

St. John Fisher College

Fisher Digital Publications

Education Masters

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education

Fall 2010

The Benefits of Reading Aloud to Children in Grades 5 and 6

Latoya Crockton
St. John Fisher College

Follow this and additional works at: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters



Part of the Education Commons

[How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?](#)

Recommended Citation

Crockton, Latoya, "The Benefits of Reading Aloud to Children in Grades 5 and 6" (2010). *Education Masters*. Paper 49.

Please note that the Recommended Citation provides general citation information and may not be appropriate for your discipline. To receive help in creating a citation based on your discipline, please visit <http://libguides.sjfc.edu/citations>.

This document is posted at https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/49 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.

The Benefits of Reading Aloud to Children in Grades 5 and 6

Abstract

This study examined closely the benefits of reading aloud to 5 th and 6 th grade students. Research was conducted in a 5 th grade regular education classroom as well as a 5 th and 6 th grade selfcontained classroom. Data was collected through classroom observation, teacher, parent and student surveys and short answer comprehension questions. The findings show that parents and teachers both enjoy reading aloud to their children. It was also found that primary teachers read aloud to their students more than intermediate teachers. Students were also able to utilize the necessary comprehension skills such as inferencing, predicting, visualizing, and making connections. In order to increase students' comprehension, teachers must practice reading aloud daily to their students.

Document Type

Thesis

Degree Name

MS in Literacy Education

Department

Education

First Supervisor

Joellen Maples

Subject Categories

Education

The Benefits of Reading Aloud to Children in Grades 5 and 6

Latoya Crockton

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

M.S Literacy Education

Supervised by

Dr. Joellen Maples

School of Arts and Sciences

St. John Fisher College

Fall 2010

Abstract

This study examined closely the benefits of reading aloud to 5th and 6th grade students. Research was conducted in a 5th grade regular education classroom as well as a 5th and 6th grade self-contained classroom. Data was collected through classroom observation, teacher, parent and student surveys and short answer comprehension questions. The findings show that parents and teachers both enjoy reading aloud to their children. It was also found that primary teachers read aloud to their students more than intermediate teachers. Students were also able to utilize the necessary comprehension skills such as inferencing, predicting, visualizing, and making connections. In order to increase students' comprehension, teachers must practice reading aloud daily to their students.

The Benefits of Reading Aloud to Children in Grades 5 and 6

Introduction

Why is it so important that children are read to? Many researchers have demonstrated that read alouds are an effective way to introduce students to the joy of reading and the art of listening (Fisher, James, Diane, & Nancy, 2004). Parents are encouraged to read to their children while they are in the womb, so that they will be able to hear and become familiar with the context of words.

Parents can start out by helping to promote their child's phonological awareness and the ability to manipulate the sounds of spoken language. When children are read to at an early age, they tend to benefit from the positive effects of book reading during the elementary school years. Children whose parents read to them also tend to become better readers and perform better in school on things such as standardized tests, vocabulary, fluency and overall intellectual growth (Bausch, 2009). When the child gets to the age in which he/she is ready to school, the baton is then passed on to the teacher.

Teachers start out reading to children in pre-school. Reading then becomes an everyday ritual that teachers like to stick to so that young children can become familiar with hearing phrasing, inflections, and expressions. Teachers should continue to read to their students throughout the school year, but after students reach a certain grade, teachers tend to read aloud less and less every day. What teachers don't realize is that they are doing a disservice to their students in more ways than one.

Read alouds allow teachers to expose students to exceptional literature. It is also beneficial to expose students to the many different types of genres. Students begin to develop

good listening skills that will follow them for a lifetime. It is very crucial that teachers not only read aloud to students, but they should model the necessary reading skills such as predicting, inferring, and visualizing to better help students improve their comprehension skills.

It is evident that children, who are exposed to books at very young ages, will most likely become very successful readers who will always be engaged and enthusiastic about wanting to read. Through this exposure, children are able to fully engross themselves in learning how to interpret and understand the necessary comprehension skills that enables children to reach their level of success in reading.

When looking at the role of the parent and the teacher in determining the outcome of a child's reading success, it clearly shows that children who are exposed to books at home and at school are better readers. Further research looked into the effects of reading aloud to students. In doing this research, it discussed the benefits of reading aloud to children. Research also showed how students gained the necessary skills that helped to increase their phonological awareness, vocabulary fluency, and all other components that work along with a child's reading development. During this project, I was able to look closely at how well students interacted with the each other and the text during the read alouds that were done in the classroom. I also, monitored the way in which students responded to certain comprehension questions that were asked either before, during or after a book was read. Through teacher questionnaires I was able to see how often teachers of both primary and intermediate grades read aloud to their children. Overall, I wanted to know what advantages students could gain when listening to a book that was being read aloud to them.

Theoretical Framework

Literacy can be defined by Gee (1982) as a socially accepted association among ways of using language of thinking, and of acting and how that could be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or social network. Children begin to acquire language at very young ages, as they begin to engage and actively participate in literate societies; the child is learning how to mean (Goodman, 1984). Learning to mean is done not only through written words, but spoken language as well. Within the classroom, students interact with one another throughout the day. When interacting, they are better able to listen and build their vocabulary. Children also, begin to interact with literacy through their own culture, causing them to become curious about their functions and purposes. Children begin to explore, examine and make sense of written language. Along with making sense of written language, children also begin to develop and have a grasp on comprehension and composition which are similar to those that they have used in oral language. This is why Goodman states that: “It is important to remember that a child’s development of literacy grows out of their experiences, and their views and attitudes towards literacy that they will encounter as they interact with social groups” (Goodman, 1984, p 317). Literacy development also occurs during read alouds. Children simply learn oral language first and then use the principles learned in oral language to develop written language.

Oral and written language both differ in several ways. A child’s language expressions tend to be used in different situational contexts. According to Kucer (2005) oral language is acquired and can be found in the here and now situations. Written language occurs over space and time with long distance. Written Language is also permanent with a record of meaning exchange (Kucer, 2005). While both oral and written languages have some differences, they also

have some similar qualities. They are both interdependent on each other. They always go together because they are both expressions of language.

Kucer (2005) explores the four developmental patterns and principles of language learning. The first is 'the learner as a Scientist and construction worker' Within this developmental pattern, the child discovers abstract regularities of language based on past communicative experiences (Kucer, 2005). The second, developmental principle is development as a recursive process (Kucer, 2005). In this principle learning is viewed as a process that involves improvement over time. The third developmental principle is the adult as Demonstrator, Mediator, and Guide (Kucer, 2005). During this principle, the language learning process starts. Adults demonstrate the dimensions of language to their child. They also mediate and support the child's attempts to use language. The child and the adult socially and collaboratively construct the dimension that exists in literacy (Halliday, 1973). Both teachers and parents play a very critical role in demonstrating to children the proper ways in which they should use language correctly. This demonstration can be done by reading or having a conversation with the child frequently. Teachers and parents can also model good reading strategies when they are reading. When modeling the child will begin to imitate what is being done. The fourth principle is, Negotiating Meaning (Kucer, 2005). In this principle children use a variety of cues to generate meaning of language. They start to use their environment to help them understand print. This is where the language learning process starts.

This information leads back to the notion of why it is important to read aloud to children while they are young. These years of a child's life is considered to be very crucial because it is where they start to acquire language as well as starting to participate in literate societies.

Research Question

Guided by the developmental patterns of language, the purpose of this action research project is to find out: What are the Benefits of Read Alouds to children in grade 5 and 6?

Literature Review

Reading aloud to children both in the home and in the classroom is a practice that has been recommended for decades (Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000) Most children are exposed to books and reading as young children when their parents read to them. As years go on, parents continue to reinforce this skill. As soon as the child enters school, the teacher will begin to work along with the parents to make sure that reading aloud is consistent within the child's education. Children are introduced to many ways to become engaged in a book that is being read aloud. These ways includes things such as responding to questions as you read, becoming familiar with unknown vocabulary words, and using other comprehension strategies that will help them to get a better understanding of the book that is being read.

According to the Balanced Literacy Handbook, read aloud can be defined as a component in which the teacher reads a selection out loud to students, often as a whole group activity. Reading aloud or oral reading should be an ongoing process that students carry throughout their lives, it can start as early as the child being in the womb. Holland (2007) states that there has been some controversy on whether reading aloud to infants is appropriate or not, but her study found that reading to infants was very beneficial to the language development of the child. When reading to young infants they begin to develop a love for reading, which makes it easier and more susceptible for them to learn to fluently read, along with making it easier for them to comprehend what they are reading. After viewing and learning a little information about read alouds, this leads me to ask the questions on what are the benefits of reading aloud to students in

5th and 6th grade? After reviewing the literature on read alouds the following categories emerged:

The history of read alouds, the purpose of read alouds, reading from the primary and intermediate perspective, gender differences in reading, the components of an effective read aloud, reader's response and practicing fluency.

