The Reading Experience: How Struggling and Non-struggling Readers Differ

Jessica Garrett
St. John Fisher College

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The Reading Experience:
How Struggling and Non-struggling Readers Differ

By

Jessica Garrett

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Supervised by

Dr. Joellen Maples

School of Arts and Sciences
St. John Fisher College

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Abstract

The reading experience is a socially charged multifaceted event. During the reading experience, students are engaged with text and forming their own identity as a reader. Often teachers help form the identity of readers based on achievement. This study asked the question; how does the reading experience differ between struggling and non-struggling readers? Research was done in Moo, New York (pseudonym) with a group of six students; 3 struggling readers and three non-struggling readers. Through surveys and interviews there was a distinct difference between the students understanding of the reading process, emotional connection to text, and connection to instruction. These findings call for teachers to evolve their instructional practices to meet the needs of individual students throughout the reading experience.


The Reading Experience:

How Struggling and Non-struggling Readers Differ

In order to be successful in our world today it is pivotal that children be able to 'read' (Gables, 2008). The ability to read is not an option, but an expectation of all children throughout their school career. However, there is no longer one literacy, but multiple literacies that children need to be well versed in (Cohen & Cowen, 2011). To be well versed in literacies children need to be able to transition through the multiple literacies and use them appropriately (2011). It is through this expectation that "school literacy" has become one of the most important types of reading and writing (White, 2009). Due to this expectation it is now common practice to rank children as readers or struggling readers dependent upon their abilities.

Teachers are the individuals largely responsible for labeling children into these two categories (White, 2009; Spear-Swering, 2009; Tobin, 2008; Padak & Potenza-Radis, 2010; Compton-Lilly, 2008). Frequently, expectations of students and the label of a struggling reader coincide. Those students whose discourses do not align perfectly with the schools discourse are often "marginalized" through "school literacies" (White, 2009). It is when the classroom environment closely reflects students' lives at home that they are most successful (Padak & Potenza-Radis, 2010). Once a child is motivated it is important to understand how that child processes literacy. Motivation is a key factor in literacy learning and struggling readers may process differently than on-level readers (Compton-Lilly, 2008). Lastly, children's "ways of being" or cultural/community background affect the way that they learn literacy (2008). As teachers, it is necessary to value each and every difference that a child brings into the classroom (2008).

Under these premises it is crucial that the experiences of struggling and non-struggling readers be further investigated. There is a clear difference between the reading experiences of
struggling and non-struggling readers. Without more research, struggling readers will continue to be marginalized in the classroom environment. As teachers, it is important that students’ differences be acknowledged and best practices created to support these differences. In order to know more there needs to be more information on how readers at-home literacy experiences, interest in reading, reading level, and teacher instruction affect student motivation. Comparing the similarities and differences between struggling readers and non-struggling readers through these contexts created more evidence to support how literacy learning is happening for these students. This information can then guide teachers, parents, and even students on how to support learning best for each student. The focus of the research identified how the reading experiences differ between struggling readers and non-struggling readers. The definition of struggling reader that was used is students identified as reading below grade level by their teacher through assessment.

Under these premises the following research was performed to further analyze the reading experience. How does the reading experience differ between struggling and non-struggling readers? Struggling and non-struggling readers’ differ in their reading experiences. Research was done in Moo, New York (pseudonym) with a group of six students; 3 struggling readers and three non-struggling readers. Through surveys and focus groups it was found that there was a distinct difference between the students understanding of the reading process, emotional connection to text, and connection to instruction. These findings call for teachers to evolve their instructional practices to meet the needs of individual students throughout the reading experience.
The Reading Experience

Theoretical Framework

It is important that every child be literate, yet it is often difficult to define exactly what that means. Literacy is an all-inclusive term; it encompasses the ability to speak, read, and write. However these three things must be done with understanding and comprehension (Kucer, 2009; Gee, 2001). Literacy continues to evolve daily and is always changing, thus it is deictic. Not only is it important to be able to have these abilities, but it is further complicated by being able to do these things in your secondary discourse (Gee, 2001). Discourse is the way in which people identify the use of language (thinking, acting, developing meaning,) in their "social network" (Gee). People are born into their primary discourse, which is the discourse of their family or community. Their first parts of literacy acquisition come from this immersion in their primary discourse. Children are born into this society that is fully literate and first acquire language through the desire to communicate with the users of their primary discourse (generally parents).

Literacy acquisition as a whole encompasses the child's participation in literacy events (Goodman, 2001). Children learn to read and write through their environment. It has been shown that children mirror reading and writing practices such as how to hold the book or which way to write lines on a page (Kucer, 2009). They acquire the basic practices by watching what their parents do. These basic practices are the start of the child’s reading experiences. The way that children experience reading has been proven to be socially and culturally specific (Meier, 2003).

There is strong evidence that children learn and acquire language in very culturally specific ways, which aligns with the socio-cultural theory of literacy acquisition (Meier, 2003). It is possible and very probable that every child will acquire language at home in a different
manner. Some children may acquire language through the reading of numerous books, while others may learn purely through oral language (Meier, 2003). Being a member of society places each individual person as a member of a certain group. Within each group, there are set guidelines and requirements for being a functional member of their group (Kucer, 2009). These guidelines then translate into a child’s reading experience.

The reading experience is driven by the socio-cultural theory based around the child’s emotion and reaction to the literacy events in the classroom. It is these literacy interactions in the classroom, which are socially charged, that create the identity of the student as a reader. The idea that a student’s identity is in fact socially constructed is the underlying principal of the social constructionism theory (Tripplet, 2004). Social constructionism theory is the idea that a child’s identity in literacy based events is socially charged. This theory is based around the child’s emotion and reaction to the literacy events in the classroom. The identity of the reader is pivotal to the experiences the child has with literacy. At an early age students begin to identify themselves as struggling or non-struggling readers. Within the classroom, simultaneously teachers are also labeling students either struggling or successful readers.

Teacher’s own perceptions of readers can affect the reading experience of their students. Cultural variation is often overlooked in classrooms. Sometimes teachers become frustrated when children are having trouble pulling meaning from text or stories. Commonly children are labeled as failures, yet it is generally a cultural variation that is causing this disconnect. This experience can negatively affect children's perspectives of what a good reader is. This socially constructed view of reading is constructed by what they see and what is modeled by the teacher (Hall, 2007; Wilfong, 2008; Compton-Lilly, 2008; Allington & Baker, 2007). If children
perceive themselves as struggling, it may affect their ability to try and therefore they will identify themselves as a "struggling reader."

The second lens that reader is being examined through is that of discursive identity theory. This theory states that the reader is in charge of their own identity, which is socially constructed (Hall, 2007). The reader then acts or thinks based on what others will think of them. This conflict of identity is a clear distinction between struggling and non-struggling readers. Children generally are concerned about what their classmates think and are unwilling to admit that they are in fact a struggling reader (Wilfong, 2008).

Children's perspectives of what a good reader is are constructed by what they see and what is modeled by the teacher (Hall, 2007; Wilfong, 2008; Compton-Lilly, 2008; Allington & Baker, 2007). Students identify themselves as readers based on teacher modeling of good readers and other classmates (Hall, 2010). This lens will be used to examine relationships within the classroom and monitor teaching styles used with struggling readers. Struggling readers often ‘marginalize’ their own success based on the fact that they wish to protect themselves from a negative identity (Hall, 2010). It is the combination social influence by teachers, peers, and parents and identity of the reader that make up a student’s reading experiences.

**Research Question**

Given that literacy is a social practice and learning occurs during social interaction, this action research project asks, how does the reading experience differ between struggling and non-struggling readers?

**Literature Review**
The subsequent literature review synthesizes current research involving motivation and the factors that affect students’ reading experiences. The first section will review the multiplicity of motivation in reading and definitions of the term. The following three sections will then discuss research that identifies areas commonly linked to motivation during the reading process. The first section will explore the influences of interest and student choice. The second section will review self-concept and its effect on motivation. The third section will identify the relationship shown between reading achievement and motivation. The culmination of this review will then give instructional based programming to support the above themes. Although there has been a great deal of research on motivation in students, there is still a missing link between the reading experience of motivated and unmotivated students.

**The Multiplicity of Motivation**

Much attention in reading has been put on the study of a student’s cognitive abilities such as comprehension, but recent research has “pushed” beyond cognition and into the actual activity presented to students (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Motivation has been extensively researched by educators and professionals alike (Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick, & Littles, 2006). The beginnings of motivation were rooted in behaviorist theories through Skinner (1953). Behaviorist theory focuses on a limited pretense that behavior is shaped by both positive and negative reinforcement. This theory led much to be desired as it did not account for the very social aspect of motivation. Early definitions of motivation focused solely on a person’s ability to engage in a task and their “persistence” to complete it (Gambrell, 2011; Ulper, 2011).

The research presented below is grounded in Vygotsky’s (1977) beginnings, which addressed the need for a shift from just cognition to the sociocultural facets that contribute to
development. Vygotskian theory has three major focal points: psychological functions are social and cultural in nature, cognitive processes are taught through social interaction, and learning is “fostered” by higher ups in the community. This concept is the building block for many researchers’ motivational studies, which is why way motivation has become a multifaceted term.

Research defines motivation in a multitude of ways. Motivation according to Gambrel and Codling (1996) is “goal directed behavior that is social, cognitive and affective factors” (p. 2). Similarly, Boyd (2002) stresses the importance of the social aspect of motivation. Boyd states that language and social interaction are the actual framework for motivation theory.

The power of social interaction on reading is shown through studies by Pitcher, Albright, Delaney, Walker, Seunarinesingh, Mogge, Headley, Ridgeway, Peck, Hunt, and Dunston (2007) and Hopper (2005). Through the use of surveys with short answers and multiple choice, both studies gathered information on students’ motivation to read. Motivation was strongly influenced by the opinions of students’ peers, family, and teachers. These three sources support the strong social aspect of reading. Hopper (2005) further supports the claim of reading as being social through the environmental resources provided in the data. The top book choices of students were Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings, which were both out on film during the study. Society therefore influenced students’ decision to read books that were popular in the media.

