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The impact of grouping for reading instruction on student attitude and self-concept

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The impact of grouping for reading instruction on student attitude and self-concept

Abstract

Researchers have found a parallel between types of grouping and attitudes of students regarding reading. The majority of students placed in the "lower" reading group in their classrooms have had negative perceptions and overall attitudes about reading. Research has indicated that the curriculum taught in these lower reading groups has differed from those in medium and higher groups due to different skills and practice that teachers have felt were required for students to succeed. Teachers' overall expectations have been found to be lower for those in lower academic groups in school. Students who have had motivation, self-efficacy, self worth, competence, and the skills to set goals and to try new strategies have tended to have good perceptions about reading.

Grouping has also been seen to affect interactions with others. The literature was analyzed to determine the exact perceptions of students when being placed or after being placed in reading groups. The research has indicated that flexible grouping tends to have more positive effects than other forms of grouping. The findings point to needed training of teachers for managing grouping arrangements in the classroom, and show a strong relationship between grouping arrangements and overall perceptions of reading.

Running Head: THE IMPACT OF GROUPING FOR READING INSTRUCTION

THE IMPACT OF GROUPING FOR READING INSTRUCTION ON STUDENT
ATTITUDE AND SELF-CONCEPT

A Graduate Review

Submitted to the

Division of Literacy Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Michelle Renee Keegan

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This Review by: Michelle Renee Keegan

Titled: The Impact of grouping for reading instruction on student attitude and self-concept

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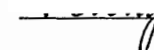
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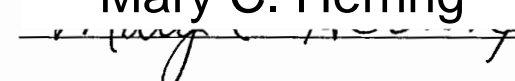
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Researchers have found a parallel between types of grouping and attitudes of students regarding reading. The majority of students placed in the “lower” reading group in their classrooms have had negative perceptions and overall attitudes about reading. Research has indicated that the curriculum taught in these lower reading groups has differed from those in medium and higher groups due to different skills and practice that teachers have felt were required for students to succeed. Teachers’ overall expectations have been found to be lower for those in lower academic groups in school. Students who have had motivation, self-efficacy, self worth, competence, and the skills to set goals and to try new strategies have tended to have good perceptions about reading. Grouping has also been seen to affect interactions with others. The literature was analyzed to determine the exact perceptions of students when being placed or after being placed in reading groups. The research has indicated that flexible grouping tends to have more positive effects than other forms of grouping. The findings point to needed training of teachers for managing grouping arrangements in the classroom, and show a strong relationship between grouping arrangements and overall perceptions of reading.

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Introduction

Children's attitudes and overall feelings about reading have been built upon their past experiences (Alderman, 2004; Cole, 2002; Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997; Eldridge & Butterfield, 1986). Some students have had positive experiences, which have had a very different effect on their perceptions and attitudes of reading from those who have shared a negative experience. While some students have excelled at a specific skill or task, others have had more difficulty doing the same task and needed more practice (Alderman, 2004). One solution to teaching to these differences has been grouping in the classroom.

Description

Placement, or grouping, has been one practice that has affected these attitudes and perceptions of readers. On the surface it seems that grouping students into three or more groups in the classroom might be a must for teaching students with so many different learning styles (Alderman, 2004; Gardner, 1983). How else could one teach students everything they need to know when teachers realized that all students are different? Instruction in these groups has been based on strategies and skills that students had or had not mastered (Wheelock, 1992). The idea sounded reasonable and proceeded to make us believe that this strategy would have a positive effect on students and their learning. However, it has been found that what is taught in these groups tends to be different (Allington, 1983; Haskins, Walden, Ramey, 1983; Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2005; Unsworth, 1984) and teachers' or students' perceptions of these groups differ from one another tremendously (Alderman, 2004; Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997; Ireson &

Hallam, 2005). Due to teacher's differences in expectations for student, students may have been treated differently in the classroom. Students in turn, absorb these perceptions and expectations from their teacher(s) and may or may not have had positive perceptions or attitudes about their own reading experiences. The following literature review details how discussion has evolved around grouping techniques used in reading classrooms and the effects such grouping has had on students; both positively and negatively.

Rationale

As an educator, I believe that the teaching of reading is important in a student's lifetime. Many of the fourth and fifth grade students that I have taught struggle with the motivation to read. To try to instill this love of reading in all my students, I have recently tried flexible grouping with my students based on their abilities and skills in reading. However, I have been unsure of how to use this grouping effectively. During my experiences, I have found negative occurrences such as discipline problems, low self-esteem, and no consistent, positive role modeling of reading strategies or skills. I was not happy with the results, nor were some of my students. For example, one of my students asked, "Am I in the dumb group?" This is due to the student's reaction after learning what group he or she was in. I have found it is so much easier to explain why a student is in a higher-level group than in a lower-level group.

What was I doing wrong? Was grouping detrimental to students? Did I just lack effective teaching strategies that were to be used in grouping practices? What was the missing component? I turned to research that evaluated grouping and searched for concurrent themes to the questions that I had about grouping of students.

Students' perceptions of their own ability and achievement truly affect their motivation either in a positive way or a negative one (Alderman, 2004). Did my use of grouping affect my students' motivation of reading? Did I teach the same information to both groups, or did my expectations differ? I questioned my teaching. I desperately wanted to have students have both positive experiences and that love of reading that I desired for them.

Purpose of Review

Many controversial aspects of educational reform have affected these lower-motivated students. Some examples are standards-based reform and inclusion (Alderman, 2004). Emphasis is on higher standards for students, accountability as well as instructional change. Higher standards were designed to promote improvements in students' performance. In order for higher scores to occur, students are required to endure high-stakes testing. In order to perform well on high-stakes tests, students must be highly motivated. The challenges of doing well on high-stakes tests and the sometimes negative results that occur when students don't do well have limited some students' motivations to do well in the school setting. There have been mixed results. Some students have given up on tests altogether; others have increased their motivation for passing tests. These results have caused teachers to have differing views and opinions on grouping and what works best to enable their students to perform well.

Alderman (2004) found that separating students into different groups based on their ability levels affected students' long-range feelings about reading in general.

Students enjoyed reading when their experiences were good (Alderman, 2004). These students had a higher rate of resiliency, were self-regulated with a strong desire to learn, and had the belief that they caused their own achievements to occur. Teachers, who grouped students everyday, needed to be aware of kids' perceptions of their grouping and the consequences this grouping could have on their overall attitude of reading.

Many research articles have stated that grouping students seems to be a must in the classroom, but have questioned how to overcome differences in students' attitudes in order to make these experiences positive ones for our students? Finding the answer to this question has not only helped me make better grouping decisions in my classroom, but also has helped my students grow positively in their love for reading.

Importance

Most schools today have gotten away from school-wide ability tracking, which involves sorting students into groups according to perceived ability, and from pullout programs (Elbaum, Moody, & Schumm, 1999). Inclusion of our special needs children into the classroom has been one of the educational methods of the present. With this practice in place, teachers have been asked to learn more strategies and try new methods to reach all of the children with different abilities in their classrooms (Alderman, 2004). The No Child Left Behind legislation has caused educators to think about how to teach our students efficiently and as best as we could. As the No Child Left Behind legislation has called for scientifically based practices, some teachers have looked into ability grouping, an idea that was criticized in the 1980's (Tieso, 2003).

Grouping has been believed to be a big determining factor in affecting students' reading experiences. Teachers have needed to provide specific activities and strategies for these learners. One way to have done this has been to have grouped students according to the skills and strategies that have been needed, called ability grouping.

Studies have indicated that ability grouping is acceptable when it is used in a flexible grouping situation that students could move in and out of (Oakes, 1985, Wheelock, 1992). The main purpose for grouping should not be to track students. Effective teaching groups have been found to be those in which teachers have used many ways of grouping to make learning the best it can be (Flood, Lapp, Flood, & Nagel, 1992). Many researchers (Slavin, 1990; Oakes, 1985; Wheelock, 1992) have found negative effects from grouping based on ability, while others have strongly suggested using other types of grouping in the classroom. The variety of views about the efficacy of grouping are shared in the following literature review.

Terminology

Ability grouping (as defined in this review) occurs when students are put into academic groups in the classroom based on how students are functioning in their classroom, on reading tasks or on other subject area-tasks (Slavin, 1987). Some researchers state that innate ability is hard to determine, and that ability grouping is really achievement grouping (Alderman, 2004). Students are given a comprehensive test; their score on this test determines to which "ability" group they are assigned.

Ability grouping has been used for a variety of purposes. Students could be grouped to track and they could be grouped for achievement. In ability grouping with the

purpose of *tracking*, students are tested using standardized tests or various IQ tests to determine placement in static groups. When grouping for *achievement*, students are grouped according to their academic performance in the classroom. Sometimes teachers' judgments, students' past performance, or predictions of students' future achievement have been used to determine groupings.

Tracking refers to sorting students into groups according to perceived ability (Wheelock, 1992). These groups are not flexible, as the students can be included in the same group in the classroom for the entire year. There is not a lot of moving from one group to another. Instructional practices vary by track and their general achievement level determines expectations.

Whole class grouping is a traditional form of grouping where students of the same age are grouped in the same classroom using the same materials and methods to learn (Grossen, 1996). Classrooms in many schools are set up this way.

Between-class grouping or *within-class grouping* is a flexible, temporary grouping placement for students who have similar abilities; the students are put into different classes or groups. This gives students instruction specific to their needs (Wheelock, 1992).

Flexible grouping is a temporary grouping used for teaching specific skills (Grossen, 1996). Students can move in and out of classroom groups many times, based on their needs. Every unit of the subject essentially has different groupings.

