that engagement in literacy skills involving digital literacies and writing requires more modeling for students. The findings from my literature review partially agree with these outcomes; however, there are varying degrees of alignment with the research on blended learning and literacy. When discussing my conclusions, I refer to the literature I examined to guide my action research, noting how my research compares to other research findings and theory related to blended learning, formative and summative assessment, and literacy skills and instruction.

**Blended learning instruction.** Based on my literature review and action research, I believe a teacher effectively implementing blended learning instruction in his or her classroom needs to be a strong teacher before they start implementing this type of instruction. After several years of practicing with the tools needed in a blended learning class, formative assessment, summative assessment, feedback, and technology, I was not prepared for the level of support my students would need in this type of instructional environment. As the students I observed revealed, students have a hard time with not only working through more rigorous material but also using tools that they are less familiar with. As McCormick (2011) showed with the need for *transmediation*, or how to understand a concept and then analyze, synthesize, or evaluate the content, students need to transmediate the content in a blended class. Not only were they working to understand concepts such as theme, symbolism, or characterization, but they also were being asked to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate the term in a novel or article. This level of thinking requires extra assessment scaffolding on the part of the teacher. Students need to see how
the small piece connects to the whole. The students I observed struggled with this relationship. This type of instruction requires strong content knowledge, strong literacy skill practice instruction, and strong ability to mediate the two ideas into an online environment. The traditional classroom understanding of formative assessment as presented by Heritage (2007) is helpful to a teacher looking to use blended learning. However, teachers need to be prepared to develop strong formative assessment examples for students that can reveal the understanding of the student, rather than a formative assessment that makes it unclear if the student misunderstood the directions or misunderstood the concept.

In addition, instruction in a blended unit requires clear instructions and strong student support. This means that what might typically be passed along verbally or on a worksheet in a face-to-face classroom needs to be made even clearer in a blended classroom. Gullen and Zimmerman (2013) emphasized that formative assessment goals are the same as they used to be in a traditional classroom but the feedback is more immediate.

Students also need to be aware that the feedback needs to be used to continue changing and developing the learning work. An example of this could be seen in the students I observed when they worked on the idea of theme. This was not a formative assessment used simply to test their ability; it was designed to help them make clear connections with themes on their summative assessments. This connection needs to be made clear to students as they begin the formative and summative work in a blended classroom. Students would benefit from seeing the big picture with assessment more clearly connected. This supports what Tong (2011) believes summative assessment does:
determines the final outcome of a student’s learning. I believe that my students were still surprised by their final outcome, which in a true blended environment there should be no surprises.

One suggested area that could benefit this process is frequent conferences between student and teacher to offer more support for the student in making the connections to the larger picture. This supported by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in their definition of personalized learning: “a learning process in which schools help students assess their own talents and aspirations, plan a pathway toward their own purposes, work cooperatively with others on challenging tasks, maintain a record of their explorations, and demonstrate their learning against clear standards in a wide variety of media, all with the close support of adult mentors and guides” (Keefe, 2007, p. 219). Within my curriculum, I had clear goals set for students but more communication needed to happen with students on those learning goals.

**Formative assessment.** The literature review included evidence on the use of formative assessment in a blended classroom that needs to be frequent (Connections Learning, 2014; NACOL, 2008; Innosight Institute, 2012). I felt that my formative assessment was frequent when I planned the instruction but as the unit progressed, I felt that the formative assessment was not as frequent as would have benefited the students in the unit. One example could be seen with the formative assessment on symbolism. Students seemed to have a stronger understanding of symbolism, so I should have provided a second opportunity for students to enhance their work with symbolism at a more challenging level since most of the four students I observed felt prepared to work
with symbolism. In another example, the work my students did with theme would have benefitted from a second opportunity for instruction and assessment since most of the students I observed struggled with some aspect of theme, whether it was finding support from the text or identifying an accurate theme.

