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Book Clubs

Conversations Inspiring Community

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For centuries, educators have assessed and compared the learning of individuals (Dresser, 2013; Johnston, 2013). However, the priority is often placed upon a single test score or an individual display of mastery. Even though individuals are vital to a community and the success of a culture, the real depth of learning is contingent on how well students can learn with and from other people (Johnston, 2013). Ultimately, the success of communities is dependent on how well people live and learn together: life is more entertaining and enjoyable with others. Communities are built through conversation, which enables a community of contagious learning where the enthusiasm and struggle is shared. Healthy classroom communities in our schools are necessary to fully enjoy learning.

As a culture, too much time is spent being entertained with the advances in technology; much time is invested in social media. There will continue to be more interest and value placed on children learning with technology (Comuntzis-Page & Hitchings, 2012-2013). However, the pace and priorities of our culture often distract us from what should matter significantly more than work or technology: people. Being present with other people in conversation is something everyone needs to experience often (Goldberg & Pesko, 2000). The pace and the necessity to learn within our culture will only increase, yet we need to improve how we value each other. With increasing value given to each individual's thinking, the quality of conversation produced from a book club can increase community (Beach & Yussen, 2011).

A thriving learning community begins through conversation giving value to unique approaches to literature.

Reading individually is a skill; reading within community is an art. Drawn from research or artistically created, the author's text needs to make aesthetic and efferent connections with readers (Prather, 2001). If the text does not come alive through conversation, then the sense of community dwindles and the sense of purpose can be lost. A thriving learning community begins through conversation giving value to unique approaches to literature. Finding purpose within a book club is a necessity to be grasped by the individuals involved, and finding a purpose within reading and discussion can be inspiring.

The purpose of this study was to foster and empower young learners to be intellectually and socially involved in each other's learning through book clubs. Reading was given more purpose, resulting in fewer distractions from their surroundings (Rank, 2013). Within the structure of a book club, social responsibility and selfless bias was developed (Beach & Yussen). Enabled students transferred these skills from the book clubs into their learning within other disciplines, and with other peers in social settings, which further encouraged them as readers in their book club discussions. Book clubs are vital in inspiring deeper levels of learning for students in their reading of literature, and essential in developing self-motivated responsibility for deeper levels of conversation within communities.

Literature Review

Reading Engagement and Social-Emotional Learning

Reading engagement was a main goal of Johnston's (2013) research. Learners were engaged by their own control or power within their learning. Two big aspects of Johnston's research were the importance of students being able to select their own literature and the pace at which they read the literature. Both aspects are aesthetic in connecting readers with text, and motivating them to share their learning experience with their peers. Focusing on skills and strategies while analyzing text is a specific focus in reading, which is an important part of developing as a learner (Prather, 2001). Focusing on the aesthetic components of learning, and giving students control in multiple aspects of their reading, encourages the efferent aspects of their individual reading experiences. Emphasizing the importance of having informal conversations with students throughout the week about their reading, in addition to holding interviews, does not give students a sense that they are losing control of the learning experience, but encourages them in their deeper levels of learning, for which they are entirely responsible (Johnston, 2013). If only direct feedback from students is recorded from interviews, some of the initial or subtle reactions of the experience are not fully documented or learned.

Commonly found within other book club structures is a structure in which the teacher allows the learners little control. In many book club structures, the emphasis is on reading, and is set by the teacher with little flexibility (Ediger, 2000). In contrast, Johnston (2013) reported positive effects in giving students control within their reading and learning. From this empowering model of engagement there were a number of influential results. First, learners invested in the learning experience, regardless if they shared the same literature. There was an energy stirred from their desire to read and how they shared their passion with others. Additionally, shared vocabulary increased as a result of being engaged in their reading, which equipped them for learning within diverse content. Finally, relationships were strengthened both with people they related with and people with whom they normally would not have engaged in conversation. This challenge develops all learners to better learn from similarities and differences in other people; students branch out and become more comfortable individually within a more diverse group of learners.

Similarly, Dresser (2013) asserted the necessity of addressing the unique social-emotional needs of learners within school environments. Academics are important, but without addressing the social-emotional aspects of the individuals within, the learning communities will not succeed (Dresser, 2013). When the community meets the social-emotional needs, success can be obtained both individually and as a community. The connection between the emotional and academic

learning of a person is vital in determining their engagement and success. At the forefront is an emphasis on social skills, social engagement, and both peer and mentoring relationships within the communities (Dresser, 2013). Social-emotional needs are met in academic environments through relationships with teachers, but are also met in students through relationships with their peers.