Two terms that this paper mentions frequently are *heterogeneous* and *homogenous grouping*. *Heterogeneous grouping* refers to grouping of students with

different learning styles and levels of achievement. The students are sometimes grouped according to interest or topic. On the opposite end, in *homogenous grouping*, students are grouped by achievement level. Instruction in this second type of grouping is based on students' abilities and can sometimes result in tracking (Grossen, 1996; Wheelock, 1992).

Another term used in this paper is *inclusion*. Inclusion involves bringing students with special needs into the "regular" classroom with other students (Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997).

Many related factors of students' self-beliefs are used in this review. *Self-concept* involves the "perceptions, knowledge, views, and beliefs that individuals hold about themselves as learners" (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003; p. 7). *Self-efficacy* involves "the judgments that people form of their ability to organize and execute the actions that are needed to accomplish specific learning-related tasks" (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003; p. 7). *Causal attributions* are the "beliefs that individuals form about what causes the outcomes of learning-related tasks in which they are involved" (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003; p. 7).

Research Questions

The primary question guiding the study was: *What are the relationships between students' perceptions of reading related to their grouping arrangements in school?* The primary question was further defined by the following secondary questions:

1. What thoughts do students have regarding the practice of grouping in reading groups?
2. What impact does grouping have on students' motivation to read?
3. What is the nature of student differences regarding perceptions of reading across different types of reading groups?

Researchers have found a parallel between types of grouping and attitudes of students regarding reading (Alderman, 2004; Grossen, 1996; Wheelock, 1994; Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997). Students who have motivation, self-efficacy, self worth, competence, and the skills to set goals and to try new strategies tend to have good perceptions about reading (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Cole 2002). Grouping has also been seen to affect interactions with others (Barr & Dreeben, 1991). The literature review that follows addressed these topics in more detail.

Methodology

The topic of this review of literature is grouping and its effects on students' perceptions about reading and their self-concepts about themselves as readers. There was a variety of data collection approaches used for finding the sources used in this review. There was an abundance of information about the topic; various approaches were taken to help search for applicable data related strictly to students' perceptions and self-concepts related to their participation in reading groups.

Method of Identifying and Locating Sources

In searching for compatible sources for my literature review on ability grouping and its' effects on students, I first searched those sources that were located online or at fingertip access to me through computerized searches published from 1980 to 2007. Some applicable sources were also secured in the university library. I wanted to find sources that were credible while still showing relevance to the topic chosen. An important factor was that the information be fairly recent and newer than the 1980's, as the practice of ability grouping was highly criticized during this time. I was interested to find both positive as well as negative findings from a variety of researchers.

From a course previously taken, I found much information in articles that I already had on file about students' motivation in reading, which also can be tied to attitudes and perceptions about reading.

Method to Select Sources

The articles that were selected and included reported studies or findings about perceptions or self-concepts of students about reading. Reviews were included if they gave some background knowledge on the topic. Participants of these studies were of the primary and intermediate level of elementary schooling. Articles covered such topics as students' thoughts regarding reading groups, the impact grouping had on students, and the nature of the differences of the perceptions and self-concept about reading, based on grouping. Researchers mostly used either interviews or survey tools to question students about their perceptions.

Index sources searched included those with high credibility in both the educational as well as psychological or behavioral fields. The University of Northern Iowa's databases such as Academic Search Elite (EBSCO Host), Education Full Text (Wilson Web) Emerald, ERIC (EBSCO Host), Expanded Academic ASAP (Thomson Gale), JSTOR (Journal Storage Project), Library Literature and Information Science Full Text (SilverPlatter), PsychINFO (SilverPlatter), and Sociological Abstracts (CSA) were used for the online aspects of the search. Other research articles were located in the University of Northern Iowa's Donald O. Rod Library using the search engines listed above. Specific terms used for the search included: *ability grouping, reading attitudes, grouping, reading, self-concept* and *perceptions*. Keyword combinations used included *grouping in reading, grouping in reading or literacy, students' perceptions of reading or students' perceptions of reading or literacy, and effects of grouping*. The search was focused on elementary research. There was much information found delving into the

topic of “motivation.” I was a bit more careful in looking at these articles to avoid focusing the discussion primarily on motivation.

I also searched the references of articles chosen to see if authors were also directly quoted or referenced in other articles as well. The more the author was cross-referenced, the more valuable I found the author to be, as it was then assumed that the author was well-known, accurate, and respected by his or her colleagues.

I only chose those sources that were reputable in the reading “realm”. This included journals such as *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Education Research*, *Language Arts*, *Educational Leadership*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, and *Review of Educational Research*, as well as other journals that seemed to add positively to my research.

I particularly wished to include sources that were written as recently as the 1990’s or within the last 10 years, to avoid the 1980’s criticism of ability grouping. However, I did include some articles older than 1990 to add to my background knowledge and that of my readers, particularly since some of the well-known authors I had chosen for sources had written older seminal articles. Those resources that did not meet the above criteria were not used in my literature review.

Procedures to Analyze Sources

While reading the books and journals chosen for this review, I continually asked myself if those chosen resources provided answers to the research questions that I had listed. Another consideration was whether the article helped me understand more clearly how groupings were used in the particular case study or article, and how applicable they were to my own classroom. Each reference source was looked at to see if it could be used to support the history of grouping, perceptions of students of grouping, perceptions of teachers toward grouping, or guidelines for successful grouping in the classroom. If none of these subject areas were addressed in the source, the article was discarded from use in the literature review.

Criteria to Include Literature

Once articles were identified as dealing with the topic of grouping in reading and the effects of students while in the grouping process, they were reviewed for data and information obtained from studies. In order to choose relevant literature, I cross-referenced several terms mentioned in multiple articles. Again many of my journals or books chosen were also found as references in other articles. Finally I looked to see what themes emerged from the literature. If the themes of grouping students and perceptions of reading of these students surfaced, the source was used.

Results

Introduction

Due to the differences among children, many concepts have caused educators to look carefully at traditional approaches in the classroom (Alderman, 2004; Unsworth, 1984). These include our current knowledge of how the reading process works, how children learn how to read, research on grouping, and teaching of reading. A very difficult decision for teachers to make is how to group students most effectively for instruction (Slavin, 1988). Concerns involving grouping include students' self-concept, teacher morale, and efficiency (Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997).

Students enter kindergarten with vast academic differences and experiences that can be related to ethnicity, highest education level of parents, and socioeconomic status (Alderman, 2004). These differences, as well as differences in educational experiences, can affect students' overall perceptions of reading (Alderman, 2004; Cole, 2002; Elbaum Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997; Ireson & Hallam, 2005, Kulik & Kulik, 1982). In order to effectively teach children with these vast knowledge and skill differences, educators are leaning more towards grouping (Unsworth, 1984). However, type of grouping has been found to affect students' motivation, performance, and perceptions about reading (Abadzi, 1985; Elbaum Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997; Gamoran, 1986).

The literature analyzed in this review has been consistent in maintaining that many students' past experiences with reading groups affects their overall perceptions of reading. Depending on the experiences, students may have a negative or positive

perception (Abadzi, 1984; Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997, 1999; Gamoran, 1986; Slavin, 1988). They may also be indifferent, according to the findings.

Researchers have identified three main concerns with grouping in the classroom. Grouping can limit what occurs during instruction (Barr & Dreeben, 1991; Slavin, 1990; Wheelock, 1994). Secondly, different types of grouping can affect the types of student-to-student interactions or those with the teacher (Alderman, 2004; Elbaum, Moody, & Schumm, 1999; Haskins, Walden, Ramey, 1983). Thirdly, grouping affects the self-esteem of learners (Alderman, 2004; Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997; Flood, J. Lapp, D., Flood, S., & Nagel, G., 1992).

Through this literature review I will discuss types of grouping, and how grouping affects students' perceptions of reading. Student recollections as well as teachers' perceptions and reasons for grouping are also included. When grouping students, there are many concerns that could arise. Due to behavioral concerns, students in lower-leveled groups are not always learning the same information as those students in average- to high-leveled groups. Teachers' expectations for students are also different within various grouping arrangements. Grouping also affects the interactions that students have with teachers and with peers. If grouping experiences are seen as negative by students, their self-esteem regarding reading is often altered as well. I conclude with suggesting there are still issues today involving grouping and how it affects students' overall perceptions of reading. A suggested grouping approach, found in much of the research reviewed, is also discussed in this review.

Analysis of Results

The electronic search for this review found 76 articles on grouping students in the classroom. However, only 20 of them focused on students' perceptions of this grouping and the effects it can have on students' self-esteem related to reading. There were also two studies that focused on teacher's perceptions and one that focused on both teachers' and students' perceptions of grouping. These were specific case studies and dealt strictly with what students (and teachers) felt about grouping and the general topic of reading. Many of the 76 articles discussed important findings dealing with grouping and motivation but dealt more with academic effects and reviewed the researchers' opinions on this matter. Information from other articles was used only in the background introduction of this review but not in the bulk or main focus of the review. In the review, findings were arranged by research questions.

Thus, the review consists of sections for each of the following topics: a) students' overall perceptions of grouping during reading instruction, b) the impact grouping has on student motivation and c) the nature of differences regarding perceptions of reading across grouping levels.

Thoughts Students Have Regarding Practice of Grouping in Reading

Older and recent research indicated a series of negative effects for those readers who experienced low-ability groups (Abadzi, 1985; Alderman, 2004; Allington, 1980, Nelson, 1994; Podl, 1995). These effects consisted of low self-esteem and negative perceptions of reading as the groupings enabled students to be conscious of the differences in ability from student to student (Abadzi, 1985; Nelson, 1994). Often

teachers failed to differentiate their teaching and materials when using homogeneous grouping. Also, as Allington (1980) found, teachers did differentiate in ways that kept their less-proficient students from getting much reading practice.