History of Read Aloud

Reading aloud has been integral to reading instruction in the United States since colonial times (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). It was considered to be a goal for classroom instruction because of its prominence in people's daily lives. In the early 19th century, schools began to use a form of oral recitation that focused on the elocution as the preferred method and goal of reading instruction (Rasinski & Smith, 2003). In a class, the teacher would use what was called a recitation lesson to engage the students in the read aloud. The teacher would read a text orally and then have the students orally practice what was read on their own. After a sufficient period of practice, the students would orally read the passage to the teacher or to one of their peers. Students who were reading would be judged by the teacher on the quality of their oral reading and on how well they were able to recall the information that they had read. Recitation practice was encouraged so much within the classroom, until it became an ingrained and perceived part of the education in the United States. Within the 20th century, the thoughts of reading instruction began to change and arguments began to arise stating the fact that the emphasis of reading should be placed on comprehension and silent reading because they were viewed as being the best tools that would lead students to higher levels of success. However, this did not lead to the disappearance of reading aloud as an instructional practice (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). Throughout the latter half of the 20th century the "round robin" method of reading was very prominent. In round robin reading, students were encouraged to read books or passages with

expression and fluency. Today in the 21st century many schools are encouraged not to practice round robin reading with students, especially with a book in which the students is unfamiliar with. When eliminating the round robin reading, it saved children the embarrassment of struggling with the pronunciation of words that were unfamiliar to them. Now, to better help the children increase their comprehension, teachers are modeling comprehension strategies during read alouds.

The Purpose of Read Alouds

Teachers conduct read alouds to motivate their students to read and to build their knowledge about a specific subject. The books that are being read aloud are those of which are more difficult for students to read. Reading aloud is a great component that should be practiced in reading programs around the United States; however it is not often practiced in most reading programs. According to Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey (2004), teachers in San Diego and California schools are required to read aloud to their students every day. It has been said that read alouds model expressive, enthusiastic reading, transmit the pleasure of reading, and invite listeners to be readers. Collins (2005) believes that reading aloud in class not only allows the children to hear a teacher model reading for them, but also allows room for discussion to occur and the meaning of the text to be explored and thought through by the children and the teacher. Students should be allowed to fully get an understanding of themselves as well as their emotions, so that the wider world can be enhanced through an introduction to a range of different narrative texts. Collin (2005) went on to do further research and found that regular reading aloud to children at set times of the day had a significant effect on their expressive language and comprehension. She also found that reading aloud helps children to develop good listening habits. According to Fisher, Flood, Lapp & Frey, (2004), reading aloud gives the students a

chance to develop their vocabularies, experiential backgrounds and concepts of print and story. While reading, teachers can model reading strategies and demonstrate ways in which the language of the book is different from spoken language. When participating in read alouds, children begin to learn new words and ideas as they are exposed to a variety of genres in their written form. When reading, teachers will oftentimes stop to check for understanding or to help students gain an understanding of what a specific word that was read means. Sometimes the teacher may stop and write the definition on the board and ask the students to copy it to use as a reference when going back to discuss the book that was read.

Reading from the Primary Perspective

Reading has made significant changes over the centuries. When looking closely at reading you will begin to see that it differs in both the primary and intermediate grades. In the early years of school, children learned to read by first reading out loud with the support of more capable readers such as their teachers. This practice allowed teachers to monitor and correct children's reading and comprehension by both the reader and the teacher. This model of reading development fits well with concepts found in Vygotsky's sociohistorical theory (Prior & Welling, 2001). He conceived the psychological phenomena as being social in two ways. First they have social origins in which cultural development appears first on the social level and later on the individual level. According to Prior and Welling (2001), Vygotsky argues that at first, speech occurs entirely in the social realm, mainly between children and their parents, then he also goes on to say that as children develop, their speech becomes differentiated. In the article written by Cole (2006) she talks about Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development. Within this theory, the child follows the adult's example and gradually develops the ability to do certain tasks without assistance. Children arrive at school with a wide range of rich knowledge

about literacy. Many of the stories that are read to them are very familiar to what they may have heard at some point in time. Riley and Burrell (2007) state that literacy practices vary considerably in different communities and in some, the oral tradition is greater than reading aloud. Children may have heard stories that were told orally with the absence of a book by their parents or grandparents. During these years, children are going through what Riley and Burrell (2007) call the Foundation Stage. Spoken Language is acknowledged within this stage. Children who are in the foundation stage also, make up their own stories, use talk to organize, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feeling and events. Children are also able to retell narratives in the correct sequence, draw on language patterns of stories and show an understanding of the elements of stories, such as the main character, and the events that have taken place within the story. Riley and Burrell strongly (2007) believe that far more attention needs to be given to promoting speaking and listening skills right from the start. Promoting these skills should be done in order to make sure that children build a good chunk of words and learn to listen attentively and speak clearly and confidently. These skills along with reading and writing are the prime communication skills that are central to children's intellectual, social and emotional development.

Story talk was an intervention study that was designed to enhance children's spoken language skills, with the inclusion of helping them to gain the ability to narrate orally. While doing this study, the children's spoken language was being assessed. The study included young children ages 5 through 6. Students were given a test that assessed things like their sentence structure, vocabulary, organization, content, along with other skills (Riley & Burrell, 2007) The assessment procedure consisted of a reading activity and a retelling activity which took 15-20 minutes. During this time, an unfamiliar book was read aloud by the teacher. At the end of the

reading, the teacher asked three specified questions and the answers were scored. The students were then asked to retell the book to another child. While retelling the story, the teacher is scoring the child's oral language in the following areas: Sentence Structure, Global Judgements in terms of Organization, Description/Expression, Content and Vocabulary.

Vocabulary according to Kindle (2010) has been identified as a "critical factor" in building proficiency in reading. Limited vocabulary knowledge is viewed as a contributing factor for struggling readers of all ages. At the primary level, children who are pre and beginning readers, read alouds are an important source of novel words (Kindle, 2010). In addition to aiding vocabulary acquisition, read alouds can increase comprehension by providing opportunities for students to use abstract thinking (Neugebauer & Rubin, 2009).

Reading from the Intermediate Perspective

Reading aloud does still take place within the intermediate grades, but teachers within these grades view reading differently. Recent studies have shown that reading aloud to students during the intermediate grades is less common than reading to the children in the primary grades (Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). Teachers within these grades tend to become more traditional when teaching, meaning they stick solely to the curriculum, reading only the texts that are required. The teachers, who mainly read to their students, were those who were younger in age. Teachers within these grades, read mostly chapter books as they try to stay away from the picture books. Teachers who are teaching at these grade levels should still read picture books to children because as Jacobs (2000) says, "many picture books include issues or ideas that challenge older readers and cause them to gain new insights."

Many intermediate teachers feel as though they do not have time to read aloud books to their students (Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). When teachers read aloud to their students, it will keep them more engaged in their learning. If the pressure of reading is always placed on them, then they will lose their eagerness of wanting to read more within the classroom. Many intermediate teachers feel as though reading aloud to students is something that should be modeled within the primary years of learning, but reading aloud should be a continuous process that follows students throughout their years in school. Children benefit in many ways from this practice, both academically and emotionally. Research has shown that teachers within the intermediate grades rarely use, read or introduce informational books to their students (Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). In the past, informational books have been viewed as being sterile, dry and uninteresting (Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). Now these books are imaginative, detailed and interesting, not to mention its wonderful color presentation. Children can benefit in many ways from the exposure of informational books. These books encourage children to ask more questions and seek answers, leading them to wanting to read even more. It also gives them a chance to gain knowledge about real life events that occur, but teachers show no interest in reading them to their students. What Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard (2000) suggests is that teachers read excerpts of informational books to students, then spend some time in class discussing issues presented in the book. With having these discussions, it will at least give students some exposure to gaining some information about a given topic. The most common use for informational books in the classroom is as resource material for a content area study. Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard (2000) believes that if teachers were to read more informational books to their students, then perhaps many more students would be influenced to read informational books when having to read independently.

Most teachers, are not reading aloud to students in the intermediate grades because as Prior, & Welling (2001) says they have placed them in the developmental transition category. Within this stage, students have moved from oral reading to silent reading. Literacy research indicates that children in the intermediate grades who are average or strong readers comprehend better after reading silently (Prior & Welling, 2001). Swalm (2001) also agrees that silent reading is done more and is seen to be most effective at the intermediate level. According to Prior and Wells, silent readers may comprehend better when reading silently, but they aren't totally reading silently they are mumble reading. When reading students will mumble read a passage through softly mumbling every word within the passage. Mumble reading appears to be a transitional stage between oral and silent reading. While some students benefit from silent reading, those who struggle with reading comprehend better when they were allowed to read out loud. The oral form of reading likely continues to provide a salient means of self- monitoring and focusing attention on printed material (Prior & welling, 2001). The oral mode for comprehension ensures reading, whereas the silent mode may permit the children to bow their heads (Prior & Welling, 2001).