In comparison, there is also substantial research done based on the identity theory. Similar to sociocultural theory, the identity theory is connected to students’ interactions with those around them (Hall, 2010). Through these interactions students form their individual identities that are constantly changing as the environment around them does (Baker & Wigfield,
Students’ identities are affected by those around them and can change dependent on the situation or interaction they are in (Hall, 2010).

Research done by Hall (2010) supports the identity theory through the collection of data on teacher/student interactions. Based on observation and notes Hall noticed that students based their own identity of what a “good reader” was on how and what the teacher said. The teacher described a good reader as a student who “read a lot” and “paid attention.” The student then identified herself as a poor reader because she was unable to do the “things” that good readers do. Similarly Gambrell and Codling (1996) conducted research that aligned student’s self-concept to their value of reading. They took fifth graders and collected data about their self-concept through the Reading Survey (Cronbach, 1951-1988). It was found that students who viewed themselves as proficient had a high positive self-concept. Those with a low self-concept often viewed themselves as lacking skills citing “I worry about what other kids think about my reading almost every day.” and “When I read out loud I feel embarrassed/sad” (Gambrell & Codling, 1996, p.19). Therefore students with a low self-concept were less likely to view themselves as capable readers, often citing teacher modeled “good reader” behaviors as a reason.

The last lens that commonly grounded research was the engagement perspective with a focus on achievement motivation theory. Engagement perspective focuses on reading being cognitive, motivational, and social (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Students with low efficacy are less likely to engage in a task (Quirk & Schwanenglugel, 2004). This perspective is directly tied to achievement motivation through the idea that engaged readers are more likely to achieve and be motivated to achieve at higher levels.
The research of Applegate and Applegate (2003) showed that students who were engaged in the task given were more likely to achieve at higher levels. Students were given reading interest surveys and achievement tests to gauge their reading motivation. Students who showed interest and that were observed on task achieved higher scores (Applegate & Applegate). These students also showed higher levels of confidence in their proficiency of reading which connects directly to the identity theory. Students who are disengaged from text often acquire the label of struggling reader.

In White's (2009) study the focus is on the label of struggling reader and the consequences it has on the child's identity. White interacted with a student in a second grade class that was labeled a struggling reader. This reader had difficulty making sense of the school literacies. This struggle was caused by the narrow view of literacy learning that he was taught (White). The lack of cultural connection that the student felt in school was negatively affecting his ability to function on level in literacy learning (White, 2009). If student learning incorporated and included this student’s discourse and home experience he may have avoided the label of struggling reader (Allington & Baker, 2007; Triplett, 2007; White, 2009).

Throughout each lens there is one continuous connection to social interaction and its effect on students. Whether students are taking reading interest surveys, developing identities, or engaging in text there is a strong social component. Hall (2010), Pitcher et. Al (2007), Hopper (2005), and Applegate and Applegate (2003) all show a social connection to the cognitive processes of motivation. Students value their peers’, family’s, and teachers’ opinions (Hopper, 2005). They acquire knowledge of identities through language used at home and in the classroom (Hall, 2010). Lastly, achievement through teacher evaluation and perceived
engagement encourage or discourage high achievement (Applegate & Applegate, 2003). Motivation is still extremely difficult to define and measure.

Current research uses a broad spectrum of definitions for motivation. In more recent research, motivation and reading have become a commonly seen connection (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Often students are described as showing a lack of interest in reading tasks, which has come to be known as a lack of motivation. A lack of motivation seems to be visual as it is based on a child “appearing” to be “uninterested” and making little effort. It is difficult to measure motivation because it is so visual (Gilmore & Boulton-Lewis, 2009). Teachers have been heard saying, “if they would just try harder” or “they show no effort” about their students (Gilmore & Boulton-Lewis, 2009). This view directly links to another frequent description of unmotivated students which is a general “disengagement” from content being studied (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). In order to be engaged in text, students are first and foremost motivated (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Along with the motivation, there is weight also placed on the reader being “strategic, knowledgeable, and socially interactive” (Gilmore & Boulton Lewis, 2009, p. 96). These three skills are combined create a new definition of reading. In face most classrooms do not consider the multifaceted approach to the reading experience. In contrast unmotivated students are described as “lazy” (Gilmore & Boulton Lewis, 2009). This common misconception is attributed to the unmotivated students’ perceived disengagement with text. With laziness also comes a negative view towards tasks that involve reading (Fulmer & Frijters, 2011). Disengagement has frequently been mistaken for defiance or disinterest within the classroom. Students’ disengagement has long been a topic of discussion throughout literacy (Guthrie, Wigfield, Tonsk, Perencevich, 2004). There is a multitude of studies based on disengagement in the unmotivated student. However, it is difficult to measure motivation due to
it being attributed to how students appear (Applegate & Applegate, 2003). Due to the difficulty in measuring students appearance researchers have grounded studies based on the following measurable aspects of the reading experience. Researchers have used self-concept (intrinsic motivation), interest, reader achievement, and teacher instruction to support attributes for lack of motivation (Hopper, 2005; Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Wigfield & Guthrie, 2004). The following sections will summarize the research done in these four categories.

**Identity and the Reader**

Self-concept, identity, and self-efficacy are all terms common to the research of a student’s internalized processes of reading (Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Hall, 2010; Gambrell & Palmer, 1996). Reading is a very social aspect which has helped to form the three above terms. Identity is defined as “what people are like”, within this their discursive identity is formed based on their social interactions (Hall, 2010). When applied to reading discursive identities are based on peer and teacher interaction. Similarly self-concept is how students identify themselves as readers (Gambrell & Palmer, 1996). Self-concept is a socially charged form of identity. The way students view themselves as readers can in turn affect their own identity. Connected to a readers identity is also their self-efficacy, which is the belief of the readers own competence (Gambrell & Palmer). Students’ competence is constructed based on their view of what good readers do. Research has shown that competence in turn increases students’ intrinsic motivation, which may lead to increased proficiency in reading (Logan, Medford, & Hughes, 2010). The way a reader sees him or herself is interconnected within these terms. A student forms an identity, which in turn becomes their self-concept as a reader. The formation of this view of themselves directly affects their self-efficacy or belief in their own competence, which is now determined.
Hall (2010) studied multiple classrooms and collected data that supports the acquisition of identity through a student’s environment. She determined that students acquire identities of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ readers. The classroom teacher explained, modeled, and reinforced what ‘good readers’ do. Through conversations with students there was a clear expectation of what Mrs. Baker considered ‘good readers’ (Hall). Some students even expressed concern about answering questions about text for fear of not being seen as a ‘good reader’. Although these students identified on their surveys that they liked to read, they found a hard time identifying with the ‘good reader’ identity presented by the teacher.

Likewise, Gambrell, Palmer, and Codling (1996) found that student’s self-concept was strongly influencing their identity. When students answered a self-concept assessment they were found to have conflicting answers. Again, students who are identified as enjoying reading did not always consider themselves good readers. In contrast, there was also evidence found in the survey that supported some students who did not like to read also viewed themselves as ‘bad readers’ (Gambrell, Codling, & Palmer). This idea directly relates to students self-efficacy.

The concept of self-efficacy is the idea of a student’s perceived level of competence in the school curriculum (Pitcher, et al., 2007). Often identity can impact a student’s self-efficacy. Students use socially constructed identities such as teacher input on their ability as readers to construct their own competency (Hall, 2010). In Hall’s study a student (Nicole) identified herself as an ‘ok reader’ at the start of the research. Through Nicole’s interactions with the teacher and her parents, her identity slowly began to change. Since the teacher originally identified Nicole as a good reader, she did not often call on her or check in on her during class activities. Nicole began to view herself as a ‘poor reader’. Nicole’s parents suggested she speak
out more in school and began giving her advice on how to be a good reader. Nicole began to view herself as a good reader based on the interactions around her. The teacher began to interact with Nicole more because she sought out help more often as directed by her parents. The identity her parents helped her form changed the way the teacher saw her and she began to see her as a ‘poor reader’ because Nicole needed more guidance. The role of parents and teachers is a defining presence in students’ lives (Pitcher, et. al, 2007; Hall, 2010).

Students’ ability to persist through a task with confidence is based on their connection with the content. In research by Pitcher et. al (2007) and Fulmer and Frijters (2011) students were more likely to perceive themselves as successful when connected through the topic by choice or interest. Self-concepts of students in the surveys of Pitcher et. al directly coincided with their choice. Students who identified themselves as ‘poor readers’ were found to have a favorite book. While conducting the conversational interview it was apparent that students were engaged with text when it was a topic of their choice.

Fulmer and Frijters (2011) found similar connections in their work with students persisting through a difficult task. Students were presented with a passage to read. Students were all given a survey to align reading to choice, but some students received their choice and others did not. Those students that received their choice were more likely to persist through the task than those who did not. There is a valuable connection between student choice and the ability to persist through a task (Fulmer & Frijters). This connection is not surprising since students’ ‘feelings’ play an important role in their level of motivation (Gambrell, Codling, & Palmer, 1996).
Identity is clearly a factor in adolescent motivation because of the search to find their identity (Hopper, 2005). Adolescents surveyed for strongly motivated books that were issues based. The reasoning for this is that students feel connected to the reading and are trying to find themselves within it (Hopper). Issues-based books support the search for a new socially constructed identity that begins in the teenage years (Hall, 2010; Hopper). With overwhelming evidence that students desire to read declines as they progress through school it is important to connect with students (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006).

**Reasons Students Read**

Whether students are reading or not has been a subject of debate in literacy. At an early age students begin learning how to read in school (Mlekoglu, 2011). At this point it is crucial that students develop a sense of engagement to a task (Wigfield et. al, 2004). Engagement is the beginning of an attachment to reading which teachers try to develop into intrinsic motivation. Students that are intrinsically motivated to read shift from, “I have to do this assignment” to “I’m interested in this assignment” (Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Perencevich, 2006, p. 63).