Students' Perceptions of Grouping Formats. Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, (1997) investigated elementary school students' perceptions of grouping formats for reading instruction. Reading instruction was found to be most effective when given to small groups of students with similar reading abilities (Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997). Using ability or homogenous grouping also gave the teacher the most direct form of instruction in teaching the lowest reading groups; capable readers were not wasting time on helping the poorer readers and therefore wasting their opportunities for advancement of their own reading skills.

Slavin compared ability grouped classes to mixed ability groupings (1990). Six randomized experiments, nine matched experiments, and fourteen correlational studies compared the two types of grouping. Achievement data from standardized testing was also looked at for this review. Schools had to have experimented with ability grouping for at least a semester for Slavin to use them in his research. It was reported that high achievers felt the benefit of ability grouping, as they were stimulated accordingly. More difficult material was given to higher-level groups while more support was given to lower-ability groups in lower-level tasks, such as basic reading skills (decoding). When looking for effects of ability grouping in the middle grades, Slavin found overall achievement effects to be around 0 in grades 6-9. All students of differing levels learned

equally well in both grouping arrangements in all subject areas except for Social Studies, where there was a trend for heterogeneous placement.

Elbaum, Schumm, and Vaughn's study (1997) sought to discover elementary students' perceptions of grouping. The study's main purpose was to investigate elementary school students' feelings about grouping practices. The students involved included 549 third, fourth, and fifth grade urban students from three schools in a southeastern district. These students also consisted of 23 students with Learning Disabilities. Most students involved in this study were minority students. A questionnaire was used to determine students' perception of grouping. The questionnaire included five categories: 1) promoting learning, 2) promoting cooperation, 3) is fair, 4) allows for individual pacing and 5) is enjoyed by students.

This study favored mixed ability groupings by students. Within the first category, 85% of students liked mixed-ability groups the most as well as mixed-ability pairs. Students felt that the most learning occurred in mixed ability groups as those who were lower-leveled students could learn from those who were higher-leveled. In the second category, 96% of students felt mixed-ability groups promoted cooperation with each other. The third category had 66% of students favoring mixed ability groups. These students felt these lower-level readers would not progress in same-ability groups and would be stuck at their present level. No students felt that mixed ability-groups would be profitable in the fourth category, involving individual pacing. Students in this study said that poorer readers in their groups of mixed-ability would frustrate better readers. The last category was divided exactly equal in that 50% of students favored same-ability grouping

while 50% also favored mixed-ability grouping. Some students said that the good readers would have the satisfaction of helping poorer readers. Poorer readers would have no one to look up to and would make no progress if they were not within mixed ability groups.

Overall, same-ability groups were not deemed as favorable as mixed-ability groups. In the first category of “promotes learning”, 15% of students believed that same-ability groupings were good for poor readers. Only 4% of students (within the second category of “promotes cooperation”) felt same-ability groups were promoting cooperation. Within the third category of “is fair”, 33% of students favored same-ability groups. These students felt the poorer readers would get confused easier within mixed-ability groups. The fourth category (“allows for individual pacing”) had 100% of students in favor of same-ability groups. In this grouping, slower students would not be pressured to read too fast. In the last category (“is enjoyed by student”), half of the students (50%) favored same-ability grouping. At the end of this study, most students decided that same-ability groups were only desirable for students who could not read at all.

In another study, students often did not enjoy their grouping experiences if the group had difficulties interacting with one another (Battistich, Solomon, & Delucchi, 1993). Eighteen 4th–6th grade classrooms from 4 schools, in 2 different school districts were given questionnaires for this study. Students’ attitudes towards small-group learning experiences in school as well as other academic and social outcomes were the main focus. It was found that the quality of group interaction determined effects of cooperative learning. Frequent group work promoted positive feelings of students towards

cooperative work, which in turn promoted attitudes, perceptions of classroom climate, motivation, and social skills.

Some students worked in groups frequently, but didn't feel that they interacted well with each other. This negative outcome to grouping often was found to promote whole-class instruction by the teacher. Low-quality interactions were associated with negative outcomes. Many teachers had not received any type of training regarding differentiated instruction or grouping. This made students and teachers dislike their grouping experiences as well, as they weren't pleasant experiences in the eyes of teacher management for neither student nor teacher. Students were just left to participate without the teacher's guidance in these groupings; at times students felt that not much was accomplished in these situations.

In another study of students' perceptions, Evans (2002) reviewed elementary literacy research to inquire if students' perceptions of text-based experienced discussions were given much attention. Evans reviewed elementary literacy research to inquire if students' perceptions of text-based experienced discussions were given much attention. The yearlong study consisted of 11 girls and 11 boys in a fifth grade class; of these students 73% being European American, 18% African American, and 9% Hispanic. There was a typical range of abilities in this class that consisted of students who received reading resource support while others read remarkable ahead of their peers. The students in the study felt that a leader was very different from a peer being bossy and taking over the group's discussion without regard for others. Bossy peers were not seen as helpful to students; they were simply trying to benefit themselves. Leaders were those students who

were good role models for others, and were seen as obtaining good communication skills and helpfulness for their entire group. Students at the fifth grade level especially liked same-gender groups as they felt that some of their “romantic” feelings got in the way of a group discussion within mixed-gender groups. They also felt more comfortable with same-gender groups when discussing and staying on task. The researcher found that bossy group members were unlikable and tended to make their grouping experience a negative one (Evans, 2002).

Kutnick and Kington (2005) researched how social interaction was found to affect children’s friendships and learning in school. A small-scale study was designed to distinguish whether cognitive problem solving was enhanced in friendship or acquaintance relationships. The study was mostly quasi-experimental in design, and used pairs of children to take on cognitive tasks. These voluntary pairings were usually with someone of the same gender and culture (Kutnick & Kington, 2005). The sample was arranged in layers by age and was clustered by class. Kutnick and Kington (2005) found 72-paired children to undertake reasoning tasks. These students were given an interview regarding their learning and sharing experiences relating to friendships. These pairings were often based on friendships (versus acquaintances), sex (male and female pairings), ability (teacher-assessed high, medium, and low), and age (students 5, 8, and 10 years old) in a primary school in west London. Performance on cognitive tasks was measured while also individual interviews were used to obtain information for this study. The comparisons represented the following pairings (each pairing contained a high, middle, and low ability rating): 1) three pairs of male friends, 2) three pairs of female friends, 3)

three pairs of male acquaintances, and 4) three pairs of female acquaintances. Friendship pairings between some elementary students seemed to enhance their cognitive performance in the classroom (Kutnick & Kington, 2005). The researchers found most students liked friendship pairings better than those with acquaintances.

Vaughn, Schumm, Niarhos, and Gordon (1993) wanted to find students' perceptions of two hypothetical adaptations for lower achievers. The first study focused on using the Students' Perceptions of Teachers (SPT) scale and determining if it was appropriate for use with elementary students. The sample involved 87 fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students from two urban schools. Students were given the SPT test to examine teachers' behaviors and methods in the classroom. This test assessed the extent to which students felt that teachers were making adaptations in the specific areas of grouping, homework, lectures, textbooks, test, instructional routines and meeting individual's needs. In the second study, the 158 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students completed the SPT and were interviewed regarding the SPT scale. Results from the first study indicated these elementary students' responses correlated to a previous study of secondary students (Vaughn, Schumm, Niarhos, and Gordon, 1993). It was found that the procedures for administering the SPT scale needed to be altered. The SPT was given in smaller groups of four to six students, students were individually interviewed, and students were randomly selected to participate in an extended interview to further the interview questions.

Elementary school students preferred a teacher in the classroom who made adaptations to students' learning (Vaughn, Schumm, Niarhos, & Gordon, 1993). These

researchers found the same students that agreed with giving students adaptations if needed in the classroom disagreed with giving differential treatment towards homework and textbooks. They preferred to be able to contact their friends about homework issues and questions. However, these students did understand the necessity of doing so. Upper-ability students indicated they preferred a teacher who made the point of helping all students understand the material at hand. Students who actually needed this individualized help did not like the teacher to make adaptations. They felt that a teacher such as this may draw too much attention to these learners, which in turn made them feel self-conscious. These same students preferred a “learning-oriented” classroom over a “work-oriented” classroom. Vaughn, Schumm, Niarhos, and Gordon (1993) found that students preferred the same treatment while in groups, and enjoyed a classroom based on challenges as well as an environment where students are invited to learn and think; no matter their ability. However, another point made in this study is that students agree that teachers need to make adaptations to those students who need it in order to give them the same “learning-oriented” environment as their peers. Individualized portfolio assessment and flexible grouping were practices that were stressed by Vaughn, Schumm, Niarhos, and Gordon (1993) as effective ways to begin academic and social successes of all students.

Students' Perceptions of Reading Curriculum. Research indicated differences of treatment of low ability groupings versus high ability groupings and to which extent students learn best (Evertson, 1982; Haskins, Walden, & Ramey, 1983; Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2005). The ways groups were formed have been quite a concern for students with learning disabilities.

Researchers have identified differences in the types of instruction that occurred in groupings that were based on ability (Allington, 1980; Flood, Lapp, Flood, & Nagel, 1992; Oakes, 1985; Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2005). Researchers had indicated that using ability grouping exclusively in language arts can have negative effects on students' learning, especially those in the lowest groups (Flood, et. al., 1992; Opitz, 1999, Slavin, 1987). In these lowest groups students were expected to do more oral reading and given the least amount of silent reading time (Allington, 1980). Low groups focused on word decoding and did more "skill and drill" activities. There was less experience with literature as well as less silent reading in lower-ability reading groups (Allington, 1980; Cook-Gumperz, Simons, & Gumperz 1988; Flood, et. al., 1992; Good & Marshall, 1984). In contrast, other research has indicated lower track classes were taught more demanding topic areas, especially higher-order thinking skills, which these readers may not have been ready for (Evertson, 1982).

