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## The rise of close reading

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### Recommended Citation

Larsen, Jayne E., "The rise of close reading" (2016). *Graduate Research Papers*. 694.  
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## The rise of close reading

### Abstract

The purpose of this advanced literature review is to examine the evolution of close reading as a reading strategy. Currently, close reading is a strategy used to teach students to independently navigate through challenging text. This strategy was previously used in higher education, but as years progressed, the strategy was used less frequently. Since the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) there has been a rebirth of close reading as a reading strategy.

The literature review discusses the history and background of close reading starting in the early 1900's. Next the literature review explores instructional strategies, and effective implementation of close reading. The next portion of the text examines researchers who support close reading as a reading strategy and their suggestions for effectively implementing this reading strategy. Finally, since close reading is a relatively new reading strategy, research and information to support implementation is sometimes lacking. Therefore, controversies and opposition to close reading are included in the review.

The Rise of Close Reading

An Abstract of a Literature Review

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts in Education

Jayne E. Larsen

University of Northern Iowa

May 2016

## The Rise of Close Reading

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this advanced literature review is to examine the evolution of close reading as a reading strategy. Currently, close reading is a strategy used to teach students to independently navigate through challenging text. This strategy was previously used in higher education, but as years progressed, the strategy was used less frequently. Since the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) there has been a rebirth of close reading as a reading strategy. The literature review discusses the history and background of close reading starting in the early 1900's. Next the literature review explores instructional strategies, and effective implementation of close reading. The next portion of the text examines researchers who support close reading as a reading strategy and their suggestions for effectively implementing this reading strategy. Finally, since close reading is a relatively new reading strategy, research and information to support implementation is at times is lacking, therefore, controversies and opposition to close reading is included in the review.

The Rise of Close Reading

This Study by: Jayne Larsen

Entitled: The Rise of Close Reading

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
Degree of Masters of Arts in Education

5/9/16

Date

Dr. Sarah Vander Zanden, First Reader

5/10/16

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5-10-16

Date

Dr. Jill Uhlenberg, Department Chair

This paper provides an overview of the rise of close reading as an instructional reading strategy for k-12 education in the United States. Since the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2008, close reading as a recommended instructional focus has been on the rise. Although close reading is not a new concept, it is a current trend that is quickly catching on in classrooms across America.

The review of literature begins with a history and background of close reading. In this section, there is an explanation of how close reading has changed over the years. Additionally, there is a portion on how close reading played a part in the shift in education. At the end of this section, there is an introduction to Common Core State Standards, which provides a link to close reading.

Next, the review of literature takes a deeper look at the impact CCSS have had on close reading. The CCSS are included in the review because of the significant role they have played in the re-birth of this strategy. The section on CCSS outlines the expectations of close reading promoted through (or alongside) the CCSS. It also provides the reader with background information and insight into close reading.

The next section, *what is close reading*, provides a more in-depth explanation of what close reading is and how it has increased in importance as a reading strategy. There is an explanation of how this strategy is different from other strategies linked to well known researchers in the field of literacy. A significant portion of the research on close reading comes from two well-known researchers, Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey.

Other supporters of close reading are mentioned in the literature review to provide insight into their recommendations for implementation of close reading.

Finally, instructional strategies for close reading in the classroom are identified. There are varying opinions on how to effectively implement close reading. Researchers have published many books to support close reading and explain how to implement this strategy. For example, *Notice & Note: Strategies for Close Reading*, (Beers & Probst, 2012), provide the reader with three sections: questions regarding close reading, methods and language used with close reading, and lessons teachers can use with their students. An additional publication, *Close Reading for the Whole Class: Easy Strategies for Choosing Complex Texts, Creating Text-Dependent Questions, Teaching Close Reading Lesson* (Anthans & Devine, 2015) unpacks close reading as a strategy, providing a grade level breakdown of how to implement the strategy and examples of how teachers have used close reading in their classrooms. There are also many opinions and suggestions of how to most effectively implement this strategy. The literature review concludes with oppositions and/or controversies with close reading.