The *multiliteracies* I was attempting to have my students create are similar to those mentioned by Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) when they determined that information literacy requires students to “find, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information (p. 284). This was my goal for instruction with them creating content for their assessments. However, the way that I was assessing them must include Kalantzis, Cope, and Harvey’s (2003) *new basics* or different methods of checking their knowledge such as project assessment, performance assessment, group assessment, or portfolio assessment. I think that a range of tasks on a similar concept evaluated to determine ability would benefit students more than the traditional method of assessment. This would give a better picture what the student knows about theme, for an example from my unit. Overall, the outcomes of my unit on formative assessments revealed more opportunities for assessments; however, the multiliteracies that I used to assess students was supported by DeCosta, Clifton, and Roen (2010) when they discuss the variety of voices that students should draw from when creating a final product.

**Engagement and literacy skills.** A large part of my literature review discussed 21st century literacy instruction. The work that I had students complete in this blended learning unit covered many reading and writing strategies that students will benefit from. Clark and Akerman (2006) cite numerous factors that can affect a student’s desire to read or write for pleasure while Pitcher et al. (2007) shared that students enjoyed literature
circles, independent reading time, and book choice over traditional read aloud models.

This was a core part of the curriculum within my blended unit. Book choice was a major factor and contributed to the success or failure of student understanding. In addition, Dalton and Grisham (2013) established that the teacher is the key stakeholder in determining the critical analysis and rigor that students will choose to reach. With increased engagement students are more likely to analyze and understand the texts they are interacting with. Overall, the rigor of the work that I was asking students to complete was high on the Webb’s (2005) Depth of Knowledge chart: analyze, trace, create, cite evidence, compare, and prove were all verbs that were found on my assessments.

Students were asked to do very complex tasks beyond the simple traditional methods of assessment. This challenged them to work at a higher level which in turn may have challenged some of them, but increased their interaction with the text.

In addition to the work students did with the reading, they were also asked to engage in writing on the novel they were reading and informational nonfiction articles. Online tools can bring significantly more meaning to discussions on books according to Simpson (2010). This was supported in my online and in-class discussions. Students were able to question and address some of the areas they were confused about with the text. This in turn helped them articulate their understanding more readily in the assessments done on the reading. In the writing that students completed for the summative assessments, both involved real world experiences or topics which is supported by Gallagher (2011) but this requires genuine modeling. I feel that more modeling could have been done but I tried to provide as much as could in a face-to-face classroom.
However, with the digital environment available, more could have been offered to student to assist them with their writing ability. Because of the diverse writing backgrounds these students came to me with, I could have given them further direction with what a great essay looks like for summative assessment #1. The results of this assessment showed weaker scores due to writing; therefore, Gallagher’s (2011) emphasis on genuine modeling to assist students with purposeful outcomes was something I could have done more with in my own writing instruction. Writing benefits from experiencing other high quality writing, as supported by DeCosta, Clifton, and Roen (2010). With so many literacy skills to address with a novel unit, it would have benefitted students to show positive examples of how to write about literature effectively and draw conclusions from the connections. I think that most students that I observed were able to do this by the final summative assessment.

Literacy instruction in a blended environment helped me as an instructor reach more in-depth understanding of my students’ work levels. As a literacy teacher, I focus much of my instruction on skills with reading and writing. Within this type of environment, the push for working further with literacy skills of reading for meaning, discussing to clarify, and writing to analyze was only enhanced in the blended classroom. Reading for meaning was enhanced because students had time to do this on their own. If I was concerned that a student was not understanding the content or completing the reading, I was able to put them in a more controlled environment, my classroom, rather than continue to have them in large classes. This choice of environment for reading allowed me more fully to help students with their reading.
Discussions were prepared for in advance by including the online discussion board for posting questions. This enhanced the classroom discussions because students came prepared with questions they wanted answered or their peers wanted answered. By using this type of discussion preparation in a blended classroom, students were able to collaborate online to ask questions of any kind. In return, this gathering of questions then benefitted students as they choose a question to complete their summative assessment #2. Overall, this disclosure of questioning was more open and offered stronger support for students than simple class discussions with a large class.

Finally, writing for analysis was a skill that was encouraged throughout the whole unit. I was able to give more authentic feedback by looking at stronger examples of analysis than a simple worksheet with questions or a quiz. Students’ work was aligned with skills that were directly within the text. This allowed them to interact with the text rather than recall basic information. By using deeper levels of analysis, I was able to enhance the instruction using Webb’s (2005) depth of knowledge for a purpose. In turn this can benefit many teachers of literacy by giving them more options for authentic assessment.