Relationships are influential pieces of learning experiences and learning environments. As a result of No Child Left Behind, Dresser (2013) explained that many different national and state tests were implemented and an emphasis was placed on programs and systems. The shift in education in response to the legislation of No Child Left Behind often ignored the social-emotional aspects of education in favor of standardized testing and quantitative requirements. Teachers and students feel the elevated pressure and expectations leading to stress and disengagement. With disengaged students or stressed environments, academic learning and social development is lost. Book clubs could possibly provide hope to students because they have their own control of the learning requirements and naturally are more engaged because they are setting the level of rigor. In having control, students could express and meet their social-emotional needs as a community.

Through his research, Dresser (2013) found, as a result of the social-emotional learning not being embedded within education, novice teachers were unaware of the relationship between social-emotional and academic development, and most novice teachers did not emphasize or involve their students in social-emotional learning. Without social-emotional learning, there is not as much involvement in classroom communities, creating dissonance between the social-emotional and academic aspects, leading to negative results. Without engagement, the classroom environment will not foster improvements academically or socially. Students need to feel valued individually and critical to the community's success.

Dresser (2013) argued that the more connections students make with their mentors, teachers, and peers, the more willing and engaged they will be in their learning, both emotionally and academically. Through social contexts, respect and trust is gained, empowering learning even through failure because emotional hope is found. Through relationships, students feel valued and are encouraged, enabling academic engagement and success. If trust is being built within classroom communities, individual students are supported even through struggles, whether the struggles occur within the social, emotional, or academic contexts. The emotional connections often can motivate higher levels of thinking as well. The safer and more supportive an environment is for students, the more likely academic success is present.

Book clubs can consist of small groups of learners building a foundation for an encouraging and involved classroom community. A community can consist of self-motivated students who are involved in each other's learning; it can also safely demand a deeper level of investment and thinking. Book clubs can inspire a commitment through accountability between each other, fostering socialization both in their book club conversations and in their conversations across all content areas. Book clubs can inspire trust in relationships.

Developing Conversations, Developing Community

Discussions of books and articles with others deepens students' understanding, and helps keep them accountable in how they are thinking with the text prior to their conversations with others. Briggs (2010) emphasized comprehension strategies in her literature circles; the inspiration to include literature circles was based on her personal struggle with reading, and she did not want this to be the case in her classroom. Teachers desire their students not just to be more engaged in their reading, but to own their thinking about the text being read (Briggs, 2010). Urgency in synthesizing with text to deepen personal schema is vital in developing as a learner.

Engagement in conversation is a challenge all people encounter, and whether or not it is being modeled and practiced at home, it should be showing up throughout a person's educational experience. To have a depth of learning, undergraduates in college need to discuss their reading and compare their opinions and understanding from their learning experience (Brank & Wylie, 2013). The better college students are able to relate with others in discussion, the better we can live within and support our present and future communities (Johnston 2013).

Hulan (2010) explored the importance of having student-led discussions specifically within guided reading groups. It is important to model and teach how to engage in discussion. With this book club autonomy, students controlled and experimented with conversations apart from their teacher, and there was more direct learning from the successes and failures within the conversations. Feedback is essential to foster learning from both teacher and students, yet depending on the student and their needs will influence the type of feedback (Hattie, 2012). Specific praise and constructive feedback needs to begin with strengths, yet be centered on the goal of improving as learners.

Fostering responsibility in students' learning experiences requires giving them control. In being given control of their learning, there will be frustrations as well as support. Book clubs can enable students to learn from the freedoms given, which lead to a deeper understanding of their reading, developing deeper understanding of other people through their conversations, and providing opportunities to safely fail and celebrate success. Social-emotional learning can be nurtured in the student-led culture enabled in book clubs. Engagement increases within the academic and social responsibilities: book clubs require and inspire.

Book Club Transformation: A Personal Story

Early in my teaching career, I started incorporating literature circles into my classroom to give my students a way to talk about assigned reading. The structure of these groups initially was rigid, and as the teacher I was very involved. Students were assigned reading from a common book that was assigned to the group. With each assigned reading, the students had individual roles to fulfill, including discussion leader, connection captain, vocabulary master, and recorder. With these roles they needed to come prepared so the group could have a successful conversation.