### **Methodology**

The process for collecting literature for this review began with a basic search looking into the definition of close reading. The search engine used for research was accessible through the University of Northern Iowa (Rod Library) library system. Prior to any searches, Full text (Print/Online) and Scholarly (Peer reviewed) were selected. This was a personal criteria and expectation made by the researcher. The researcher felt it was important to have full access to the text and professional research on the

topic. The search that began the research was “define close reading”. This search pulled eight search results, three of the eight results were from Fisher and Frey. Based on subsequent research, Fisher and Frey have the most published articles on close reading. Since close reading is a relatively new concept in education, there are varying degrees of understanding of this strategy. Additionally, there is not one agreed upon method for implementing close reading.

Articles focused on close reading were the starting point for the research. There were forty-three articles used for this research. After reading the articles, articles were put into the following categories: history of close reading, Common Core, instructional strategies, and middle school. Middle school was a focus area because it pertains to the area of interest and teaching for the researcher. Next, articles were read for detail and supporting information that help supplement the above categories. If articles did not fit into the above categories, they were put in a discard pile. Eighteen articles were discarded.

The research continued to the history of close reading. The first search made was, “history of close reading”. This search produced 266 articles on the history of close reading. In order to gain more understanding and information on close reading, “close reading” and “background” were searched. This search produced 23,777 results. Based on the results, it was found that this was an “old concept, with a new look” and it was important to look into the history of this strategy. New Criticism theorists were linked to 1,564 articles and were researched for more information and background on



close reading strategies. Articles were chosen based on the following criteria: full text and scholarly reviewed.

Another search was initiated with the CCSS as part of the search criteria. Attention given to the Common Core State Standards appears to be largely responsible for giving this strategy a new look. When using the search terms “Common Core and close reading”, 1,516 articles came up. The researcher then focused on finding articles that related to Common Core State Standards. The search terms used were “close reading” and “Common Core State Standards”. This search produced 347 articles on these two topics. Articles were excluded if full text was unavailable. Next, articles that focused on middle school were pulled. Also, articles that explained the process of close reading were reviewed. Additionally, articles that focused on the process of creating Common Core State Standards, instead of just referencing CCSS. In order to understand this strategy completely, it was important to understand how this strategy became so popular, so quickly. With the implementation of CCSS in educational systems, close reading skyrocketed in importance with educators across the country.

Google Scholar was another search engine used to cross check literature, previously discussed. This search engine was used to identify the increase of articles published on the topic of close reading. Close reading has gained momentum since the 1970's. In order to identify how close reading has increased since the 1970's, “close reading” was entered into Google Scholar. Search results using Google Scholar found 3,930 results for years 1970-1979. For 1980-1989 there were 8,080 results when using the same search. From 1990-1999 there were 17,000 results found. When searching

from 2000-2015, Google Scholar found 81,000 search results. There has been a dramatic increase in information available on the topic of close reading since the 1970's.

Identifying the process of close reading was the next step in understanding this trend. Once again, Google Scholar was used to pull articles on implementing close reading. The search terms used during this portion of the research were "close reading" and "implementation"; this search pulled 60,003 results. The implementation process for close reading appears to be the area in which researchers opinions vary the most.

There are two researchers who consistently appeared as experts in close reading: Shanahan and Fisher & Frey. When searching "close reading" and "Shanahan", eighteen search results were found. Additionally, when searching "close reading" and "Fisher and Frey", there were 103 search results found. Based on the search results, Fisher and Frey have done significant research on close reading compared to other researchers in the area.

When choosing articles for the literature review, articles were first chosen based on explanation and clarity of close reading. For example, Timothy Shanahan's (2014), *This Is Not Close Reading (But we'll tell you what is)* and Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey's (2015) *Improve Reading with Complex Texts*. Next, there was close consideration based on instructional level. Articles were still chosen if they provided insight and information, for example, Bridget Dalton's (2013) *Engaging Children in Close Reading: Multimodal Commentaries and Illustration Remix* discussed various ways of using technology while close reading. Although, technology was not a focus, the process for working through the text was considered. However, articles at the

middle school and secondary level were first priority when searching, because of the potential application to the researcher's teaching area.

*Search terms: "Define close reading", "History of close reading", "Close reading" & "Background", "close reading" & "Common Core State Standards", "close reading", "close reading" & "implementation", "close reading" & "Shanahan", "close reading" & "Fisher and Frey".*

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of the literature review is to chronicle the way close reading became a buzz-word for a reading strategies in K-12 classrooms. Through this literature review there will be an explanation of what close reading is, where the strategy came from, and how to implement the strategy. The literature review begins with a history of close reading and when this strategy was first being used during the twentieth century.