After researching ability grouping, Barbour (1990) indicated that students in low-achieving groups fell further and further behind while high-achieving groups benefited from ability grouping. Some researchers (Allington, 1983; Haskins, Walden, & Ramey,

1983; Unsworth, 1984; Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2005) believed this was due to the fact that students were treated differently in each of the groups.

When students were divided up into higher-ability, average-ability and lower-ability groups for instruction, there were learning differences in each level (Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2005). Saleh, Lazonder, and De Jong (2005) examined how students' achievement, social interactions, and motivation were affected by grouping arrangements. One hundred four fourth grade students from five different classes in an elementary school in Kuwait were randomly assigned to homogenous or heterogeneous groups based on their abilities from the Science Elementary Achievement Test (SEAT), a basic science skills test. Students who scored at the upper 25% of the distribution were assigned to the high ability levels, while those who scored at the lower 25% of the distribution were part of the lower-ability levels. Students in the middle 50% of the distribution were a part of the average ability level. Students were randomly assigned to one of the 13 heterogeneous groups; each with one high, one low, and two average ability students. These students were then given 16 plant biology lessons based on a fourth grade textbook which covered basic botanical topics as well as advanced issues complex to fourth-grade students. These students were taught using Slavin's 1994 strategy called Student Teams and Achievement Divisions technique form. A questionnaire was used to determine motivation beliefs towards collaborative learning. A pre- and post-test were used to assess knowledge gains by the individual students. Over a nine-week period of time it was found that specific students with low-, average- and high-abilities had more success in specific groupings, either heterogeneous groups or homogenous groups. The

lower students were most likely some of the poorest readers in the class and possibly non-readers. When students were placed in homogenous groups, students were learning basic reading skills and rarely learn above decoding skills. On the other hand, when students were in heterogeneous groups, their learning needs had not been met as well. Saleh, Lazonder, and De Jong (2005) found that lower ability students learned more in heterogeneous groups, average-ability groups learned more in homogenous groups and high-ability groups learned in either scenario. A conclusion made during this study was that neither heterogeneous nor homogenous grouping is better than one another. The learning dialogue was also affected by grouping in the classroom as students of similar ability often built upon each others' conversation whereas lower ability students had less explanations and conversations overall with each other. Motivational beliefs were often affected by classroom groupings. Teachers mostly used heterogeneous groupings in their classroom as a means to improve students' academic work in the classroom.

Oakes determined that tracking had an influence on student achievement, self-esteem, goals, teacher expectations and the overall learning environment (1985). It was found in her publication that schools that were using ability grouping did not have the same curriculum across groups; students in the high groups were given many expectations and were taught differently than the lower groups. The lower groups were given lowered expectations and more solitary practice such as worksheets and textbook reading. Basic skills were the focus of their lessons, while the higher groups were given more discussion which involved higher-level thinking. Oakes (1985) argued that all

groups needed to be given the same expectations and teaching methods in order to be successful and “catch-up” to the higher track.

Oakes also identified many unintentional actions that teachers aimed towards lower-track learners. Teachers had those students doing a lot of copying information from one place to another, allowing little time to practice or process the skill trying to be taught. Teachers were simply reading the text themselves and getting out the information that was required for the students themselves. The students were not participating in active learning or any kind of information-processing or understanding of what they had just “read”. Many of the tests given in these groups contained information that had mostly come verbatim from the text.

Alderman (2004) discovered that a student’s group assignment in reading or any other subject area could actually affect a teacher’s expectations for those students.

Researchers found that when labels were given to groups, it made the teachers feel these students were not as capable as other students. Teachers in the lower-ability groups were less specific about student goals and objectives (Alderman, 2004). Students were less likely to have their own experiences and backgrounds tied in with a teacher’s lesson.

Most students’ input was not taken nor were the directions of activities as clear for the students (Evertson, 1982). Lower track classes were taught more demanding topic areas, especially higher-order thinking skills, which these readers may not have been ready for. However most research indicated that most teachers stay with literal comprehension with low groups, thus keeping them from learning how to apply higher level thinking to learn (Allington, 1980; Flood et. al., 1992; Haskins, Walden, & Ramey ,1983; Oakes, 1985;

Saleh, Laznder, & De Jong, 2005). These teachers were also less experienced, had less active learning and had more seatwork for students to do (Oakes, 1985).

Research findings indicate that low-ability groups have higher numbers of low-income and minority students (Haskins, Walden, & Ramey, 1983). In their study of teacher and student behavior in high- and low- ability groups Haskins, Walden, and Ramey found high-group learners got more from the instruction than low-group learners. Low group learners were more apt to give correct answers than lower-group students. High group learners also got more contact time with the teacher than did low group learners and therefore made them more at ease with the teacher. The response from the teacher to the students also differed in high-ability groupings versus low-ability groupings. Some examples included asking leading questions, rephrasing the question, or giving longer wait time to answer a question for different leveled students. This gave the assumption that teachers had different expectations for different leveled-learners. Haskins, Walden, and Ramey (1983) maintained that poor achievement of low income and minority students was actually caused by ability grouping. High-grouped students performed better than the lower-grouped counterparts.

Haskins, Walden, & Ramey (1983) also found that teachers usually taught students of higher levels individually; students worked independently on goals set with the teacher. Lower-level students were taught using whole group methods. The authors found that teachers had more behavior concerns with students in lower-ability groups than they did with higher-ability groups. The comments made in higher-ability groups had more to do with instruction and meaning, while the comments in lower-ability groups

were about behaviors. However, students were given much more positive reinforcement in lower-ability groups than in higher-ability groups. Students in lower-ability groups received more direct instruction from the teacher. Higher-ability groups were given more seatwork to work on independently. Students in lower-ability groups were given more drill than higher-achieving students. There was also more correction from the teacher towards lower-ability groups.

Studies have reported inconsistent findings on the best learning environment for high ability groups. Saleh, Lazonder, and De Jong (2005) found effects of within-class ability grouping towards social interaction, achievement and motivation. As previously mentioned, these researchers examined how grouping arrangements affected students' academic progress in school, social interaction, and motivation. These students were given 16 plant lessons using fourth grade material and a special technique of Slavin's (Student Teams and Achievement Divisions). Each lesson began with a whole class introduction and students then went to their assigned groups to work on specific learning tasks with tutoring from each other. Students received individual scores on tests, and could earn bonus points for their groups based on their quiz scores. The team with the best score from the week before was rewarded at the beginning of the following week. After this study, it was found that higher-ability students found both homogeneous and heterogeneous groups to provide them with effective learning. However, these high-ability students were able to give more in-depth communication to others when involved in homogeneous groups. When these same students were immersed in mixed ability groups, their communication and thoughts were not as highly cognitive. Other studies

found just the opposite to be true (Azmitia, 1988; Hooper & Hannafin, 1988, 1991; Webb, 1991).

Similarities were found, as well. Neither group of students (high or low) received more organizational statements, more wait time, or more time in transitional activities (Haskins, Walden, & Ramey, 1983). This result indicated that direct instruction time was not “wasted” more in one ability group than the other.

However, there were differences between groups in the amount of behaviors that could interfere with instruction or learning (Haskins, Walden, & Ramey, 1983). The behaviors were infrequent overall, but when they occurred in low-ability groups they were more likely to lead to a second disruption. This led low-ability groups to be 70% more off-task than high-ability groups. However, in each case, when teachers tried to redirect students in the lower-ability groups, the students were more compliant than in higher-ability groups.

It was found that behavior could also be caused by ability grouping (Alderman, 2004). Haskins, Walden, & Ramey (1983) found that the teacher was more controlling in the lower ability group and expectations for students were lower than those for higher ability students. Students were then unable to show as much attention in lower groups due to discipline and management issues (Gamoran, 1986). There was much more behavior management time for teachers in lower ability groups than in higher ability groups. Students were working on much lower skills in these groups, unlike the higher groups who were focusing on higher level thinking skills. Unsworth (1983) noticed that during high reading group instruction specific behavior was either encouraged or

discouraged and the opposite true in the lower ability groups (expectations were not the same). Teachers were more willing to interrupt poor readers when they made errors than those in high ability groups making the same mistakes (Allington, 1980).

Students noticed grouping in classrooms, whether it was the textbook that was different from group to group, or that it was obvious by the skills taught in the group (Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997). Students did not notice grouping as much if the same materials or same books were used.

Students' Perceptions of Group Stability. Webb, Baxter and Thomas, (1997)

found that when students created their own groups, even they were more likely to form homogenous groups. During their study of grouping practices in the classroom, the authors suggested that socialization of grouping could affect students' motivation. These researchers observed 30 fifth-grade classrooms in a large urban school district. It was found that teachers tended to form heterogeneous groups, whereas students tended to form homogeneous groups in the classroom in regards to ethnicity, gender and achievement. In interviews, many teachers told researchers that they formed groups based on achievement; however this did not follow what researchers observed in their classrooms. Some students could be motivated to get to know students better, while others could be more motivated to learn comfortably with friends. Some students enjoyed helping others and being able to know their classmates better; others enjoyed being with other students they were familiar with.

Attitudes were more positive when students were able to pick someone of their liking in a grouping arrangement versus random assignment (Mahenthiran & Rouse,

2000). Mahenthiran and Rouse's goal was to find if students attitudes and performances in school could be improved by giving them choice over the group selection process. Students were asked to complete a group exercise and a group case. Following, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire based on their satisfaction. It was found that their grades were higher when students were paired. It was found in their study that the best group approach is to let friends pair up, and then included them in groups with higher ability rather than randomly assigning them to groups.