During the following years, I made changes with the literature circles, giving students more and more responsibility. The students were assigning their own reading, they were able to choose their roles, and what was required from each student diminished significantly. From casual observation, I learned that the more responsibility the students had, the more significant their

The focus no longer was on reading strategies or roles of literature circles, but the learning that was aesthetically motivated through discussions with peers apart from an adult in a book club.

learning was together. The freedom of being self-motivated in more responsibility was approached as a privilege, encouraging more involved readers and collaboration.

I desired an experience for my students that emphasized the social aspects of learning. I wanted them to build off of their independent thinking within their reading, and extend their growth academically while being brought together socially. In thinking about adult book clubs, I realized what I wanted my students to experience: to find value learning together in a community, to read and discuss

together in a community, and to laugh and experience joy through their learning. I wanted my students to value their peers' opinions and struggle in conversation. My students needed me to step back and give them the opportunity to have conversations about their reading and to build relationships. The focus no longer was on reading strategies or roles of literature circles, but the learning that was aesthetically motivated through discussions with peers apart from an adult in a book club.

The Study

The purpose of the study was to foster and empower young learners to be intellectually supported and socially stimulated in their peers' lives through book clubs. Driving the formal study were these questions: How can dialogue regarding literature inspire higher levels of collaborative learning? How will book clubs encourage deeper belonging within the community? How will accountability and safety develop within student-led book clubs?

Participants

The study was completed in my fifth grade public classroom with a diversity of cultures and families at an elementary school in the Midwest. Through the diverse backgrounds of the learners, the book clubs provided a structure for students to learn from their different opinions and schema. Although all book club participants gave feedback, Brady, Bill, Annie, Mary, and Alicia's responses were purposefully selected for data analysis. These students were chosen because of their unique background and diverse approach to the book club experience. All of the names were changed to protect the privacy of the participants. All of the data collected from the students and observations made about their learning was password protected within a Google Document and Google Form. Institutional review board (IRB) approval through the University of Sioux Falls ensured confidentiality and protection to all people involved in the study.

Methodology: Book Club Structure

The research began in September when book clubs started for the year. The book clubs were moved to different times throughout the day to allow all students to participate. At the conclusion of the research in January, students had individual conferences to share the effect of book clubs on their reading, their learning, and their communication with people.

Participation in the book club experience for every student was optional. Students in book clubs were asked if they wanted to participate in the study, emphasizing it was optional, and whether or not they chose to be a part of the study would not affect their book club experience or overall learning experience in our classroom. Students who were a part of the study and students who were not received the same support in the learning environment.

The time of day for the book club discussion was changed throughout the experience to best fit the students' entire learning schedule. The book clubs met in the back of the classroom at their choice of the floor or table. The informal conferencing between the students and I occurred throughout the school day, depending on when there was time for brief conversations about their book club experiences. The formal conferencing occurred toward the end of the day, individually with the student and me at the back of the room as frequently as each student desired to share their bias and synthesis derived from their book club experience.

The book clubs met once a week and occurred during the school day, lasting between 10-20 minutes. There were a few times where students were engaged in their other learning activity, forgetting to meet at their particular time, and as a result they had less than five minutes to meet. Students had the option to quit their book club experience at any time, but were required to discuss with their peers why they were not going to continue learning in the book club.

At the end of each week, observations of the book clubs were documented, and the informal conversations with students about the book clubs were documented in the teacher journal. Specific observations deemed important to be entered into the journal throughout the week were documented on post-it notes to ensure being included in the teacher journal. The journal included reflections from the teacher's vantage point, documenting strengths and weaknesses observed in the book clubs. These observations would encourage specific inquiries and rhetorical questions within future informal and formal conferring between the students and me.

In this same journal, the students' responses about the book club experience were stored. During the individual student conferences, there was no structure or concrete question. Similar to the book club structure, conferences were centered on conversation. The questions were intentionally vague to leave my bias out of the conversation as much as possible. The conferences with the students about their book club were not consistent throughout the book club experience; some students utilized the option to have a conference regarding their book club, while other students preferred to share their thinking and learning through a letter.

The students in the study provided quick and brief feedback consistently throughout the book club experience. After the book club met, if there was time, they would share their thinking and learning experience in a Google Form. If there was not time directly after the book club met, then students completed the Google Form sometime later in the day. The Google Form had a timestamp with each entry, which were also organized by which open-ended question the students answered.