Gender Differences in Reading

Great concerns have been expressed over the male deficit in reading achievement. Below, Skinner, Ferrington, & Sorrell (2010) have found this research to be true. The deficits in reading that males face may be due to the physiological-maturational and cultural-societal factors (Below, Skinner, Ferrington, & Sorrell, 2010). Males tend to perform better on tasks that requires simultaneous (visual) processing and worse on tasks involving sequential (auditory) processing (Below, Skinner, Ferrington, & Sorrell, 2010). Deficits in early processing may affect reading skill development. Research also shows that gender differences in reading skills are

influenced by environmental or cultural /societal causes (Below, Skinner, Ferrington, & Sorrell, 2010). As a result of this, when being in the classroom, teacher's behaviors towards students is influenced by both the behavior of a particular student and the teacher's assumptions about what the student usually does or is likely to do. Teachers will automatically hold higher expectations for females. Below, Skinner, Ferrington, & Sorrell (2010) also found that teachers make more academic contacts and will spend more instructional time with girls during reading instruction.

Research findings suggest that, relative to girls, boys have weaker reading skill development when they enter Kindergarten (Below, Skinner, Ferrington, & Sorrell, 2010). These differences remain constant during the elementary years. This is why it is very crucial that the teachers implement very rigorous reading lessons that will help to increase the reading skills of boys so that they will not experience academic failure throughout their years in school.

What are the Components of an Effective Read Aloud?

There are many ways and ideas in which schools and districts around the world could incorporate read alouds, but Fisher et al (2004) explained the components that describes and effective reading:

1. Books chosen were appropriate to student's interests: Teachers clearly should choose text for the students that are of interest to the students. If a student loves animals it would be good to choose and read a book that is about animals, so that it will keep the interest of the students.
2. Selections had been previewed and practiced by the teacher: Teacher should not only preview a text that he or she would like to read, but they should practice reading the book before reading it. Practicing the text allows the teacher to pause effectively

during the read aloud to monitor fluency. A frequent pause also gives students opportunities for questioning. Teachers can also make reference and write down specific words that can be kept in a specific journal. Students can also create sentences with the words.

3. A clear purpose for the read-aloud was established: This allows the teacher the chance to express the reason for reading. They will be able to review what was read in the past, in other words teachers check for understanding by having the students retell the story then allowing them the chance to predict what they think might happen next within the story. The teacher will also introduce the comprehension strategies that students will be working on.
4. Teachers model fluent oral reading: This component is similar to text previewing. This is where the teacher provides a model of fluent reading. Teachers are encouraged to practice the Pronunciation of words. Fluent reading is often described as reading that is quick accurate, and expressive (Schwanenfluhel, et al., 2009).
5. Teachers were animated and used expression: When reading aloud to students using both animation and expression, it engrosses the students into the book that is being read. While reading, teachers are encouraged to change their voices to denote different characters emotions and various moods. It is also good to use things like movement, hand gestures, facial expressions, and props to provide animation and expression.
6. Teachers stopped periodically and thoughtfully questioned the students to focus them on specifics of the text: This is where students are engaged in the text. When engaging, students are able to make connection. These connections can be to the

world. This is where the reader makes a connection to something in the world. Text to self is another component. When making this connection, the reader is able to read a text and automatically think of a time in which he or she may have faced that specific moment. The last connection is text to text. This is where the reader is able to compare one book to another. All of these connections may stimulate great discussion.

7. Connections were also made to independent reading and writing: In this, teachers are able to connect their read aloud to the independent reading or writing that occurred during the day. Many teachers allow students to keep their responses in a Response Journal. Students are able to respond to the story in which the teacher is reading.

These seven components are very essential to an effective read aloud. If teachers were to stick to these components, it will ensure that every child is involved as well as receiving the best out of the read aloud.

Readers Response

Another component of conducting an effective read aloud is incorporating reader's response. Reader's Response suggests that individual readers transacting with a literary text will produce a variety of responses (Ghisso, & McGuire, 2007). During read alouds, these different interpretations and perspectives may be shared and discussed by students and teachers who together form an "interpretive community" Research has shown that the nature of response varies depending on the genre of the text being shared (Ghisso, & McGuire, 2007). Picturebook read alouds are what is called "performed texts." With this they have multiple cue systems, including the author's written text, the illustrator's visual text and the teacher's oral text (Ghisso,

& McGuire, 2007). All of these components comprise reading as well as mediation through additional talk. Teacher mediation helps children to negotiate the multiple sign system at play in picture books.

Practicing Fluency

As stated earlier, fluency is an essential part of reading and has been considered to be an important factor in reading development (Keehn, 2003). Fluent reading is often described as reading that is quick, accurate, and expressive (Schwanenflugel, et al., 2009). Fluency oftentimes is a neglected aspect of classroom reading instruction. Teachers tend to place their focus mainly on decoding and comprehension. These two are in fact very important, but in order for students to fully grasp these concepts, fluency must come into play because it helps students to recognize words accurately. Keehn (2003) believes that fluency is the connection that readers make between the natural phrasing in speech and the phrasal segmentation in oral reading. It involves reading with intonation and expression. Some at-risk indicators of oral fluency are the following:

1. Slow and labored pace: In this students are reading word by word with no expression
2. Poor flow or continuity, indicated by pauses, false starts and/or regression
3. Poor phrasing, evidenced by choppy reading improper stress and or intonation.

Some practices that have been put into place that would help to promote fluency within young readers is reading, modeling, explicit instruction, reading in manageable texts, and Readers Theater (Keehn, 2003).

Rereading is an instructional procedure in which students read a text repeatedly until they achieve a designated rate and then repeat the process with a new text. Many students benefit from rereading a text and it helps them to improve their rate and accuracy. It can also help with

comprehension because students become familiar with a specific text, therefore helping them to become confident whenever they have to read it. Schwanenflugel, et al, (2009) suggests that teacher practice the rereading strategy with students. Some ways in which teacher can do this is by choral reading, echo reading or partner reading.

Modeling (Keehn, 2003) is also a factor that will help with fluency. Students who hear good oral models have an advantage of students who have not had such models. This is why it is important for teachers as well as parents to read to their children on a day to day basis because they will model what good fluency should sound like.

Explicit Instruction (Keehn, 2003) this has been put into place to help bring instructional attention to the aspects of fluency so that it can build students metacognitive awareness of fluency production. Keehn (2003) states that in order to break out of the word by word reading and begin to group words, beginners must be aware that it is possible to read in some other way than word by word. Many students struggle with reading word by word. They will receive a text and just begin to read it without using expression.

Manageable Texts are texts that fit the reading level of the student for the development of reading fluency. Most people suggest that that the students be able to read the text with 95% accuracy in word recognition (Keehn, 2003). If students do not reach this accuracy, that means that the text that they have chosen is too difficult for the student and they will need to choose a text that is easier. Kim and White (2008) add that when given the opportunity to choose their own book, students tend to choose books that are too easy or too hard. They never choose books that suit their specific reading level. They also go on to stress the importance of the teacher being there to guide the student in making the right book choice both according to their level and

interest. Many teachers today will have the students choose the book and read the first page of it to see if the student is able to read the words that are presented. Some indications that teachers should look for is if the child comes to a word or words that he or she does not know or if they become stuck on a word for a long period of time. The student being stuck on a word simply means that he/she is having difficulties reading that specific text. There are other ways in which teachers can help students to increase their reading abilities. One way is by using Readers Theater in the class.

Readers (Keehn, 2003) Theater is an interpretative activity in which students repeatedly read a script based on the story in preparation for an oral reading performance, as a vehicle for oral reading practice (Keehn, 2003). Reading Theater promotes gains in oral reading fluency as well as growth in overall reading proficiency. Keehn (2003) looked at Reader's Theater more closely. She investigated the impact of Readers Theater on students at different levels of reading development. She found Reader's Theater to be a viable vehicle for oral reading fluency. When conducting the study, Keehn (2003) found that all of the students who participated in the study made gains in rate, phrasing, fluidity and expressiveness, as well as comprehension and word recognition. If students do not have fluency by 9th grade, they will be at risk of fully becoming literate in their adult life (Goering & Baker, 2010). This is why it is very critical that teachers who teach both primary and intermediate students, continuously work on increasing reading fluency.

Method

Context

Research for this study occurred at Edward Elementary (pseudonym) a school that is located in the Southwest zone of the inner city of Rochester. Edward Elementary has an enrollment of 402 students. Of those students, 86% are African American, 5% are Caucasian, 7% Hispanic and 2% Asian. The number of students who receive free/reduced lunch is 390 (97%). Edward Elementary uses a standard based curriculum and instruction to ensure that all students meet or exceed all state and national standards in all subject areas. The school provides 2½ hours of Language Arts instruction every day. During this time, students engage in reading, writing, speaking, listening and a skill practice in a structured environment in which they understand the routines and expectations. Edward Elementary also offers a technology based program called accelerated reader. The accelerated reading program is used to help students with learning different reading strategies as well as increasing fluency. The school has many community partnerships with local agencies and colleges. When these agencies come to the school they serve as tutors in the areas of reading and writing as well as serving as mentors who are preparing students for high school, college and the work force.