Many teachers left the students' groups in the arrangement permanently. Therefore, students were "stuck" in their groupings (Unsworth, 1983) for most of the year. Unsworth stated that in order to meet individual needs, flexible within-class grouping was the answer. Based on article reviews, the author offered a practical example of how to use these groupings in the classroom.

In a review, Harp (1989) also found that children "should not be assigned to classrooms on the basis of their ability or achievement" (p. 431). If there were groupings of any kind, they should not have been permanent. The needs of that group at that time should have been very different than the future needs of the students in that group. He also believed ability grouping's benefits did not outweigh the risks to self-concept. He stated that this type of grouping made thematic teaching impossible and only encouraged differentiated treatment of students.

The Impact Grouping Has on Students' Motivation to Read

The way students perceive their own ability had a very close relationship with their motivational feelings about themselves (Alderman, 2004). In Alderman's book on motivation for achievement, it is recognized that one role of teachers is to "develop self-regulated learners and incorporate motivation and learning strategies" (p. 23). The purpose of this text was to provide current knowledge on motivation and give hope and ideas to educators to enhance motivation for achievement (Alderman, 2004). The content is based on establishing classroom structures that provide a positive environment for motivation, engagement, and learning while the other portion is based on tools to help students become self-regulated learners.

When students believed they could do an assignment or task, they were more likely to try the task and their value for it also increased (Bandura, 1986). During adolescence, students have what is called the self-worth motive. A student associates his or her beliefs about him/herself based on the accomplishments that have been achieved (Alderman, 2004). Cohen's study of managing group work included training ideas for teachers to use with students as well as possible guidelines. Cohen discussed conditions of productivity during group work as well. Possible motivation problems could also occur when students are grouped according to ability (Cohen, 1994).

Covington and Beery (1976) said self-worth depended on how students competed with one another. Humans tended to associate success with accomplishment (Covington, 1992, 1984). It had been found that a motivating community and a positive image of ability for students' accomplishments go hand in hand with one's self-worth (Covington,

1998). Covington also found that students believed ability was a reason for success and the lack of it was a reason for failure.

As Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) stated, motivation is a major concern for teachers, in that it is a definite problem when students do not have motivation in the classroom. These researchers based their study on finding out from students what motivated them to read. Fourth-grade teachers from a midsize city in the southwestern United States were asked to rate their students' reading levels and motivational levels of all 91 students based on the following categories: Motivated Above-Grade Level, Motivated On-Grade Level, Motivated Below-Grade Level, Unmotivated Above-Grade Level, Unmotivated On-Grade Level, and Unmotivated Below-Grade Level. Three students from each category were chosen randomly except only one student was identified from the Unmotivated Above-Grade level. Each child was interviewed using the Conversational Interview portion of the Motivation to Read Profile by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzone (1996). It was found that personal interests, characteristics of books, and choice got the students excited about reading narrative text. When reading expository text, students found knowledge gained, choice and personal interest to be the greatest factors. Having access to books from the school library, teachers, family members and their peers were also important to students. Children's interest and excitement about reading was based on family members, teachers and themselves.

As teachers, we must truly find what motivates our students before we can expect them to learn (Dewey, 1913). Gambrell (1994) also stated that we must give students the opportunity to feel pleasure when they read something. Motivation is an important part of

reading comprehension. Gambrell also stated in her 1996 article what research and theory suggests about motivation and the work that she has been involved in. Children who are motivated and who spend more time reading are better readers (Gambrell, 1996). Cole (2002) found that when we give “positive beliefs and clear reasons and purposes for reading (page 328)” we give students pleasure in their reading. Cole’s study of what was motivating to students found that the four second-grade students that were chosen all had different ideas and concepts that motivated them. These students had their own reasons and purposes for reading as well as separate reactions to reading and literature.

Self Perceptions and Motivation of Students. Possible motivation problems occurred when students were grouped according to ability (Cohen, 1994). Students’ feeling about their overall ability affected many things such as how competent a student felt, their value, self-efficacy, self-worth and their goal-orientation, as well as their own motivation (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Cole, 2002). The older students got, the lower their self-confidence about themselves became (Wigfield, Eccles, Yoon, Harold, Arbreton, Freedman-Doan & Blumenfield, 1993). In this study regarding age and gender differences in children’s perceptions during school, Wigfield, Eccles, Yoon, Harold, Arbreton, Freedman-Doan and Blumenfield (1993) asked 865 first-, second-, and fourth-grade students attending 10 elementary schools in four semi-urban school districts in southeastern Michigan to complete a questionnaire assessing their self and task perceptions. It was found that children’s activity-related self- and task perceptions are separated. This differentiation occurred fairly early, even before students had much

experience with activities in or out of school. By the end of first grade, it was found that students' beliefs are already differentiated

Wigfield, Eccles, Yoon, Harold, Arbreton, Freedman-Doan & Blumenfield, (1993) also did another study regarding the differences in children's beliefs regarding gender and grade. The same participants were used using the same measures as Study 1. The youngest students had more competence than the older fourth grade students in the areas of math, reading, music and sports. It was found that the older students got, the less value they had for academics; they value for sports became more than the value of math, reading, and music. Wigfield, Eccles, Yoon, Harold, Arbreton, Freedman-Doan and Blumenfield suggested these older students found sports to be more important than academics.

On the other hand, ability grouping provided a positive self-confidence level for those high ability students (Haskins, Walden, & Ramey, 1983). This self-confidence was due to the instruction these students needed based on their individual needs. Most ability grouping also used the same materials in all groups, just spent more time on specific skills with the low-ability groups and the overall time spent on a unit was different (Flood, et. al., 1992). Lower group readers were expected to read more words out loud, did more drill work, had less exposure to different works of literature, and did less silent reading as higher-level students did. There was no higher-level thinking activities that were used in these lower-level settings. The pacing of these units may have actually been faster for students of these lower-leveled groups as they could complete the story faster

than a group that read it several months prior. Sometimes even the same activities were used with students at different times of the year.

Humans tended to associate success with accomplishment (Covington, 1992, 1982). It had been found that a motivating community and a positive image of ability for students' accomplishments go hand in hand with one's self-worth (Covington, 1998). Covington also found that students believed ability was a reason for success and the lack of it was a reason for failure.

In Unsworth's research it was found that in many studies lower-grouped students gave themselves lower self-evaluations if they were in ability groups (1984). Most students in these lower groups had negative feelings about reading and toward their group members. Many teachers (unbeknownst to them) actually made it known which ability group was the high, medium and low, whether it was in their names or materials used.

Possible motivation problems also occurred when students were grouped according to ability (Cohen, 1994). Students' feeling about their overall ability affected many things such as how competent a student felt, their value, self-efficacy, self-worth and their goal-orientation, as well as their own motivation (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Cole, 2002).

The older students got, the lower their self-confidence about themselves became (Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993). These researchers investigated the development and how children socialized their perceptions, task values, and activity choices. In the first year, 865 first-, second- and fourth-grade students attending 10 elementary schools in four school districts in the suburbs of a large Midwestern city.

During the second year, these students were also observed. However, these students were now second-, third- and fifth-grade students. Each spring these students completed questionnaires which measured their beliefs regarding competence and tasks regarding math and reading, instrumental music and sports as well as other areas. It was found that when students didn't value an activity and had low competence beliefs, they were less likely to engage in the activity.

In Simpson, Licht, Wagner and Stader's study on children's self-perceptions of ability, 190 fifth grade students from two elementary schools in northern Florida were given a questionnaire to assess their self-perceptions of 1) perceived ability, 2) near-future expectancies for their upcoming fifth grade report card, 3) near-future expectancies for their upcoming sixth grade report card and 4) causal attributions for success and failure. Some children had unrealistic low or high self-concepts which did not match up with their abilities (Simpson, Licht, Wagner, & Stader, 1996). This could have been due to not being able to identify perceived ability, near-future expectancies, distant-future expectancies, and causal attributions to ability. By age 10, students were found to be able to differentiate the difference between effort and ability. However, if students' performances were stable over time, their perceptions of their performances and their perceptions of their abilities in a specific academic subject also could become more similar to each other. For example, gifted students were not found to have a subject-specific self-concept to the extent that other students do (Swiatek, 2005).

Swiatek (2005) wanted to find how gifted students' self-perceptions regarding domain-specifics compared to average-leveled students. Public and Private school

students in third through sixth grade who scored at the 95th percentile or higher on an in-grade standardized test were eligible to take the 2003 Carnegie Mellon Institute for Talented Elementary Students Talent Search EXPLORE test, which was designed for eighth grade students. Before testing, students were asked how they believed they compared with other classmates in specific school subjects. Their responses were linked and factor analyzed to find the extent of the differentiation of their perceptions of ability by subjects. Finally, Swiatek (2005) compared these responses to their outcomes on the EXPLORE tests in specific subject areas. It was suggested from this research that gifted elementary students may not distinguish between subject-specific academic self-concepts to the extent that other students do.

Students who had learning difficulties had lower self-perceptions of their ability than normally achieving students did (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003). Chapman and Tunmer, (2003) reviewed a number of studies on the development of achievement related self-concept and self-efficacy factors relating to reading. They found that these lower-level students generally lacked confidence in their organization and execution of activities that were required in order to be successful. These students tended to give up sooner, got involved in off-task behavior, or evaded the task at hand altogether. These students failed to involve themselves in tasks that were frustrating, without external incentives. These inadequacies tended to filter into low expectations for any future achievement. These causal attributions then in turn pointed to learned helplessness. These students believed failure was due to their lack of ability to achieve.

