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Collaboration on the Book Club Project: The Multiple Roles of Researchers, Teachers, and Students

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Our article describes the potential benefits of university/public school collaborations for the teachers, researchers, and students involved. Even these common terms *teachers*, *researchers*, and *students* shifted meanings as each participant of our project assumed various roles. All of us were classroom teachers, though Taffy, Ginny, and Sue had returned to the university. Taffy is now a professor working with teachers through her research and the Literacy master's degree program, Ginny a graduate student leaving her first grade classroom, and Sue a doctoral student leaving behind her middle school teaching. Deb, in her first year of full time teaching, had returned to teaching as a second career after five years in the business world. Yet we were all researchers, maintaining field notes, analyzing classroom literacy events, sharing our thoughts and challenging each other's thinking at weekly meetings of the Book Club project team. The urban fourth and fifth grade students were also teachers as they worked with their peers mentoring and mediating each other's small group discussions. Further, some assumed the role of

researcher as they spontaneously gave us their field notes or noted reading log entries they thought we should copy as evidence of particular kinds of growth. In short, through our research during the Book Club project, we all grew from the multiple levels of collaboration as teachers, researchers, and students.

In this article, we share what we learned from a collaborative project that focused on moving away from a traditional, teacher-directed reading program to the social-interactive approach that characterized Book Club. First, we describe the project's goals and participants. Second, we focus on the four instructional components of the Book Club Program. Third, we trace the progress of Book Club in Deb's classroom using two examples: 1) a six-week folktale unit and 2) students' questioning abilities across the academic year. Through these examples, the impact of the collaborative efforts can be seen in the students' growth in their abilities to engage meaningfully in discussions about the books they read.

The Book Club project: Why?

The participants in the Book Club project shared a common vision of the goals of literacy instruction: 1) promoting students' understanding, enjoyment, and choice to engage in literary activities, 2) helping students learn to acquire, synthesize, and evaluate information from text, and 3) helping students develop a language to talk about literacy. There has been a growing sentiment toward literature-based literacy instruction over the past decade, with arguments that students need to belong to a community of readers (Smith, 1988), recognize their role in author/reader relationships (Graves and Hansen, 1983), and have opportunities in school to participate in authentic reading and writing events (Au, Scheu, Kawakami, and Herman, 1990; Short and Pierce, 1990).

In fall, when we began meeting weekly, Deb talked of her ideal reading program, one that would include quality literature, active student interaction, critical thinking, and oral language connections. She said that, even before she was sure she had a teaching position, "I started looking into trade books, catalogues to order books [wanting to teach] critical thinking... [with] the kids... more in control... to be able to be a more active part in their own learning." When she thought about her role in such a program, she said she would "first present, and model, and make the instructions clear, and let it go. Let them work it out for themselves. That's when learning takes place and it does, every time... I picture the kids becoming more part of the program... it's their learning too." She was adamant about not wanting to repeat what she saw in her student teaching, where "you know, you have your lower kids in *Moonbeams* or whatever, and your middle kids, and then your higher kids... assign workbook pages this day and so many, and make sure you keep with the schedule... the test at the end of the week. I wanted to do something more than that!"

Despite a clear sense of where Deb wanted to go with her program, she also expressed concern about how to begin and whether or not such a program would provide students with the skills and strategies they needed. She noted she was concerned that they had had little experience with literature as the basis for their reading program, and little to no experience working collaboratively in student-led groups. "It's like I thought, I can't picture these kids carrying on a serious conversation about a book." She reported asking herself, "Could it be done? What were the expectations? Could they be accomplished?... I had that fear that much as [Book Club] liberated me to get away from tradition, I had the fear that the skills wouldn't be covered, because each grade level has their own curriculum statements and expectations, and I thought,

'How am I going to cover these skills... I'm scared to death... I can't do it.'"

