Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

2-2-2020

What happens when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals to comprehend text?

Sarah E. Wint
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd

Part of the Language and Literacy Education Commons

Let us know how access to this document benefits you - share your thoughts on our feedback form.

Recommended Citation

Wint, Sarah E., "What happens when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals to comprehend text?" (2020). *Theses and Dissertations*. 2754.
https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2754

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN EMERGENT READERS USE TALK AND READER RESPONSE JOURNALS TO COMPREHEND TEXT?

by

Sarah E. Wint

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Education
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Reading Education
at
Rowan University
January 19, 2020

Thesis Chair: Marjorie E. Madden, Ph.D.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family, who supported me throughout this entire master's program. Their encouragement and support was invaluable. Love you all!

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Marjorie Madden, for her guidance and support throughout the entire thesis process and past two years of graduate school.

Abstract

Sarah E. Wint
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN EMERGENT READERS USE TALK AND READER
RESPONSE JOURNALS TO COMPREHEND TEXT?
2019-2020
Marjorie E. Madden, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this study was to examine what happens when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals during interactive read-aloud experiences. Student-teacher interviews, audio recorded conversations, student work and notes in a teacher researcher journal were all analyzed to determine if using talk and reader response journals led to a deeper understanding of text and impacted motivation and engagement in the classroom. The data was also analyzed to determine which teacher behaviors foster a stronger understanding of text. Findings were that using dialogue and writing in reader response journals can lead to a deeper understanding of text and increase student motivation and engagement during the literacy block. In addition, providing wait time, modeling skills and asking open-ended and probing questions helps students make meaning of text. Implications for today's classroom are discussed.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents (Continued)

Chapter 1

Introduction

I was entering my third official year of teaching Special Education and Basic

Skills. This was my first year starting with a consistent group of five second grade

students who would come to my classroom each morning. It was also my first year of

graduate school. The book requirement for this first class was titled *Reading with*

Meaning by Debbie Miller. After seeing how engaged Debbie Miller's students were

during classroom reading instruction, I made it one of my goals to incorporate more

interactive read-aloud experiences for my students. These experiences incorporated

before, during and after reading components. Students were given the opportunity to ask

and answer questions about the text. After a few weeks of consistent read-alouds, I

decided to read *The Last Stop On Market Street,* one of my favorite books. As the book

progressed I noticed that my students were becoming more engaged. After one student

asked a text-based clarifying question, the comments and questions spiraled. Students

were making connections to the text. One student stated "I have never been on a public

bus but I have been on a subway to Philadelphia. The city looked kind of like the pictures

in the story." This led another student to say "Ms. Wint, I have actually never been to a

city or on a bus like the one in this story!" It was clear that this story created a new

experience for them. I caught myself wanting to step in and stop student discussion since

we were running out of time. However, instead I started to take anecdotal notes of what

students were saying to use as an assessment tool. It was then that I realized the value of

student talk in the classroom. Students were using higher order thinking skills to ask and

answer questions about the text. They were making connections to the spoken words in

the text and forming opinions about the characters. Rosenblatt (1994) explains that "the finding of meanings involves both the author's text and what the reader brings to it" (p.14). This experience validated Rosenblatt's words. A transaction between the text and the reader occurs when you give students opportunities to engage in dialogue about what they are reading.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to identify what happens when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals during interactive read-aloud experiences. The students in this study are considered emergent readers because they are not yet reading fluently. The specific aims are to determine if using dialogue and journals during classroom read-alouds impacts students' comprehension and motivation to read. It is also going to look at the impact reader response journals have on student responses of text and if their responses lengthen over time. Lastly, this study will also analyze teacher moves that foster a stronger text-based conversation.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

The purpose of this study is to examine what happens when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals to better comprehend read-aloud literary texts. Sub-questions that guided my inquiry include: In what ways does using talk and reader response journals foster a deeper understanding of text with emergent readers? In what ways do reader response journals foster a stronger discussion about text? In what ways does talk in the classroom increase student motivation and self-esteem? What teacher behaviors facilitate a stronger conversation about text?