Intrinsic motivation is the key to creating life-long readers. However, since intrinsic motivation is an internal, cognitive process it is difficult to measure and show improvement in intrinsic motivation (Gambrell, 2011). Studies have been done that show there are three main factors that influence students’ interests: choice, multiliteracies, and home connections.

Choice is a powerful tool to build student interest (Pitcher et. al, 2007; Hopper, 2005). Student engagement to text was stronger when given the choice of reading material (Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Pitcher et. al). Through the engagement theory, Guthrie and Davis discuss that
students were more apt to complete a task when empowered through choice. Hopper (2005) also found that students were more likely to read on their own when given a choice of what to read.

There are multiple influences on students’ choices of what to read. Popular culture played a role in student’s personal reading choices. At the time of Hopper’s (2005) research two popular movies had just been released, “Harry Potter” and “The Lord of the Rings.” The top two book choices of students for independent reading were also Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings. Both of these titles are also series books, which students were found to then be interested in after reading the first book. Mckool (2007) noted that other series influenced students’ motivation to read also. Students that were surveyed listed books such as Goosebumps and Babysitter’s Club as favorites. These books then acted as gateways into other books. Many times students read a book and seek out similar literature. The top choices of students in Hopper’s (2005) study reacted similarly. In fact all the literature in the top ten list were of a similar genre. Student recommendation of the latest genre of fantasy influenced student choice.

Recommendation is a powerful tool for encouraging student choice. Friends were the number one motivator for trying out a new book (Pitcher et. al, 2007; Hopper, 2005). Students stated that they were more likely to read a book if recommended by a friend (Mckool, 2007). In fact, numerous students on the reading interest survey admitted they chose a book only because a friend told them it would be enjoyable. Another influence on their reading choice was parental recommendation. One student said, “She knows what kind of books I like so she…buys me a bunch of books and she just puts them on my shelves” (Pitcher et. al, 2007, p. 392). Her parent buying the book was enough to entice her to give it a try. However, not all students valued their parent’s recommendation. There can be a struggle between what teenagers want to read and what parents deem appropriate (Hopper, 2005). The issues based genre is sometimes considered
inappropriate. Likewise parents have deemed children’s series such as Goosebumps and Babysitter’s Club as ‘trashy’ also (McKool, 2007). Although parent recommendation was listed as an influence on choice of book teachers were rarely cited as a source (McKool; Hopper, 2005). Students did mention if a book was a required reading for school, but expressed a disconnect between academic and pleasurable reading (Hopper).

Academic reading is still a widely used term in literacy learning. Teachers frequently focus on textbook reading in the school setting (Pitcher et. al, 2007). It is through this teacher misconception that multiliteracies are marginalized to students. The study by Hopper (2005) on students’ reading habits revealed that 61% claimed to be reading at home. On the contrary 93% claimed to be reading something at home (i.e. magazines, newspaper, and the internet). The discrepancy between these numbers supports that students are still being taught a narrow definition of reading. Students defined their own self-efficacy as readers using this narrow definition (Guthrie et. al, 2006). The definition they used was often based on limited information such as ability to handle difficult words and perceived difficulty of a passage. Students who marked that they rarely read in Pitcher et. al’s (2007) study were noted to be then talking in the conversational interview of spending time on the computer and reading magazines. Electronic literacies are one of the most popular forms of independent reading that students are engaging in (Pitcher et. al; Hopper, 2005). If given a choice, students are likely to choose a multiliteracy experience. Student choice of enjoyable experiences connects to Guthrie and Davis’s (2003) idea that engagement is stronger in pleasurable content. Magazines chosen by students were content based whether they were fishing or popular culture. In fact magazines were the most likely choice for students outside reading (Pitcher et. al, 2007). Multiliteracies are proven to be
shared with families and friends making them powerful social interactions to acquire literacy identities.

Students’ social interaction within the home influences student choice also. Students whose parents cited that they were avid readers were more likely to identify themselves as avid readers (Gambrell, Codling, & Palmer, 1996). In their Motivation to Read study 56% of students named home as the place they read their most interesting story. These students also claim that their parents are who taught them to read (60%) and that 75% of them talk to their family about reading. These positive experiences led students to have higher motivation scores on their survey. In this case, students showed positive self-concepts as readers.

In contrast, choice can be affected by differences in parent preference and choice (Gilmore & Boulton-Lewis, 2009). Parents who describe their child as appearing to be ‘lazy’ or to be ‘lacking effort’ failed to notice that students attributed difficulties as disinterest in the topic at hand. Again, students are more likely to choose activities that they are connected to or interest in (Fulmers & Frijters, 2011; Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Parent and student interest can sometimes be disconnected due to the misconception that reading is from a textbook or chapter book (Guthrie & Davis).

Student choice leads to a positive, engaged interaction with text (Hopper, 2005; Pitcher et. al, 2007; Guthrie & Davis, 2007). When students are engaged in their reading they are more likely to persist even with struggles (Fulmer & Frijters, 2011). Reading is rich with social interactions whether with other students, family, or teachers (Boyd, 2002). When students feel socially connected with their reading they are more likely to be self-determined and develop
intrinsic motivation (Guthrie et. al, 2006). Giving students choice results in increased engagement and high involvement, high interest reading.

**Reading Achievement and Motivation**

Reading achievement is often described using the cognitive abilities of a reader. The processes involve recognizing sound syllable, words, and converting them into spoken/written language (Ulper, 2011). Breaking reading into merely cognitive abilities discounts the social aspects of the reading experiences. The act of reading in school in fact is socially constructed and adds to the identity of high achieving readers (Hall, 2010). Cognitive abilities are an important part of the reading process. Students who have mastered reading strategies are more likely to view themselves as proficient and have increased self-efficacy (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). However, strategies do not stand on their own to predict reading achievement. Students who are reading on grade level texts are also able to make connections to their experience, which also adds to their self-efficacy (Unrau & Schlackman; Hopper).

Achievement can be seen as a predictor for motivation. As with any task students are less likely to be motivated to complete a task seen as difficult (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Struggling readers are less likely to want to interact with text when deemed unsuccessful. Many students have struggled for extended periods of time and see reading in a negative context (Hall, 2010). Removing the negative context from reading is a key part of the reading experience. One negative factor is the label teachers place on students of struggling readers. Due to the label of struggling reader, students may have low self-confidence in their ability (Howse, Lange, Farran, & Boyles, 2003). Low achievement and low confidence lead to low motivation to complete a task. Many times reading achievement and low motivation increase as students move through
elementary school (Melekoglu, 2011). Expectations increase as students move through school and the gap between struggling and non-struggling readers increases. Students in middle school are often expected to read at levels far beyond their achievement, which also negatively impacts their motivation to persevere through a task (Fulmer & Frijters, 2011). The gap between achievement and expectations adds to the stress of a struggling reader (Fulmer & Frijters).

Reading motivation can be defined as, “the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 405). Motivation is a multifaceted definition that intertwines cognitive processes with intrinsic and extrinsic forces. To further complicate the study of motivation, motivation itself is the main predictor of reading achievement (Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie, 2009). Research has shown that students who are motivated are more likely to be engaged with text. Students with an interest to read were motivated which leads to better text comprehension (Logan, Medford, & Hughes, 2010). Comprehension is often identified as the main predictor of understanding in reading. In turn it is due to a desire to comprehend text that readers have higher motivation to complete a task well (Taboada et. Al, 2009). Motivation is the key to students persisting through difficult tasks. The more relevant the subject matter the more likely a student also is to have an increased reading performance (Retelsdorf, Koller, & Moller, 2010). Cognitive skills and motivation are seen to be intertwined (Logan et. Al, 2011). Students with more of an attachment to the text at hand may be more apt to persevere, but needs further studying.

Boyd used excessively challenging text to help prove that interest, motivation, achievement, and persistence are all related. Students that worked slightly above their ability and were interested in their content were more likely to persist through a task. On the opposite
end, students with tasks that were too easy and didn’t align with interest, were unlikely to persist through a task. This study supports Logan et. al’s (2011) research that assessments of children’s reading achievement plays a pivotal part in motivation. Ability levels not being met in a classroom that affect intrinsic motivation. A lack of intrinsic motivation results in lower gains in reading achievement (Retelsdorf et. al, 2010; Logan et. al).

Much of the research done in this area shows a small variance between enjoyment and interest, but needs more information to be seen as fact (Logan et, al, 2010; Retelsdorf et. al, 2011). Motivation and achievement are definitely related but difficult to separate whether achievement affects motivation or motivation affects achievement. The research available lends more to be desired to make more connections to achievement and motivation. Again, due to the appearance/action based analysis of motivation as a whole it is still difficult to measure and compare factors of motivation.

**Classroom Instruction and Motivation**

School experiences are motivated through social interaction (Guthrie, Tonks, Perencevich, 2004; Scharlach, 2008). The approach that schools take to the curriculum can affect the way that students feel about reading (Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie et. al, 2004). Motivation in the reading curriculum is based on students’ choices of behavior. They can choose to persist through an activity or give up based on their connection to the content (Gambrel). Fostering children’s reading motivation is imperative to creating highly motivated learners. There are numerous factors that account for students’ choices to put forth effort in school. The first factor is a teacher’s preconceived notion of how students learn and are motivated. The main
factor is the instruction that the teacher uses in the classroom. (Guthrie et. al, 2004; Scharlach, 2008; Harlin, Murray, & Shea, 2010).

Teachers are faced with the difficult task of providing dynamic instruction that reaches all learners (Scharlach, 2008; Al-Barakat & Bataineh, 2011). Research shows that student interest is dependent upon effective teacher instruction (Al-Barakat & Bataineh). To prepare teachers to shape the minds of children, instruction begins with pre-service teachers and their preconceived notions of adequate instruction.