It was found that beginning readers became aware of the tasks that were more difficult for them to perform related to reading, but perceptions of reading were not associated with this reading performance, or lack-there-of, until students were in their 4th year of school (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995). Results from a previous 1997 study indicated the relationship between self perception of reading and reading performance started when students were between six and seven years old (Chapman & Tunmer, 1997). In a later study, it was found that toward the end of their first year in school and also during the middle of their third year, students who had negative self-concepts regarding reading read lower level books in class and did not perform as well on word recognition and reading comprehension as did their positive self-concept counterparts (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003). This in turn caused them to dislike reading in general.

Kulik and Kulik's review of research also stated that in students, there was a correlation between self-esteem and the track or ability leveled-group they were in (1982). Kulik and Kulik found that students who were in grouped classes felt more positive in their attitudes about the subjects they were studying, especially those in lower ability groupings. These groupings did not largely affect their attitudes about themselves or school. Students who studied with peers of similar ability seemed to like their class subjects more and even developed positive attitudes about school in general.

Also, girls and boys differed in their motivation for reading in that girls showed more positive motivation for reading while boys were more negative (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995). Wigfield and Guthrie (1995) wanted to design a questionnaire to measure motivation for reading. These authors proposed eleven different categories of reading

motivation and designed an 82-item questionnaire to measure each category desired. This was completed by 105 fourth and fifth grade students. While doing this study, Wigfield and Guthrie (1995) found girls also read more than boys overall. However, each student performed alike when the strategy used by the teacher matched the student's individual learning style (Dunn, Giannitti, Murray, Rossi, Geisert, & Quinn, 2001). The data from this study suggested that even students who did not have a strong choice of learning style could perform better or less well depending on the group strategy.

Environmental Factors. Cole (2002) claimed that environmental factors such as feeling a part of the class, (belonging) and treatment from others in the class, as well as past learning, truly helped to shape students' beliefs about reading. Some factors focused on student's strengths, a well-balanced literacy environment, as well as an environment composed of learning with students (Cole, 2002). As Cole (2002) found in her study, every child was motivated to read with his or her own set of beliefs. Those students that felt confident about themselves, or who had a good self-efficacy, felt more in control and positive about their learning (Bandura, 1986).

Ireson and Hallam (2005) researched on the topic of students' liking for school when participating in ability grouping. Forty-five different secondary schools were selected for this study. The final sample ranged from schools from London and the southern counties of England to East Anglia and South Yorkshire. Schools were asked to represent three levels of ability groupings in the lower secondary schools (years 7-9) with 15 schools in each level. Students were asked to answer a questionnaire based on self-esteem, self-concept, liking for school and perceptions of specific lessons. It was found

when given support by their teachers and peers, students felt accepted in schools and had a positive outlook towards school, their teachers, and their work in school. When these students felt a part of their school and learning, they were less likely to be unmotivated to learn. When lower-achieving students were grouped homogenously, they found their self-esteem to be low and their school experiences negative. Students felt a need to belong and be a part of their community (Ireson & Hallam, 2005).

Ireson and Hallam (2005) indicated that when students felt supported by their teachers and other students in their class, they felt a sense of belonging in their classroom. Those students in grades 4, 5, and 6 who felt accepted by teacher and peers also had a positive attitude towards school in general. Those in turn, also felt more intrinsically motivated to become autonomous learners. It was found that a sense of belonging actually encouraged effort, participation and other achievement.

Some researchers felt that being in a group that made students feel comfortable helped to encourage communication and elaboration in discussions (Webb, 1997; Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2005). Low ability groups benefited the most from the social interaction they were receiving in their groups. These lower-ability students were able to learn more from higher ability students due to this belief (Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2005).

Many students had negative feelings about grouping in their classrooms as well. As mentioned in Battistich, Soloman, and Delucchi's research (1993), students' attitudes about grouping in reading, were affected greatly by the lack of management by their teacher. Teachers used direct observation in small-group interaction. The observer, who

was trained thoroughly before the observation, looked for the rate students were friendly helpful, collaborative, and showed concern for one another in their small group settings. Most teacher direction in these observations was based on student behavior and not student learning or academic in nature. Therefore, students rarely got academic learning from grouping when teachers were not trained for management of grouping. Students felt they worked together frequently, but not in a positive way.

Battistich, Soloman, and Delucchi (1993) believed that not all teachers have been thoroughly trained for management of students while grouping. Students were put into groups often, but lacked the “rules and regulations” of working in groups. This therefore had negative results in teachers’ experiences in that students did not always get along with each other in groups and had negative experiences themselves. This did not produce positive outcomes for teachers or for the students. The group learning became more behavioral rather than academic.

Slavin (1990) felt that ability grouping actually had negative effects on low achievers who were taught slower, got a lower quality of education, teachers were less experienced and did not want to teach low-track classes, and had low expectations for students. In turn, students felt demoralized had lower expectations, and had poor behavioral models. These students were more prone to be delinquent, absent, drop-outs, and have other social problems. Low-track students are less likely to attend college, due to expectations of those around them (Slavin, 1990).

Parents’ and peers’ perceptions of students and teachers. Many students felt affected by others’ perceptions about themselves (Alderman, 2004; Cohen, 1994; Cole,

2002; Kulik & Kulik, 1992). Parents affected their children's perceptions of reading as well as other peers in the classroom. Teachers' perceptions also had an affect on students' perceptions of themselves.

Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) found that children did say the actions of others do affect students' motivation to read. Family members, teachers and students themselves were found to be a source of motivation. Active involvement of others was found to be a recommendation for motivating students in the classroom.

Ability grouping using tracking, or streaming created different feelings for students about their schooling (Ireson & Hallam, 2005). Students believed that those in the lower-ability groups were not ones that they would want to have friendly relationships with. Those in the top streams of ability groups were seen as hardworking and as role models for others (Ireson & Hallam, 2005). These same students also valued what their parents believed when it came to academics and how important it was viewed. This in turn also affected their motivation and value of reading.

Elbaum, Moody and Schumm (2000) have also found that students support each other's learning when instructed in small mixed-ability groups. Cole (2002) found each student was motivated by different things. Many children need the support of their peers and being able to talk with them is crucial for reading comprehension and reading skills achievement to occur (and increased motivation).

Students enjoyed having choices during reading including stories and the activities that they did (Cole, 2002). Peers often offered suggestions to each other while

other times students made their own choices regardless of what peers suggested to them. Many students valued what their peers read and suggested to them.

As Elbaum, Schumm, and Vaughn (1997) found in their study of middle elementary students' perceptions of grouping during reading class, some students enjoyed helping and cooperating with students in mixed-ability groupings. Fifty percent of students enjoyed learning from their peers while the other half did not want to be ridiculed by a classmate, which affected their self-esteem.

Alderman (2004) stated in her review of motivational beliefs that in some cases male and female students did differ in their reasons for success and failure. Parents' perceptions of their sons' and daughters' abilities and effort also had an effect on students. It was found in many studies that girls tended to underestimate their success, while boys overestimated (Frieze, 1980; Meece & Courtney, 1992; Yee & Eccles, 1988). In a study in which they compared effort of both boys and girls, Yee and Eccles (1988) found that parents thought talent was the sole reason for success in math for boys, while for girls it was effort. When effort was the "reason for success" parents believed boys to be less talented in the area. Parents blamed lack of effort on the mere fact that their children just weren't talented in that area.

Alderman (2004) also found some ethnic differences which had to do with negative motivation based on peer pressure and negative feedback from peers (2004). For example, African-American students found school to be generally harder; the drop-out rate was higher and it had been found that these students also lacked the same education as White students had received (Haycock, 2001). Garibaldi (1993) found

teachers also underestimated their aspirations regarding motivation, which in turn affected the type of education they received.

Streaming and other tracking made students feel stereotyped and felt that expectations were different in different groupings (Ireson & Hallam, 2005). Students felt if they were in the lower ability groups, others viewed them in a negative way, including their teachers. Ireson and Hallam (2005) stated those who were in top tracks, felt they were seen as “bright, hard-working, and interested while those in low streams are seen as lacking ability, lazy, and poorly behaved (p. 299).” This actually could have led students to a negative attitude towards school and their schoolwork. Students in lower ability groups actually felt the work they were given was too easy and that after teachers dealt with the disruptive behaviors, there was not much time left for learning. Those students in higher tracks also indicated that teachers did not always take time to explain work and felt that they were always in a hurry to cover more content. Students felt more positive about groupings when the teacher took the time to listen to them and help them learn and understand the material.

Students in lower tracks thought others perceived themselves as dumb; they also perceived themselves as dumb (Oakes, 1985). High-ability students also saw themselves as having a high ability and then inflated their self concepts about themselves, as well, which caused negative motivational problems.

Students could have been comparing their scores with other students' scores, therefore using social comparisons (Alderman, 2004). Students may also have been comparing themselves to a previous test or score called self-referenced comparison.

Teachers' perceptions of students. Teachers sometimes saw the advantages and disadvantages to groupings used in their classroom. Berghoff and Egawa, (1991) described their feelings,

When we taught the 'low' reading group it never felt right. The sixth graders with the third-grade reading books were never eager to read. The first graders who couldn't break the code wiggled and squirmed their way through the pre-primer stories. We were as relieved as they the children when the 'low' reading group was finished. They named themselves the Super Heroes or the Cardinals, but everyone knew all classes had three groups: the Eagles, the Bluebirds, and the Rocks (a low-group nickname actually used in the lounge). And everyone knew who belonged to each group (p. 536).

Berghoff and Egawa (1991) saw this as the disadvantage to grouping. They felt students needed to know how to understand how to organize and make sense of what students were learning. They needed to also be an active participant in their classroom discussions. "Learning is a social endeavor (Berghoff & Egawa, 1991, p. 536)." By working in a learning community, students made connections to literacy and learning. Learners needed to have connections in order to learn and be able to make choices as they learned. Every student brought a valuable teaching experience into learning. These researchers used a combination of whole group, small group, pairs and independent learning in their classrooms to help all students learn.