Implications

My research has implications for students, teachers, and the education system. The implementation of blended learning within literacy instruction can benefit all three stakeholders if executed correctly and if very intentional work is conducted with the use of assessments within the units. Blended learning instruction used in combination with literacy instruction can help students become more aware of their role in education, help teachers understand the skills students come to the table with in addition to what the level
of feedback will result in workload increases, and assist the education world with making more informed decisions about blended learning models within the English Language Arts classroom. When students, teachers, and the education world overall use the ideas of blended learning within the old education system, challenges will be presented but positive changes can be made to help reach more learners to help them increase their awareness of their learning and abilities in digital literacies.

**Implications for students.** Blended learning instruction gave students more awareness of their role in their own education. Much of this was related to higher student motivation for the tasks they were responsible for along with them having the self-discipline to complete these tasks. The students most engaged with the work were the students that had the higher achievement with literacy skills within this unit. However, those who did even better, did so in this type of environment because they had the best skills in managing their time. This shows that students with the better time management skills were more focused on the work when outside of the class using the blended learning time. This time was theirs to use to determine how and when they got the work done (Innosight Institute, 2012). After designing curriculum focused on the essential components of quality instruction (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2007; Pellegrino & Quellmalz, 2010; Gullen & Zimmerman, 2013; Tong, 2011), I realized that students can benefit immensely from this type of instruction as well. Not only did students within my curriculum understand the outcomes of their learning, but they were also more focused on the tasks and less on the behaviors within the classroom. This gave students the power to focus on their own work rather than getting distracted by those around them. Overall, this can benefit students because it makes the learning journey more personalized (Evan,
2012; Keefe, 2007). Blended learning intends to design instruction so that students can become a key stakeholder in the process (NACOL, 2008; Connections Learning, 2014; Rosen & Beck-Hill, 2012) and that power can benefit any student, especially older students, who may be frustrated or burnt out with the system that Fischer (2009) revealed: listening, waiting, and independent work time.

**Implications for teachers.** After completing this research, I feel that there are more implications with this instructional model and use of assessments for teachers. First, it is important that teachers understand that not every student starts in the same place. This affects this individuality of student achievement within a blended learning course, or any course these students are taking. In order to have the most success with this model, a teacher should have a complete picture of what a student is able to do when they enter a blended classroom. This in turn will determine the ease of which they are able to complete the assessments. In particular, within literacy instruction, it is important for teachers to establish a strong baseline of what student can read and writing independently in order to determine the affordances researched by Castek and Beach (2013) that students need to support their work with digital literacy (Smith, 2015) and multimodal literacies (O’Brien & Voss, 2011). Without this information for a blended class, a teacher may be asking students to do more than they are able to do or there may be learning curves for the digital work, as there was in my research study.

In addition, while the blended learning classroom benefits students by creating a unique story for each member of the class, this does require more time for each student. The use of an online classroom can strongly benefit the work the students are doing by creating portfolio of sorts. I was able to quickly access work even months after the
research project was over. This can assist teachers with helping their students show growth over not only the time frame of a unit, but also the time frame of the school year. This can also highly benefit parent conversations. The access to student created resources on a daily basis can help to provide parents with a highly individualized picture of their student’s skills.

However, with the time restraints already in place for myself and other educators as mentioned in chapter one, this could present more work for educators with limited time. Large class sizes create more feedback opportunities with the different types of assessment and writing done in this type of literacy instruction. This element of blended learning appears to be more of a component than I thought it would be. On average it took about an hour for each formative assessment to grade the work done. The first summative assessment took several days to complete which I completed during my Thanksgiving break. The second summative assessment was immediate. I was able to grade student work as they presented which allowed for more immediate results and opportunity for students to manage their own learning. This final summative assessment revealed that one option for time management within a blended course might be more performance based assessments that can provide quicker results but more authentic learning experiences. This is supported by the work of Kalantzis, Cope, and Harvey (2003) that call for more emphasis on different types of assessment to measure multiliteracies. However, the workload and class size of blended learning classrooms needs to be a factor that is evaluated by educators and administrators before anyone begins to work in these environments.
Implications for education. “Blended learning” is becoming a popular term in the world of education. If the world of education adopts blended learning instruction, like many districts are attempting to do, in every classroom including the strong use of formative assessments, more students would feel that they have a role in their education and know exactly at what level they are working. The education system could be a key factor in addressing Fischer’s (2009) call for a need for change within the educational system in order to regain student engagement and encourage critical thinking throughout all classes. Blended learning instruction in literacy could increase engagement of students if they feel they know they are making progress in the literacy work and that the work promotes critical thinking about reading and writing.