Story of the Problem

I knew I wanted to focus on reading comprehension for my thesis research study. However, I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to focus on. One day, I was reading the book *All For Me and None For All* by Helen Lester to two students who attend my resource center/basic skills classroom. Both students are emergent readers and reading below their grade level. It was our fourth day working on making predictions. Before we read the book, the students made a prediction based on the title and the pictures. As we read the book, the students and I engaged in text-based discussions to verify and create new predictions. After we read the book, one of the students raised her hand and said "I think if the story didn't end and kept going the pig would give everyone back their stuff because he saw that he was being greedy. He would feel bad like he would give back the shoes to the chick who he took it from". I was impressed that the student was able to use what happened in the story to make a future prediction. She was able to create an alternative ending based on clues about what happened in the story. The student who made this comment is on a Fountas and Pinnell guiding reading level A. However, she was able to comprehend text read aloud to her at a much higher level when she was given the opportunity to listen, talk and respond to the text. This experience reminded me of the moment I had when reading *The Last Stop on Market Street* the year before. I realized that allowing students to talk about text and respond to it creates a deeper understanding of what they are reading. It teaches students to use critical thinking skills, answer higher order thinking questions and make meaning of what they are reading. These are all skills that are essential when comprehending text.

The other student listening to the story was a less active participant. She gave one word or sentence answers. After reading the text, she didn't want to comment on what happened in the story. I started to think: Would responding to text in writing encourage this student to talk about the text? What teacher moves would encourage her to feel more comfortable or motivated to talk about what we are reading? What can I do so that this student is able to create aesthetic responses to literature?

This moment confirmed my interest in using talk and reader response journals in the classroom as the area of study in this thesis project. Reading comprehension skills and strategies must be taught from a young age in order to set students up for success. The report from the National Reading Panel (2000) states "comprehension has come to be viewed as the "essence of reading" (Durkin, 1993), essential not only to academic learning but to lifelong learning as well" (4-11). Since reading comprehension is an area of importance, teachers must teach students to make meaning of what they are reading.

Listening and speaking skills are essential aspects to incorporate into literacy instruction. The Common Core State Standards (2010) were created so that students would be "prepared to enter college and workforce training programs ready to succeed". Most schools have adopted the Common Core State Standards and have centered curriculum around these standards. The New Jersey Learning Standards are also used throughout public schools in New Jersey to plan lessons and units. These standards "are designed to prepare our students for college and careers by emphasizing high-level skills needed for tomorrow's world" (New Jersey Department of Education). Included in both of these standards is a "speaking and listening" section. These standards focus on comprehension of text being read aloud and collaboration with others about this text. It

also focuses on how students can present knowledge and ideas. This research study aligns to these standards since students will be required to use speaking and listening skills to better understand text being read aloud.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter two provides a review of the literature surrounding the use of talk and reader response journals to comprehend text. Chapter three describes the context of the study, including a description of the participants from the class in which the study was conducted. Chapter three also includes the research design and how the data was collected and analyzed. Chapter four provides the analysis of the collected data and a discussion of the findings of the study. Chapter five presents the conclusions of the study and its implications for using talk and reader response journals during comprehension instruction.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The text is merely an object of paper and ink until some reader responds to the marks on the page as verbal symbols. (Rosenblatt, 1994)

Introduction

According to The National Reading Panel (2000) comprehension is one of the five essential elements of literacy. Comprehension is "critically important to the development of children's reading skills and therefore their ability to obtain an education" (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 4-1). Students who have strong comprehension skills are able to think deeply about text. Durkin (1993) defines comprehension as "intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader". Comprehension instruction should be incorporated into classroom instruction from an early age. Research has shown that teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions are essential when learning to comprehend literary texts. Giving students time to talk about what they are reading and respond in a reader response journal increases and extends student thinking and comprehension skills. Through dialogue, students are able to create both efferent and aesthetic responses to literature. Having students respond to the text in a response journal also encourages students to make meaning of what they are reading. When working with emergent and beginner readers, teachers should use interactive read-alouds to teach comprehension strategies. Beck and McKeown (2001) explain that "because young children's aural comprehension ability outstrips their word recognition competence, challenging content can be presented to young children from book selections that are read aloud." (p. 10).