The beliefs of preservice teachers are defined through their attitudes, values, beliefs, knowledge of teaching, students, content, and the education process (Scharlach, 2008). The beliefs that teachers have, influences their ability to work with and motivate students (Scharlach; Guthrie, Tonks, Perencevich, 2004). Scharlach (2008) and Guthrie et. al worked with preservice teachers to gather data of what they perceive to be the most important aspects of education. The overwhelming majority in both studies agreed on the following: parental involvement, motivation, teacher efficacy, and reading materials.

There is a clear divide in the role of parents in educational practices (Scharlach, 2008; Guthrie et. al, 2004). In one study, teachers agreed parental involvement was pivotal, while in the other only 16% thought so. When teachers did agree parental involvement was important there was a pattern that they then removed some of the responsibility to teach struggling readers from themselves (Scharlach). Teachers preservice beliefs clearly affect instructional practices. Removing responsibility from themselves interferes with the child’s reading experience. Teachers who believed they were not solely responsible for students reading achievement had students with lower levels of achievement than those who felt it was their responsibility.
The Reading Experience

(Scharlach). Similarly those teachers that felt the relationship between parents of students was not imperative, are missing out on chances to educate parents (Al-Barakat & Bataineh, 2011). Parents play a very important social role in the literacy events of children. Involving parents allows teachers to help parents become more familiar with these literacy rich events.

Multiliteracies play an important role in the motivation of students. As previously mentioned 93% of students Hopper (2005) surveyed claimed to have read something at home. Technology is a constant source of literacy for students, yet is often forgotten in the classroom. In Harlin et. al’s (2010) research of three teachers technology proved to positively impact student motivation in the classroom. One teacher put a new twist on a research project by using iMovie to present the information. The technology was new to most of the students and their interest in the project was expressed in the research (Harlin,). The teacher in the third grade classroom in Padak and Potenza-Radis’s (2010) classroom also incorporated different text formats. The classroom used authentic learning practices to make their text come alive. They performed plays that made the text real to them. Different text formats acted as a motivational agent because the students became excited about the text. By excluding multiliteracies students are in fact being deprived of real world interactions (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Although increased numbers of educators are reportedly using real world experiences in the classroom, it is rarely connected to instruction in reading (Guthrie & Davis; Wigfield & Baker, 1999). Connections to real world interactions promote student motivation.

Motivation in students is important, but highly debated throughout research. There is still a push to recommend students go to the library (Al-Barakat & Bataineh, 2011). However Fulmer and Frijters(2011) agree that recommending the library is not enough. Students need a connection to the task at hand. Connection is frequently described by students in their reading
interest surveys (Pitcher et al., 2007; Hopper, 2005). In Pitcher et al.’s research out of 21 summer school students 19 reported that there was nothing they enjoyed about their teachers. The two that did say yes described a teacher that read aloud to them. As teachers it is important to provide a balance of interest based learning, collaboration, and discussion (Guthrie et. al, 2006). The use of effective instruction, research based programs, flexible grouping, and explicit teaching of skills have had an effect on the reading experience for students.

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) is an activity that has been around for a long time. Research shows that it is important to cultivate a love of pleasurable reading in students (Pitcher et. al, 2007). Contrary to popular belief, students are reading fiction still, even with multiliteracies ever present. Sustained silent reading is a time in school where students are supposed to read silently a book of their own choice (Chua, 2008). Research has shown that SSR encourages students to read and within the school context it seems to work however the study also showed that students were reading less at home when reading in class. Of the students in Hopper’s (2005) study, sixty-one percent reported reading at home, which supports the claim that students are reading. There is debate though that students could be reading a required text and not for pleasure. Encouraging Sustained Silent Reading did create heightened levels of positive attitudes for reading, but was inconclusive as to whether or not it encouraged leisure reading.

To put into place a SSR time it is important for teachers to have a classroom library with a broad range of selections (Scharlach, 2008). This reading time will encourage student choice, which will encourage student motivation (Pitcher et. al, 2007). In order for teachers to encourage student choice they must become experts of children’s literature. Not all teachers are knowledgeable enough to make recommendations for students. This lack of expertise could
attribute to the low percentage of teacher recommended choices that students are making in the classroom (Hopper, 2005). The use of a library does incorporate choice, which encourages students to persist through an activity. Students who get their choice of reading are more likely to remain engaged with text no matter the difficulty (Boyd, 2002). Students that are engaged in their text have reached an intrinsic level of motivation (Guthrie et. al, 2006). Guthrie et. al studied student choice and how it affected student motivation. Students could choose narrative or informational text and students who chose narrative books to read during Guthrie’s study reported high levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. While narratives encouraged both, those that chose informational listed solely intrinsic motivation (interest based). Intrinsic motivation leads to higher engagement in the task at hand (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). In order to support these needs it is important for teachers to provide both options for students in their classroom library.

Type of instruction directly affects a student’s motivation in the classroom (Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Al-Barakat & Bataineh, 2011). Students can be encouraged or discouraged based on the teacher’s style. Struggling readers often lack skills necessary to be ‘good readers’ (Hall, 2010). The ‘good reader’ label is created by the teacher and may not align with the students’ way of learning. Unfortunately by the time students are reached by the teacher for help they have often undergone a full year of repeated failure (Quirk & Schwanenflugel, 2004). Students need a balance of interest and skill to provide a multi-dimensional teaching approach. Students who lack motivation can be motivated when given choice, but students who have choice and still remain unmotivated may not have mastered basic reading skills (Quirk & Schwanenflugel). Unlike Hopper (2005) who believes that interesting books may be the key to motivation, Quirk and Schwanenflugel (2004) argue that it may not be enough. Basic reading skills can play a role
in the motivation of students. Without a base of abilities students even with choice may continue to struggle.

Frequently, struggling readers in a classroom feel frustrated and have negative emotions towards reading in school contexts (Triplett, 2007; Triplett, 2004; Allington & Baker, 2007). In Triplett’s (2004) study she examined the difference of emotions between a student in a classroom setting and in a tutoring setting. The student was described by the teacher as a struggling reader who often had emotional breakdowns during instruction (Triplett). However during tutoring sessions there were no signs of negative emotions elicited. Triplett found that unlike in the classroom the student was given choice and instructionally capable text. By allowing the child to participate in his own academic success, he went from a struggling, emotional reader to a positive and capable reader. Conversely, Boyd (2002) argues that students need some level of difficulty to the task or their motivation decreases as does their effort. Students in his study who received easier tasks were less apt to have personal interest in the task. Through Quirk and Schwanenflugel’s (2004) research they found some programs that may support these readers.

A successful program must provide accelerated reading progress and key factors to increase motivation (Boyd, 2002; Quirk & Schwanenflugel, 2004). Often programs can bore students, which conversely causes a lack of interest in the task given. Programs that are just skill and drill can become boring and do not build on a child’s identity (Boyd, 2002). Without a connection to the activity, the skill become rote and no social connection is made. Quirk & Schwanenflugel (2004) disagree in that they believe a student’s identity is affected by skill based programs. With repeated success students are able to increase their self-efficacy and build feelings of success. Programs that do address struggling readers come from a broad range of philosophies (Quirk & Schwanenflugel). Programs such as Direct Instruction and Reading
Recovery have no research to support whether they influence motivation. However, they do show an increase in self-efficacy through the use of attainable goals (Quirk & Schwanenflugel). When students set goals and achieve them, it allows them tangible rewards for their hard work. This reward creates a valuable connection to the student’s reading experience.

Using explicit teaching and attainable goals helps support the student’s learning. Often students labeled as struggling are labeled this because they are not able to perform the reading tasks necessary in the classroom setting (Triplett, 2007; Triplett, 2004; Allington & Baker, 2007). Students that are involved in classrooms that incorporate choice, flexible grouping, and explicit teaching of skills are proven to be more successful in the classroom (Allington & Baker, 2007). The students that receive these types of support in the study done by Allington and Baker are able to seamlessly transition throughout their day. Every student is engaged and participating in the classroom activities. The balance of cognitive abilities and the social aspects of reading create valuable reading experiences for the student. Allington and Baker largely attribute this success to the fact that the teacher explicitly models what is expected of the students and provides leveled readers for each individual child in all subjects. By providing these resources every child was able to live up to the expectations that are so often set by the cultural norms (Allington & Baker, 2007; McDermott & Verenne, 1995). Explicit teaching of expectations for interaction during literacy events, children whose identities do not align with the school are given the opportunity to succeed.

One way to incorporate flexible grouping is through the use of discussion groups (Boyd, 2002). Discussion groups allow students to include social interaction in the reading experience. When students discuss text it gives, them the opportunity to gain competence in their reading. It also allows students to choose a book and use social interaction to discuss and communicate
Increased social interaction has been shown to increase comprehension (Gambrell). Comprehension is the process that students show understanding of a text. Given opportunities to discuss text in groups allows for additional discussion points and encourages students to become well versed in the text. Boyd (2002) put a new twist on discussion groups by incorporating high/elementary school discussion groups. Students in the high school were struggling readers and working with elementary students allowed them to work with less difficult texts and increase their reading strategy database. The social interaction it created also put them into a teaching role, which reinforced the skills and concepts that were being taught.

The final aspect of teaching literacy that that could help support readers is the concept of differentiated instruction. According to Tobin (2008) differentiated instruction is specializing instruction to meet the individual learning needs of each student. This type of teaching helps alleviate some of the points made through the discursive identity theory. When instruction is differentiated, there are mixed ability groupings and multiple ways to get to the same result (Scharlach, 2008). In a way, differentiated instruction removes the social aspect of the identity crisis and creates a single group. The students are all working toward the same goal, but are doing so without the stigma of a "struggling reader." In the end, working in groups saves the child the identity crisis that the label ensues and allows them to be a part of the social context that is the norm. By differentiating instruction, there is a sense of community and sense of identity for each student. If students are working at their own instructional pace they are comfortable with their reading and feel empowered. By differentiating classroom instruction and working in groups struggling readers are able to receive more individualized attention to progress in their reading processes. They are also able to work at their own readiness (Tobin,
Working at their own readiness allows students to be successful and allowing them to participate in the best way they know how.

