

Article

A Literary Shadow Study

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Abstract: A shadow study can be an effective way to consider a student's experience in school. For teacher candidates, engaging in a shadow study can be a responsive approach supporting growing habits of translating theory into practice and making connections among course concepts, research, theory, and principles. When middle-level teacher candidates were unable to have field experiences in recent semesters due to COVID-19, they instead took part in a literary shadow study of a character in a novel for young adolescents. After taking running notes while reading, they connected aspects of the character (including thoughts, words, and actions) to research and principles about education for young adolescents. This was a collective case study to determine overall themes across two cohorts of teacher candidates' shadow studies. Each candidate's literary shadow study was a source of data, analyzed through discourse analysis. The AMLE standards for middle level teacher preparation were start codes; other codes were identified through data analysis. This study builds on the scant research on the shadow study procedure and presents evidence of teacher candidates' learning about young adolescent development as well as middle level structures, and how they connect these ideas to specific student experiences (in this case, fictional) and their own identities as teachers.

Keywords: middle level education; shadow study; book study; teacher education



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1. Introduction

During a shadow study, an observer follows a student in school and takes notes on the student's experiences. A shadow study can be an effective way to experience school from the student's perspective.

For teacher candidates, a shadow study can support growing habits of translating theory into practice and making connections among concepts, research, theory, and principles from their teacher education coursework. Teacher candidates at the middle level can consider a shadow study experience in terms of the AMLE standards [1]. Through a shadow study, teacher candidates are able to reflect on their coursework and field experiences and to discern their identities as teachers [2–6]. In a previous study [7], I explored how teacher candidates demonstrated their growing identities [8] as teachers through vision statements [9,10]. Here, there is a greater focus on how teacher candidates expand their understanding of young adolescent development as part of their identities as teachers. This focus on young adolescent development is a responsive approach for middle level teacher education, following the idea from the Association for Middle Level Education that educators “value and respect young adolescents” [11] (p. 8).

While teacher candidates in an introductory middle level course that I teach usually conduct a shadow study of a young adolescent as part of their field experiences, this was not possible in recent semesters when candidates did not have classroom placements due to COVID-19. Drawing on the idea of Rudine Sims Bishop [12] that literature can provide mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors, I designed a literary shadow study, through which teacher candidates “shadowed” a fictional character. This fictional character was August Pullman from *Wonder*, R. J. Palacio's 2012 novel [13].

The question that drove this study was: How do teacher candidates demonstrate their expanding knowledge for teaching through a literary shadow study?

2. Relevant Literature

The shadow study procedure that teacher candidates in my courses follow is based on a model pioneered by John Lounsbury. Lounsbury [14–16] conducted five national shadow studies of young adolescents between 1964 and 1990. In these studies, individual observers followed individual students throughout the school day. Each observer took running notes in approximate five-minute intervals related to “what the student is doing, the setting, and the observer’s notes or comments” [16] (p. 350).

More recently, Fisher [17], an educational researcher, spent nine days shadowing students. Fisher focused on learning environment and use of instructional time in his study of the schedules of three high school students. He tabulated how much time students in various classrooms spent engaged in different tasks like whole-class discussion, listening, reading, and writing. He concluded that the ways that students spend time in school matter for their motivation, learning, and achievement.

Other educators have taken part in shadow studies. Williamson and Blackburn [18] proposed several ideas for principals to gather data in schools. Among their ideas was a suggestion that a principal conduct a shadow study. They noted Lounsbury’s procedure [15] and encouraged principals to observe a student and then to interview the student, offering questions like, “What are some things about the school that you would change if you could?” (p. 65). Wiggins [19] shared a post from a high school teacher who spent two days shadowing two students. Clark and Clark [20] reported on a project in which they collaborated with a community agency to recruit parents and members of the community to take part in a shadow study of a middle school student. Participating observers attended a training session to learn about the procedure and the instrument, modeled after Lounsbury and Johnston [14].

Lounsbury [16] noted that, as interest in the shadow study procedure grew, one impact was that some teacher education programs began to require teacher candidates to engage in a shadow study of their own as they prepared to teach. More than fifty years ago, Cuony [21] advocated for teacher candidates to take part in a shadow study “as a means of understanding children” (p. 312) and to complement their learning on campus.