In a study by Elbaum, Moody, and Schumm (1999), it was reported that both regular education and special education teachers felt when students with a range of abilities were placed together in groups, they found the lower-ability students to learn from the higher ability students and that all students would benefit from working cooperatively. In this same study, it was found that when students of lower ability level in mathematics were grouped with those of higher ability, there were learning advantages

for these lower level students. When small groups were used, the purpose of this by teachers was to work cooperatively to practice skills learned, rather than to provide instruction to a small number of students.

Teachers found themselves to be concerned that students' difficulties at home were a cause to the learning problems, lack of effort, behavior problems (Weiner and Kukla, 1970). Some of these difficulties included lack of educational support by parents, and lack of a conducive reading environment. Most teachers felt that low grades were due to the fact that students did not show much effort. Those with more effort were rewarded more frequently than those who did not. These teachers' beliefs were found to actually have an effect on how students felt about themselves as well as the teachers' feedback and evaluations (Alderman, 2004).

Teachers' expectations about students also had a lot to do with teachers' own feelings of how students would perform (Alderman, 2004). A small amount of teachers actually felt that some ethnic students contained certain limitations that could not be defeated, which affected how they taught to these students (Shields, 1995).

Kulik and Kulik (1982) stated that after interviewing teachers, the authors felt strongly about ability grouping in that they favored it in homogeneous classes. The students were easier to teach, and they could learn more from the focused instruction at their own levels. According to Weaver, (1990), it was easier for teachers to educate those students who were grouped according to their abilities. Students were together for instruction at their own levels.

In 1985, Oakes completed a study in which she looked at schools' structure regarding grouping and tracking. She found that about 60 percent of all students in the elementary classroom were using ability grouping of some sort. In the secondary middle level, 82 percent of schools used ability grouping in separate classes. Of these 82 percent of schools, 72 percent of teachers indicated a liking for ability groupings.

The Nature of Differences in Students' Perceptions About Reading Across Different Types of Reading Groups

When comparing outcomes of surveys and observations, there were no specific differences between learning disabled groups and low-achieving students (Ireson & Hallam, 2005; Saleh, et.al., 2005). This was usually the case as well with the gifted students and the higher readers. Most research indicated differences in low and higher readers' perceptions about their groupings.

Saleh, Lazonder, and De Jong, (2005) found low-ability students in heterogeneous groups were more motivated to learn than in homogenous groups. In this study the ratings of average and high-ability students did not differ enough based on the grouping; some were more motivated to learn in homogenous groups while others had more motivation in heterogeneous groups. Students in low-ability groups felt that the work they did was too easy and that the teacher was constantly working with discipline situations (Ireson, & Hallam, 2005). Saleh, Lazonder, and De Jong (2005) found lower-ability students were more motivated to work in heterogeneous groups. Students' perceptions of academic, social and attitude benefits could be related. A suggestion made by Saleh, Lazonder, and De Jong, based on their 2005 study, was that teachers could put high and low-ability

students in heterogeneous groups while having the average-ability students in homogenous groups.

Females who were in friendship pairs seemed to have a relationship based on trust, loyalty, fairness, and a general feeling that they could work together (Kutnick & Kington, 2005). Male friendship pairs felt that 'doing' the activity was showing others their friendship. These students were more action-oriented in their partner goals. Girls actually performed better when in friendship pairings, while boys worked better in acquaintance pairings than friendship pairings.

Lower Readers' Perceptions and Findings. Most studies found negative perceptions of ability grouping by those in the lower ability groups. Most elementary students also had difficulty getting help from the teacher when in small groups (Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997). They felt that there wasn't enough time for the teacher to get to all of them while she was working in groups. These lower students also took more time to discuss or do the task that was desired and many students found themselves becoming inattentive causing misbehavior to occur at times (Felmlee & Eder, 1983).

Students with Learning Disabilities thought the classroom was noisy and not much work would get done when grouping occurred (Elbaum, et. al., 1997). Students with LD also felt that they were made fun of by their peers when they were in small, mixed ability groups. Several indicated that they would rather work alone. Some even experienced anxiety when in small groups.

Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong revealed in their study that low-ability students learned best in heterogeneous groupings (2005). There were two interpretations believed

to help affect this learning: 1) group learning provided peer tutoring in which students benefited from repeated instruction and repair of misconceptions and 2) the role of peer interaction provided students with a positive in a social interaction. The latter interpretation is based on the groups' feeling of equal partnerships and the positive interaction of the group members. Students can ask their peers for clarification about a topic while in their groups. Low-ability students in heterogeneous groups thought more of the cooperative learning than did homogeneously-grouped low ability groups. Low-ability students were more motivated to learn when placed in heterogeneous groups. Learning-Disabled students were mixed in their decisions. Some enjoyed mixed ability groups while others liked same-ability groups.

However, one study found positive effects of ability grouping. In a study of 7th, 8th, 11th and 12th grade students, Elbaum, Schumm, and Vaughn (1997), found that the majority of the lower achieving students liked same-ability groups. Between-class grouping and flexible within class groupings have been found to be good learning experiences for disabled students.

Higher Reader's Perceptions. Research found on higher-achieving readers has been inconsistent (Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 20005). Higher achieving students seemed to favor mixed ability groups. Gifted students liked their higher-ability groups as they learned more from them. Studies by Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, (1997) suggested gifted students had more negative feelings about mixed ability groups and they learned more when they were with their matched-ability peers. Some higher-achieving students

were also frustrated in these small groups as they had to take longer in their groups to learn something and that time was wasted.

High-ability students performed better in heterogeneous groups than in homogenous groups, because of the role taken by these students to better explain material to their peers (Webb, 1991). It was also found that high ability students performed well no matter what grouping they were involved in (Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2005).

Average-ability students in homogenous groups felt better about their learning experiences than in mixed-ability groups (Webb, 1991). Many teacher-student relationships existed between high and low achievers. Average ability students also were more active in their learning in the homogenous groups.

Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong (2005) indicated in their study that students of average ability achieved more in heterogeneous groups than did their counterparts in homogenous groups while those of high-ability learned just as much in either homogeneous groups or heterogeneous groups. Motivational scores were a bit higher in homogenous groups than heterogeneous ones, but the results were not statistically significant. Students were not more motivated in one form of grouping over the other.

Summary of the Findings

In conclusion, there was indeed a correlation between groupings and attitudes regarding reading. Most attitudes about reading were deeply affected by perceptions of academics in groups, treatment by teachers, and motivation to read.

Students' Perceptions of Reading Groups. For the most part students like working in groups for reading as long as these groups were grouped according to mixed abilities (Elbaum, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1997; Slavin, 1990). Many students enjoyed helping others and getting to know other students, while others enjoyed working with those they knew (Webb, Et. al., 1997). These students felt similar ability groups were only benefiting those with lower-abilities. Also voluntary pairing was enjoyed as these students felt they truly learned from their friends (Kutnick & Kington, 1995). Students in the lower-level groups didn't enjoy ability-groups when they felt that teachers were making accommodations for them in the classroom that were different from their higher-level peers (Vaughn, Schumm, Niarhos, & Gordon, 1993). These students didn't like the attention drawn upon them by the teacher.

Many students placed in lower-leveled reading groups were learning lower ability skills such as drill and practice, oral reading, and failed to learn the same as those in higher-leveled groups (Oakes, 1985; Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2005). These students felt that their expectations by teachers were also different than those in high-ability groups (Flood, et. al., 1992; Opitz, 1999; Slavin 1990). Students noticed the different materials that were used in the classroom when groupings were taking place as well.

Self Perceptions and Motivation of Students. It was found that students' self-concept about their ability affected competence, value, self-efficacy, self-worth, goal-orientation as well as motivation (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Cole, 2002). Ability-grouping helped those students with higher-leveled skills, but was found to be quite detrimental for those with lower-level skills (Haskins, Walden, & Ramey, 1983). Most students in these lower-groups tended to have negative feelings towards reading, and their group members, therefore affecting their own motivation (Cohen, 1994; Unsworth, 1984). These students lacked confidence, had less patience than those who had higher-abilities, were off-task more frequently, and had many avoidance behavior towards academics (Chapman & Turner, 2003). These feeling then grew into low expectations for future achievement.

A sense of belonging in the classroom also helped students feel success in grouped settings in school (Bandura, 1986; Cole, 2002; Ireson & Hallam, 2005). When students were given support, acceptance was an effect therefore giving students more motivation to learn.

Students also were concerned with how others perceived them (Alderman, 2004; Cohen, 1994; Cole, 2002; Kulik & Kulik, 1992). When parents, teachers and peers accepted students and perceived students positively, students tended to be more motivated to learn themselves.

Nature of Differences in Students' Perceptions About Reading. It was found that, for the most part, students in lower-ability groups (both learning disabled and low-achieving students) preferred heterogeneous groups to homogenous groups (Ireson & Hallam, 2005; Saleh, et. al., 2005). These students were more motivated to learn than in homogenous groups where they believed the work was too easy and most of the teacher's time was spent on management issues.

Girls enjoyed friendship pairings as they performed well, while boys enjoyed them but worked better in acquaintance pairings (Kutnick & Kington, 2005).

Most lower-ability groups (including those who were learning disabled) disliked groupings in the classroom because they had difficulties getting help from the teacher, and that there wasn't even time for the teacher to answer all of their questions (Elbaum, et. al., 1997). They also felt it was noisy and not much could get accomplished.

Average-ability students felt better about homogenous groups as they felt more connected with the teacher and active in their learning. (Webb, 1991), while higher achieving students preferred heterogeneous groupings. Students felt they learned more when they were able to teach their peers.

Discussion

During the course of this research it was found that more research was needed on students' opinions about grouping, especially average-ability readers. Much of the research included opinions of various researchers, but did not contain original research or studies of the perceptions of average-ability readers.