Students need to be supported to work at their own readiness throughout their skill building in reading (Tobin, 2008; White, 2009). Students who are not working at their own readiness are labeled as struggling. Often children struggle with “school literacies” because they are so different from their own experiences (White, 2009). By acknowledging and incorporating students’ experiences there is an increase in teacher-student and teacher-parent connections. In summary, by using authentic literacy practices students are more engaged in their learning and motivated to improve and participate in the classroom (Padak & Potenza-Radis 2010; White, 2008; Hall, 2007; Allington & Baker, 2007). Through this support, students will be able to smoothly align their own identity with the school developed identity.

As teachers it is pivotal to have deeper understandings of literacy education and supporting each student’s individual needs (Spear-Swerling, 2009). By keeping an open mind and using multiple strategies and means of support, teachers can help support the reading experience of their students.

Conclusion

Reading is a ‘lifelong skill’ that is essential for success in today’s world (Scharlach, 2008). According to research there are about eight million students struggling with reading in elementary and high school each year (Melekoglu, 2011). Too often these students are overlooked and their reading experiences are devalued. The key way to value these students’ needs is to address the needs of struggling readers by shifting to a closer look at motivation to read (Wifield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). The reading experience encompasses a
broad spectrum of cognitive and motivational influences. There is a clear difference in the experience of readers based on their cognitive abilities, interest, parental involvement, and teacher instruction (Guthrie et. al, 2003; Retelsdorf, 2010; Hopper, 2006).

**Method**

**Context**

The following research was done in Moo, New York (pseudonym). Moo is a small rural community with approximately 4,000 residents. The community consists of one grocery story, one pizza place, one Chinese restaurant, two delis, and a diner. There are two doctors but no dentists in the area. The closest cities are Core and Burn, which people frequent when services are not available in town. The school plays an important role in the community. They provide many activities such as circuses, Mexican restaurants, and sporting events. These events draw packed parking lots and streets.

There are two school buildings down the main street of town. The schools are separated into a kindergarten through fifth grade setting and a sixth through twelve setting. The entire district serves about one thousand students. The student breakdown is 98% white and two percent black/African American (NYSED, 2006). Of these students, 21% are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The middle school houses sixth through eighth grade. This school has been designated The School To Watch Award the past three times they have been eligible. The average class size is 19 students. The following study was done in the sixth grade which has 75 students in the class. The class is made up of 41 males to 34 females. Of these 75 students 11 are identified as having an Individualized Education Plan and receiving special education services. In addition 23 of the 75 students have been identified as in need of Alternate Intervention Services in both math and reading.
Participants

Teacher. Within the study there are four teachers that were interviewed about their perceptions of reading. The participants are as follows:

Jackie (a pseudonym) is a sixth grade teacher and has been for her entire career. She has taught in Moravia for nineteen years. Her certification is in elementary education, with a masters in curriculum and instruction. Her responsibilities in sixth grade are to teach advanced math and social studies with a literacy base. She is very organized and is a taskmaster when it comes to assignments.

Chaz (a pseudonym) is also a sixth grade teacher and has been teaching for thirty six years. He has taught both fifth and sixth grade but has spent the majority of his career in sixth grade. His responsibilities this year have been to teach math and to be the third adult in our AIS classes in the afternoon. His education includes an undergraduate degree in elementary education and thirty masters credits. Chaz is soft spoken and likes to have a lot of fun with the students.

Elvis (a pseudonym) is also a sixth grade teacher that teaches AIS math in the morning and two sections of ELA in the afternoon. He has been teaching for twelve and a half years and did four of those years in fourth grade and has done the remaining years in sixth grade. Elvis’s undergraduate degree is in elementary education and his master’s degree is in reading. He is firm with his students and is a part of our buildings literacy Professional Learning Circle.

The last teacher included in the study is Frank (a pseudonym). Frank is the sixth grade special education teacher. He provides push in services throughout the day and holds one resource time for students in math. Frank has been teaching for twelve years. He began teaching special education in the elementary school and moved to sixth grade four years ago. His
undergraduate degree is in elementary and special education and his master’s degree is in elementary education with a concentration in technology. Frank is a coach throughout the year and is outspoken with the students. He is active and keeps the students moving.

**Students.** Included in the study are also six students, which are a mixture of regular education English Language Arts students and Academic Intervention Services Students. All are residents of Moravia and Caucasian. They all attend Middle School and it is their first year in the sixth through twelfth grade building.

Destiny (a pseudonym) is a twelve year and ten months old female who lives at home with dad, step-mom, and brother. She enjoys dancing (ZUMBA) and the *Twilight* books. She is socially active with friends but very reserved in class. She speaks very softly and rarely raises her hand to answer questions. She pays a lot of attention to those around her. Her father describes her as enjoying reading but often “reads books that are too hard for her.” She is in the AIS reading class.

Calvin (a pseudonym) is a twelve year old male who lives at home with mom, dad, and his brother. He is active and sports and likes soccer the best. He also likes professional football and baseball, especially the Boston Red Sox. In the classroom Calvin is an active participator. He frequently has his hand raised and is always asking questions. His mom describes him as having something “click” this year with reading. She claims there is no longer a fight at home over reading books. He is in the AIS reading class.

Miranda (a pseudonym) is a twelve years and fourth months old female who lives at home with mom, dad, a brother, and an older sister. She is an avid Moto crosser and even competes. She is also active in sports and enjoys soccer and basketball. In class Miranda is quiet and rarely raises her hand. She completes homework on time and follows directions in
class. Mom says that she wishes Miranda would pick up a book more often. She is a member of the AIS reading class.

Gavin (a pseudonym) is a twelve years and fourth months old male who lives at home with mom, dad, and an older sister. He enjoys sports, especially statistics and professional sports. He actively participates in class and often corrects other students reading and writing habits. Gavin has high expectations in himself and often gets upset over what he considers “bad grades.” His mom describes him as having a love of reading, especially non-fiction. He is a member of the regular ELA class.

Kole (a pseudonym) is an eleven years and six months old male who lives at home with mom, dad, and his little brother. He enjoys baseball and basketball. In school he enjoys math and physical education. In class, Kole frequently participates and has a good sense of humor. His mother describes him as liking to read especially mysteries and sports books. He is in the regular ELA class.

Jessica (a pseudonym) is an eleven years and six months old female who lives at home with mom, dad, and her little brother. Up until this year she has been home schooled. Her brother is still homeschooled by her mother. She enjoys being a member of 4-H, gymnastics, and basketball. She participates in many activities in school including the play, yearbook, and art. In class Jessica is soft spoken but does not hesitate to raise her hand to answer or ask questions. Her mom describes her as loving to read especially books with “causes that interest her” (i.e. animal cruelty). She is in the general ELA class.

**Researcher Stance**

This study is being conducted in my own classroom. I have been a classroom teacher for two years. I taught fifth grade last year and I am teaching sixth grade this year. My
undergraduate degree is in Childhood Education and Special Education with a minor in Instructional Technology. I am currently completing my Master’s degree at St. John Fisher College. My certifications are in birth through sixth general education and kindergarten through sixth special education.

In sixth grade my responsibilities include teaching math and two sections of English Language Arts (ELA). One section of ELA is Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and the students are chosen based on test scores and teacher recommendation. The other section is considered general education ELA.

Throughout the data collection, I played the role of active participant observer. According to Mills (2011) an active participant observer is responsible for the teaching and data collection. As the person who administers grades and assessments in the classroom I play this role. This role impacts my research in a few ways. As the classroom teacher, the students are familiar with me already. In addition being familiar with students puts a bias on my opinion of the students due to the fact that I work with them year round. This stance could affect research also because I am asking the students the questions, which means they may not be completely honest. This lack of honesty could be attributed to the fact that I am responsible for their grades.

Methods

Throughout the research I discussed reading with the students. The initial collection of data was done through two questionnaires. One questionnaire was for the student and used a combination of rating scales and short responses. The second questionnaire was sent home to the parent to rate their student’s interest level. Parents were also given the opportunity to give short response answers.
The next method of research was teacher interviews through email. I created a list of questions based off of answers given by parents and students to see teachers’ feelings about the reading experiences. Teachers responded and were asked to expand if more information was needed.

Data was also collected on the students through state and teacher assessment. Each student's New York State ELA score was recorded. The students' average grade in ELA for the year was also recorded. Both of these pieces of data were long-term data collections.

The last piece of method use was a focus group. The group was pulled together to eat lunch and was told they would be answering questions about how they experience reading. Based on answers given in the questionnaires I formulated questions that would expand on what research was already done. Throughout the interview students took turns answering the questions and were given the ability to pass if they were unable to answer the questions.

**Quality and Credibility of the Research**

Throughout this research quality and credibility were at the forefront. Mills (2011) defines credibility as the researcher’s own ability to consider the complexities within a study and recognize that there will be interpretation of patterns needed. One way to assure credibility that I practice was the use of triangulation. Triangulation is comparing multiple pieces of data from different methods and sources (Mills, 2011). I used questionnaires about reading to analyze both student and parent views. Assessment data from both the state and the classroom were utilized. Focus groups were added to get additional information from students about their views and feelings. Lastly, other teachers were interviewed to give a different perspective on reading.
Throughout my research I also used a “critical colleague” as recommended by Mills (2011). This peer debriefed through my data and analyses during the researcher process.

Transferability was also taken into account during research. Transferability is the idea that all information in the study is “context bound” (Mills, p. 104). The results of the study are not to be held as truths but can specifically applied to my research. In order to assure transferability detailed descriptions were taken of the setting and activities. These descriptions include details of the school, classroom, and forms used with the participants.

Dependability was also secured through the use of stable data. Stability of the data can be insured by using overlapping methods. For example students were given questionnaires that included follow up focus groups to obtain additional information. Throughout the process dependability was also taken into account through an audit trail. Included in my research are field notes, data, and recordings.