Leonard et al. [22] described how a shadow study was a pedagogical practice that supported teacher candidates to be boundary-spanning teacher educators, learning alongside young adolescents and teacher educators. The teacher candidates described in their paper focused on seeing the school day through a student’s eyes.

The teacher candidates in the two cohorts of this study did not conduct a traditional shadow study because they did not have traditional field placements. Instead, they conducted a literary shadow study. This was a different form of book study for these teacher candidates.

Other teacher educators have engaged teacher candidates in book studies. Sometimes, the focus of the book study is an informational text. For example, Hall [23] organized teacher candidates in literacy methods courses into book clubs. These candidates selected one of five texts about literacy and reflected on them as ways to explore their visions for teaching [9,10]. In some instances, a book study is organized around a work of fiction. In one example, Morawski [24] designed a book study in which teacher candidates read a fictional text. Then teacher candidates created multimodal scrapbooks to respond to the coming-of-age text. Similarly, I have engaged teacher candidates in a range of book studies. In one example, teacher candidates read novels for young adolescents and then create curriculum plans based in the novels. In another example, teacher candidates have written letter essays following Nancie Atwell’s [25] model as an example of a literary practice they can modify for their future classrooms.

For this literary shadow study though, my pedagogical goal was that teacher candidates would expand their knowledge of young adolescents through reading a novel and connecting details from the novel to concepts about teaching at the middle level. This approach to a novel study is similar to the way Varga et al. [26] positioned *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding in three higher education courses in Norway, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom so that students could learn about and discuss notions of citizenship;

some but not all of the students in that study were in teacher education programs. Sheppard et al. [27] developed several ideas for integrated and interdisciplinary middle level curricula anchored in a range of novels for young adolescents, following the idea that literature can provide readers with insights into the realities of young adolescents. While I had read *Wonder* previously with teacher candidates, the purpose for reading related to middle level curriculum; here, teacher candidates also read to understand the young adolescents and to discern their growing identities as teachers.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research draws broadly on standards for middle level teacher preparation [1] and characteristics from *This We Believe* [28] and *The Successful Middle School: This We Believe* [11]. This research also relates to the Middle Level Educational Research Special Interest Group's research agenda [29] in its focus on teacher candidate development. Within this framework, the characteristic that middle level educators "value and respect young adolescents" undergirds this research. As part of their preparation for teaching middle grades, the candidates in this study engaged in many experiences within their coursework to expand their knowledge base for teaching young adolescents. The literary shadow study assignment at the focus of this research required them to consider a young person's experiences in school.

The ways that candidates value and respect young adolescents inform and are informed by their emerging identities as teachers [8,30]. This study draws on Gee's idea that identities relate to the ways that people see, know, and interact with the world. Through the literary shadow study, candidates demonstrated how they saw, knew, and interacted with a fictional student and his experience in school.

Candidates may value and respect young adolescents in different ways. Four of these ways are growing understanding of young adolescent development, augmented teacher listening and noticing, application of middle level ideals, and enhanced identities as teachers. First, teacher candidates need to understand young adolescent development, in line with AMLE Standard 1. Second, candidates need to be able to listen to and notice students. Fisher [17] concluded his report on instructional time by noting, "You cannot get good at something you do not do" (p. 175). While Fisher focused on student learning with this statement, it also can apply to teacher candidate listening and noticing. Jacobs et al. [31] defined expertise in mathematical noticing as attending to students' thinking, interpreting their understandings, and deciding how to respond. Amador et al. [32] conducted a review of research on prospective teacher noticing and found a variety of frameworks in use. The teacher candidates in this study used an observation protocol as a framework to notice and note parts of the story. Additionally, candidates applied middle level ideals and enhanced their identities as teachers by focusing on the experiences of a young adolescent and reflecting on what they would do if they were the student's teacher. As Bishop and Harrison wrote, "Middle grades educators demonstrate that they value student by listening intensively to their students' works, observing their actions, and being attuned to their silences in order to actively respond to their needs" [11] (p. 12).