The Book Club team

The Book Club team served as a source of support as the program was developed and studied. In addition to the authors of this article, the Book Club team consisted of Laura Pardo, Jessica Bentley, and Fenice Boyd. The authors appreciate the contributions they made in helping us to bring this article to completion. The program is designed for a classroom with one teacher and no assistance, but the collaborative nature of the development provided multiple sets of eyes within each classroom and the opportunity to raise immediate questions and discuss current lessons. For example, university participants provided leadership in close analysis of the literacy events within the program and guidance on instructional possibilities. The public school teachers provided insights into the students' ongoing interactions and related instruction, the relationship between Book Club and other subject areas, and the practicality of the approach. We met as a whole team and in various subgroups. The entire group met once a week to share ideas for classroom instruction, reflect on students' progress in general, discuss specific problems or issues that had arisen over the week, and keep informed of one another's activities in the two classrooms.

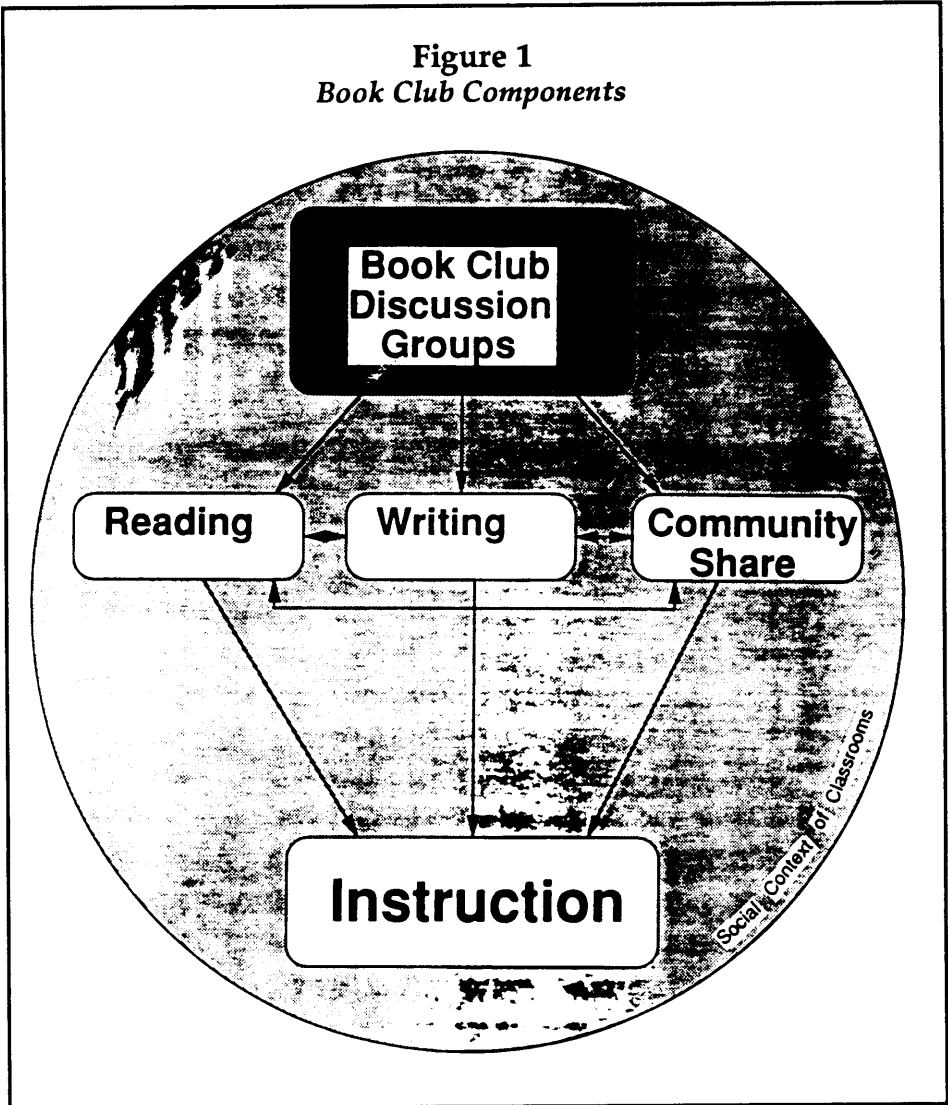
One subgroup was based on participants within the two separate classrooms. For example, two university participants, Taffy and Ginny, visited Deb's classroom once or twice a week each, on separate days. We took field notes, videotaped and audiotaped whole group lessons and Book Club sessions, and met with Deb to talk about what we saw. Another subgroup of research staff met to work with data analysis. Subgroups varied depending on particular needs (e.g., classroom considerations, presentations at conferences, writing articles).