#### ***History of Close Reading***

Close reading was one of the most talked about strategies in 2014 according to *What's hot, What's not in literacy education* (Mastrovito, 2014). Close reading is not a new phenomenon, this is a historically familiar reading practice with a new look "Close reading is not a new instructional routine; it has existed for many decades as the practice of reading a text for a level of detail not used in everyday reading" (Frey & Fisher, 2013, p. 57). According to Hinchman and Moore (2013) the idea of close reading was mentioned in scholarly texts in the 1930's through 1960's. Books that focused on close reading during this time frame were, "*How to Read a Book*" and "*How Does a Poem Mean*" (Hinchman & Moore, 2013). According to Shanahan (2014) the term close reading refers to the ability to effectively read a text. Previously, people who

used this strategy were upper high school and college age students. Close reading was actually first seen in the New Criticism literary theory.

### ***Roots in New Criticism***

As stated by Fisher and Frey (2014) “The roots of close reading can be found in the New Criticism literary theory movement of early and middle decades of the last century, as advanced by I.A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren” (p. 27). Under the New Criticism theory, it is expected that the reader focuses closely on the author’s purpose, therefore, allowing the reader to understand and gain more insight to the message being conveyed through the text (Fisher & Frey, 2014). By looking closer at the purpose and the structure of a text, the reader can better understand the text and take understanding to a higher level. “Such a reading seeks to discover a text’s explicit meaning by meticulously analyzing patterns in its language and the ways the patterns combine throughout a text” (Hinchman & Moore, 2013, p. 443). This type of reading is important because it teaches students to slow down their reading and to actively read.

There are various theories about how readers respond to text, for example, Rosenblatt’s Reader Response Theory (Soublis & Winkler, 2004), Feminist theories (Commeyras, Orellana, Bertram & Neilsen, 1996), and Marxist perspectives (Levitas, 2012). In close reading,

Readers interpret meaning within the confines of what the text offers. For instance, linking a text with its author’s life or historical setting is not permitted. This approach was preferred in a secondary English language arts classrooms during the 1950’s and 1960’s. (Hinchman & Moore, 2013, p. 443)

As other reading theories and strategies were introduced, close reading started to be viewed as less important and significant in the field of literacy. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is credited with the rebirth of close reading as a reading strategy.

### ***Common Core***

In 2009, state leaders, including governors and state commissioners from forty-eight states, began developing Common Core State Standards (Development Process, 2016). These standards were meant to allow consistency between expectations for curriculum in our country's educational system (Development Process, 2016). "State school chiefs and governors recognized the value of consistent, real-world learning goals and launched this effort to ensure all students, regardless of where they live, are graduating high school prepared for college, career, and life" (Development Process, 2016). The creators of the CCSS looked at effective standards already in use, experience of teachers and professionals in the field, and feedback from the public when creating these standards (Development Process, 2016).

"As of August 2015, 42 states, the Department of Defense Education Activity, Washington D.C., Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the CCSS in ELA/literacy and math. They are now in the process of implementing the standards locally" (Development Process, 2016, para. 2015).

With the implementation of the CCSS in the United States came a rebirth of an old reading strategy, close reading.

Although there were many supporters of the Common Core, there was one area where the CCSS was lacking, money. This is where Bill and Melinda Gates came into

the equation. Bill and Melinda Gates, co-founders of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provide grants addressing inequities, are strong believers in sound and effective instruction when it comes to education. According to Phillips and Wong (2012) “As strong believers in clear, consistent standards that focus on what students need to be prepared for college and careers, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was proud to support the Common Core work” (p. 31). The Gates Foundation claims to support teachers by helping them implement Common Core into their teaching (Phillips & Wong). The Gates Foundation was a significant contributor to funding of the CCSS.

As stated by Fisher and Frey (2015), CCSS expect teachers to teach students how to be close readers and how to independently read complex text in the classroom. The importance of close reading is clearly defined within the first standard of the CCSS. The standard states, students should be able to “read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text” (English Language Arts, 2016, p. 10). They are also expected to cite text evidence when reading or writing. This will help support readers’ thinking and understanding of the text (Fisher & Frey, 2014). The goal of close reading is to give students a helpful strategy to use when working with challenging texts.