4. Method

This study took place within an introductory middle grades course that I taught across two different semesters. The teacher candidates in the study were enrolled in a regional public university in the Southeast United States. The goal of this study was to explore themes in the literary shadow studies across the participating teacher candidates [7] and how these themes related to teacher candidates' expanding understanding of young adolescents and their growing understanding of their identities as teachers. Together, these teacher candidates comprised a collective case study [33].

4.1. Population/Participants/Subjects

The participants were 30 undergraduate middle grades teacher candidates who were enrolled in an introductory middle grades course at the time of the study. These teacher candidates took the course in one of two consecutive semesters. They were preparing for initial licensure in middle grades education (grades 4–8). Each candidate selected two content area concentrations from English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Across the participants, there were 5 Black women, 1 Latina woman, 19 white women, 1 multi-racial man, and 4 white men.

4.2. Intervention/Program/Practice

Traditionally, teacher candidates in the course conduct one shadow study of a student in grades 6–8 and another shadow study of a student in grade 4 or 5. On the day of each shadow study, the teacher candidate observes a specific student and takes running notes on their day at school. They use an observation table, based on Lounsbury [14,15], with different columns for time of day, specific student behavior, learning environment, and comment. The adapted observation table is in Figure 1. Teacher candidates then use their observations to write a reflective and analytic paper.

Time	Specific Behavior	Environment	Comment

Figure 1. Shadow Study Table.

Instead of observing a young adolescent in a partner school, the teacher candidates in the present study observed a fictional character. While the pedagogical goals of this assignment remained consistent with those in a traditional shadow study, I adapted aspects in response to a new context. A description of the assignment and a description of the novel that was the basis for the adapted assignment follow.

4.3. The Assignment

Teacher candidates read the novel *Wonder* as the basis for their literary shadow study. Over the course of approximately three weeks, teacher candidates read the novel and took notes on different characters and actions that stood out to them.

Then they took these notes and wrote a paper in which they described August Pullman, the main character, and his experiences in school. They focused on interactions with teachers and peers that they had noticed in the novel. Then they analyzed the contents of the novel and connected aspects of August's character (including thoughts, words, and actions) to research and principles about education for young adolescents. Key course readings that teacher candidates drew on include *This We Believe* [28] or *The Successful Middle School: This We Believe* [11] and a research summary on developmental characteristics of young adolescents [34].

To modify the shadow study for the teacher candidates in this study, I first considered various instructional videos that take place in classrooms. Most of these, though, focus on teachers rather than students. I contemplated a few different films., Then I settled on the idea of teacher candidates reading a young adolescent novel as the basis of their shadow study. Some novels I considered include *New Kid* by Jerry Craft, *Counting by 7s* by Holly Goldberg Sloan, and *Restart* by Gordan Korman. Briefly, I thought about organizing candidates into book groups but decided that everyone would read the same novel to facilitate discussion and analysis. I settled on the novel *Wonder* because it had been popular with teacher candidates in other courses, because it took place over the course of a school year, and because it had different narrators. Next, I provide an overview of this novel.

4.4. The Novel

Wonder, by R. J. Palacio, centers on the character of August Pullman, who turns 10 during the events of the novel. At the start of the novel, August is about to begin fifth grade in the middle school at Beecher Prep in Upper Manhattan; this is important as August's mom has homeschooled him up to this point. August was born with several physical differences and has had multiple surgeries. During his year at Beecher Prep, August meets many new classmates and teachers. Mr. Browne, who teaches language arts, gives the students a precept, or saying, each month. A couple of these, like the precept, "When given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind" (p. 48) relate closely to the themes in the novel. The novel also includes August's parents and sister, Via, who is starting high school. The book takes place over the scope of one school year.

Palacio wrote the novel in first-person, and six different characters are narrators in eight parts of the book in this order: August, his sister Via, August's friend Summer, August's friend Jack, Via's boyfriend Justin, August (again), Via's friend Miranda, and finally August. An appendix includes the list of Mr. Browne's precepts as well as precepts selected by different student characters. The varying characters provide additional lenses on the main character of August; notably, all the narrators are young adolescents or teenagers. While August's parents and various teachers are characters in the novel, none of them is a narrator.