The students themselves were part of the team from the beginning and contributed in many ways, once they realized they could help us learn about better ways to teach reading. They willingly engaged in formal and informal interviews, saved copies of their writing in and outside of Book Club, and in the case of three students, began to take field notes because, as Randy stated, "Ken was saying some really important things and I thought we should have it written down." Randy and two other students recorded what they and their peers said, as well as what Deb had written on the chalk board. Such student involvement supported the goals of the program in general, and Deb's belief of the importance of students "becoming more part of the program and contributing to their own learning."

The Book Club

As evidenced by research on the students' entering abilities to talk in meaningful ways about what they had read, we saw that these students could benefit greatly from learning how to engage in response groups (McMahon, 1991; Raphael and McMahon, in press). We identified two areas that needed instructional focus: Knowledge about *what to share* and knowledge about *how to share it*. While students could talk about the importance of taking turns or asking and answering each other's questions, the transcripts did not show particular respect for one another's ideas, provided little evidence of follow-up or in-depth questioning, a narrowness of ways of sharing ideas (e.g., read aloud, go on to the next person), and little variation in purpose for the discussion. In listening to groups of students in this and other schools, we found that these interactions were not unusual (McMahon and Hauschildt, 1993).

Figure 1
Book Club Components



We created a four-component approach to facilitate students' development in these areas, to provide classroom teachers support for the instructional focus of the reading program, and to guide the development of thematic literature-based instructional units. Deb specifically wished to move away from a narrow definition of the mandated district

curriculum materials toward a strong literature-based reading program, yet wanted to be sure that she addressed instruction toward the skill and strategy development her students needed, and the parents and district personnel might expect. Focus on support for the students' small group discussions, or Book Clubs, from which the program takes its name included the four components: 1) reading, 2) writing, 3) whole class discussions, or community share, and 4) instruction (see Figure 1). While these components interacted with each other to support and develop students' abilities to respond to their selections, for the convenience of readers of the article, we first address each one in turn.

Reading. Obviously, to be able to participate in a discussion about books, students need to have read the relevant material. To prepare for their Book Clubs, and give students of different abilities the support they needed, Deb used several different opportunities for reading, including partner-reading, choral reading, oral reading/listening, silent reading and reading at home the evening prior to Book Club. The students' reading logs replaced traditional workbooks, containing blank pages for representing ideas through pictures, charts, and maps, and lined pages that could be adapted for writing reflections on elements such as story events and characters, interesting words or language use on the part of the author, funny sections including dialogue and descriptions, and so forth.

Deb was conscious of the district reading requirements, noting that "each grade level has its own curriculum statement and expectations" and that her objectives included both "getting kids to the point where they feel comfortable talking about books [and] that they gain the necessary skills [including] the skills that are required for them to pass the MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program): main idea, getting the facts from the situation, sequencing, etc." She

hoped her students would learn to "maintain a Book Club, discuss, question, and feel successful at expressing themselves." Deb did not have students participate in formal vocabulary lessons each time they read. Rather, she asked students to note in reading logs confusing or interesting words to discuss. She included comprehension activities such as character mapping, sequencing, question generation, and other activities often associated with more traditional reading programs, but these were either selected by the student, or prompted by her sense of what was relevant to understanding and discussing their selections. In such ways, we enlisted students' help in shaping the details of their curriculum, albeit within clearly defined parameters of the overall program of instruction. In addition to reading the Book Club book(s), students participated in a weekly library program and a daily school-wide DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) program, ordered books from different school publishing catalogues, and used trade and textbooks in science and social studies. Many of these reading opportunities gave Deb a chance to examine individual students' reading fluency.

