Abstract

This qualitative action research study shares the experiences of students and their teacher when blogging and small group discussions are implemented as ways to analyze literature. The 24 research participants are part of a 10th grade Honors English class in a suburban school of approximately 1600 students in an affluent district situated in northeastern Pennsylvania. The purposes of this study are to ascertain what effects blogging had on in-class discussion, as well as students’ ability to analyze literature and also to learn what strategies and structures best facilitated high level, student-centered discussions.

This study is not meant to compare the effects of online asynchronous discussion with in-class discussions but rather to determine what kinds of discussion strategies best facilitate high levels of participation in analytical literary discussions. Data is gathered using surveys, observations, student work, participation checklists, and discussion tracking sheets. This study suggests that students benefit from time to prepare for in-class discussions and that individual participation increases when students are made aware of their own individual participation levels. In addition, findings also indicate that effective student-centered discussions are more likely to occur when the teacher acts as a facilitator and provides scaffolding for participation and opportunities for preparation. It is also apparent that students deepen their initial understanding and response to literature by discussing their responses with others and through examining textual
evidence, making connections, stating themes, and recording insights about the
text and characters through cooperative learning.