### ***Close Reading and Instruction***

Close reading was re-introduced as an instructional reading strategy as a way to promote and ensure students are ready for life after their K-12 education. As stated by Boyles (2014) “Readiness for college and career – and for life – means that texts

students read should help them become critical thinkers” (p. 33). By teaching students to be close readers, teachers are providing students with skills to work through challenging texts independently and eventually, creating confident readers.

In the past, teachers have provided students background and information prior to reading. When close reading, students are given very little information about the context or origin of the text (Shanahan, 2014). “Close reading expects readers to focus on the information that a text provides, without relying on a lot of information or support.” (Shanahan, 2014, p. 29). The desired result of close reading is to transform readers who need support while reading, to readers who can tackle challenging texts independently and with ease and confidence while reading. While reading, students are considering the text and what it has to offer by way of explicit information on the topic in the text. Close reading is not meant to be a strategy that is done quickly; it can take multiple class periods. Students are expected to read the text slowly, and then go back and re-read in order to gain ample amount of information provided within the text (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Close reading is different from other reading strategies because students are asked to use short complex text or portions of text, rather than an entire text.

***Text used in close reading instruction.*** Another way close reading is different than other reading strategies is the use of short complex text. “Close readings should be done with texts that are worthy and complex enough to warrant repeated reading and detailed investigation” (Frey & Fisher, 2013, p. 57). Text selection for close reading does not have to include a text in its entirety. Close reading can be done with a few paragraphs, poems, chapters, quotes, or even a picture. “When readers read closely,

they investigate, interrogate, and explore the deep meanings of a text. They form opinions and arguments based on a range of texts that have been examined and can defend their positions as result” (Fisher & Frey, 2013, p. 56). While reading, students will look closely at the structure of the text, as well as, pay attention to how the author’s ideas and opinions develop throughout the piece.

**Text complexities.** Text complexity is an important part of the close reading process. By providing students with challenging and complex text, teachers are pushing and challenging students to be better readers. According to Shanahan, Fisher, and Frey, “Just as it’s important to build muscle without weight or resistance, it’s impossible to build robust reading skills without reading challenging texts” (p. 58). CCSS goal is to push students to higher levels and teach them how to independently navigate through challenging texts (Shanahan, Fisher, & Frey, 2012). The following are factors teachers need to consider when choosing complex text: vocabulary, sentence structure, coherence, organization, background knowledge, skill building, and motivation and persistence while reading a text (Shanahan, Fisher, & Frey, 2012). Teachers should keep these factors in mind when choosing text, and work toward a level of difficulty to ensure the text is challenging for the student.

According to the article, *What’s Hot, What’s Not*, in October 2014, close reading was in the top five very hot trends in education, along with college and career readiness, high-stakes assessment, informational/nonfiction texts, and text completely (Mastrovito, 2014). Providing students opportunities to read short complex text and use close reading as a way to work through and understand the text is considered important



in helping make students college and career ready (English Language Arts, 2016). By exposing students to challenging texts, engaging them in critical scrutiny of the complexities and nuances of informational texts, educators are preparing students to be independent thinkers and readers.

***Text dependent questions.*** Providing students with text dependent questions allows students to work more easily through challenging texts. The purpose of text dependent questions is to transition student's understanding of a text from the literal level, to the inferential level. "The questions teachers and students ask about a text serve not only as a scaffold for student learning but also as a main driver of close reading itself" (Fisher & Frey, 2015, p. 13). The first level of questioning focuses on a basic or general understanding of a text. Questions such as who, what, when, where, why, or how much are typically ask during the beginning stages of close reading (Fisher & Frey, 2015). This level is meant to give students an understanding of the text in order for them to navigate more effectively. The next level of questions focuses more on vocabulary and phrases taken from the text. "Importantly, they can also include questions about the connotations of the word or phrase, including mood, tone, and the use of analogies" (Fisher & Frey, 2015). This level of questioning will also focus on author's craft and thinking about why and author chose to write the piece in a specific way. Next, students identify author's purpose for writing a piece. The student will work to identify the author's relationship to the topic and their views and opinion of the topic (Fisher & Frey, 2015). Fisher and Frey add an additional level of questioning, which takes the reader beyond what the text says. This final level allows students to interpret

their meaning of the text. “These questions invite opinion with evidence or argument and result in some task” (Fisher & Frey, 2015, p. 15). This final level allows students to take a stance on the topic and share their reasons through explanation with peers or through writing. Close reading provides students to tools to work through challenging texts, because of this, there are many people who believe this is an effective reading strategy.