Within the year of 2010, the number of students at Edward Elementary who passed the English Language Arts test remained slightly the same across each grade level. There were 54.7% of 3rd graders who passed the test. In 4th grade, 56.8% of the students passed. In 5th grade the passing rate went down to 52.4%. In grade 6 the passing rate was 54.1%. When viewing these results it is evident that the school was able to have an overall passing rate of over

half of the students in each grade level and with more practice and reinforcement the other half of students can become very successful in passing this state exam.

Participants

The participants of this study were six 5th graders and one 6th grader. Of these students, four of them are in a regular education classroom and three of the students receive special education service. There were also seven parents who were involved along with eight teachers.

Nina Johnson (pseudonym) is an African American 9 year old female, 5th grader who has been placed in a regular education classroom. Nina lives within walking distance of the school. She is the oldest of six children. In school she is very enthusiastic about learning and enjoys taking on many leadership roles within the school. Nina serves as members of both the safety patrol and the student council. Her academics are on target. When taking the developmental reading assessment she scored a level 50, which places her right on the 5th grade level of reading. When completing the reading survey, Nina stressed the fact that she likes to read. She does not have a favorite book, but loves to read Dr. Seuss books to her little brothers and sisters. Nina thinks that reading is the best and if given the opportunity to read any type of book she said that she would read scary books because she loves the suspense of the book. While reading when coming across a word that she does not know, Nina says that she likes to try to sound it out. Nina also said that she likes reading best when someone reads either to or with her. Nina enjoys reading comics with her friends. Overall she thinks that she is a good reader because she has read lots of books over the years. Nina's mom Ms. Johnson also completed a questionnaire on her personal views of reading. She stated that she has been reading to Nina ever since she was a baby. She also, stated that she loves to read. Her favorite book to read is the Holy Bible. When

answering the question about her child as a reader, she said that her child loves to read and that she encourages her to read on a daily basis at home.

Tamara Mcknight (pseudonym) is a African American 5th grader who has been placed in a regular education class. She is the president of the schools safety patrol. Tamara lives in the inner city with her mother and two sisters. In class likes to stay on top of things by getting her work done and making sure that she understands that many concepts that is taught to her from day to day. When taking the Developmental Reading Assessment, Tamara scored a 60, which placed her on the 6th grade reading level. Tamara also receives after school tutoring from The Boys and Girls club that is located in her school. When completing the reading questionnaire, Tamara wrote that her favorite book was “Diary of a Wimpy Kid.” Her favorite types of books to read are mystery books. When choosing books she gets them from home or school. Tamara wrote that she thinks that reading is cool because it helps her to learn. Whenever she is reading a book and comes across a word that she does not know she likes to try to sound it out first, if she is unable to sound it out then she will ask an adult for help. When being asked whether she likes to read alone or with someone, Tamara stated that she likes to read alone because she understands the story more when reading by herself. Aside from reading books, Tamara likes to read magazines. Tamara thinks that she is a good reader because she can read fluently. Tamara’s mother Mrs. McKnight (pseudonym) wrote that when she reads she likes to read magazines, newspapers, and informational texts for pleasure. She said that she read to Tamara both when she was a baby and now. Ms. McKnight’s favorite authors are Alan Evan’s and E.B. White. Nothing about the books that she has read has really changed her in some way but, she has read some books that she really has enjoyed. She also commented and said that she would be willing to work with her daughter at home to build her reading skills.

Carrie Smith (pseudonym) is a biracial girl who has been placed in a regular education class. Carrie lives on the east side of the city and commutes to school by bus. She lives at home with her mother, father and little brother. Carrie is very shy and quiet, but has many friends within the school. She enjoys being a member of the peer mediation team because she loves to solve problems. When taking the Developmental Reading Assessment, Carrie scored a 50 which placed her on a 5th grade reading level. When being asked to fill out the questionnaire about her reading habits, Carrie stated that she loves books and has so many favorite books, but if she would have to choose one it would be “The Bully” She stated that she liked this book because it talked about real life issues that happen every day, especially in school. She also wrote that this is a good book to share with the students who are experiencing problems during peer mediation. Carrie wrote that her favorite types of books are books that talk about things that happen in real life. Carrie thinks that reading is fun and interesting because so many things happen within a story. Carrie wrote that when she comes across a word that she does not know, she likes to try to sound it out or use a dictionary. She said that if given the choice to read alone or with someone, she would like to read with someone because you get to hear the expressions of others while they are reading. Other than reading books, Carrie wrote that she loves to read comics and magazines. She thinks that she is a good reader because she is able to understand what she is reading.

Carrie’s mother Marlene Smith (pseudonym) completed the questionnaire. She stated that she likes to read magazines, novels, and the newspaper for pleasure. Marlene has and still does read to Carrie. Her favorite author is Danielle Steel. A recent book that she has read that has changed her life in some way was a book titled “Matters of the Heart.” She quoted that “This book made me see how lucky I am.” Marlene thinks that Carrie is a very fluent reader. They practice this

every night. She also, stated that she has and will always be willing to work with Carrie to build her reading skills.

Maria Cruiz (pseudonym) is an Hispanic girl who has been placed in a 5th grade regular education class. Maria has returned back to Rochester from Florida. She lives with her father and little brother. Maria is very outgoing and high spirited and smart. She is the standard barrier for the school. While in school, Maria enjoys going to tutor primary students. When completing her Developmental Reading Assessment, Maria scored at a level 80 which places her on an 8th grade reading level. When completing her questionnaire she wrote that her favorite book is titled “Blubber” by Judy Blume. The type of books that she likes to read most is informational books. She is currently reading a book about Nelson Mandela. Maria said that she thinks that reading is very fun and relaxing. When she is reading and comes across a word that she does not know, she said that she tries to sound it out by covering up parts of the word. When reading she said that she likes to read by herself at home and with her friends at school. Maria wrote that when she is not reading a book she likes to read magazines. She thinks that she is a good reader because she reads throughout the day so that she could increase her reading level and books help you to get more knowledge. George Cruiz (pseudonym) is Maria’s father. When being asked to fill out a questionnaire, he wrote that he likes to read both for business and for pleasure. He loves to read informational texts. George also wrote that he reads to his children every night. He does not have a favorite author, but has a favorite book called “Octopus Rex.” He likes this book because it makes him think of free Willie.

Erica Ross (pseudonym) is an African American 5th grader who has been placed in a 12+1+1 special education class. Erica lives in the inner city with her aunt, three brothers and one sister. Erica enjoys working with others within her classroom. She enjoys participating in

classroom instruction and discussions. Erica strives to do her best in all subject areas. When taking the Developmental Reading Assessment, Erica scored a 30 which placed her at a 3rd grade reading level. When completing the reading questionnaire, Erica stated that she loves to read. Her favorite book to read is “High School Musical” because it is a fun book and it has a lot of pictures inside of it. Erica wrote that she likes to read chapter books and she gets them from the library inside of the classroom. Erica stressed that she thinks that reading is fun. When coming to a word that she does not know she asks her teacher. When given the choice of reading alone or with a partner, Erica wrote that she likes to read by herself. When she is not reading a book, Erica wrote that she likes to read the newspaper everyday inside her classroom. Overall, Erica thinks that she is a good reader. Adrienne Ross (pseudonym) Erica’s aunt was asked to fill out a questionnaire and she said that she enjoys reading both nonfiction and informational texts. She does read to Erica on a nightly basis. Ms. Ross’s favorite authors are Joseph Prince and T.D. Jakes. Ms. Ross view Erica as being a very good reader who likes to read with excitement, but lacks comprehension after she reads. She is willing to work with Erica at home to better increase her comprehension skills.

Stephanie Chavez is a Hispanic 6th grader who has been placed in a 12+1+1 classroom. She lives at home with her mother, step father three brothers and two sisters. Stephanie is very quiet and seldom participates in class. She has several friends whom she likes to hang around in school. Stephanie is also enrolled in an afterschool tutoring program. When taking the Developmental Reading Assessment, Stephanie scored at a level 24 which places her in the middle second grade range of reading. Stephanie likes to read and thinks that it is fun. She likes to read “My Little Pony” books and books about Halloween. When getting a book to read, Stephanie gets them from the school’s library. When reading and coming to a book that she does

not know, Stephanie wrote that she does not want to read that book anymore. When reading she likes to read by herself. Besides reading books she likes to read recipe books. Stephanie wrote that she thinks that she is a good reader because her dad told her so. Marta Chavez (pseudonym) Stephanie's mother completed the questionnaire and stated that she likes to read magazines, novels, and nonfiction books. She said that she reads to Stephanie sometimes, but really doesn't know how she is as a reader.