Writing. Researchers have suggested that writing and reading are mutually supportive processes (Pearson, 1994). For example, McMahan (1991) found that students' writing prior to Book Club influenced their discussions, and that their discussions influenced the amount and type of information included in later writing activities. Deb encouraged students' writing through three activities within the Book Club program: 1) the reading logs, 2) think-sheets, and 3) creating their own texts. First, students used reading logs to write about their ideas before each Book Club, using their log as a permanent record of their developing ideas, and after Book Clubs as a place to reflect on how their ideas had changed. Second, the students used think-sheets as individual guides to support specific reading strategies (e.g., comparison/contrast;

prediction; synthesis) or ways of responding to the literature. Figure 2 illustrates a think-sheet promoting students' critical response to literature. Landra has elected to critique Coerr's development of the character Sadako, after finishing the book *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, noting that the author had "showed a lot of Sadako..." so that readers now know what "Sadako thought and all her secrets..." but that Coerr had not done a thorough enough development of Sadako's siblings so that readers cannot tell how the two feel about their sister, Sadako.

Figure 2
Book Critique

I plan to critique

(plot, character, setting?)

Character

What are some things the author did well? _____

She showed a lot of Sadako and she tells more about Sadako in the story, and we now know how much everything that Sadako thought and all her secrets and everything else.

What are some things the author could do to improve the story? _____

The Author could tell a little more about the sister and the brother so that we will know more about them and she didn't tell us the sister and the brother feel about Sadako.

Third, students created their own texts that fit thematically within the Book Club units. For example, during a unit that explored the genre of biography, students gathered information from their families and created their own autobiographies, while during a folktale unit, they wrote their own folktales.

Community share. We found that students benefited from large group discussions especially in two circumstances. First, during community share, Deb raised students' consciousness about issues or events they would be reading. In one example, students were to read Sally Ride's account of her trip in the space shuttle, *To Space and Back*. They had also studied gravity in a recent science unit. Deb used community share as a time to remind students about what they already knew, and to prompt their thinking about both the fun and the frustration of zero gravity. Students next read the relevant section of the book and later wrote about fun/frustrating experiences, recording their ideas in their reading logs in preparation for their upcoming Book Clubs.

A second reason for community share was to give each Book Club the opportunity to share with the whole class what they had discussed. Students learned from each other, and Deb could identify where they might have some knowledge or comprehension gaps. For example, students read Lois Lowry's Newbery Award book, *Number The Stars*, which is about a 10-year old girl who shelters her Jewish friend from the Nazis during the German occupation of Denmark. In one Book Club, Crystal had asked why Hitler would want to attack Denmark. A student who had either missed the point in the selection or who may have been sensitive because of the beginning of the Persian Gulf War responded that, "The king was very rich and had a lot of oil. The other people were very poor and didn't have any oil and needed to get the wells. So

he started a war." When this emerged in the community share, Deb and Taffy, who had been observing that day, realized the need for a brief history lesson before students continued with the book. Deb immediately intervened with a mini-lesson on World War II.

Instruction. Observations of the students' early Book Club participation helped us determine the value of instruction in *what to share* and *how to share it*. To help students develop a range of possibilities for *what to share*, Deb modeled various rhetorical (e.g., text structure, story elements), comprehension, and synthesis activities, during community share. For example, Deb modeled rhetorical elements by helping students explore how authors create characters (e.g., modeling character maps and their use during discussion), how authors organize their texts (e.g., sequencing, comparing, and contrasting different books), and how readers evaluate texts (e.g., critiques). She modeled comprehension strategies including prediction, question-asking, monitoring, summarizing, and drawing upon prior knowledge and related texts. Discussions of overarching themes, common features across texts, and time lines provided students with models of discourse synthesis.

To help students develop appropriate social skills for *how to share*, Deb focused on both general interaction (e.g., turn taking, listening to one another) and specific ways to expand upon one another's ideas (e.g., asking follow-up questions, asking for clarification, relating to other ideas). Deb involved the students in critiquing Book Club interactions in different ways. Some discussions were videotaped, some audiotaped, and some were available in typed transcripts. Deb used these different versions throughout the year to have students consider both what the participants had done particularly well, and what they might want to improve.