**Supporters.** There are many people who support close reading as an effective reading strategy, such as Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, Kyleene Beers and Robert Probst, and Sandra Athans and Denise Devine. CCSS are credited with putting close reading back on the map as an instructional reading strategy. *The Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* (JAAL) has also shown support for close reading. After completing an advanced review of articles within JAAL, there were 9,104 articles published between 2006 and 2016 that focused on or addressed close reading. “We find much promise in having students learn to slow their reading purposefully to meticulously analyze what authors have written” (Hinchman & Moore, 2013, p. 444). Although close reading has been deemed a hot trend in education, it is important to understand that does not mean it is the only reading strategy students need to know in order to be effective readers. It is still important to teach students other reading strategies that will help them be successful readers (Frey & Fisher, 2013). Close reading is one of many strategies students need in order to be effective readers.

### ***Instructional Strategies***

Although close reading is one of the hottest trends in literacy education in the United States, there is not one true method or explanation of how this strategy should be carried out (Fang & Pace, 2013). Fang and Pace suggest a type of ambivalence among educators in the use of close reading in the classroom.

On the one hand, it [close reading] gives teachers considerable degrees of freedom to exercise their professional knowledge and wisdom in determining how curricular goals are best attained in their disciplinary contexts. On the other hand, many teachers have expressed a lack of confidence or preparedness to teach close reading with complex texts.” (Fang & Pace ,2013, p. 104)

There are specific criteria for implementing close reading. Close reading must be done with short, complex texts (Mastrovito, 2014). Students are expected to approach the text as critical readers, honing in on the details and specifics of the text that will help them make meaning as readers. While reading, it is expected that students will struggle with the complex nature of the text, but it is through the use of multiple readings within the close reading process that students can gain a better understanding of the text. It is during this process of reading and making meaning at a deeper and deeper level that drives the close reading process.

The following showcases two methods for implementing close reading (Fisher & Frey, 2013, 2014, 2015; Shanahan, 2014). Each method is a little different from the other, however, these close reading methods have one common element, digging deeper into the text and reading multiple times for better understanding of the text.

### ***Fisher and Frey***

There are four phases students go through while close reading with the Fisher and Frey model (2015). While working through those four phases students are

encouraged to annotate. While annotating, students can underline major points, circle key words, ask questions, identify interesting points, make connections, and summarize as needed (Fisher & Frey, 2013). Each of these phases asks the student to read the text for a particular purpose or focus. The first phase addresses the question, *what does the text say?* By completing this phase, students will work to elicit explicit questions taken from the text. The goal is to identify the main idea, questions they have about the text, and text evidence (Fisher & Frey, 2015). Next, the model requires the reader to answer the question *how does the text work?* This phase asks the reader to look closer at vocabulary words and phrases, identifying unknown or challenging words. This vocabulary focus gives the reader an opportunity to work through those challenges while reading. Students will also look closer to identify the structure of the text in order to better understand the flow of the text (Fisher & Frey, 2015). Through focusing on challenging words and examining the structure of the text, students are then ready to answer the question *what does the text mean?* Students will work through answering this question by looking closer at the author's craft. Examining the author's craft involves asking why the author chose the specific structure, how the structure affects the way the information is presented to the reader, and if there are any hidden or implicit meanings within the text (Fisher & Frey, 2015). Finally, the student will be able to answer the question *what does the text inspire you to do?* This final phase allows the student to formulate an opinion, backed with evidence from the text.

Engaging in the close reading process invites "students to take a critical stance by examining power structures, considering alternate perspectives, and posing

problems themselves that lead to action” (Fisher & Frey, 2015, p. 15). This can be done through various activities, allowing students to showcase, prove, and justify their thinking to their peers. By working through Fisher and Frey’s four phases of close reading, students will have an opportunity to dig deeper into the text, in hopes of creating a better understanding of the author’s message, and ultimately engaging personally through action connected to that message.

### ***Shanahan***

Shanahan (2014) has a similar approach for implementing close reading as Fisher and Frey (2015). However, instead of students going through four phases, as suggested in the Fisher and Frey model, Shanahan suggests students read through the text three times. Each time, students will dig deeper into the text for a better understanding. It is important that students focus on the text, the reader needs to work to gather as much information about the text as possible (Shanahan, 2014). By allowing students to dig deeper into the text, students will walk away more knowledgeable and confident in their reading.