Joseph Willis (pseudonym) is an African American 5th grader who has been placed in a 12+1+1 classroom. Joseph and his family relocated to Rochester from Ohio on last year. Joseph is very helpful around the classroom. He has a lot of great ideas and strategies that he offers to the class. When completing the Developmental Reading Assessment, Joseph score at a level 18 which places him at a middle 1st grade level in reading. Joseph favorite book is "Goosebumps" because he likes to read scary stories. When choosing books he gets them from his school. If given the choice to read any type of book, Joseph said that he would like to read a book about the world. While reading and coming to a word that he does not know, Joseph likes to ask the teacher for help. He would rather read a book alone versus reading with a partner. Besides reading books he likes to read comics. Joseph's mother Asia Willis (pseudonym) completed the questionnaire and stated that she loves to read magazines, novels and nonfiction texts. Ms. Willis read to her son when he was a baby. Her favorite author is Tyree Omarr. Something that she has read that has changed her life was the poem "Pronominal Woman" by Maya Angelou. When being asked to describe her son as a reader, she wrote that He is doing much then usual. He reads books to me and will miss some words, but he is doing very well ever since we moved here.

The Parents of the children who were apart of the study was asked to participate. They were asked to fill out a questionnaire on their history of reading to their children. Parents were also asked to comment on their reading history.

The teachers of Edward Elementary school were asked to participate and 8 of the 16 teachers decided to complete the questionnaire that asked about the number of times in which they read to their children. Mrs. Bulk is the 5th grade teacher that I decided to work closely with during this study, along with her 4 students. I also decided to include myself and three of my student's two 5th graders and 1 6th grader.

Ms. Bulk is a 5th grade teacher who has been teaching at Edward Elementary for five years. She moved her from Chicago several years ago. Ms. Bulk attended College in Alabama and has a Bachelor's Degree in business administration. She later went back to school to obtain a Master's Degree in Elementary Education. Ms. Bulk has taught grades 2, 5, and. All of which she has enjoyed teaching and implementing new ideas. When being asked to complete the Teacher Reading Questionnaire Ms. Bulk was asked to respond to several questions regarding her outlook on conducting read alouds within the class. Ms. Bulk stated that she reads to her students on a daily basis at least once during the school day. She generally reads for 20 minutes. Ms. Bulk stated that when doing read alouds her intentions are on modeling fluency. She also wants to allow the students to hear how she uses expression as well as helping them to pay attention to punctuation. The benefits that she sees her students gaining from this is the increasing of both fluency and comprehension as well as making note of the other comprehension strategies that she has modeled such as asking questions, making inferences, visualizing, drawing conclusions etc... The types of books that Ms. Bulk uses for read alouds ranges from picture books to textbooks. Ms. Bulk write that she does consider read-alouds to be

a part of the planned curriculum because children need daily exposure to different types of books that maybe would not have sparked their interest before. Reading Aloud is a very essential component that teacher should exercise on a regular basis. It will not only help students to improve their fluency and comprehension skills, but it will also increase listening as well.

Researcher Stance

During part of this study, I served as what Mill (2007) calls a Privileged, Active Observer. When taking on this role, I was allowed to go into a classroom during my planning time to observe students while they were both listening and working. The second part of the study occurred within my classroom. According to Mills (2007) I became a Participant Observer. I was fully engaged in what was going on during the read aloud.

I am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College. I am working on obtaining my degree in Literacy. I currently have a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary/Special Education. I have been working in the area of special education for 4 years.

I went into the classroom the same time every day, and took a seat towards the back of the room to take notes based on what and how I saw students working and interacting with the text while it was being read. I also saw how well students are able to comprehend what they were listening to when a book or a passage was being read. I also went into the classroom to not only observe the teacher during her read aloud, but to observe the students when they were independently reading at their seats. When doing both of these I saw the student's interactions with the books that were both being read aloud and read quietly at their seats. I did this every day for 45 minutes consecutively for 3 weeks. When listening to a story I monitored and analyzed the amounts of questions and responses that the students had to offer.

Prior to reading a story the students in Ms. Bulk's class, would first do an author study, in which allowed them to get to know the author as well as become familiar with all of the books that were written by that specific author. The author that was chosen by the class was Nikki Grimes. After studying Nikki Grimes, the students then prepared to engage in the book titled "Make Way for Dymond Daniels." One reading strategy that I wanted to see students utilizing more was predicting. I wanted to see students making predictions before and after reading a story of chapter. I also tape recorded and transcribed some of the sessions so that I could be able to capture the dialog that occurred between the students. Students were also asked to sit in a circle so that there would not be anything in their way that would be a distraction to them while listening to the story. Their undivided attention should be focused on the teacher. Before reading the book, the teacher introduced the unfamiliar vocabulary that was within the chapter so that students could have a better understanding. While reading, Mrs. Bulk would stop periodically to ask questions and to check for understanding. After finishing the reading for that day, students were asked to go back to their desks to answer some comprehension questions. At the completion of the read aloud period, the students would have the opportunity to talk about the chapters that were read.

I read the same book in which Mrs. Bulk read. At the end of the reading, students were required to answer questions as well as give answers to short response questions. My students are special education students, so I had to modify their assignments. One way in which I modified the assignment was that I allowed students to read over the comprehension questions before I read each chapter. With doing this it helped the students to know what they are listening for when the story was being read.

I observed the daily read aloud block that Mrs. Bulk included within her schedule. I also worked along with her to design the comprehension and response questions that the students were asked to answer after every reading session. I also decided to be a part of this study by reading a book aloud daily to the three students who are in my self-contained 12+1+1 classroom.

Ensuring Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

According to Mills (2007), there are four aspects that characterize the validity of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the researcher's ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and deal with patterns that are not easily explained (Mills, 2007, p.104). One way in which I showed credibility was by collecting documents such as the question responses that were given to students after each chapter had been read as well as the reader's response journals. I also recorded some of the sessions when going into the classroom, so that I would be able to capture the full dialog between the teacher and the students.

Transferability was present in this study as well. Transferability refers to qualitative beliefs that everything they study is context bound and that the goal of their work is not to develop "truth" statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people (Mills, 2007, p.104). To ensure transferability I collected detailed descriptive data that permitted comparison of a given context. In this detailed description, readers were able to picture the setting of the study as well as the interactions of the students.

Dependability is another aspect that is described. Dependability refers to the stability of the data. To address issues related to the dependability of the data that we collect (Mills, 2007, p. 104). The overlap method was definitely used within this study. I was able to use two methods in

such as way that the weakness of one is compensated by the strength of the other. In addition to me taking notes during the classroom observation, I was able to tape record some of the sessions to ensure that I would capture the full effect of student interaction during this time.

The final aspect that was described was Confirmability. In Corformability, the data or the neutrality or objectivity of the data that has been collected (Mills, 2007, p.105). In addition to this I was able to practice reflexivity by keeping a journal with reflections after every session.

Confirmability was also used in this study as well. Mill (2007) explains this as being the neutrality or objectivity of the data collected. In this the triangulation process is still in use because a variety of data sources and different methods will be compared to one another. A journal was kept throughout this process that included reflections on a regular basis.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Rights of the Participants

No data collection could be taken without the consent of all of those who are going to be a part of this study. I needed to collect this consent in order to protect the rights of all individuals within this study. I first had a conversation with Ms. Bulk and gave her a letter stating what it was that I was going to be doing with her and her students. She signed the consent form. I then wrote a letter to parents introducing myself and the study in which I was going to be conducting with parents, teachers and students. In the letter I ensured that the rights of the parent, teacher and child would be protected. I also explained that I wouldn't be using any names. Along with the letter, I attached a reading survey for the parents and on the survey I explained that if parents fill it out and send it back with their children, then they are completely agreeing to participate in this study. After getting the approval from the parents, I went and explained to the students what I was going to be doing. I also left room for them to ask any questions. After everything was all

set and the students agreed, I asked them to sign the assent form. I also allowed students to choose their own pseudonyms. After doing this I personally went to all of the teachers and explained what I was doing and asked them if they could fill out the questionnaire that I provided. I went on to further explain that if they were to fill out and return the questionnaire that they were agreeing to participate in the study. Any names that are found on the artifacts that are used will be removed. If in any case I have to use names, those names would be pseudonyms.

Data Collection

There were multiple forms of data collection I served as a privileged, active observer in which I went into the 5th grade classroom to observe the teacher as she was doing a read aloud to her students, during the reading block. I took notes on how well the students interacted with the text while listening to what is being read. I also used a tape recorder to record the discussions that went on after the book was read. After reading, I also observed students when answering the comprehension questions that were given by the teacher.

In the second part of the study I served as the Participant Observer in which I was involved as a teacher within the study. I read and did different activities with my students to check for their comprehension. As I read I walked around the room to see how engaged students were. I also stopped periodically to check for understanding. Students were also asked to make predictions of what will happen next in the story. Some of these sessions were recorded. After reading I would playback the reading session and from this I was able to take notes and reflect on student's interactions and participations. After the readings, students were asked to either answer comprehension questions or write a response in their reading response journals. After each session, I had a short discussion with the students about the book as well as their responses.