4.5. Procedure

For their literary shadow study, teacher candidates focused on the character of August Pullman. They took running notes as they read: these notes included events and passages in the book, settings for different events in the book, and questions and thoughts they had as they read. The observation table for their running notes was modified and is in Figure 2.

Page(s)/Chapter	Specific Behavior/Quotation	Environment	Comment

Figure 2. Table for literary shadow study.

In the "pages(s)/chapter" column, they noted pages in the novel where they noticed specific information that they considered to be relevant to the shadow study assignment. They noted pages from sections of the book that took place at school, at the homes of different characters, and in different characters' thoughts and feelings. In the "specific

behavior/quotation" column, they noted what characters did or said. In the "environment" column, they wrote where different scenes took place. In the "comment" column, they kept track of their running questions, responses, connections, and reactions to what they were reading. A few examples of teacher candidates' observations are shared in the findings.

4.6. Data Collection and Analysis

Each teacher candidate's literary shadow study (their observation notes and their paper) was a source of data, analyzed through discourse analysis [30]. Gee's approach to discourse analysis focuses on studying "saying, doing, and being in language" (p. 3). This approach also relates to identities, and the ways that teacher candidates demonstrated their growing knowledge of young adolescents and their reflections on the kinds of teachers [8] they wanted to be in response to this literary shadow study. Discourse analysis was appropriate to this study as the data sources were written documents; through repeated readings, I identified trends and nuances across teacher candidates' shadow studies. All teacher candidates together comprised a collective case study [33]. A collective case study was a good fit for the goal of analysis was to identify trends across candidates' data sources rather than to compare one teacher candidate with another. These trends informed the goal of the study to see how teacher candidates demonstrated their expanding knowledge of teaching through a literary shadow study.

The AMLE standards for middle level teacher preparation [1] were start codes; Standard 1, young adolescent development, and Standard 5, middle level professional roles, were most relevant to the purpose of this study. Other minor codes were identified through data analysis; these codes were related to one of the AMLE standards. One example of a minor code was student collaboration. Codes were then synthesized into main themes detailed in the findings.

The data source was a course assignment as indicated above. The shadow study assignment called on teacher candidates to address young adolescent development, middle level curriculum and instruction, and the student's interactions with peers and teachers. Accordingly, I do not include counts of how many teacher candidates addressed these elements as they were required. For this study, I was interested in the ways that teacher candidates read the book through these lenses: young adolescent development, middle level curriculum and instruction, and the fictional student's interactions with peers and teachers. I also noted "linguistic choices" [35] teacher candidates made, especially in the ways that they connected their reading of *Wonder* to insights for their teaching and their expanding identities as teachers.

5. Findings

I framed the research question for this study to inquire how teacher candidates demonstrated their expanding knowledge for teaching through a literary shadow study. Key areas in the findings relate to young adolescent development, teacher listening and noticing, middle level ideals, and teacher candidates' own emerging identities as teachers. These areas link back to the theoretical framework, grounded in ways that teacher candidates demonstrate value and respect for young adolescents through their expanding understanding of young adolescents and their growing identities as teachers. Teacher candidates wrote about and reflected on scenes involving teachers and students, scenes at school among students, and scenes that took place outside of school. They ended their papers with insights for their own teaching based on this literary shadow study.

The names below are pseudonyms for participating teacher candidates. I edited quotations from their shadow studies only for spelling and conventions.

5.1. Young Adolescent Development

Teacher candidates learn about adolescent development across four domains (physical, intellectual, emotional, and social) and about the ways that development in one domain impacts development in others. This area of the findings aligns with AMLE Standard 1 on young

adolescent development. Many candidates took notes on aspects of development as they read the book. One of Dolly's entries on the observation table, shown in Table 1 is an example:

Table 1. Excerpt 1 from an Observation Table.

Pages/Chapter	Specific Behaviors/Quotation	Environment	Comment
43	August introduces himself to the class	Ms. Petosa's class	Didn't look up, had to be asked to speak up (social, emotional)

In another example, Stevie noted a passage when the character expresses ideas about Halloween costumes (Table 2):

Table 2. Excerpt 2 from an Observation Table.