At the end of the book club research, a reflective conversation was held with book clubs as a whole about the impact of book clubs on their reading, learning, and communication skills. Social responsibility and selfless bias was wrestled with in the structure of book clubs. Students

were encouraged to tell about what went well with the experience, what they hoped would improve, and the impact of the book clubs on them as individuals and on our classroom as a whole. If there was confusion or vague connections made by the students between their learning in the book club experience and their learning outside of their book clubs, students were asked to elaborate to better understand their perspective.

Data was collected from the students through informal teacher observations during their book club meetings, informal conversations throughout each school day, a quick feedback form students filled out after each book club meeting through Google Forms, and an individual conference between the teacher and student monthly. Continual and consistent collection of data throughout the experience helped in understanding the overall impact of book clubs on the students' learning and ability to communicate. The students found comfort in being able to provide feedback in a variety of ways. The students felt ownership in the ability to choose if they wanted to provide feedback, allowing them to develop an increased sense of belonging and more often improving the quality of their feedback.

Findings

The teacher documented his observations of the book clubs, generalizations from informal conversations with students about their experience, and specific opinions shared through formal conversations about book clubs in a journal through a Google Document. After students met with their book club, they provided brief feedback through a Google Form regarding their learning and experience. Both the teacher journal and Google Form responses provided reference for the teacher to guide further inquiries and communicate strengths and focuses for students' learning within the experience. In coding and analyzing the observations and feedback, book clubs enhanced students' love of reading and learning through four different themes: (a) diverse perspectives deepened understanding; (b) building relationships provided safety; (c) aesthetic and efferent responses were evident, and (d) community accountability was necessary.

Diverse perspectives. Within formal and informal dialogue about their book club experience, one of the initial comments often evolved around the students' increased love for reading because of the various perspectives from their club members. "Book clubs are fun and they challenge me," Mary shared, "by reading higher levels and thinking deep thoughts." This comment was in response to an open question toward the beginning of the book club experience. Her response was surprising because the first meetings contained awkward silence between the students as they did not know what to do with the unstructured time and conversation. There were some book clubs who struggled in their first few meetings with what to discuss, but all wanted to stay independent through their initial struggles.

A number of students were initially hesitant to join a book club earlier in the year because they did not want to give up their independent reading time. From this feedback, the book club meeting time was changed to right before lunch. In an informal conversation toward the beginning of the third quarter, Bill voiced his desire to continue book clubs again by stating, "I'd even be willing to give up on my reading time to still do a book club." With different perspectives leading to a better understanding of the texts, students found reading to be more enjoyable.

The learning that was shared between the students heightened the focus the students had with their reading individually. Focused reading allowed the students to better communicate with their peers during their discussion. With the heightened focus improving their independent reading, their discussion was valued and deepened. The deeper their conversation, the more motivated they were to think deeply within their independent reading to share later with their book club.

Mary shared how, through the book club experience, she had deepened her understanding of the book they read together, and she was exposed to more books she would not have read without their book club discussions. In a formal conference, she discussed, “It is a good thing because I would not get to read a book that I never knew about. I am not interested in books that I don’t know about right before.” The book clubs she had been a part of persuaded her to read new genres of literature. Without conversations with her peers, she would not have become interested in the different genres or titles. The learning community broadened her interests.

Experiencing discussion within the format of book clubs increased the students’ ability to discuss their thinking and learning throughout the academic day. As the students transitioned between different subjects, there were more conversations about what books they read. It was rare for a student who read a book they enjoyed to not discuss it with their peers. Students desired to share their excitement, and further encouraged each other when they discussed their favorite aspects of their reading.

The book clubs had a contagious effect on learning in the classroom. Many of the students involved in book clubs no longer chose learning partners or groups of learners throughout the day based upon the strength of their friendships or personal interests, but desired to be with a partner or group of students who offered a diverse perspective. In January, Brady wanted to hear my perspective of the reading. “I think it would be awesome if my teachers joined the book club because I would learn more about what they think about a book,” he explained. From his suggestion, we started a book club open to any student during our Friday lunch in the classroom. Many students became excited about the idea of having a book club with a teacher to improve their student-led book clubs.

Discussing book clubs informally with Brady, Annie described how she would probably be having book clubs with her friends this summer. She thought it would not only help her be responsible and read over the summer, but it would help keep them busy with a fun activity. Within a formal conversation with Annie about her book club experience, she shared the idea of being a part of a book club outside of school again: “Making a book club will be something I will want to do when I am older for my own enjoyment.” Brady elaborated, “I think I will try to talk with my friends about the book outside of when our book club meets. If we met outside of the book club, I would ask questions about the book that are deeper questions.”