During the first reading, students will determine what the text says (Shanahan, 2014). During this reading students will work to determine what the text is about, the theme of the story, and characteristics of the character. In the second reading, students will figure out how the text works (Shanahan, 2014). By doing this, the student will use context clues to identify unknown words, identify who is telling the story, and the author’s purpose. In the final third reading, students will analyze and compare the text

(Shanahan, 2014). For example, students might compare the main idea of a text to the main idea of another text.

In order to close reading to be effective, teachers need to model expectations for being effective close readers. Lessons can be organized by whole class, small group, or individual basis (Shanahan, 2014). It is important that students are confident and comfortable in all situations. Although there are differences in how researchers believe close reading should be implemented, there are some commonalities within instruction.

### ***Instructional Commonalities***

Regardless of the method used for close reading, there are two commonalities among Fisher and Frey and Shanahan's method for implementing close reading. The first suggested component for successful implementation is student discussion. By giving students an opportunity to have discussions with their peers they are given a chance to confirm their thinking about a text. Providing students with the opportunity to have small group discussions, allows students have chance to learn to think for themselves as readers and as individuals (Hinchman & Moore, 2013). Peer discussions also give students a better understanding of how peers interpret a text. "Large group lessons are useful for exposing all students to a particular idea, while smaller groupings encourage greater participation and allow for more observation" (Shanahan, 2014, p. 30). Students need to interact with peers after reading in order for close reading to be truly effective (Fisher & Frey, 2015). By allowing students to have discussions about a text, it provides them with a chance to fix misconceptions and also solidify their thinking

about a topic. Students need an opportunity to engage with each other and express their ideas. It is not enough to just read a text multiple times, in order to ensure comprehension, students need to be discussing their ideas with peers.

The second commonality is the importance of rereading a text. By rereading a text, students are given the chance to dig deeper and find more meaning in a text. “Since close reading requires that students analyze the texts more thoroughly, a “one and done” reading is not enough” (Shanahan, 2014, p. 29). It is important that students go into the close reading process knowing they will be reading a text multiple times. The most effective close reading lessons are lessons where teachers guide students through multiple readings, taking students from identifying the literal level understanding of a text to inferential level of understanding a text (Fisher & Frey, 2015). Teachers are guiding students through multiple readings of a text by providing them with effective questioning that will allow them to analyze the text. Although, close reading has been deemed a reading strategy that will increase comprehension, there are a few controversies and oppositions to the trend.

### ***Controversies/Opposition***

One issue found with close reading is the lack of research and information to support this as an effective strategy. According to David Pearson, University of California, Berkley, “If, on the other hand, close reading gets operationalized as low-level, literal, factual comprehension, it will set back comprehension instruction at least a decade, maybe more” (as cited in Cassidy & Grote-Garcia, 2014, p. 12). Pearson believes close reading can be beneficial if it is used to take students thinking and

understand of text to a higher level, for example when supporting literal, inferential, and critical comprehension (Cassidy & Grote-Garcia, 2014). Educators are still not sure about the long-term effectiveness of close reading as a strategy to increase comprehension. This shows the uncertainty in implementation and effectiveness of this strategy. In addition, Hinchman and Moore (2013) state, "Close reading has been ignored by current high-profile syntheses of literacy research, and we have been unable to locate individual empirical studies that overtly investigate its use with youths" (p. 443). With lack of research and information to back up this strategy, it makes it challenging for educators and districts to provide full support. Another issue is the lack of focus on students' background knowledge and prereading preparation in the close reading procedures. In close reading, it is recommended that students are not given background information on the text prior to reading (Hinchman & Moore, 2013). The omission of prior knowledge and prereading preparation for text reading has raised questions on the efficacy of the practice. "Given the well-established role of readers' prior knowledge when reading, this devaluation countered much current prereading instruction advice in the professional literature as well as daily practice in classrooms" (Hinchman & Moore, 2013, p. 446). Omitting this aspect in preparing students for reading would be a significant change in teacher instruction. As teachers try to make sense of current trends and popular approaches to reading, Cassidy and Ortlieb (2013) suggest that educators keep attuned to the literature and seek advice from literacy experts regarding current practice. "Staying current with literacy publications and the annual What's Hot survey serves to inform literacy professionals about what a variety of experts think are