Components working together

Each of the four Book Club components operates in interaction with the others and all support students' development of the abilities to respond to a variety of selections and to develop their own sense as a reader and an author. For example, in one unit on folktales, students read, wrote, and discussed a variety of books including Aardema's *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* and *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*, Clement's *The Painter and the Wild Swans*, Heyer's *The Weaving of a Dream*, and San Souci's *The Enchanted Tapestry*. Toward the end of the unit, Deb held community share to focus on features of folktales. The students used their knowledge base of the genre to create a list of common elements, then used this list as they created their own folktales. Following this, students held Book Clubs to discuss how the common elements were incorporated in different folktales, building a basis for later writing of their own folktales.

During the Book Club period every day, Deb and the students used the various components for many purposes. For example, students had been reading Heyer's *The Weaving of a Dream* and San Souci's *The Enchanted Tapestry* throughout the week writing about and discussing the stories daily. On Friday, Deb initiated a compare/contrast activity analyzing these two similar folktales drawn from the same oral story. Five activities made up the one-hour lesson that day: 1) Deb provided students some time to reread the two texts; 2) she modeled comparing and contrasting; 3) students did a compare and contrast activity in the reading logs; 4) Book Clubs met to discuss log entries; and 5) Deb led a community share to discuss folktale features. The critical thinking skills required in comparing/contrasting these two books gave students the opportunity to develop or practice reading

comprehension strategies, identify common rhetorical features, and relate elements to other folktales they had read.

In the following segment, a typical heterogeneous group of fourth graders focused on comparing elements of plot and the illustrations of the story following the community share and reading log activities. The students reflect the diversity of ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Vietnamese, Hispanic, Caucasian) and ability levels found at this school. In this case, it is a group of girls, though typically the groups were mixed in terms of gender as well. Their conversation highlights how the leadership shifted among the students as they talked about the characters, then a story event, and finally began to critique the pictures in the books. The conversation further illustrates how the student began to "co-construct" their response as they worked together to identify important events and similarities and differences.

Eva: I thought it was exactly the same as Weaving of a Dream, 'cause it had the same characters, but not the same names. It wasn't, it wasn't exactly like Weaving of a Dream, but just where the parts are different...

Crystal: Yeah, they are exactly the same.

Mei: Some of them, they are differences. Right?

Eva: All the differences I hear are mostly their names.

Mei: (interrupting) — the part, wait. When he go get, um, the tarp —

Crystal: (interrupting) The tapestry?

Leanne: But anyway, it's almost exactly the same because inside, inside the story, the mother did have three sons, and there was, she was a widow, and there was a fortune teller in the story, and there was a stone horse in the story, and stuff like that, except for when he —

Eva: (interrupting) — except for when the horse in Weaving of the Dream he had to put 10 drops of blood on the horse.

Crystal: The Enchanted Tapestry book was sort of different (short pause)

Leanne: The pictures are different and neat... bright, real bright (pointing to Weaving of a Dream)

Eva: Sort of like bold.

Leanne: (pointing to Tapestry) They're like pencil, they're like (short pause)

Eva: Watercolors.

Mei: But they are good pictures.

Crystal: They're good pictures, but they're plain. They have, they need bright colors.

This interaction illustrates the role of focusing students' discussion through prompts in their reading logs (e.g., focus on similarities and differences between the two books), reflects improvements in both *how* and *what* the students share during Book Club as they demonstrate turn-taking and respect for each other, provide help to each other when they sense some confusion (e.g., pointing to the pictures in the book), focus on the content of the selections as it relates to their own knowledge and opinion (e.g., pictures are good, but plain), and work collaboratively to co-construct their ideas (e.g., Leanne and Eva working together to talk about the exceptions).

In a mid-winter conversation between Ginny and Deb, Ginny noted that the community share sessions seemed to benefit the students, saying "I'm not sure, I think in some ways that's why they're doing so well now, because they had that chance to really learn what it means to communicate, and what they're really trying to do. I think in some ways if they hadn't had the whole group discussions, I'm not sure they would have been doing what they are now." Deb agreed that the whole class sessions set up expectations and noted that it had also helped that they had been continually asked to

evaluate how well their Book Clubs had gone. As Deb said, "they're proud of their Book Clubs, and they should be." The folktale unit also heightened students' interest in becoming authors. One community share activity asked Taffy to assume yet another role on the project, that of an unpublished folktale author working on a manuscript in the style of Kipling's *Just So* stories. Taffy underscored collaboration in the process of creating books, asking students to help her improve the manuscript for children their age. As students engaged in critiquing her story, and talked with her about the books they had read and their own writing, they expressed interest in writing their own folktales. At their request, Deb provided the time so they could write, illustrate, and share their folktales with each other and with a group of first grade students. Again, the outcome of collaboration among university, public school teacher, and student participants created an instructional opportunity that was shaped because of the collaborative effort.