Many of the students involved in book clubs no longer chose learning partners...based upon the strength of their friendships or personal interests, but desired to be with [those] who offered a diverse perspective.

Building relationships. Within the book clubs, students made connections with each other and the community while including as much personal information they felt comfortable sharing. Students shared the value of how book clubs were a safe place to problem solve and provide a safe context to improve as a communicator. One of the main goals of being in a book club was to improve in preparing for academic conversations and verbally communicating with peers amidst conversation. My discussion with Brady in December shocked me when he shared how important it was to him to have a safe way to learn and share his thinking with his peers. He described, “I love talking about a book instead of talking about my personal life.” He elaborated by saying he could be in community and have fun with peers without discussing anything personal. In making his own personal connections with the book and their book club conversations, he did not have to reveal anything personal about himself.

The most important aspect of book clubs for Mary was more than improving as a reader. “It helps me best in my communication,” she responded when asked why book clubs have been important to her. Being a higher level reader, book clubs challenged the depth of her thinking as she read. She improved her relationships by improving how she communicated with others.

As a student, Alicia worked extremely hard and loved to read. She was encouraged to try being in a book club experience not only to learn from others, but to have fun reading with others in a community. Initially she was timid because she did not want her love for reading to be inhibited. She gave it a chance because she was able to quit at any time if she did not like the experience; having control within the book club structure comforted her. The more she met with her book club, the more she enjoyed being a part of discussions with her peers and building relationships. When asked to describe the purpose of book clubs, she responded, “Book clubs are about learning from other people.” She preferred only to be in one book club, but stated she loved the experience and continued to learn with her peers. Students made connections with each other and the community and included as much personal information as they wanted.

Aesthetic and efferent responses. Students genuinely loved the experience of having a book club not only because it gave them an unstructured time with their peers in control of their learning, but it challenged them to become higher level thinkers while reading which lead to deeper thinking. Being independent in their learning was the most appealing aspect to most of the students. The book club would not last more than two weeks without reading and thinking about an agreed-upon assignment and without focused conversation during the book club time. Responsibility within the book club was essential. Socializing became stagnant when they did not have something they were interested in discussing or inquiring about. Without discussion stemming from the efferent aspects of the book club experience, students were not aesthetically motivated to continue; book clubs without responsible learners stopped meeting from frustration or apathy between learners.

Being a part of both successful and unsuccessful book club experiences, I asked Brady to describe the difference, from his perspective. He shared, “We are proficient because we are interacting with others about the same book, noticing different things...I have learned that if you only do the minimum, I do not learn as much.” He described the idea that the harder a student worked, the more aesthetically driven they were to continue learning within the community. All students wanted to talk and relate with their friends. The book club not only gave them success in

their own student-structured learning environments, but it encouraged them to use what they had learned to structure these communities throughout their day of learning across multiple content areas. What they were learning in their book clubs was motivating them to be lifelong learners in a variety of contexts with varying types of personalities.

Discussing learning as a class began with identifying strengths, and was followed by what needed to improve. Within both the formal and informal conversations about the book clubs, we discussed strengths as well as areas for improvement. Brady shared how important he believed the efferent aspects of learning were, concluding his thoughts by saying, “I think what needs to change is we need to talk more about our learning instead of about the book. Talking about the book is important, but our learning is more important.”

Annie scheduled a conversation one afternoon about her recent thinking regarding book clubs. She shared, “Having a book club makes you a better person because it opens up your mind and [you] have a whole new perspective on things...you see the world in a whole new way and you are socializing so you are thinking about a book with a whole bunch of people.” Similar to many of the students, she made connections about the importance of learning with and from other people. Book clubs were motivating her to look not only at the stories she was reading in different ways, but how to approach many aspects of her learning. She finished by explaining, “In fifth grade we need to know how to handle our relationships because relationships matter the most. Really we need to know how to comprehend with each other and learn things on our own.”

Accountability. The biggest struggle with any book club participant was being independently responsible. There were many responsibilities in a book club. Students needed to assign reading within their book club so they could have discussions, stay focused during their discussions, complete their reading independently outside of their book club, and know what time the book club met. With all of this responsibility, students were intimidated.