Confirmability as defined by Hall (2011) is the neutrality of the researcher to the data collected. Similar to credibility, triangulation or multiple forms of data were used to compare methods used. Students participated in discussions and questionnaires. Similarly parents also completed questionnaires, which could then be compared to student views of their reading. Reflecting on the data and the research questions identified in the beginning helped ground my research.

**Informed Consent and Protecting the Rights of the Participant**

Before beginning research parents, and teachers received informed consent forms to participate. Students received assent forms to participate also. This form was done to protect the rights of my participants. In addition to informed consent students, parents, and teachers were assured that pseudonyms would be used and all data would remain anonymous. The participants
were informed why the study was being conducted and the research question. Data was collected from the beginning of the year and now but all participants were reassured that they would be unidentifiable within the study.

**Data Collection**

During the study I collected data about students’ reading experiences. Data was collected from students, teachers, and parents through focus groups, questionnaires, e-mail interviews, and assessments. All of these pieces of assessment were interconnected. The initial forms sent to parents and students helped narrow focus questions and questions aimed at teachers.

Initially information was collected from parents about how they viewed their child. The questionnaire (Appendix A) included a scale to rate the students’ interest in certain activities, which included reading. There were also short response questions that asked parents to identify how they viewed their child as a reader. These questionnaires were sent home and parents returned them completed.

The next form of assessment used was a questionnaire for the students. Similar to the parent questionnaire the student was asked to rate certain activities based on a scale. The student also had to answer short response questions about whether they liked to read. Included was a reading interest section that asked them to tell their favorite genre or series. The questionnaire (Appendix B) was adapted from Laura Candler’s Reading Interest Survey (2012). This questionnaire was handed out by me and done by the student at their own pace.

After reading through the questionnaires I formed a focus group to ask the students questions (Appendix C) about their responses. I asked them to each talk about whether or not they enjoyed reading, when and where, and what type of material. I also asked them to discuss a positive and negative experience with reading either in school or out of school. This focus group
was done in school during a study hall with myself and all six students. The students took turns answering the questions and were given the opportunity to pass if they wanted to.

Two pieces of assessment data were collected. The first piece was the students’ NYS ELA test scores from fifth grade. This assessment was not performed by me but played a role in the student’s placement in my sixth grade ELA class. The second piece of assessment data used was the students’ ELA average for the year in sixth grade. This assessment is done by me and was used to support the students’ abilities in reading.

The last piece of data used in my methods was an e-mail interview (Appendix D) to four other sixth grade teachers. The interview consisted of both methods and instructional questions. These interviews included questions about reading and how to teach literacy practices to students. There were also follow up questions asked for answers that seemed to be too vague.

In conclusion the data collected will be used to obtain a better understanding of how students’ experience reading. Student, teacher, and parent input play a valuable role in the literacy experiences of students. Analyzing the above data will help to explain these relationships.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data I began to analyze to look for commonalities across the sources. The first analysis done was with my quantitative data. This data consisted of the students New York State English Language Arts Test scores and English Language Arts average grade. The data was organized into tables and ordered highest to lowest according to scores.

Taking my student surveys, focus group questions, and teacher interviews I began to look for common themes among the discussions. In particular I focused on students’ feelings towards reading, their knowledge about reading, and teacher/student relationships. These focal points
were developed from the research I had done previously and the focus of the research question. I hoped to gain a greater understanding of struggling and non-struggling students reading experiences. The definition of struggling and non-struggling was based on the students’ placement, grade point average, and New York State ELA Test scores.

The student surveys were analyzed and coded according to categories and then put into themes. Students frequently attached a feeling to reading whether negative or positive. Students also identified favorite books and reasons why they enjoyed or disliked reading. These common categories developed into positive and negative experiences in reading. While coding the data I compared the findings to the work done by Hopper (2005) who formed research about students’ emotions with reading.

Similarly, positive and negative experiences in reading were coded in the focus group questions. Students frequently attached a feeling toward reading. Within the focus group I also analyzed the data and found discussion on the reading process. Students were able to express their knowledge of the process. Also in the teacher interviews teachers expressed their opinions on the knowledge of students reading processes.

In addition, this data started to show some contrary evidence when using triangulation to support teacher and student views. This discovery helped to code the data and supported the research done previously. Hall(2010) mentions a disconnect between teacher and student definitions of reading when analyzing I noticed connections to this idea.

Students’ experiences during reading are distinctly different. The data produced the following themes: struggling and non-struggling readers show differences in students’ understanding of the reading process, negative and positive experiences in reading, and connections with the teacher.
Findings and Discussion

The initial research done with the students was collecting the students New York State Test Scores (Table 1). Of the six students in the study fifty percent met state standards for English Language Arts (ELA). The students who met standards were placed in general education ELA. The other half of students, who only partially met state standards, were placed in an Alternate Intervention Services class.

The test scores below (Table 1) are the students’ fifth grade test scores. The scores play a strong role in the placement of students in the AIS setting. The first score is the students whole score, while the score in parenthesis is the students overall grade. A two is designated as a student who partially meets state standards and a three is designated to a student meets state standards.

Table 1

*NYS ELA Test Scores 2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>NYS ELA TEST SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destiny</td>
<td>644 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>657 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvin</td>
<td>657 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>674 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavin</td>
<td>680 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kole</td>
<td>680 (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-concept as a reader has frequently been attached to the cognitive abilities of a reader. Based on the cognitive abilities of a reader achievement can often be predicted (Retelsdorf et. al, 2010). Kole, Gavin, and Jessica achieved at state standards in their reading achievement. This score could be used as a predictor for their success in the reading experience. Calvin, Miranda,
and Destiny scored below state standards in their reading achievement. Similarly to the at level readers the below level readers could also be used to predict achievement.

Students’ overall grade point averages for sixth grade were also collected. The six students all passed sixth grade ELA. Two students performed above a ninety grade point average and were considered A students. The two middle students performed as B level students and the bottom two students were six points apart. The lowest student performed at C level work.

Table 2

*Student’s Grade Point Average for the Year in ELA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destiny</td>
<td>74.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>80.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvin</td>
<td>84.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>88.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavin</td>
<td>95.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kole</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These grade point averages were collected throughout the year. Students’ proficiency in reading is often attributed to their cognitive levels. Although cognitive abilities of the students can act as predictors of achievement the scores cannot stand alone. A readers proficiency is based on a more multifaceted approach. According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) reading motivation is based on “the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading (p. 405). With this definition in mind the cognitive abilities above cannot be the only predictor for reading achievement used.
In order to strengthen the previous data in Table 3 the data is placed side by side to show the relationship between GPA and NYS Test Scores. Again, students’ GPA’s were assessed throughout the year and put in rank order. Surprisingly, when the NYS test scores were placed next to the GPA’s the rank order of the students was the same. This could be attributed to the fact that cognitive abilities in reading can be used to predict achievement in reading (Gambrell & Codling, 1996).

Table 3

Student’s Grade Point Average Compared to NYS Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
<th>NYS Test Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destiny</td>
<td>74.22</td>
<td>644(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>80.51</td>
<td>657(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvin</td>
<td>84.02</td>
<td>657(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>88.25</td>
<td>673(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavin</td>
<td>95.35</td>
<td>680(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kole</td>
<td>92.63</td>
<td>680(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two highest performing students in the classroom (Gavin and Kole) scored the highest on the NYS test. This data could show that student’s grades within class are predictors for how they will perform on assessments. The two lowest performing students (Miranda and Destiny) scored the lowest on the test, being cited as only partially meeting state standards. This low score could be a direct correlation to their struggles in the classroom. Both students received lower grade point averages than their peers. The middle two students (Calvin and Jessica) both scored mid-eighties in their grade point averages but had differing test scored. Jessica scored a three, which meets state standards, while Calvin only partially met state standards at a level two. This discrepancy could be attributed to the fact that Jessica was home schooled until sixth grade.
She continues to adjust to the school discourses but performed well on the state test. As her confidence in the classroom increases this could change her GPA in the classroom.

Looking at the findings there could be a connection through GPA as a predictor for abilities on the NYS test. The students performed similarly in both settings and achieved similar scores to their abilities shown to the teacher. Often, a reader’s self-concept is formed based on their proficiency in reading. According to Gambrell et. al. (1996) self-concept leads to an expectancy in achievement. The consistency shown in the performance of all six students in both methods of assessment supports this idea. The following couplets were formed based on the similar level of achievements to continue to analyze the qualitative data: Kole and Gavin, Jessica and Collin, and Miranda and Destiny.

In addition to the students assessment scores there was numerous qualitative assessments done with the students. The qualitative assessments helped form additional information on the reading experiences of the above couplets. It was found that the students experienced differences in the reading process, emotional connections, and connections with instruction.

The Reading Process

The data pointed to a distinct difference in the understanding of the reading process amongst students. The reading process is a topic often discussed in research and classrooms. Hall (2010) found that students’ often lacked the skills to be “good readers” The understanding that students have of how to read and what “good” readers do is pivotal to the reading experience of students. Kole and Gavin, two students considered to be on level by the state had well-formed definitions of “good” readers. When describing good readers, Kole stated that “good readers reread and ask themselves questions and try to understand them” (Focus Group Interview, June
He shows that he realizes comprehension is important to reading and that reading is a self-regulated process. By self-regulating he’s taking ownership for his reading. Similarly Gavin identified that “good” readers “go a little bit farther than just the words. They try to figure out what the words actually mean.” (Focus Group Interview, June 18, 2012). Gavin shows that there is a deeper meaning to text. He, like Kole is acknowledging that reading takes thought and self-regulating. In addition both boys considered themselves to be good readers. When asked why, they both listed reasons that supported themselves. Gavin stated that he has a “wide vocabulary” and he can “figure out text”, which directly relates to what he believes a good reader does. Kole also states that he prompts himself as a reader by “rereading” where he “left off” in a book to remind himself about what he’s reading. The two readers clear and concise ability to identify good readers could be connected to the fact that they consider themselves good readers. A strong self-concept has frequently been attributed to success. Research has shown that competence in turn increases students’ intrinsic motivation, which may lead to increased proficiency in reading (Logan, Medford, & Hughes, 2010). They are both able to articulate the reading process and have a well-constructed identify of themselves as readers. Students’ competence is constructed based on their view of what good readers do. Research has shown that competence in turn increases students’ intrinsic motivation, which may lead to increased proficiency in reading (Logan, Medford, & Hughes, 2010). This increased proficiency is reflected in the student’s test scores and GPA’s.