Such activities progressed over the academic year as students moved through units connected by theme (e.g., the effects of war), genres (e.g., folktales from around the world and biographies), and topics (e.g., the holocaust). Generally, students in the class read at least one book in common, while individual copies of books related by theme, author, or genre were available in the classroom library. In addition to collaborating on the primary research agenda and the curriculum development, we also found collaboration particularly useful in choosing the books.

Even though Deb wanted the students to have a voice in deciding which books to read, availability constrained text selection. To incorporate choice in other ways, Deb established a system to help her choose books. First, she worked collaboratively with her students to identify a theme,

genre, or authors they wished to study. Deb then explored available options in the school district's language arts collection of classroom sets while those of us in the university setting explored availability from outside resources (e.g., public and university libraries, funds for research supplies to purchase books). She then identified those available book sets (of 10 to 30 books) and individual books that most closely related to one of the students' choices. Members of a single Book Club each read the same book related to the overall theme, while each student also selected a book for additional reading.

In identifying skills on which to focus, Deb drew on her knowledge of reading (e.g., from her teacher education program, the district guidelines, and the scope and the sequence chart of the district adopted basal reader) and her knowledge of collaborative grouping practices. She expressed concern early in the year about her students' questioning abilities, saying, "I want them to develop better questioning skills; they've gotten to a point where they'll ask, 'What do you mean by that?' but they have much more to learn." She thought about how questioning abilities might relate to the composition of the Book Clubs, and making changes in the groups based upon "their oral language, how they speak and listen, making [the Book Clubs] as heterogeneous as possible, test out mixes in case a group has someone too dominant." The focus on *how to share*, particularly how to ask questions of one another, occurred over the year, through Deb's modeling during community share and through students' analysis of their own Book Clubs (e.g., on video or audiotape). In mid-November, we began to see that children had internalized one form of questioning, asking for information. The following Book Club occurred after students mapped characters from *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*:

Crystal: Jean, let's hear from you.

Jean: Okay, but don't laugh. The mosquito talked too much.

Crystal: Yeah, Larissa, what's first on your map?

Larissa: The branch fell... said it was the crow's fault.

Crystal: It was the crow. Tremaine, what's yours? Let's hear about it.

Tremaine: I did the iguana. It had sticks in ears and walked in the forest.

Larissa: Why did it walk in the forest?

Tremaine: It got tired of the mosquito nonsense.

This discussion is certainly an improvement over students' Book Clubs in early October (Raphael and McMahan, in press) when the students could barely start a discussion, but not as strong as the one comparing *Weaving of a Dream* and *Enchanted Tapestry* that occurred somewhat later in the folk-tale unit. Crystal and her peers had the opportunity to share, they showed respect for what others had to say, and talked of specific parts of the text. However, while there were improvements in *how to share*, there was little elaboration, questions and answers were shallow, little personal response and no relations were made to experiences outside the text. Crystal assumed a "teacher role," directing the group rather than allowing students to assume collaborative roles. More modeling and analysis occurred to address these issues and changes were observed over the course of the following months.

During our meetings, we discussed possible grouping of students based on our observations. We noticed that interactions were affected by the group membership, and Deb shifted groups to find a good balance, based on leadership, communication, and social skills of the students. For example, Jennifer appeared to be shut out of discussion by a more dominant girl in her group, a fact that she was quite

aware of as she described in an interview several months later: "she was getting on everyone's case 'cause they wouldn't be doing nothing right and would get too slow so she was trying to be the leader." Joshua, a student who in October had refused to talk at all, needed support beyond being ordered to talk. Together with Randy and Jeffrey, Jennifer and Joshua comprised a Book Club for the folktale unit. Their interactions show the results of careful grouping, and the effects of engaging in a variety of comprehension and synthesis activities in their reading logs. Notice both the increased range and depth of questions asked:

Jeffrey: I'd like to talk about the youngest son. I liked him because um, he didn't lie and um, didn't do all the bad things, like the brothers, 'cause the brothers went to town and got the gold instead of trying to help their mother.