Brady explained to me in November after a few months of meeting with an unsuccessful book club and a few successful book clubs, “I prefer one book club at a time because it is easier. I am still reading more books, but I only need to be responsible to read for and stay at one spot with one book club.” He shared with me in January a contrasting perspective of his book club experience, “Because I am in two book clubs, I can talk more about my reading. I think it [is] more fun to be in more than one. In one week we are going to finish a book I am reading with a gentleman; we keep changing our assigned reading because we like the book so much. It encourages me to read more.” He was so driven aesthetically to continue learning in community. Not only was he encouraged to read more, but he also managed to be responsible enough to be in two book clubs. The accountability he received from his peers within the book club context was motivating enough to help him thrive as a learner.

While enhancing their understanding of the stories they were reading through conversation, students increased their motivation to read independently. The students involved in book clubs desired to read throughout the school day, similar to Brady, when there was choice learning time. Most students involved in book clubs also increased how much they were reading at home. A few students communicated their desire to read during their recess time at school because they wanted to be responsible with their reading for their book club and be able to read the online

school resources. This desire was not the result of teacher mandates, but a sense of urgency and passion from students to read both at home and at school.

Students not only wanted to be responsible outside of the book club, but within the book club conversation, as being focused became a priority for most students. They were motivated to learn and wanted to be challenged. “Being responsible is important because otherwise people would not like to be around you. Most people do not like irresponsible people,” Bill explained in frustration after someone from his book club quit. Students were more focused on reading and finishing their assigned reading knowing their peers were depending on them to read. They were motivated to read at home and in the classroom so they could discuss with depth; they loved the independent responsibility while realizing the importance of being challenged to sustain a successful and enjoyable experience. Bill explained how he improved as a reader by being a part of book club discussions, “You also talk with other people and help them with reading; you are not only helping yourself. It is important because it is easier to learn with others than by yourself.”

Discussion and Recommendations

Collaborative learning within the structure of book clubs in the classroom far exceeded expectations. Higher levels of learning were not only obtained within the academic aspects of reading and learning in a community, but higher levels of relationships were established socially between students and their peers. The quality of their dialogue was strengthened within their book club, which permeated into other academic content areas, and extended into other social communities encountered throughout each day. Their learning was not limited to the literature or specific book club community; students learned their book club was not just an activity that helped them think deeply at school, but could be an enjoyable lifelong learning experience with their peers.

Book clubs aesthetically motivated students to desire a depth of learning and relationship within and throughout the classroom community. Students also recognized that without being challenged, aesthetic motivation ceased. Students were more willing to tackle challenging books because they knew they would have the support of their peers. The group accountability became more than just quantitatively finishing the assigned reading and sharing a summary; reading within a community became qualitative because learners were thinking deeply together, enhancing the book club discussion with multiple perspectives and diverse schema

A sense of belonging was achieved between students with a variety of differences and disagreements. The sense of belonging extended to multiple contexts, deepening understanding and accountability within the academic and social aspects of learning. The whole classroom learning environment changed as a result of book clubs, which became a safer and a more welcoming community of diversity. Students invested in the learning at an independent level, which was strengthened when they could share their independent learning with their peers and experience other perspectives. Through book clubs, each student grew as a reader, yet an even greater potential was fostered within a collaborative community of readers. Improving in discussion as learners and improving as inquirers of their peers’ learning, students had more

opportunities to be involved with their peers in book clubs because of their leadership. The responsibility of being critical thinkers in their collaboration and dissonance became contagious.

Limitations within the study included the different schedules of the students, and the students' varying reading abilities. Students who were at primary reading levels were limited in the depth of conversation they could engage in due to their reading being more focused on comprehension than preparing for the conversation. The more students improved as readers, the more opportunities they had to be a part of the book club community. Students with lower reading levels read shorter books, which challenged us to provide reading material over multiple weeks. Arranging a consistent time where students could have their book club discussion each week was a limitation because of all of the interventions, learning programs, and other pullout experiences such as band and orchestra throughout the week. As a result, the designated book club time was changed a few times throughout the research, eventually taking a portion of math time.

The length of time that research data was collected also limited the study. The depth of learning continued to increase throughout the remainder of the year. The learning from the book club experience spread throughout the students' academic and social experience at school. The more the students engaged with their book club community, the more contagious learning throughout the whole classroom became.

Further research could explore having more diverse types of book clubs. These book clubs could include nonfiction book clubs or book clubs focused on a specific genre, book clubs including teachers and students, book clubs with students in other classrooms, or book clubs with students in other grade levels. These book clubs could provide and focus on a variety of different academic and social strategies and skills, developing more communities and building more relationships between learners.

Nathaniel Petrich is in his seventh year of teaching fifth grade in Sioux Falls, SD. His passion is found in collaborative and diverse learning environments enhanced through technology.

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