In contrast Miranda and Destiny (considered low performing) were able to identify what good readers should do but were unable to identify how. This could be a due to lack of strategic ability in reading. Students who have acquired reading strategies must also be able to connect them to text efficiently (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). Often students with negative identities of
themselves as readers lack these connections to text. Miranda stated that good readers “make sure they understand what they’re reading and if they don’t they reread it until they do” (Focus Group Interview, June 18, 2012). Similar to the high performing students she knows that comprehension is important but she states a less specific way to achieve a goal. By saying they should “reread until they do” implies that she may not know how to have better understanding during rereading. Reading is more than just cognition and is defined as being able to strategically navigate through text (Guthrie et. al, 2006). The student’s inability to articulate the strategy necessary supports the idea that she is lacking proficient reading skills. Destiny also stated that good readers “reread” adding on that good readers “ask themselves questions until they know what they talking about” (Focus Group Interview, June 18, 2012). Like Miranda she stated rereading to be helpful but lacks a way to better understand other than rereading. This lack of understanding could imply that they lack confidence in their understanding of the reading process. When asked the same question about whether they were good readers both cited that they were not. Destiny’s reason was that she “has trouble” and Miranda claimed, “I don’t quite understand what I’m reading”. In their statements the girls are identifying themselves as bad readers. This could be due to the fact that they seem unfamiliar with the reading process itself. Gilmore & Boulton Lewis (2009) agree that good readers need to be “strategic and knowledgeable.” Often students that lack these qualities associate themselves as bad readers.

**Emotions Connected with Reading**

During conversations and throughout surveys, students experienced different connections with the reading experience. Some students were able to relate positive and negative experiences to reading, while others could not. Students connect emotions to the reading experience. Through the Reading Interest Survey (June, 2012), the students responded to multiple questions
about how they felt about reading. Of the six students surveyed all six expressed that they liked to read. Kole and Calvin (high and average performing readers) both described that they like to read and that it helps them escape. Calvin stated that he “loves reading, when you get lost in a good book” similar to Kole who described just liking to “sit there and read” on his “pool deck” (Reading Interest Survey, 2012). Jessica and Gavin both talked about reading being a way to “gain information” and learn (Reading Interest Survey, 2012). Julia claimed that reading was also a way to “get away from the real world” (Reading Interest Survey, 2012). All four of the students who expressed positive thoughts about reading did not provide a negative view of reading. However, the words “choice” and “interest” were commonly used (Reading Interest Survey & Focus Group Interview, 2012). This choice of words could imply that students enjoy reading more when they are given the chance to choose. This idea of choice aligns with Hopper’s (2005) research which concluded that students were more motivated to read when given a choice of text.

When asked to give a happy memory of reading the four readers above were able to describe a time. This data could show that the readers are invested in reading and again are connected to their experience. Gavin, Calvin, and Kole described a place that they enjoy reading. Gavin liked to read at the beach stating, “at the beach this one time and I was reading a novel series and I remember how good I felt when I finished the last book of it” (Focus Group Interview, 2012). This feeling of satisfaction could be associated with accomplishing a task. This feeling of accomplishment connects to Boyd’s (2003) research, which found that students were likely to be more motivated when completing a task. Similarly Calvin described a time in a car stating “when you finish a good book” as his positive memory of reading (Focus Group Interview, 2012). Again, Calvin was relating to a feeling of success in the reading experience.
Similar to Kole and Gavin, Jessica recalled finishing a book at her grandparents after hours of reading. There seems to be a connection between satisfaction of finishing a book and happy memories for the students. The idea that persisting through a task is more common when enjoying the text connects to the research of Logan, Medford, & Hughes (2010). Logan et. al found that students were more engaged in texts that they were interested in. This persistence of each student could be explained through their fond memory of completing a task.

To the contrary, the same three of the four students when asked for a negative experience also came up with a time that they felt negatively towards reading. Jessica and Calvin both identified a time that they felt confused or were unable to complete a task. Calvin discussed a book in third grade where, “I wasn’t a very good reader and it was like a first grade reading level and I couldn’t even read it” (Focus Group Interview, 2012). Jessica also described “when we first started “Misfits” like I wasn’t sure what was going on at all” (Focus Group Interview). Both Jessica and Calvin associated a negative experience with a lack of success in reading. The idea that students’ identify themselves as good or bad readers based on achievement in the classroom is similar to that of Hall’s (2010) identity theory. The readers identified negative experiences as those where they felt least adequate in the reading experience. Gavin on the other hand had a comical story about his book being taken away by the waves. Gavin’s lack of negativity to the reading experience could be attributed to the fact that he most often feels successful in reading. However, three quarters of the group again felt an emotion toward the reading experience and were able to express it. Lastly, all four students when asked if reading would be an activity they would choose to do responded with yes. This response could show that the readers enjoy and feel successful as readers.
Miranda and Destiny both identified that they enjoyed reading but added a stipulation to the experience. Destiny claims to not like reading sometimes “because she likes to be lazy.” Miranda said she finds reading “boring.” This attitude towards reading could be connected to the fact that they do not feel they are good readers as cited earlier. However both students were able to name a favorite book or series (Reading Interest Survey, 2012). When the two lower performing readers were asked in the focus group to talk about a positive or negative experience with reading they were unable to identify with either. Miranda and Destiny answered “I don’t know” or “no” to both questions. This inability to answer the question could be that they struggle to connect to the reading experience. As Hall (2010) found, readers may struggle to identify with the socially constructed identity of a reader. Students may find that they are unable to connect with the reading experience. In school, often students are labeled as struggling readers. The label of struggling reader is given to low performing students, which Miranda and Destiny are considered. Low performing students usually lack motivation (Howse, Lange, Farran, & Boyles, 2003). This lack of motivation could attribute to the inability of both students to respond positively or negatively to reading. Another social aspect that this lack of connection could be attributed to is a lack of experience. In connection, both students when asked if given a choice if they would read and responded “no.” If the students are not reading in their spare time they are essentially lacking experience with the reading process. Again, both students are considered low performing by state standards. Neither student shared that they enjoyed a time they finished a book, while all four other students did. Frequently, students endure repeated failure in the school setting (Quirk & Schwanenflugel, 2004). Destiny and Miranda are not meeting state standards in ELA which could explain their lack of connection to reading. Their reading experience is nonexistent due to their shortage of feelings about it.
Disconnect Between Students and Teachers

Teachers play a critical role in the reading experience of students but there is a clear disconnect in how the reading experience is perceived. Comparing teacher interviews to the student surveys and group questions showed glaring discrepancies in their views. Teacher’s preconceived notions about students and teacher’s instructional practices play a central role in the classroom (Scharlach, 2008). The misalignment of teacher and student definitions, best practices, and grading policies affect the reading experience for all children.

As cited in earlier findings, students have a clear definition of how they define a good reader to be. Teachers also had a definition of good readers in their interview. Similar to the students, of the four teachers interviewed all stated “understanding” as playing a key role. Also similar to the students the teachers stated that “interest” and “enjoyment” were keys to reading. The idea of being interested in the text being related to enjoyment is common to the students’ earlier expressions such as Miranda stating that reading is “boring.” This idea of reading being “boring” aligns with Jackie’s (a sixth grade teacher) statement that she does not believe “struggling readers see any joy in reading.” The description of reading having no “joy” could explain the reason that Miranda and Destiny were unable to think of a positive experience in reading. This lack of “joy” could be caused in the misalignment of school and home literacies. Students expressed a desire to read what they want. Destiny and Miranda say they read when “interested.” Destiny claims to enjoy the “Twilight” books and Miranda enjoys “Sports Illustrated.” Both of these types of reading are not often included in school literacies. By excluding multiliteracies students are in fact being deprived of real world interactions (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Not catering to student interest creates a general lack of disengagement from the text. Guthrie and Davis (2003) found that students were more apt to complete a task when
interested. This aptitude to complete a task could be directly related to Destiny and Miranda’s lack of “joy” in reading.

Although the teacher and student definitions of reading were similar the methods of teaching students varied. Jackie cited that readers needed more of a focus on skills which was resounded across the board by Frank, Elvis, and Chaz. The idea of skills being a focus in reading was also mention by the students. The students all said that rereading was important. Calvin stated that he “rereads to check that (he) understands” which shows he understands the purpose of rereading. However, all the higher level students added on deeper meaning and understanding. Calvin’s ability to identify the purpose of rereading (checking for understanding) shows a deeper connection to the reading process. The lower level students seemed inept to the purpose of the skills such as Miranda who stated “reread until you do [get it].”

Teachers took ownership over the responsibility that they play in teaching reading. Each teach interviewed cited that “everyone” was responsible for teaching reading. This view is in contrast to the student view that “teachers” decide who can read and who cannot. According to the focus group interview (2012), students believe teachers are solely responsible for deciding who good readers are. When asked, “Who is responsible for deciding who the good readers are?” the students all resounded with “the teacher” with the exception of Jessica who said “the teacher and parents” (Focus Interview, 2012). The shared responsibility that teachers feel could be connected to the knowledge of resources they have in a school. Students’ lack of understanding to other adults that also play a role in their reading experience could be interpreted as a breakdown of communication between students, parents, and teachers. Although teachers described good readers as having a deeper understanding of text and developing meaning, students failed to mention either when talking about identifying who is a good reader. In the
focus group interview (2012) the students had varying ideas of how teachers identify good readers. Kole and Gavin (high performing readers) named ways that teachers check for understanding. Kole said, “draw pictures to see what’s in our minds” and Gavin said, “ask you questions to check your understanding.” Similarly Calvin talked about how teachers ask questions and “based on how you do they know what book you can handle.” Destiny, Jessica, and Miranda had more limited answers expressing that teachers asked you questions and saw if you answered them correctly. Miranda stated, “they’ll ask you questions to see if you read it after you’ve read it and see if you understand it” just like Destiny who said, “give you questions and see if you can answer them” (Focus Group Interview, 2012). Students find question and answer to be a central part of being a good reader but this method was not mentioned by teachers. Teachers focused on fluency and comprehension as measures and instruction in the classroom must include question and answer. This disconnect could show that teachers are providing question and answer to check for students understanding. However, instruction should not be limited to just asking questions and answering. Gambrell (2011) found that students were more likely to be retain comprehension when using discussion group. Discussion is socially charged, which provides a stimulating environment for students and forces them to push beyond the lower level thinking of question and answer.