Randy: What bad things did the other brothers do?

Jeffrey: They um, went to the stone house where the stone horse is and instead of taking the horse, knocking out their two front teeth, they went and got the gold and went to town instead of helping their family.

Jennifer: Okay, if you were in that, uh, if you were in that situation, what would you?

Jeffrey: (pause) Trust my youngest son.

Joshua: Trust all three of them, but the youngest son was the best.

Jennifer: What if he tr... what if like, what if he trusted the oldest one? That the oldest one was the one that he trusted?

Jeffrey: Um... I trusted, um, I would have trusted all of them, but he, when he left he never came back, he went to the other city.

Jennifer: (interrupting) I mean, what if he didn't know that the oldest one was really for you to trust? And you never found out? And then you would, and

then you would think that the youngest one did all the bad things?

Jeffrey: I would just disagree with the boy if I was the mother... I would just disagree with the boy, with the two big boys.

Randy: How could the mother discipline them?

Jeffrey: Yeah, when she didn't even know about it.

Randy: Yeah, how could she discipline them?

Jeffrey: She couldn't discipline them. They went to town and took all the gold. But at the end of the story, I think they came back.

Jennifer: I want to talk about the um, first episode when they go to the land -- far east -- with that lady and her two sons?

While we could still see potential for improved discussions, it was clear that students were growing in important ways in *what to share*. First, all students had begun to participate, even quiet Joshua, and their responses were more interesting than merely rote reading from their reading logs. Second, there were personal responses, when Jennifer wondered how one of the students might act in that situation, or when they discussed what kinds of discipline might be appropriate. Third, there was a focus on the substance of the text. Students examined specific sections of the plot, from Randy's request for a summary at the beginning of this segment to their discussion of trust and hypothesizing different outcomes to Jeffrey's comment about the older brothers returning. Issues of trust and discipline formed central themes to the discussion. The Book Clubs comparing and contrasting *The Weaving of a Dream* to *The Enchanted Tapestry* further illustrate students' improved focus on both *how* and *what to share*.

Finally, an example from an April Book Club session reveals how students internalized the in-depth questioning that

Deb modeled frequently when scaffolding students' interactions during community share. For example, when Deb asked students to think about what features characterized folktales, she modeled how to probe for further information, using general prompts such as "tell me more about that," "can you explain that," or "what kind?" She also elicited more specific information, as in the following exchange:

Jarrod: (Folktales have) a problem.

Deb: Can you think of a problem we have read about?

Jarrod: When the man goes through the ice.

Jennifer: In Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears there was a problem because it kept going on and on and made people angry.

Helena: The lesson is taught in the story.

Deb: What lesson?

Helena: Don't tell secrets.

The modeling that Deb had done over the course of the semester began to have results, as you can see in the following exchange in April between Jennifer and Angela. Jennifer both probes and supports Angela, a student who frequently experiences comprehension difficulties, in her struggle to clarify a point about the astronauts in Sally Ride's book *To Space and Back*:

Richard; Angela, let's hear yours.

Angela: It will be scary.

Jennifer: Why do you think it will be scary?

Angela: Because they leave the earth.

Jennifer: Why would you be scared to leave the earth?

Angela: Because I've never been up so high to know how it would look.

Jennifer: Do you think everything would look small or something?

Angela: Yeah.

Jennifer: *Why?*

Angela: *'Cause you are in outer space.*

This interaction showed growth in Jennifer's ability to question for more information and ask for ideas beyond what is detailed in the text or her reading log.