Pages/Chapter	Specific Behaviors/Quotation	Environment	Comment
Costumes	No specific behavior. August was just sharing how he feels about Halloween. He said that he loves it so much because he can wear a mask, and everyone seems him as regular. They do not stare, etc.	There was no specific environment.	Reading August say that he loved Halloween so much all because people cannot see his face is heartbreaking. I hope today will be a good day for him since it is his favorite holiday.

Candidates drew on examples like these to inform their reflective papers.

In her paper, Loretta expressed, "*Wonder* is a book that provides its readers with a deep insight to what the inside of a middle school looks and feels like, and touches on all parts of young adolescent development". Carole opened her paper with the statement that, "August 'Auggie' Pullman is not your ordinary ten-year-old". The word "ordinary" here picked up on the opening chapter of the book, "Ordinary", in which August uses the word over and over to describe how he sees himself before revealing that he knows that few others see him as ordinary.

Statements like these showed that teacher candidates were able to connect points in the novel to course concepts and principles.

In reading *Wonder*, they noticed how August was described as being smaller in stature than his peers. Stevie, for example, picked up on the detail that August had undergone more than twenty surgeries and that he was self-conscious in response. She related that to ideas she had read in Caskey and Anfara [34]. Duane took notes on a scene in which August and other students are gathered around a table to watch their teacher demonstrate a scientific phenomenon. In the novel, August looks up and notices that he is alone on one side of the table and realizes that his classmates are hesitant even to stand next to him. In his analysis, Duane wrote, "because of August's physical appearance, many other children didn't want to engage in activities with him due to fear of touching him. As a ripple effect, this type of behavior will greatly affect August's development in other forms." Michael explicitly wrote about August as a student with special needs, but most teacher candidates generalized from August's experiences to all kinds of students.

The social dynamics provided many plot points in *Wonder*, and teacher candidates wrote about several incidents. They noticed that August was initially shy at school. Early in the story, August faces a common middle school challenge of finding a seat at lunch. Luckily, a student named Summer invites him to sit with her. One teacher candidate, Otis, connected this scene to August's shyness when he wrote,

At lunch, August sat with one girl. This is a common theme with him, he seems to only interact with one friend at a time. They got along well and created a list of people they would like to eat lunch with. This is because August only wants to feel safe.

Teacher candidates wrote about social dynamics between August and other characters like Jack, who became a friend, and Julian, who was an adversary.

The dynamic between August and Julian prompted reflection for many teacher candidates. At the start of the novel, August, who is a huge fan of Star Wars, has a braid; this braid is like the braid that a Padawan, or Jedi apprentice, wears to show their status. Julian, also a Star Wars fan, has seen the braid. At one point in the book, August cuts it off. In her shadow study, Diana realized this was a pivotal moment for August when she wrote, “August wanted to remain invisible in class so one day he just cut [the braid] off. When Julian brought this to August’s attention, it hurt his self-esteem.” Phoebe also commented on the ways that Julian bullies August throughout the novel and how that dynamic related to his social development at school.

Other teacher candidates connected parts of the story that take place out of school or reflect characters’ thoughts and feelings to young adolescent development. They read how August depends on his parents yet seeks more independence as the school year progresses. A key event in the novel is when August joins his classmates on an overnight field trip to a nature center, a fifth-grade tradition at Beecher Prep. Dolly wrote,

Originally, August struggles with the idea of independence versus security. He relies heavily on his parents and finds a sense of security in them. As the book progresses, his emotional development does as well. He shows that he is attempting to move toward independence. A perfect example of this is when August chooses to go on the nature retreat even though he has never (successfully) spent a night away from his parents.

This episode illustrated how a young adolescent showed his growing maturity by choosing to be less dependent on his parents. Insights like these show how teacher candidates connected concrete actions in the book to concepts that at first seem abstract to them. Often in class, we discuss concepts and consider what those concepts look like, sound like, and feel like in practice [36]. Teacher candidates connected concepts like independence and peer interactions to specific episodes in the novel.

Teacher candidates took notes on August’s emotional and social development, and they also wrote down scenes in the novel that showed August and his classmates engaged in academic tasks. August arrives at Beecher Prep well-prepared academically. In an early scene when Jack, Summer, and Julian give August a tour of the school, August comments that he may want to take a science elective. This signals to the other kids that he is serious about academics. Reacting to some chapters about the science fair, Tina wrote that August “wants to be challenged with his education and did so with his science project by not choosing something that was easy like a volcano”. Many of their insights about August’s intellectual development also relate to middle level ideals, as I will elaborate below.