One similarity found was the idea that students need some instruction at their level. Like Tobin (2008), teachers expressed a need for differentiated instruction. Elvis stated “working with students at their readiness” as being important for readers. Students incorporated this into their own definitions of good readers. Destiny stated she sometimes “reads books that are too hard.” This thought could mean that Destiny is aware of her own readiness and if not a teacher may have informed her of her abilities. Jessica expressed a similar idea claiming that “you know
a book is too hard if the words are hard.” Statements such as these could mean students are more aware of their own readiness than teachers believe. Hall (2010) completed a study that found students identified themselves as either a good or bad reader based on comments from the teacher and their own competence. For example the teacher may have said that a book is “too hard” if you can’t read the words. Similarly in Hall’s study a student aligned “good” reader with “paying attention.” In addition students tend to perform based on their own expected competence. Students in Boyd’s (2003) study who aligned themselves as “good” readers performed that way, while “bad” readers performed poorly. The labels of good and bad reader often come from teachers. Teachers influence students reading experiences on a daily basis both directly and indirectly.

Teachers are largely responsible for measuring student achievement in the classroom. However, the reading experience is a socially constructed event that has multiple factors. The reading experience of struggling and non-struggling students differs due the differences in their own processes and identities. Struggling and non-struggling readers differ in their understanding of the reading process, ability to connect to the reading experience, and their connection to classroom instruction.

**Implications and Conclusions**

The reading experience for struggling and non-struggling readers differs dramatically. As studies have shown, there is often a difference in motivation amongst students that seems to be attributed to abilities and confidence. Reading motivation can be defined as, “the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000,p. 405). Guthrie & Wigfield’s definition of motivation encompasses the exact areas of difficulties that struggling reads have. The preceding research found that
students who struggle with reading can lack an understanding of the process, little interest, and difficulties connecting emotionally to text.

In the above findings, the struggling readers had difficulties discussing the reading process. Reading achievement is often described using the cognitive abilities of a reader. The processes involve recognizing sound syllable, words, and converting them into spoken/written language (Ulper, 2011). Cognitive abilities are an important part of the reading process. Students who have mastered reading strategies are more likely to view themselves as proficient and have increased self-efficacy (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). As teachers, it is important to provide explicit instruction of the reading process. For example, when discussing the skill of rereading it is pivotal that students realize that this is a part of the reading process. Using real world examples and modeling of the use of skills will help to place the process in context. Explicit teaching paired with attainable goals has been found to increase students reading achievement levels (Tripplet, 2007). Students pay close attention to what teachers describe as “good” readers and by explicitly teaching these skills students could realize the importance.

Although skills based instruction is important in good readers, it cannot be the only focus. Similar to Hopper’s (2005) study, students expressed the importance of interest in text effecting motivation. The above study found similar results as 100% of the students mentioned interest in their desire to read (Reading Interest Survey, 2012). Similarly, the teachers interviewed also mentioned “interest” and “engaged readers.” Although teachers and students seem to acknowledge that interest is important for motivating readers, there is little evidence of this information translating into instruction. Teachers need to take into account student interests when choosing texts to use in the classroom. Students are more likely to persist through a task when there is a connection to the task at hand. Boyd’s (2002) study supports this claim. Boyd’s
students, even when given a difficult task, persisted through when given their choice of reading material. As teachers, interest can be addressed through reading interest surveys, which would allow teachers to draw information from students. Teachers can provide silent reading time in which students may read a book of their choice. Lastly, teachers can create a connection to the material by having students pick a piece of literature to use in class. When students are engaged in their reading, they are more likely to persist even with struggles (Fulmer & Frijters, 2011).

Student engagement could lead to a connection to the reading experience. A disconnect of emotion from the reading experience can be caused by a negative identity of a reader. Students in the above study that were labeled struggling readers were unable to speak positively or negatively about the reading experience. Comparable to the above study, Hall (2010) found that struggling readers identified themselves as poor readers and achieved little success in the school setting. This negative connotation supports that the reading experience is a strongly social process. Pitcher et. al (2007) found through surveys that students heavily based their connections to reading on parent, peer, and teacher opinion. Again the social aspect of reading is pivotal to the identity of the reader. To support the success of struggling readers, it is crucial that teachers are aware of the social aspects of the reading experience. Teachers can help build positive identities of readers by providing attainable goals for their students. If attainable goals are set, students will feel success and may identify themselves as better readers. With repeated success students are able to increase their self-efficacy and build feelings of success. Feelings of success have been shown help build connections to reading of text (Boyd, 2002). The more engaged the student, the more connected to the experience. In turn, hopefully their ability to speak both negatively and positively about the reading experience will increase.
There were a few limitations in the research done. Time was short which limited the amount of observation and length of time to compare. Also, due to it being the end of the year there were limited amounts of teachers willing to work with me during the study. In the future teachers would be more of a focal point in the research.

After completing the research, there were multiple aspects of the reading experience that lead me to further questioning. One area in particular was stemmed by the general disconnect between teacher and student. There are multiple areas about teacher instruction that caused me to have the following questions. Studies have shown that struggling readers lack an understanding of the reading process but where does this disconnect occur? One student stated that “in third grade I couldn’t read a book that was like a first grade book” (Focus Group, 2012). Instructionally how does this occur? Similarly, there was a distinct disconnect between teacher and student definitions of good readers. As teachers, what can be done to improve this connection? Also could teacher coaching and professional development help evolve reading instruction. Further research involving more studying of teachers and instruction could benefit the above research.

In conclusion, it is pivotal to note that literacy and the reading experience are socially charged events. The school environment has distinct expectations of readers that can affect their reading experiences. In order to be successful, readers need to translate these social aspects into their own reading experience. As teachers we must recognize and act upon the importance of the reading process, connection to text based on interest, and the disconnect between teachers and our students.
References


Please take a moment to fill out the following questionnaire about your child. Thank you for your help!

Parent Name ___________________________   D.O.B __________

Occupation_________________________   Family
Size_____________________

YOUR CHILD AS A READER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My child likes to read.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child likes to be read to.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child tries to read in everyday situations like street signs, food boxes, and store signs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child seems to understand what he or she reads or what is read to him/her.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child is choosing a wide range of books (e.g. stories, poetry, information)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child tries to work out unknown words when reading by guessing, sounding out, re-reading, or reading ahead.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child likes to read at home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child uses the computer at home to read or write.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child would like to receive a book for a gift.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child sees me read at home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask questions to make sure my child understands what he/she has read. My child would choose to read over other activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
My child brings books home from school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are a lot of books for my child to read at home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I talk to my child about the books he/she is reading.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hear my child read.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident about helping my child with his/her reading.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take my child to the library.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask questions to make sure my child understands what he/she has read.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How would you describe your child as a reader?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

What types of books does your child enjoy reading?
Any additional information you would like to share
Appendix B

Reading Interest Inventory

Name ____________________________ Date __________________________

1. How do you feel about reading? Be honest! Explain why you feel that way.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Answer at least one of the following two questions. You can answer both.

   What do you like about reading?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

   What don’t you like about reading?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

3. Do you have a favorite series? If so, what is it and why do you like it?

   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

4. What topics would you like to learn more about this year?

   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

5. Do you like to read newspapers or magazines? Explain.

   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
The Reading Experience

Book Genre Questionnaire

Name ________________________ Date ______________________

Which of the following types of books do you like? For each type of book that you like, try to think of an example or a specific topic. This will assist me in helping you find more great books!

Nonfiction

☐ Biographies
☐ Science
☐ History
☐ Poetry
☐ Supernatural
☐ How To
☐ Folktales & Myths
☐ Travel
☐ Other

Examples of Topics or Books You Like

Fiction

☐ Mystery
☐ Adventure
☐ Fantasy
☐ Realistic Fiction
☐ Historical Fiction
☐ Science Fiction
☐ Humor
☐ Animal Stories
☐ Other

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Playing sports</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Reading about fashion</td>
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<td>Playing a musical instrument</td>
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<td>Going shopping</td>
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<td>Reading about famous people</td>
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<td>Reading science fiction (aliens, space, etc.)</td>
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<td>Drawing or painting</td>
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<td>Listening to music</td>
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<td>Playing video games</td>
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<td>Cooking or preparing food</td>
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<td>Reading about sports</td>
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<td>Going to museums</td>
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<td>Reading funny books</td>
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<td>Going to the movies</td>
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<td>Reading about real places</td>
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<td>Reading about cars or motorcycles</td>
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<td>Reading about the military or war</td>
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<td>Reading long chapter books</td>
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<td>Going camping</td>
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<td>Using the Internet</td>
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<td>Talking on the telephone</td>
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<td>Going to the public library</td>
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<td>Going swimming</td>
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<td>Spending time with friends</td>
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Created by Laura Candler — Teaching Resources — www.lauracandler.com
Appendix C

How long have you been teaching?

What is your educational background?

What subjects are you responsible for?

Who do you think is responsible for teaching reading?

What is your definition of reading?

How would you define a "good" reader?

What's the best way to teach reading?

Is it the same or different for struggling readers?

How do you think readers and struggling readers differ? Is their reading experience the same or different?

Any additional comments