Limitations

While my research was beneficial for my own development as an educator and the ideas within this unit could be applied to other classrooms, there are limitations to my study. The blended learning instruction focused on literacy skills within my own classroom of 12th grade students focused on one particular area of reading and writing. Other instructional units could give different results from other methods for assessment and content applied within the blended learning setting. Outside factors impacted the delivery of the content, which could skew the results.

Strong content and background knowledge was also a factor. I did not have my curriculum designed by professionals and the curriculum I used was based on my choices of state standards for instruction. I was able provide my students with what I thought was the best materials for the instruction created. However, the work that my students knew or did not know before they entered my classroom also affected their reading and writing.
Some students had stronger background in writing than others, such as two of the students I observed, and this could have affected the outcome of their writing assessments in different ways.

This capstone research project focused on one of many facets of blended learning: literacy instruction and how it correlated within a blended learning unit. Thus the results are only relevant to application in a similar setting. They cannot be applied to other types of texts. This project only explored one type of blended learning model (enriched virtual) and did not explore how other models might play out in other classrooms. In addition, only one type of technology platform was used for the digital classroom (Schoology). Other options were not explored as they were not available for the study. These options may have tools for assessments that this digital classroom did not make available.

The sample size of this study is also a limitation. While I observed my classes through research journals, I only reflected on the work of four student participants. A larger study that includes students of different ages and backgrounds would need to be conducted for more reliable results. In addition, students were chosen at random within a small group. These students were already filtered out by English class that they chose to take. This study did not analyze how higher level English class (college preparation) or lower level English classes (work force preparation) might be able to use the features of a blended learning model. In addition, the formative and summative assessments were distributed to all students. This study only shows a small portion of those assessments which does not reflect the whole of seniors at this school where the research was done.

Finally, due to factors out of my control, the research was interrupted and delayed by several outside facts including school breaks, my absence from school, and the fall
musical. At least three of my participants were absent at some point during the instruction of this unit which also impacts performance results.

**Future Research**

After working with my research question throughout this unit, how can the use of formative and summative assessments be used to understand student achievement and learning within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended environment? I have developed several ideas for future research projects for both other researchers and myself. The first question I thought was essential to this topic was what do other models of blended instruction add to the English Language Arts classroom? This was the most important question that I had after completing the work I did for this unit. There are other models and variations of this type instruction; therefore, I would like to explore further what other types of blended learning would benefit the English Language Arts classroom. This type, the enriched-virtual, was a helpful start but there is also much potential for a rotation model or a self-blended model if the curriculum was strongly built and the assessments were structured in a way that benefits student learning goals.

The second top priority question I had was does more frequent formative instruction within a blended learning classroom increase the outcomes on the summative assessments? This was also a high priority question after the completion of this unit. I only used three formative assessments, primarily due to time constraints. It would have been interesting to see if the results were different if students were provided more opportunities for mastery of the skills I was instructing and teaching them on. This correlation of formative assessments to summative assessments is clear; further research on the integration of the two with a higher ratio of formative assessments is needed.
Another question that would benefit from additional study is can the same literacy skills be taught in a different content area or grade level blended classroom and can this instruction be effective? These literacy skills are important to other classes; therefore it is important to see if these skills can be assessed in other ways within other content areas or grade levels. In particular, there were only a few of many literacy skills assessed in this unit. Research is needed on what other content areas could assess and how they could do it successfully within a blended learning model.

An additional question related to student goal setting that would benefit from further research is would student personal data tracking and individual conferencing improve assessments throughout the unit? The work I completed revealed some interesting results about students following directions, learning independently, and understanding what they are learning when they are away from a live instructor. Further work would benefit educators in the areas just identified because these areas are essential to the work of blended learning. These are all strongly related to motivation; however, for the purpose of this study, I did not assess student motivation throughout this study, only briefly. Further research should look at how online learning is read by a student and understood. It should also monitor what students do while they are working independently and how they interpret directions reading from an online prompt. These answers would all strongly benefit a blended classroom instructor and students.