5.2. Teacher Listening and Noticing

Teacher candidates showed their emerging knowledge of teaching in the ways that they seemed to align themselves with the educator characters in the novel. This finding relates to AMLE Standard 1 on young adolescent development and to AMLE Standard 5 on professional roles. Teacher candidates highlighted examples of how the educators noticed and didn’t notice students and their dynamics in school. As an example, they highlighted Mr. Tushman, the middle school principal in *Wonder*. Teacher candidates noticed how he welcomes August to Beecher Prep and how he monitors August, sometimes from afar, throughout the year. One of Melissa’s observations, shown in Table 3 was from the latter part of the book:

Table 3. Excerpt 3 from an Observation Table.

Pages/Chapter	Specific Behavior/Quotation	Environment	Comment
285	Mr. Tushman tells Auggie that he knows about all of the trouble between him and Julian. He tells him that middle school directors know all	This is in Mr. Tushman's office with just the two of them	This just kind of shows how middle schoolers think that they are getting away with a lot and that teachers don't see as much as they do.

In her paper, Tori commented on how Mr. Tushman did not tolerate bullying from Julian toward August and elaborated that she would not stand for bullying either.

They also wrote about Ms. Petosa, one of the teachers. On the first day of school, Ms. Petosa shares some information about herself before inviting each student to do the same. Tina liked how Ms. Petosa did that. Many candidates reflected on what happened when August shared his interest in Star Wars. When Julian asks August if his braid is a Padawan braid, Ms. Petosa responds positively, thinking that August, the new student, is discovering a classmate who shares an interest. However, Julian asks another question related to Star Wars. August realizes that Julian has an unkind intent. Ms. Petosa, however, shares that she does not know much about Star Wars; as a result, she doesn't understand that Julian's second question almost amounts to covert bullying. Kate wrote how Ms. Petosa "was unaware of the remark and cruel intention by Julian. She had assumed the two were bonding, but it was exact opposite". Melissa also inferred that Ms. Petosa did not realize what Julian "was hinting at".

Loretta showed understanding of how important it is for teachers to notice each of their students. She wrote,

August never really came out and said to any of his teachers how he was feeling, or that he was scared, but it was still apparent. It was insightful for me to read about his development emotionally and intellectually throughout the book, because this is something that happens every day in the eyes of middle grades educators.

Likewise, Tina declared that "We automatically assume that [students] are doing fine or that they don't have any questions since they choose not to speak up".

Teacher candidates realized that teachers need to notice students and to understand that students notice them. Patti picked up on a scene in which a teacher saw August for the first time. Given his physical appearance and many surgeries, the character is quite attuned to small shifts in facial expressions when meeting new people. Based on this scene, Patti wrote, "Having this new knowledge of the awareness of students made me understand that I have to be very aware of my actions and facial expressions towards students". At the same time, teacher candidates like Melissa commented that teachers often notice much more than students may realize.

Teacher candidates saw the need for teachers to understand aspects of young adolescent development in order to support each student. For example, Joni wrote,

These educators are those that understand young adolescents developmentally, practice qualities they want their students to imitate, have a research-based decision-making process, foster significant learning experiences, and overall use their profession to make a positive difference in the lives of young adolescents.

The experience of reading *Wonder* also allowed teacher candidates to see the teacher characters in the novel through the eyes of the narrators, all of whom were young people. These perspectives provided them rich insights into their own identities as teachers as well.

5.3. Middle Level Ideals

Teacher candidates related specific parts of the book to middle level ideals. Two themes in this category relate to the roles of teachers, following AMLE Standard 5, and

aspects of curriculum and instruction, relating to AMLE Standards 2, 3, and 4. They had many insights about the teaching and learning experiences they read about at Beecher Prep.