hot issues” (Cassidy & Ortlieb, 2013). Keeping abreast of what is considered hot trends in the field of literacy can help the literacy educator understand what is current. But it does not necessarily mean those trends are viable practices; it requires the educator to be thoughtful and critical in examining trends to determine efficacy of practice from the research literature. Like many things in education, trends are ever changing. The longevity of close reading and how long it will be considered important and significant in education is unclear.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations are drawn from the findings of this literature review. First, it is important for educators to understand that close reading is a relatively new strategy in schools and has been on the rise since the implementation of CCSS. With that being said, research is lacking in the effectiveness and implementation of this as a reading strategy. Educators need to keep this in mind when encouraging and implementing close reading within districts. Educators also need to stay current in their research and findings about this strategy. Trends come and go in education, it is important that educators stay up to date and knowledgeable about the strategy.

It is also important to establish a uniform definition of close reading to reflect what the practice looks like for a particular building or district. As there are varied definitions of close reading in the literature, each building or district should come to consensus about exactly what they mean by close reading. After there is an agreement of the expectation for this strategy, the next step is to identify how this strategy will be used. Based on how the strategy will be used, building level administrators will need to

decide how the strategy will be implemented. Will a professional come into the building and provide professional development? Unfortunately, with the newness of this strategy, there is not yet a significant amount of professional development available for off-site/on-site resources. If a building would like to do in-house training, how will administrators train teachers to use this strategy? These are all important questions to answer prior to putting forth the expectation for implementation of close reading.

### **Possible Professional Development**

Fisher and Frey's website (2016) appears to have the most professional development available. There is a PowerPoint document, with an overview of close reading available for teachers to download (Resources, 2016). Currently, there are no professional development dates available for close reading. However, there are numerous books available for purchase on their website (Resources, 2016). It is also possible to contact Fisher and Frey, via their website; this could possibly lead to in-house professional development. Solution Tree (2016), a cooperation and publishing house provides districts with videos, books, and online courses, also provides professional development. Although, Solution Tree does not provide specific professional development focusing on close reading, there is a focus on Common Core (Books & Videos, 2016). Through this type of professional development, teachers would have the opportunity to dig deeper into Common Core, which will in turn, help teachers better understand the process of close reading (Books & Videos, 2016). Additional resources for close reading were found on the International Literacy Association (ILA) website (Units & Lesson Plans, 2016). From there, teachers are

encouraged to visit ReadWriteThink for engaging and nationally aligned resources for teachers (ReadWriteThink, 2016). The ReadWriteThink website (2016) provides 40 professionally created lessons related to close reading. Although, there may not be a large number of professional development opportunities for teachers, there are resources available to help guide and assist teachers when implementing close reading into the curriculum.

If teachers are looking for individual resources in order to learn more about close reading, there are many resources available. Through a basic amazon.com search, there were 513 resources available for instructional practices, teacher resources, and overview of close reading strategies. The top rated authors, according to amazon users, include: Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, Timothy Shanahan, Camille Blachowicz and Peter J. Fisher, Barbara Moss and Diane Lapp, Martin Lee and Marcia Miller, Michael Fisher, and Barbara Bloy. If support is not provided through the district, independent research and instruction through online and print material can be helpful for teachers.

### **Conclusions**

Close reading remains one of the hottest trends in k-12 education. With the implementation of CCSS, close reading has skyrocketed in importance as a reading strategy. There are still many questions and uncertainties about close reading. First, is this an effective, long term reading strategy? With all the buzz about this strategy, the amount of research to back the effectiveness of this strategy is lacking. Second, there are varying opinions of the most effective method for implementing this strategy.

Finally, is this a strategy that will withstand the test of time? Or is this merely a strategy that will be replaced when another up and coming trend is presented?

There is no denying the importance of pushing students to be more effective readers. Close reading is meant to challenge students by presenting them with more challenging texts. Close reading is also meant to teach students how to struggle through a text. By struggling through text, students will learn not to give up, they will also be able to use tools that help them be successful when presented with challenging texts (Shanahan, 2014). Even with the uncertainties with close reading, there are still many positives that come from using it as a reading strategy to foster comprehension.

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