A final question that would benefit from further investigation is how can differentiation be further built into blended learning environments? One more long term question I had for further investigation is how more differentiation options, as shared by Tomlinson and Allan (2000), with many varieties of choice and student created learning
goals. This is important research that should be developed within any blended learning classroom; however, it is not a top priority when developing the curriculum. It is also helpful to research what further differentiation would do for learners as they work through the curriculum in a blended learning course.

**Use of Results for Future Classes**

Blended learning is a path that my school district is choosing to pursue for future school years. Many models have been investigated for various grade levels and content areas. The results of this study can be beneficial to the cohort of early adopters for this model at my school district. Some of the observations about behaviors by students working within a blended classroom can benefit any teacher transitioning to this type of instructional model. In addition, the literacy skills addressed and assessed were specific to English classes; however, the formative and summative work and observations are helpful examples for other classrooms to work with, use, adapt, or make changes to. These are universal to making significant changes within the traditional classroom; therefore by adopting these core instructional strategies into the classroom, other teachers in my district could benefit from these tools and how they were used online or in class. The results of this study will be shared with my school district administrators who are working on starting a blended learning slate of classes for the following school district. My hope is that they can use this data to make more informed decisions about the type of instruction, model of blended learning, use of formative and summative assessment, engagement of material, importance and types of feedback, and use of the online classroom.
Summary

In order to enhance my classroom to provide more meaningful learning experiences to my students, I investigated the research question, how can the use of formative and summative assessments be used to understand student achievement and learning within a 12th Grade Language Arts blended environment? I designed and implemented a four and a half week unit focused on formative and summative assessments revolving around two novels, *1984* by George Orwell and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. This work was done in a blended learning instructional setting where students had more freedom to work with their assessments in a way that personalized and differentiated learning for them. Blended learning is useful for classrooms that have strong formative and summative assessments and incorporates effective and integrated ways of using technology and multiliteracies. Literacy instruction in the 21st century involves a variety of ways to assess, instruct, and practice work with reading and writing for more authentic tasks to increase student work in those areas. Comprehension and students support are important factors to blended learning.

Blended learning in combination with literacy instruction that includes formative and summative assessment can benefit students if used with understanding and support by the teacher. I believe that there are benefits to blended learning instruction in the 21st century classroom but that multiple factors must be included in order for the classroom to experience success within this model. Blended learning instruction is difficult to teach a student but can be applied if strong methods of assessment are put in place to help students gain the 21st century skills they need in order to find the success and motivation to continue becoming lifelong learners in an unknown world and future.
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APPENDIX A

Backwards Design Template
## 1-Page Template with Design Questions

### Stage 1—Desired Results

**Established Goals:**
- What relevant goals (e.g., content standards, course or program objectives, learning outcomes) will this design address?

**Understandings:**
- Students will understand that...
  - What are the big ideas?
  - What specific understandings about them are desired?
  - What misunderstandings are predictable?

**Essential Questions:**
- What provocative questions will foster inquiry, understanding, and transfer of learning?

**Students will know...**
- What key knowledge and skills will students acquire as a result of this unit?
- What should they eventually be able to do as a result of such knowledge and skills?

**Students will be able to...**

### Stage 2—Assessment Evidence

**Performance Tasks:**
- Through what authentic performance tasks will students demonstrate the desired understandings?
- By what criteria will performances of understanding be judged?

**Other Evidence:**
- Through what other evidence (e.g., quizzes, tests, academic prompts, observations, homework, journals) will students demonstrate achievement of the desired results?
- How will students reflect upon and self-assess their learning?