When gathering all the students' responses together I analyzed which students benefited most from the read aloud. I looked closely at these responses to see if students paid close attention to detail as well as described the elements of the story like the character, setting, problems etc... that happened. When viewing the teacher surveys I placed them into categories according to the grade level. From this I was able to see which grade level primary or intermediate reads aloud the most to their children frequently.

Findings and Discussion

This study was designed to find out the benefits of read alouds. Jacobs (2000) believes that reading aloud to children in the classroom is a practice that had been recommended for decades. While it is not recommended within the curriculum, teachers are encouraged to read to their students because it not only models fluency, but it teaches them all of the necessary comprehension skills that they use while reading a book. When going into the classroom and observing the teacher and the students I began to see how well students enjoyed read alouds. When hearing and looking at the students responses, I began to see the commonalities in terms of the comprehension skills that students exhibited. The themes in which I began to focus is engagement, the three types of comprehension questions literal, inferential and evaluative as well as some comprehension strategies such as making a prediction, drawing conclusions and making a connection.

Engagement

Through action research, it was observed and noted that children were fully engaged during each read aloud, with putting full participation and effort in answering comprehension questions. Ms. Bulk read aloud to the students the same time every day. In order to prepare for

the read aloud, students would place their chairs into a circle. It was observed that the girls within the room always tried to move closer to the teacher, while the boys furthest away from the teacher. In my observation I think that the boys maybe moved farther away from the teacher to avoid being called on whenever a question was being asked. When reading the boys would oftentimes start to chatter, which would make Ms. Bulk stop to attend to the boys chattering. According to Below, Skinner, Ferrington, & Sorrell (2010) males face great deficits in reading. Such deficits may be due to physiological-maturational and cultural-societal factors. Males tend to pay less attention during reading instruction and more attention during math instruction (Below, Skinner, Ferrington, & Sorrell, 2010). This may or may not be a gender issue but I was curious as to why they would always move away from the teacher. Ms. Bulk would redirect these students by reminding them about the importance of listening to what is being read. At the beginning of each session, she would let the students know that they would be answering some questions that would test their comprehension. Collins (2005) believes that an active involvement with literature enables pupils to share the experience of others. Many of the students became very involved with the types of discussions that were going on in the circle. Ms. Bulk would read the book, periodically stopping to check for understanding and to see how well students were comprehended what she was reading.

Types of Comprehension

In order to monitor comprehension, Ms. Bulk asked three types of comprehension questions, they were literal, inferential, and evaluative. The literal questions are questions that can be found in the text and can be directly stated. Students are always able to go back into the text and show where they found the information. Inferential questions are questions that can be found in the text as well, but they are implied and not directly stated. In order to find the answers

to these types of questions one would have to read between the lines. In these questions, students are able to explain their reasoning and show the part of the story that supports their idea. Evaluative questions requires information outside of the text. In other words, the answers are in your head or somewhere else. As we look closer at these types of comprehension questions it will become evident that along with these questions come the strategies that are used in order to answer these questions. These strategies include things like making connections, visualizing, making both predictions and inferences, asking questions and using background knowledge. All of these strategies fall under the category of the 3 forms of comprehension. The three forms of comprehension that I am going to discuss are Literal, Inferential, and Evaluative.

Literal Comprehension

Literal questions lead to answers that can be found directly in the text. Although students were not allowed to look back at the book to find the answers to these questions, all of the students did well on these questions (Benchmark Education Company 2010). Most of the literal questions that were asked were pertaining to students having to identify the names of characters and well as the names of certain locations that were mentioned. Students were very confident in answering these literal questions because they were sure of the answer. When looking over all participants' literal questions, all 7 participants answered 3/4 questions that were asked. What the found data showed was that these students were able to listen and remember important information such as names, places, and dates. The answer that students struggled with was describing the character traits. The story used many words to describe the main character Dyamonde, but when asked to list three character traits, students begin to just list the names of other characters that were associated with the main character such as her mother, father and best friend. In my observation, students really showed frustration when answering this question and

asked the teacher for clarity and after explaining it to them, students still gave the names of characters. What this was showing was that students may have needed some information or a refresher on what character traits were prior to reading the chapter. It may have also been beneficial for the teacher to give examples of the traits of either someone in the class or of a character in a previous story that was read.

Inferential Comprehension

Inferential questions are questions that can be found in the text, but they are implied but not directly stated (Benchmark Education Company 2010). In viewing students responses to these types of questions, it was found that most of them struggled with answering these questions correctly. In the story the main character, Dyamonde, liked to wear a vest that was red, white, and blue. She called this vest the “independence vest.” The question that was asked was in reference to students responding to why Dyamonde called her vest this. When answering, five of the students said because the vest was red, white, and blue. This response shows that the students understood the colors of the vest, but in order to fully answer the question, students would have to activate their background knowledge of what those colors are associated with. Students would also have to know what the word Independence is associated with. In the student Maria’s response she was able to say that the red, white, and blue were the colors of the flag and this was a partial response, but the author wanted the reader to connect this scenario to Independence Day (4th of July).

Another question that students struggled with was explaining how Dyamonde felt about sleeping on the pullout couch of her apartment. She didn’t come out and give a feeling word of how she felt, but she talked about how the sofa bed was bigger than her old bed, and she was

able to stretch many different ways in the bed at night. With that information, several of the students answered and said that she was upset about having to sleep on this sofa bed. The results to this question showed that students were unable to take what the character said to determine her feelings towards her having to sleep on this sofa bed.

A skill that all of the students were able to do well was use context clues to determine vocabulary words. As Jacobs (2000) stated, it is important to reinforce vocabulary skills with the students. Whenever reading a text, Greenawalt (2010) suggests that teachers should preselect ten vocabulary words and provide kid-friendly definitions. While the book didn't come out and give the meaning to the words, students were able to listen to the words in which the character explained around the specific vocabulary word and from this they were able to give the correct definitions to the given vocabulary words in which the teacher wrote down on the board. When arriving at a specific vocabulary word, Ms. Bulk put great emphasis on the word and the "clue" words that helped to describe or tell the meaning of the words. When stopping to ask the meaning of the word "extraordinary," Tamara raised her hand and responded, "It means that she was unusual"(field notes October 28, 2010).

During my read aloud, I also stressed and reread the vocabulary words that were asked within the chapter, and when being asked to tell the meaning of the word, my students asked if they could use a dictionary to define the word. While Ms. Bulks students were able to tell what the word meant by listening to the context clues, my students struggled with listening for the context clues that would help them figure out what the word meant. In not being able to use context clues this shows that the students had no prior knowledge of the words and maybe would have benefitted from having me write the words and the clues on the board. My students rely on

the dictionary for definitions whenever they are unsure of the proper answers to say. In other words they want to be accurate in their answers.

Based on the information given, students were able to make accurate predictions as well. They were able to make accurate predictions of what would happen next in the story most of them just extended what the author said at the end of the previous chapter. After answering prediction questions, students would always want to share. From this sharing, there was great discussion between the students. The students in my class didn't feel comfortable with sharing their predictions. I think that the comfort level of my students isn't all that great. One reason is because they are afraid of being wrong. When viewing their predictions I saw that they clearly understood what the previous chapter talked about and their prediction was a continuation of what was previously read. To better help students overcome this fear, it might be beneficial for me to allow them to make predictions not only when reading a story, but throughout the day on things such as the weather, and certain math concepts.

Evaluative Comprehension

In evaluative comprehension, students have to search for the answers outside of the text or have it already in their heads (Benchmark Education Company 2010). When looking closely at these questions, students were able to relate their personal feelings to those of the characters in the story. In other words, students were able to make connections with either things that they read about or things that happened in their personal lives. Students gave great responses to these types of questions. The reason why they gave great responses was because of their ability to connect the text with their own personal experiences. A question that was asked was in reference to Dyanne referring back to her life in Brooklyn, and the students were asked what life they

would choose and why? The student Carrie gave a very long response as well as reasons to why she thought that way, “I would choose to live in Brooklyn because I would have more friends there and it is a place in which I would be familiar with everyone” (field notes, October 25, 2010) She also went on to write that she would be sad if she had to move to a different city because she is used to life in Rochester. Giving this response showed, that Carrie had given the question some thought and had actually placed herself within the story. There was also a question that required the students to incorporate their personal feelings. This question asked students to think about a time in which they had lost something (pet, teacher etc...) and how did they feel and why? This question stemmed great discussion as well. Students wanted to discuss this because they were able to empathize with Dymond and they wanted to talk about their losses. Students talked about everything from losing pets to losing a loved one. Maria talked about losing her dog, and she expressed her sadness by telling the history of her and the dog. This data showed that students were able to make a text to self connection. According to Fisher et al (2004) one of the components of an effective read aloud is for students to be able to make a connection between the text and either the world or themselves.