Many teacher candidates commented that Mr. Tushman, the administrator, was an advocate for August and the other students; this is a specific characteristic mentioned in their course text [11,28]. They connected plot points to the general concept of what it means to advocate for students, and what it looks like to value and respect young adolescents. They also saw how teachers can support and challenge students academically and socially. Teacher candidates also responded positively to Mr. Browne's precepts, or sayings. In the novel, Mr. Browne introduces a new precept each month. Ella wrote,

The way Mr. Browne has set up the precepts is he allows students to make an assumption of what they think his precept means and each student is going to have a different point of view. This allows students to explore many answers and not just one.

Patsy included this entry on her observation table, shown in Table 4:

Table 4. Excerpt 4 from an Observation Table.

Pages/Chapter	Specific Behavior/Quotation	Environment	Comment
65	Mr. Browne poses the precept, 'Your deeds are your monuments.' August had a lot of valuable inputs on this Assignment.	Mr. Browne's class	I love how Mr. Browne is utilizing the precepts to engage with his students.

Joni noted how this way of teaching made Mr. Browne a role model.

Mr. Browne and his precepts remind me of this (ideal) type of educator. He took this real-world concept and molded it to fit into his classroom by giving his students the space and time to talk about what the precepts meant to them.

Etta also noticed how the precepts Mr. Browne selects allow for integrated and interdisciplinary learning.

Other ideas related to learning include some of the projects that August and his classmates create during the story. Teacher candidates commented on the science fair and Egyptian museum projects that the students in the novel took part in. Dolly noted the role of student choice with these projects, and Melissa mentioned possibilities for creativity. Etta responded enthusiastically to the Egyptian museum project in the novel because:

It showed how an interdisciplinary curriculum can be viewed through a student's eyes and that the students can actually make the connection that they are related. It challenged the students because they had to design and make a model of the artifact. They were fully involved and active in the learning. I have already mentioned how this is what curriculum should look like-integrative, exploratory, challenging, and relevant. I want to be able to integrate other content into my class and create curriculum that is meaningful for all students. That is why this experience has informed me while I am working to become a teacher.

Etta cited Bishop and Harrison [11] with this sentence as she directly referenced keywords for middle level curriculum. Loretta also wrote about the possibilities she saw for project-based learning after reading *Wonder*. Many teacher candidates ended this literary shadow study with more ideas about how they could enact dynamic middle level teaching and learning.

5.4. Identities as Teachers

Most teacher candidates identified primarily with the educator characters in the novel. These increasing identities as teachers align with AMLE Standard 5 on professional roles. In his observation table, Sam took notes as if he were a teacher in the novel along with

August and other characters; his use of “I” in the table reflects how he read himself as an educator into the story. Most teacher candidates expanded on their identities as teachers in the paper and did not take specific running notes on this topic. In his paper, Scott wrote about how he remembered being in middle school and used the experience of reading the novel to remember why he wanted to be a teacher.

Reading this book took me back to my memories in middle school. So many people hate middle school because of how awkward they felt and the moodiness they could not escape. I did not enjoy my time in middle school, but that is exactly why I feel that I can make a big impact on the lives of middle school students.

Scott’s comment is evidence of his expanding identity as a teacher and how he values and respects young adolescents. When Joni noted the importance of teachers listening to student conversations, she used “we” and included herself as a teacher: “One of my biggest insights from reading this book is how aware of student conversations we need to be.”

Etta responded positively to the literary shadow study by documenting insights for her teaching. These ideas reflect her expanding identity as a teacher.

I have learned that I want to be a teacher who makes a difference, connects learning to other classes and the real-world, and offers an inclusive and welcoming environment for my students. While I did not get to shadow a student in real life, I have still learned to continuously look for developmental cues and instances where I may be able to step in as an adult advocate for a student who needs help and guidance.

Teacher candidates like Natalie acknowledged how teachers can be advocates and role models for students. Patsy highlighted Mr. Browne as a role model before reflecting on herself as a teacher, stating that Mr. Browne “does an excellent job of being that model for his students and I would like to inspire the same positivity and kindness in my own students as young adolescents need adult advocates to support them wholeheartedly”. Dionne, in a related vein, wrote, “After reading *Wonder* and stepping into August’s shoes I want to help each child grow in their talents as I teach them”. Kim, through the student characters in the book, had a better grasp of how to teach students with different abilities, interests, and skills. Sam offered ideas for how he would support August based on his reading of *Wonder* and course materials.