### Stage 3—Learning Plan

**Learning Activities:**
- What learning experiences and instruction will enable students to achieve the desired results? How will the design
  - W = Help the students know Where the unit is going and What is expected? Help the teacher know Where the students are coming from (prior knowledge, interests)?
  - H = Hook all students and Hold their Interest?
  - E = Equip students, help them Experience the key ideas and Explore the issues?
  - R = Provide opportunities to Rethink and Review their understandings and work?
  - E = Evaluate their work and its implications?
  - T = Tailored (personalized) to the different needs, interests and abilities of learners?
  - O = Be Organized to maximize initial and sustained engagement as well as effective learning?
APPENDIX B

Blended Learning  Informal Chart
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student (A) John</th>
<th>Book Choice</th>
<th>FA #1</th>
<th>FA #2</th>
<th>FA #3</th>
<th>Disco #1</th>
<th>Disco #2</th>
<th>Disco #3</th>
<th>SA #1</th>
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<td>Student (B) Kate</td>
<td>Book Choice</td>
<td>FA #1</td>
<td>FA #2</td>
<td>FA #3</td>
<td>Disco #1</td>
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<td>Disco #3</td>
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<td>Student (C) Kevin</td>
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<td>FA #3</td>
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APPENDIX C

Research Journal Template
Blended Learning Research Journal

Date:

Type of instruction (describe how students got information today):

Online  In-class  Small group  Other

Notes:

Daily Learning Goal (Students will be able to...):

Assessment in progress currently (list FA or SA with detail):

Notes on student in-class work or assessments during today's class:

Notes on student online work or assessments during today's class:

Rating of student learning based upon daily learning goal:

Student A: 1 (struggling)  2  3  4  5 (mastering)
Student B: 1 (struggling)  2  3  4  5 (mastering)
Student C: 1 (struggling)  2  3  4  5 (mastering)
Student D: 1 (struggling)  2  3  4  5 (mastering)
APPENDIX D

Curriculum Overview
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int</th>
<th>Learning Goals</th>
<th>Essential Questions</th>
<th>Formative</th>
<th>Summative</th>
<th>Usage Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Modern World</td>
<td>Through analyzing author's choices (RL 12.3, 13.5) and theme (RL 12.2), students will develop a deeper understanding of the text.</td>
<td>1) Do individuals have the power to change the society in which they live?</td>
<td>Theme: FA 3</td>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>Model theme development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students will also be able to sequence and analyze informational texts related to the novels and make inferences about their connections to the real world (RI 12.1).</td>
<td>2) What are the methods that people use to gain control over other people?</td>
<td>Inferences: FA 2</td>
<td>Final Presentations</td>
<td>In-class discussion #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students will integrate and analyze multiple types of media, using text evidence to draw conclusions and summarize what they read (RI 12.1, 12.7).</td>
<td>3) How does a single group of people gain such total power in society?</td>
<td>Connected to Real World: FA 3</td>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>Read sample article for each: annotate and write test essay as a small group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students will use content that they have analyzed to write informative essays comparing the novel to current events (W 12.2a-d).</td>
<td>4) What happens to our identity when people in power take our privacy away?</td>
<td>Draw Conclusions: FA 1</td>
<td>Final Presentations</td>
<td>Model final project from a different unit (done last year). In-class discussion #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students will produce writing appropriate to the task and gather information from relevant sources to draw the conclusions (W 12.8, 12.9).</td>
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<td>Students will use many varieties of technology to research, write, publish, and collaborate on the writing pieces they create (W 12.8).</td>
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<td>Students will write online in short formative assessments and online or in class in final summative assessments (W 12.10).</td>
<td>FA 12.3</td>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>Submit writing on Schoology; share documents on Google; post writing on discussion thread.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students will engage in a variety of discussions, both in person and online with peers, partners, and the teacher (SL 12.1).</td>
<td>Online discussions</td>
<td>Online discussions</td>
<td>Online and in-class discussions</td>
<td>Online and in-class discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students will prepare for discussions by researching evidence from the novel portion they have been assigned (SL 12.16).</td>
<td>Online discussions</td>
<td>Online discussions</td>
<td>Online and in-class discussions</td>
<td>Online discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students will set clear goals for online discussion forums to help group members collaborate in a timely manner (SL 12.19).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group leaders will rotate. Model good discussion questions and bad discussion questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In a final presentation, students will gather multiple pieces of evidence to solve a problem they want answers for (SL 12.23).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence used in final presentations - rubric overview for final project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students will present information with a clear line of reasoning while using strategic use of media in their presentations (SL 12.17 &amp; 17.10).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Media tool will be shared with the class in a discussion - question will be posted to forum for peer and teacher feedback prior to work on final response.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

Apps for Formative Assessments
PicCollage (FA #1)


Wordsalad (FA #2)


Bubbl.us (FA #3)

APPENDIX F

Apps for Summative Assessments
Google Docs

https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/google-docs/id842842640?mt=8

Notability


Schoology

APPENDIX G

Summative Assessment #2 Student Slides
John’s Summative Assessment #2
However this ties together that our society is sadly turning into the public because everything is so technology based. There is no reason for us to pick up a book like the public in Fahrenheit 451.
Kevin’s Summative Assessment #2

Example 2

Example from US

These quotes show that even thoughts are subject to punishments.