Independent Reading/Mumble Reading

Students also practiced reading independently. Some students may have a hard time with practicing this skill. When going into Ms. Bulk’s class during independent reading time, I observed the students sitting quietly at their desk with both their books and response journals in front of them. Students were reading books that are at their independent level. These books were also books that the students had chosen according to their interest level. Students were asked to independent read for 20 minutes. Some students showed excitement about reading, while others complained but would begin to eventually read. During this time, some students asked to read in

a corner or on the reading carpet. While the room was in total silence, students would oftentimes take a break from their reading by laying their books on their desk. This showed the lack of focus and the lack of engagement that the students were having with the books that they were reading. As I began to walk around the room, I also observed students doing what Prior and Welling (2007) call mumble reading. Students who were mumble reading were not very loud, but you could hear them reading. Prior and Welling (2007) believes that the transition between mumble reading and reading independently starts in grades 2 through 5. The students who were silent reading were not bothered by the students who were mumble reading. After the 20 minutes were up, the timer went off and the students automatically knew to start writing a response to what they were reading inside their response journals. Independent reading time within my room is similar to that of Ms. Bulk, but my students have a hard time silent reading. Everyone mumble reads. As I walked around my room, you can hear students reading. At first I thought that this would interfere with the reading dynamics of the room, but no one was bothered by this so I allowed it as long as the students were reading. While students were mumble reading, it gave me a chance to walk around and listen for student's fluency as well as seeing how they were interacting with the books in which they were reading.

Personal Response Journal

Readers Response Journal is also an important component that is included during read alouds. According to Ghisco & McGuire (2007), Reader Response suggests that individual readers interacting with a literary text will produce a variety of responses. Bashir (2007) believes that students should keep response journals for not only the purpose of writing a response to a story, but to record their ideas and reactions to the books that are being read to them. According to the schools reading curriculum, students are required to keep a reader's response journal. In

this journal, students respond to either a story in which they are reading or a story in which the teacher has read. Ms. Bulk and I like to have our students working in these journals every day. Every student has a response checker board. On this board, students are asked to choose a response square. These squares include every question from telling the authors purpose, to giving a one paragraph summary of what they read. When viewing the students' responses, I saw that some of the students gave great responses making reference to characters as well as making personal connections to either their own personal lives or a book that was previously read. Ms. Bulk students' responses to the books were very extensive. When asking my students to give a response to the story, the students Stephanie and Erica gave thorough responses while Joseph just gave a two sentence response of what he thought about the story. When asking him to elaborate on what he wrote, he stated that he couldn't remember anything else. It was assumed that Joseph didn't understand the story or he would have better understood the story if it was reread to him. Joseph would also benefit from the use of a graphic organizer so that he could write down important things that happened in the story. Sometimes at the end of this time I allowed students to share their responses.

Teacher Questionnaires

During this study, there were eight teachers who participated in a questionnaire. Of those eight teachers, four were primary teachers, and four were intermediate teachers. When viewing the questionnaires of the primary teachers, I began to see the commonalities among them. When asked the question of how often do they read to their students, one teacher responded and said that she reads to her children all day long. The other teachers said that they read to the students periodically throughout the day mainly in 30 minute intervals. When asked to give the benefits of reading to children, most of the answers were the same. Reading to students enforces many

strategies such as fluency, stimulates visualizing, predicting, inferring, and making connections. The teachers at the primary level enjoy reading mostly picture books because they keep the students engaged in the text. The primary teachers also stressed that they rarely read informational books for pleasure. The only times informational books were incorporated are during science and social studies. These teachers also feel like read alouds are a part of the curriculum during the primary years because students need to see how good reading should be modeled. In all of the information collect, it was shown that primary teachers in fact read more picture books and less informational books but primary teachers should look at informational books as what Jacobs (2000) says as a way for students to learn about a specific topic along with being able to ask questions and seek answers. The primary level should be the basis for becoming familiar with informational books because it gives students the chance to gain knowledge about real life events.

There were four intermediate teachers who completed the questionnaire as well. The answers among this group of teachers were somewhat different. Three teachers responded and said that they read to their students once a day for 30 minutes. Another teacher wrote that she reads to her students two to three times per week for 15 to 20 minutes. These teachers noted that the stories that they read are generally related to a topic that is or has previously taught. In other words, these teachers read informational texts that are used to further increase the student's knowledge about a topic. Teachers at the primary level like to read everyday some even read throughout the day.

When reading, two of the teachers wrote that they read aloud with the efforts of helping their struggling readers better enhance their reading skills as well as modeling fluency. At the intermediate level, teachers are mainly reading chapter and informational books. One

intermediate teacher wrote that she still likes to read picture books to her students because it helps her students to visually see what the author is writing about. As Jacobs (2000) states that picture books are good to read because they attend to real life issues that some students can relate to. Both primary and intermediate teachers read aloud to their students, but it is done more at the primary level. According to Jacobs (2000) it is very important to read to children period, but primary teachers tend to read more to their students, and the questionnaires that were taken proved that primary teachers do actually read more to their students than intermediate teachers. Primary teachers should practice reading more informational books to their students because as stated earlier it exposes them to real life events. As for intermediate teachers, they should incorporate more picture books because most of the picture books carry real life messages that students will be able to benefit from. Both primary and intermediate teachers agree that reading aloud to students is a very important entity that should be incorporated in their everyday lesson plans.

Implications and Conclusions

The findings from my research suggest several implications for me as a teacher. While it is clear that there are some great benefits in reading aloud to students, many teachers have their own perspective on when and how it should be done. When participating in read alouds, students are able to increase their comprehension skills by utilizing the reading strategies that have been previously taught to them. In my findings, I was able to see how well students are able to listen and answer literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension questions. I was also able to see how well students were able to respond to what was being read through interactive conversations and writing personal responses. As a teacher, I feel that reading aloud to students should be done every day.

During the time that was allotted, students were fully engaged in the book that was being read. The teacher would often stop to check for understanding or to ask higher order thinking questions. Prior to reading the book, students gained a little background knowledge about the author. After finishing this, students were allowed to vote on the book in which they wanted the teacher to read. According to Fisher (2004), students should have a voice in the book in which teacher is reading aloud to the class. When students have a voice, it is sure to keep their interest. In this case, it did. The book touched on many real life issues in which students were able to make a text-to self-connection with. Students showed excitement every time the book was about to be read. After the teacher read the book, students were asked to go back to their seats and answer comprehension questions.

Limitations

If given the chance to do further research in this study, there would be several things that I would incorporate to help enhance my findings. The first thing that I would do is read other books that were written by the author. There was a very short time frame given, so to make sure that everything was completed, we could only read one of the author's books to the students. Also, while reading, I would allow the students to take some notes about what is being read. There were several questions that were given to students in which caused them to remember minor details within the story. Along with taking notes, I would also allow students to write down any unfamiliar words that they hear during the read aloud. The teachers chose some words for the students, but Kindle (2010) stated vocabulary as being a "critical factor" in building proficiency in reading. Students should be allowed to identify words in which they don't know as well as search for the meaning of those words by using the available classroom resources.

If time would have permitted, I think that I would have spent one on one time with the students who were apart of the study. I would have given them a chance to read aloud to me a book that is at their independent level. When asking them to read, I would check for any strategies that they may use while reading as well as checking their fluency and intonation. After doing this, it would have been beneficial to have had a chance to sit down with the teacher and offer some suggestions for future instruction that would be geared towards helping those students. As a teacher who was a part of this study, I was able to learn more about my students and their abilities to comprehend what is being read. After doing this, I was able to develop effective lessons for my students.

Another aspect of this study that I would have liked to incorporate was having the chance to observe a primary teacher during read alouds. It would have been nice to sit and observe the interactions as well as the dialogue between the primary students and the teacher. I also think that it would have been good to incorporate the parents in the study more. Parents did fill out the survey that was given, but it would've been nice to send home a book for them to read aloud to their children and have them note the reactions of their children. I know that this is something that parents of primary children are encouraged to do, but reading should be a continuous entity within the intermediate years as well. Another question that is still pondering in my mind is whether or not students respond better to informational books or books that are read for pleasure.

Overall, the research that was done helped others to understand the benefits of reading aloud to students who are in the grades 5 and 6. The daily literature circles that were observed were very conducive to the learning of all the individuals who participated. At the completion of this study, students were able to gain a better understanding of the many different comprehension skills that students are required to acquire before making their transition to junior high school.

Conclusion

I focused my research study on the question; “What are the benefits of reading aloud to children in grades 5th and 6th?” I found out that children begin to acquire language at a very young age, as they begin to engage and actively participate in literate societies; the child is learning how to make meaning of both spoken and written words (Goodman, 1984) by interacting and developing vocabulary through both oral and written language. Both teachers and parents play an important role in helping the child to develop language. Reading is something that parents should practice doing at home while the child is very young and when going to school, this act of reading should continue with the classroom teacher.