Concluding comments

At the beginning of the year, Deb talked about her concerns: Could such a program as Book Club work for her students? Could *she* make such a program work for her, given her responsibilities to the students, the district requirements, and her students' parents? By spring, Deb expressed both her pleasure with the students' progress, and her desire to incorporate the principles of Book Club throughout the school day the following year, by including Book Club in social studies and science. Deb also described differences in students' attitudes in terms of both their literacy attitudes and development, and their self-esteem. One source of evidence she cited was their weekly trip to the library. "You should see them when they go to the library now. They used to come back, and I can remember at the beginning of the year, they used to say 'I don't want a book, so what, I don't have to have a book.' Now I hear 'Ms. Woodman! Ms. Woodman! Look at the book I got, it's a folktale.' It's like, whatever we're doing, they'll look for a book and if they find it, they run back to me... they're really excited about reading."

Deb attributed part of students' excitement, and much of their self-esteem, to the heterogeneous nature of the Book Clubs, saying, "You're talking about last year, a child was in the lowest reading book and that child was, throughout the year, reminded that he is way behind somebody else. This year, he feels he has gained so many important life skills... and pulled him up on the same level as some of those higher kids, the ones who were in the highest book last year." About

another child, she noted "she is so confident... she's always been in the lowest groups. Look at her this year! She's so confident, she was even in the speech contest... she knew what she wanted to say, she said it well... she's come so far, and she feels good. She's experienced success and is gaining so many skills." In talking with Taffy and Ginny about how her students of higher abilities were doing in the heterogeneous groupings, Deb indicated that she believed they too had experienced success. She noted that "They've just gained or added to the confidence they previously had, and felt like they were a valuable contribution. I can see that, from time to time, they might have thought 'I'm the one who keeps this together, and I'm the one who does a nice job.'"

Finally, Deb believed that the students' excitement was revealed in their attitudes at home. During parent conferences, Deb drew on the students' reading logs and other writing samples to form the basis of her report to the parents. Deb told others on the research team that when she began to explain Book Club, that she was often stopped by parents who said, "Oh, we know all about..." — mentioning some of the students' favorite characters and books. Deb said of the parents during conferences, "They seemed excited, and I think that excitement was carried over from when the kids went home... I don't think they would have been solely convinced on just what I said."

We saw a lot of progress by the students when we thought about our original three goals of literacy instruction. The first goal — students showing enjoyment, understanding and choice to engage in the activities — was easily seen in their excitement. For example, one day when a number of extra books about folktales were brought into the room, students quickly selected from these new books those that they wanted to read during sustained silent reading. One

student exclaimed "This is just like Christmas!" A second example occurred when one of the children was hospitalized for three weeks with a broken leg, after being hit by a car. When Deb visited him on his first evening in the hospital, he asked her if his Book Club group could visit him to talk about their current book.

Meeting our second goal — helping students learn to acquire, synthesize, and evaluate information from text — was apparent in all the students' progress, specifically in the later Book Club discussions and reading logs. We saw students frequently referring to books read earlier in the year, to ideas from other students within and outside their Book Clubs, and to books and media sources outside the Book Club program. They learned to critique, compare and contrast, and identify themes across multiple books. The third goal of developing a language to talk about literacy is apparent in the many examples of the students' small group and whole class discussions. From the limited voice of students at the beginning of the year, we saw students mature into thoughtful and articulate participants in discussions about books. There was ample evidence that the students all demonstrated an ability to engage in "a serious conversation about a book," one of Deb's earlier concerns. They critiqued illustrations, plots, and character descriptions; asked questions about authors' motives for writing and about each other's interpretations of story events; created dramatic interpretations of books they had read; and discussed each other's written texts.

In short, the collaborative project that resulted in the form that Book Club took in Deb's room provided her with much of the support she needed to create a literacy environment in which students read high-quality literature, learned to respond to the literature in multiple ways, and developed an appreciation for the experience. The university

participants learned a great deal about the processes involved in developing an intervention in collaboration with public school participants and felt rewarded that despite the formal end to the Book Club study, Deb and other teachers involved have continued to work collaboratively with them to develop and expand the program, write about it, and present to their colleagues at state and national conferences. The fourth-graders, given opportunity, appropriate instructional support, good literature and nonfiction selections, and an integrated literacy program, not only became active members in a literary community, they developed the strategies, skills, and inclination potentially to continue this development throughout their school careers and beyond.

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