6. Discussion & Implications

The literary shadow study was an adaptation I made to preserve candidates’ ability to “shadow” a student, albeit in a book rather than in a classroom. There were some affordances of this format: candidates read about characters in out-of-school settings, gained different insights on the main character since the book was written with multiple narrators, and had the ability to read or re-read at their own pace. This adapted shadow study provided a worthwhile complement to a traditional shadow study, during which each teacher candidate follows a student’s schedule for a minimum of four hours. Even the most rapid readers spent more time reading *Wonder*, so the additional time to read was a factor in this literary shadow study. Through analysis, I identified four main findings, each of which aligns with one or more of the standards for middle level teacher preparation [1] and each of which demonstrates aspects of teacher candidates’ expanding knowledge for teaching. This literary shadow study was a responsive approach to middle level teacher education because it allowed teacher candidates to demonstrate understanding of course concepts in an analytical and reflective way.

This study builds on the scant literature on the shadow study procedure. It was a valuable way for teacher candidates to extend their learning about young adolescents [21]. This study builds on the literature on a shadow study procedure [14–17,20,22], and it adds to the literature on book studies with teacher candidates [23,24,26]. The study presents evidence of teacher candidates’ learning about young adolescent development as well as middle level structures, and how they connect these ideas to specific student experiences

(in this case, fictional). The MLER SIG research agenda [29] called for more research on young adolescent development, and this study extends the literature base on how teacher candidates can demonstrate their expanding knowledge for teaching young adolescents.

In response to the research question, this study provides evidence that teacher candidates demonstrated their expanding knowledge for teaching by highlighted young adolescent development, teacher listening and noticing, middle level ideas, and their own identities for teaching through this pedagogical activity. Based on Gee's [8] idea that identities relate to how people see, know, and interpret events around them, I analyzed the ways that teacher candidates took notes on the story and then interpreted and analyzed these events as teachers. This study contributes to the field in its adaptation of a shadow study procedure and in its findings related to teacher candidates' understanding of young adolescents and their own identities as teachers.

Many candidates took several notes on social and emotional dynamics in the novel; they reflected on how important these areas are for young adolescents. They made connections between the social environment and the learning environment. Drawing on examples of teachers like Ms. Petosa in the book, they recognized their roles in shaping not only curriculum and instruction, but also learning environments and social dynamics in the classroom. By reading *Wonder*, they connected broad course concepts to specific characters and settings.

One great benefit of a literary shadow study is that the novel included characters' thoughts and feelings. Teacher candidates made extensive running notes related to characters' emotions and social dynamics. As a result of seeing these rich insights, teacher candidates and I have continued to explore excerpts from *Wonder* through these lenses and to discuss how we would react if we were teachers in the novel.

Teacher candidates demonstrated their value and respect for young adolescents through this literary shadow study. They took notes from perspectives respectful of the student characters and the teacher characters. They analyzed actions in the novel to connect to the importance of dynamic learning and a safe learning environment. They noted examples of teachers acting as advocates for students. Their value and respect for young adolescents came through in the ways that they wrote about young adolescent development and teacher listening and noticing, relating back to the theoretical framework.

I recommend that teacher candidates have opportunities to consider a student's perspective of middle school to inform their knowledge and skills for teaching, their understanding of young adolescent development, and their identities as teachers. Focusing on one specific character in this shadow study allowed them to make insights on teaching young adolescents and to see how diverse young adolescents are. This exercise positioned these teacher candidates as teachers. They were able to analyze aspects of the novel along teacher–student dynamics and to reflect on different parts of the story through *This We Believe* [28] or *The Successful Middle School: This We Believe* [11] as well as other research. The procedures, involving observation notes and then a paper, provided candidates with time and space to notice young adolescents and then analyze and reflect on how what they noticed connected to important concepts and insights for teaching. They provided concrete examples of ways they value and respect young adolescents in the actions they noted in their running notes and in their analyses and reflections. The literary shadow study supported teacher candidates in becoming responsive educators for young adolescents: they gained knowledge and insights on young adolescents and on themselves as teachers.

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