During the 19th century, reading started out as an act of reciting the words in which the teacher would be saying. As the years progressed and the 20th century began, reciting became obsolete and “round robin” was introduced. Today, teachers all across the world are encouraged to read to their children. Primary teachers have been found to read more to their children than the teachers who are within the intermediate grades. This lack of reading is because so many of the intermediate teachers are bombarded with the stress of having to teach the students what is required of them to learn according to the curriculum. Reading aloud to intermediate children encourages them to ask more questions and seek answers, leading them to wanting to read more books.

When completing the research, I was able to learn of the components of an effective read aloud. The study that was done was most beneficial to classroom teachers because it helps them to understand and to know what it takes to make sure that all of the students engage in the read aloud. Through doing this research, I have also learned some strategies that are necessary to

help a struggling reader increase their fluency. While the teacher is reading, he/she is modeling fluency. Modeling fluency was observed throughout this study. The teacher would speak clearly as well as use expression to help the students understand what was going on in the story as well as to express the emotions of the characters.

Along with reading aloud comes the notion of being able to comprehend what's being read. Students who were apart of this study were able to answer the three types of comprehension questions that were mentioned earlier. Allowing students to answer written or verbal questions is very important because it shows whether or not the student comprehends what is being read. It also helps the teacher develop lessons and offer some suggestions and ideas to parents.

In order for students to experience all of the great benefits of read alouds, parents and educators have to be willing to keep an open mind and explore all of the possibilities and ideas that can be used when reading to children. It is important not only for students to become familiar with words, but students should become familiar and comfortable in reading. They should gain a sense of knowing how to read fluently as well as answer questions. When having all of these components working together, there will be no need for extra help or programs that are geared towards helping struggling readers.

References

- Bashir, S. (2007). 'I had a teacher who read to me': the role of reading aloud in creating enthusiastic young readers. *English Association* , 18-21.
- Bausch, L. (2009, Nov/Dec). To Read or Not to Read-That is the Question. *Pediatrics* , 10.
- Below, J. L., Skinner, C. H., Ferrington, J. Y., & Sorrell, C. A. (2010). Gender Differences in Early Literacy: Analysis of Kindergarten through Fifth-Grade Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skill Probes. *School Psychology Review* , 240-257.
- Burrell, A., & Riley, J. (2007). Assessing children's oral storytelling in their first year of school. *Instructional Journal of Early Years Education* , 181-196.
- Cole, A. D. (2006). Scaffolding beginning readers: Micro and Macro cues teachers use during students oral reading. *International Reading Association* , 450-459.
- Collins, F. M. (2005). "She's sort of dragging me into the story!" Student teachers' experiences of reading aloud in Key Stage 2 classes. *Blackwell Publishing* , 10-16.
- Fisher, D., James, F., Diane, L., & Nancy, F. (2004). Interactive read-alouds: Is there a common set of implementation practices? *International Reading Association* , 8-17.
- Gee, James P.(2001). What is Literacy? In *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook* (pp. 537-544). Boston, MS: Bedford/St Martin's.
- Ghiso, M. P., & E., M. C. (2007). "i talk them through": Teacher mediation of Picturebooks with Sparse Verbal Text during Whole-Class Readalouds. *Reading Research and Instruction* , 341-361.
- Goering, C. Z., & Baker, K. F. (2010). "Like the Whole Class Has Reading Problems": A study of oral Reading Fluency Activities in a High Intervention Setting. *American Secondary Education* , 39(1) 61-75.
- Greenawalt, L. (2010). Repeated Interactive Read Alouds Using Non-Fiction . *Ohio Journal of English Language Arts* , 15-21.
- Goodman, Y. (1984). In *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook* (pp. 316-324). Boston, MS: Bedford/St. Martin's
- Holland, J. W. (2008). Reading Aloud with Infants: The Controversy, the Myth, and Case Study . *Early Childhood education Journal* , 35:383-385.

Jacobs, J. S., Morrison, T. G., & Swinyard, W. R. (2000). Reading Aloud to students: A National Probability Study of Classroom Reading Practices of Elementary School Teacher. *Reading Psychology* , 171-193.

Keehn, S. (2003). The Effect of Instruction and Practice Through Readers Theatre on Young Readers' Oral Reading Fluency. *Reading Research and Instruction* , 40-54.

Kim, J. S., & White, T. G. (2008). Scaffolding Voluntary Summer Reading for Children 3 to 5: An Experimental Study. *Scientific Studies of Reading* , 12(1) 1-23.

Kucer, S.B. (2005). Oral and Written Language Relationships. In Dimensions of Literacy (pp. 46-66). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Mills, G.E. (2011). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Neugebauer, S. R., & Rubin, R. (2009). Read Alouds in Calca, Peru: A Bilingual Indigenous Context. *The Reading Teacher* , 62(5) 396-405.

Prior, S. M., & Katherine, W. A. (2001). "Read In Your Head": A Vygotskian analysis of the transition from oral to silent reading. *Reading Psychology* , 1-15.

Rasinski, T. V., & V., H. J. (2003). Oral reading in the school literacy curriculum. *Reading Research Quarterly* , 510-522.

Schwanenflugel, P. j., Kuhn, M. R., Morris, R. D., Morrow, L. M., Meisinger, E. B., Woo, D. G., et al. (2009). Insights into Fluency Instruction: Short and Long Term Effects of Two reading Programs. *Literacy Research and Instruction* , 318-336.

Swalm, J. E. (2001). A Comparison of Oral Reading, Silent Reading and Listening Comprehension. *The State University* , 111-115.

Appendix A

Student Reading Survey

1. Do you have a favorite book? If you do, what is it and why do you like it?
2. What kinds of books do you most like to read?
3. Where do you usually get the books you read? (example: school, bookshelf, at home, library)
4. Complete this sentence: I think reading is...
5. Complete the sentence: If I could read anything I wanted to, I would read a book about...
6. When you're reading a book and you come across a word you don't know, what do you do?
7. Would you rather read a book alone or have someone read a book to you?
8. Besides books, what else do you like to read (example: comics, magazines, newspaper)
9. Do you think you are a good reader? Why or why not?

Appendix B

Reading Survey For Parents

1. Why do you read (circle one)

I don't Business Pleasure Both

2. What do you read (circle all that apply)

Magazines Newspapers Informational Text Novels
 Nonfiction Other

3. Do your children see you reading? Yes No

4. Did you read aloud to your children when they were younger? Yes No

Do you still? Yes No

5. Who are your favorite authors?

6. What have you read that changed you in some way? How?

7. Describe your child as a reader. Please include what you see as their strengths and weaknesses, the areas that need improvement, and what you would like your child to accomplish in reading this year?

8. If necessary, would you be willing to work with your child at home to build reading

skills? Yes No

Appendix C

Teacher Reading Survey

1. How often do you read aloud to your students? (If possible state how many times a week or month.)
2. How long does/did a typical read-aloud session last in your classroom?
3. If you do read aloud to your students, what is your intention in doing so?
4. What benefits do you see students gain from the read-aloud experience?
5. What types of book/materials do you use for read-alouds? Please rank them in order from 1 (use the most) to 7 (use the least). Feel free to write in the rank any other resource that I may have forgotten to add.
 _____ picture books _____ Chapter books _____ Informational/Non-fiction books
 _____ textbooks _____ magazines _____ website information
 _____ (others, please list) _____
6. Do you consider read-alouds part of your planned reading curriculum? What other purposes do they serve in your classroom?

Demographic Questions:

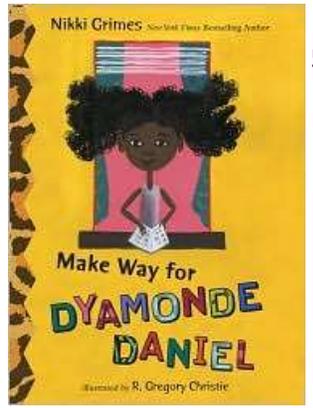
What grade do you teach? _____

How long have you been teaching? _____

How many students are in your average class? _____

If you are comfortable doing so, please check the next line to your age.

_____ 21-35 _____ 36-50 _____ 51 or older



Appendix D

Response Questions Dyamonde Daniel Chapter 1 & 2

Vocabulary Words

Gem _____

Extraordinary _____

1. List three character traits that describe Dyamonde:

2. What was the family secret that Dyamonde was asked to keep?

3. How did Free respond to Dyamonde's invitation during lunch? What did she think?

4. What part of math didn't Dyamonde like? And why?

5. Short Response: Think about a time in your life when something was subtracted, how did this make you feel? Did your feelings change over time (Ex: Losing a pet, teacher etc...)

Appendix E

Response Questions Dyamonde Daniel Chapters 3 & 4

1. Why did Dyamonde call her vest the Independence vest?

2. What name did Dyamonde give to Free?

3. Why were students in the school scared of Free?

Personal Response

Why do you think Free is acting this way towards his classmates?

4. What did Free do to Jordan? How did Dyamonde react to this?

5. When going to get Chinese takeout, where did Dyamonde find free?

Write a prediction of what you think will happen in the next chapter titled “Dyamonde Digs for Answers.”