In 1984...

1984

It is a big part.

In the United States, our freedoms are only important to everybody.

Question

How important is our definition of freedom?
Thinking

...is an important part of our language and getting punished for it would not be good for anyone.
June’s Summative Assessment #2

Do the three slogans exist in our world today?
A Level 3 Question from 1984

"War is Peace": Present in our world today?
- War on terror whilst life carries on in America
- Pres. Obama receives Nobel Peace Prize despite pursuit of war-fueling activities (Expanding Afghan war to Pakistan)
- Espionage Act - more focus on traitors during a war than spies

1st Slogan: "War is Peace"
- Doublethink
- True because of INGSOC
- Constant war, constant peace

2nd Slogan: "Freedom is Slavery"
- Doublethink
- True because of INGSOC
- Total freedoms = mind and body enslaved
- Recent restriction
- Party says removal of power = a free people

"Freedom is Slavery": Present in our world today?
- UN says what they do is for Freedom, some say it’s for the opposite
- Natural rights and privileges must be earned/worked for
- Convicted felons not allowed to vote.

"Ignorance is Strength": Present in our world today?
- 9/11 conspiracy theory - Wall St bankers and government rewarded for effects of 9/11

3rd Slogan: "Ignorance is Strength"
- Not knowing the truth is beneficial to optimism
- Winston’s job keeps citizens of Oceania ignorant of the truth
- Ignorance of citizens = strength to the Party
- No knowledge = No fear

These slogans are:
- All true statements because the Party says they’re true, even if contradictory
- Make it easy to have control over truth and reality
APPENDIX H

Dystopian Terms Worksheet
Dystopias: Definition and Characteristics

Utopia: A place, state, or condition that is ideally perfect in respect of politics, laws, customs, and conditions.

Dystopia: A futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control. Dystopias, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, make a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system.

Characteristics of a Dystopian Society
- Propaganda is used to control the citizens of society.
- Information, independent thought, and freedom are restricted.
- A figurehead or concept is worshipped by the citizens of the society.
- Citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance.
- Citizens have a fear of the outside world.
- Citizens live in a dehumanized state.
- The natural world is banished and distrusted.
- Citizens conform to uniform expectations. Individuality and dissent are bad.
- The society is an illusion of a perfect utopian world.

Types of Dystopian Controls
Most dystopian works present a world in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through one or more of the following types of controls:

- Corporate control: One or more large corporations control society through products, advertising, and/or the media. Examples include Minority Report and Running Man.

- Bureaucratic control: Society is controlled by a mindless bureaucracy through a tangle of red tape, relentless regulations, and incompetent government officials. Examples in film include Brazil.

- Technological control: Society is controlled by technology—through computers, robots, and/or scientific means. Examples include The Matrix, The Terminator, and I, Robot.

- Philosophical/religious control: Society is controlled by philosophical or religious ideology often enforced through a dictatorship or theocratic government.

The Dystopian Protagonist
- often feels trapped and is struggling to escape.
- questions the existing social and political systems.
- believes or feels that something is terribly wrong with the society in which he or she lives.
- helps the audience recognizes the negative aspects of the dystopian world through his or her perspective.
APPENDIX I

Articles from Summative Assessment #1
1984 Articles

Article 1


http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/14/books/review/Wheatcroft-t.html?_r=0

Article 2


http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/03/opinion/beale-1984-now/

Article 3


Kevin’s Article

Jacinto, J. (2015, Sep 18). The country where Big Brother is watching. Retrieved from

http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=79845&page=1

June’s Article


http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/george-orwell-sales-1984-rise-edward-snowden-477262
Fahrenheit 451 Articles

Article 1


Article 2


Article 3


John’s Article


Kate’s Article