While looking for this research, I rightly expected to find very little information on average-ability students and their perceptions of reading groups. This hypothesis was proven true when only 2 of the twenty articles chosen out of the seventy-six for the in-depth analysis spoke of average-ability students as their own entity. Much of the research also found little differences between average-ability and high-ability students, and results were grouped together as higher-level students therefore eliminating any specific information related to average-leveled students (Saleh, et. al., 2005).

I also found it interesting that only 2 of the twenty articles discussed teachers' thoughts and perceptions of groupings. It was also alarming to me that many teachers were not trained to group students; therefore they simply placed students into groups without any type of instruction or training given to the students on expectations of group behavior. Teachers were placing students in groups due to district requirements or based on their own personal beliefs of quality instruction (Berghoff & Egawa, 1991; Elbaum, Moody & Schumm, 1999; Elbaum, Schumm & Vaughn, 1997).

Information from the Elbaum, Moody, and Schumm (1997) study seemed the most complete as it discussed all ability-levels and these students' perceptions on grouping pertaining to reading. Other studies had some pieces of information that were used in this review but did not cover the topics I was researching.

Limitations

The research in this review was limited to peer-reviewed journals as well as several texts that were used in several of my classes. Dissertation studies were excluded as well as those articles not peer-reviewed. There were many articles found on math groupings that were deleted from the research. Some of their findings might also have been interesting to include in research on overall grouping.

This research was also limited to students in primary and secondary (middle school) schools. More research was available for use from high school-based studies and research.

It has been found that reading motivation affects students' overall perceptions of reading (Gambrell, 1994). According to Guthrie, McRae, and Klauda (2007), intrinsic motivation predicts reading achievement in the classroom. This finding determines an urgency in addressing children's intrinsic motivation in reading programs. Several factors should be taken into consideration for engaged reading: 1) create rich knowledge goals as the basis of reading instruction, 2) connect reading to student experiences, 3) offer students a wealth of interesting books to read, 4) give students some choices, 5) give direct instruction for reading strategies and 6) encourage students group work (Guthrie & Davis, 2003).

How to Increase Motivation and Overall Reading Perceptions That Are Positive: A Plan for Grouping

Does grouping in reading affect student's perceptions of reading in the classroom? Research has definitely shown that there is a correlation between experiences in reading and how students feel about their overall reading efficiency (Alderman, 2004; Elbaum, Moody & Schumm, 1999; Flood, et. al., 1992; Kutnick, Blatchford, & Baines, 2002; Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong, 2005). We must choose grouping strategies well and for the proper reasons if instruction is to be of a positive nature.

Since researchers have found negative research for using ability groups in classrooms, what should be done? There are many alternatives to grouping students, but Flood, et. al, (1992) stated "groups in which teachers use a variety of grouping patterns to enhance student learning" (p.609) to be the most effective. Three qualifications suggested by Flood, et al. (1992) include: choosing the best basis for grouping, the most effective format for grouping, and the most appropriate teaching materials. I also believe these ideas are important in order for grouping to be a positive and effective idea for classrooms.

Researchers Johnson and Johnson (1990) and Slavin (1987) suggest that cooperative learning should be the goal for instruction. There are five basic elements that Johnson and Johnson (1990) suggest students have in order to have successful cooperative learning occur. They are: 1) positive interdependence, 2) face-to-face promotive interaction, 3) individual accountability, 4) social skills, and 5) group processing. If students are immersed in an environment in which they know what is

expected of them and the experience to practice group interaction and expectations, they will be successful in grouping situations (Keegan, & Shrake, 1991). Since it has been found that motivation is a prime factor of students' reading motivation, I feel that a positive classroom environment that promotes these ideas is needed in order for students to be successful in classrooms.

It has been determined that all students in classes are placed in some sort of grouping during their classroom life (Kutnick, Blatchford, & Baines, 2002). However, teachers and students both may not feel confident about these groupings. These groupings need to be chosen based on the needs of the children's learning; not for organization and physical structure, as they tend to be. It has been found that groupings not only promote social interaction but it also gives some students learning possibilities that they would not have working on their own. To increase the quality of production of students group work, students need to be trained on how to effectively work with others in the small-group setting. This not only makes the group time more productive, it also teaches them an important adult skill.

Teachers also need to be able to use these groupings in the classroom not to control children's behavior, but for encouraging discussion to take place or help give students the learning experiences that they deserve (Kutnick, Blatchford, & Baines, 2002). We must really look at the reason we are grouping kids and what we want our outcome to be. Students should all be given a chance to learn the same information and encourage them to be the best they can be.

Today's grouping should be flexible and improve the teaching and learning of reading (Flood, et. al., 1992). Each child's needs can be met through his or her type of learning as well as an understanding of the relationship between reading, language, speaking and reading. Flexible grouping should be just what it is called: flexible. Children's needs change throughout a unit; they may either grasp a concept that they had not previously or a new need or concern could also need to be addressed. New groups should frequently be made so tracking does not occur.

By grouping students inadequately, we are compounding the poor self-esteem levels that students already have about themselves (Alderman, 2004). Lower ability groups are not given or taught the same information as would be taught to higher ability students. Therefore students are not prepared for college entrance exams or college work (Maeroff, 1988). Many students are not given the strategies needed to help them with motivation and achievement (Brown, 1993). As teachers, we must provide students with the tools to create their own learning motivation while giving students resources, time for independent learning, knowledge of how to achieve goals, and learning about resiliency (Alderman, 2004).

If teachers used differentiated grouping arrangements in the classroom, students would not necessarily be held back due to motivation or achievement concerns. Saleh, Lazonder, & De Jong (2005) suggested creating heterogeneous groups of high and low ability while the remaining average ability students be placed in homogenous groups. I'm not sure I can honestly say that I agree fully with this belief. I feel that all students benefit from placement in various ability groups. I have tried doing groups of same-ability in my

classroom and I don't believe I am as fair to them (just as the research says). It seems to take us longer to cover content in the lower-ability groups; and it may not be the same delivery as the higher-ability groups. I might also teach more in-depth content with the higher ability groups as well. On some occasions, there may be a need to have a 15-minute re-teaching or check in with those students of lower-ability levels, but overall I believe in using mixed ability grouping.

Students would need to be coached on interpersonal and task-related behavior that is expected by teachers in grouping situations (Battistich, Solomon, & Delucchi, 1993). After students received directions for their activity that their group was to perform, giving students specific personal values to keep in mind during the activity were also found to help encourage meaningful social goals. This would help to avoid negative group experiences for both students and teachers.

High stakes testing in this country has had an effect on student motivation (Alderman, 2004). There are consequences both for students and for teachers. Students do not seem to have the tools to gain and retain new information needed to be successful and many teachers do not have proper instructional strategies to encourage positive motivation. By teaching students to understand and make goals concerning their own motivation, we can help students to bounce back or become resilient. Resiliency is important in learning motivation (Alderman, 2004).

Setting goals allows students to feel better about themselves as they are involved in setting the direction for their learning and they have a sense of empowerment. This motivates them; in turn, perceived motivation becomes a prime factor in them achieving

their goals (Alderman, 2004; Madden, 1988). By forming long-term and short-term goals, students will be able to "begin with the end in mind (Covey, 1989, p.7)". Students who set goals that could be met, progressed faster, and felt better about themselves, which promoted self-efficacy (Alderman, 2004). Madden (1988) found those students who feel good about reading become more intrinsically motivated to continue making growth in their reading skills.

By strongly encouraging effective motivation strategies and activities, we would be helping students be more excited about reading in general. Students' relationships with their peers are extremely important for helping them grow to become adults (Epstein, 1988). Grouping structures in the classroom can affect how this comes into play.

In our society, students have come to believe that human value is associated with accomplishment (Alderman, 2004). Students become convinced that ability is the primary element for having success. Students gain messages about their abilities, when students are compared based on their abilities.

Weiner's research (1979, 1985, 1986, 1990) indicated the four main reasons for causes of success and failure in schooling were ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. Ability and effort have been found to be the most common reasons for success and failure in schools

Teachers need to help students' optimum motivation by teaching learning strategies that concern intrinsic values, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation (Zimmerman, 2000).

Conclusion

By eliminating redundant exposure to higher-level thinking skills students have already mastered, students will be more successful (Alderman, 2004). There is a need to focus on interrelationships and encourage self-directed learning by other students. We also need to remember that students have differences in learning, and learning about these differences our students have will help students learn best in our classrooms. We need to be aware of those differences, and make new curriculum to help those students in ways that are beneficial to them (Alderman, 2004).

Pre-service teachers needed to be more comfortable with characteristics of mainstreamed students, as well as how to instruct them, and how to manage their behavior (Brownell & Pajares, 1999). All personnel in a school, as well as administrators and teachers needed to support each other in a classroom. More subject matter preparation for pre-service teachers might also benefit instruction of mainstreamed students (Alderman, 2004).

We should be doing as much as we can to help students succeed in reading, whether it is in ability grouping or not. Most studies have indicated that ability grouping is successful when it is used as a flexible grouping situation where students can move in and out of. The main purpose should not be tracking.

Students need a classroom where engagement and involvement abound (Alderman, 2004). Teachers must be aware that learning activities, rewards and recognition, motivational effects of everything done in a classroom are very important in students' perceptions of reading. Students' academic success depends on their own

ability, how willing they are to apply effort, if their goals are made and how involved they are in learning. Students need to be given tasks that create thought, motivation and engagement (Alderman, 2004).

In conclusion, if groups are used in the classroom, they need to be flexible according to what is needed for instruction at the time. These groups need to be arranged in many different ways in order for students to be successful and for the highest and lowest learners to benefit from peer learning.

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