Comprehension instruction for primary students should incorporate these experiences since their listening comprehension skills are normally stronger than the comprehension of the text they read on their reading level.

Chapter two presents a review of the literature in the areas of reader response theory, benefits of read-alouds, using talk in the classroom, and teacher moves that support classroom discussions. The first section discusses reader response theory, how it is used in the classroom, and how it contributes to student talk. This section is followed by a discussion about the benefits of using interactive read-alouds to increase student talk and strengthen comprehension in the classroom. The third section examines the benefits of promoting talk in the classroom. The final section explains what teacher moves create opportunities or spaces for a strong classroom discussion and extend student thinking. The chapter ends with a summary of the literature surrounding reader response, read-aloud experiences, and dialogue in the classroom. It also discusses the ways this study may contribute to the field of education with regard to using student talk and reader response journals with emergent and beginner readers.

Reader Response Theory

Rosenblatt (1982) believed that "reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances" (p. 269). Since each student has different background knowledge, the transaction between the text and the reader is going to be different for each person. Further, students comprehend and make meaning of text-based on their transaction with text and their responses to what they are reading. Rosenblatt explained that students create two different types of responses, efferent responses and aesthetic responses, when reading text (Tracey &

Morrow, 2006). Student responses that are efferent focus on factual information while aesthetic responses are based on students' personal feelings and emotions about the text (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Both types of responses are important when making meaning of text. In some school settings, aesthetic responses are not seen as often with emergent and beginner readers because they are only being asked questions that lead to efferent responses. However, teachers should aim to create lessons that promote aesthetic responses to literature (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). When students are given the opportunity to engage in dialogue about what they are reading, they are able to produce aesthetic responses. They are able to think deeply about what they are reading and make connections between the text and their own lives. Promoting aesthetic responses leads to a stronger understanding and connections to the text they are reading.

Using reading response journals in the classroom is a way to encourage students to create aesthetic responses when reading text. Hancock (1993) explains that "written response to literature is a powerful means of preserving those special transactions with books that make reading a rewarding, personal journey" (p. 467). After doing research on reader response journals and the impact they have on making meaning of text, Hancock (1993) found that there are three major types of response options that lead to aesthetic responses. The three types of responses are personal meaning making, character and plot involvement and literary criticism (Hancock, 1993). Personal meaning making options focus on metacognitive comprehension strategies such as making predictions and inferences, and questioning the text. These types of responses move past a simple retelling of what happened in the story. Character and plot involvement responses "encourage reader interaction and reaction to the characters and events of the story"

(Hancock, 1993, p. 469). Students express their personal opinions and judgments of characters in the story. Literary criticism responses require students to act as a "literary critic" and state their opinion on the literature and author. All three types of response options lead to a personal connection between the person who is writing and the text that is being read. Writing a response to literature "enables each reader to transform the printed page into a personal reading experience" (Hancock, 1993, p. 473). Through these responses, students understand the text on a deeper level.

Reader response journals should be frequently incorporated into classroom instruction in order for them to be fully effective. The more students use the reader response framework and reader response journals in the classroom, the stronger their comprehension becomes. Kelly (1990) conducted a study that focused on reader response with her third grade class. Her students were asked to respond to text read aloud to them. As they read the text aloud, the students engaged in text-based discussions. After reading, the students responded to the text. The students first responded orally and then when they were ready, they started to respond in writing. Kelly (1990) found that students of all abilities were able to respond orally to the text and make connections to what they were reading. Students' responses increased over time as they become more comfortable with the reader response framework. Kelly (1990) also found that the students' written responses lengthened as the study went on. Students were able to answer inferential and critical thinking questions and make text-to-self connections. When teachers use reader response questions and journals over an extended period of time, students are able to increase their meaning making skills.

The Benefits of a Read-Aloud for Emergent/ Beginner Readers

Emergent and beginning readers are still learning how to decode and read fluently. Therefore, teachers have to identify ways to teach emergent readers how to comprehend, connect with and make meaning of text. One way to do this is through interactive read-alouds in the classroom. Research has shown that interactive read-alouds are a beneficial classroom literacy procedure for students. Santoro, Chard, Howard and Baker (2008) state that "for many students who struggle with decoding skills or who are just learning to read fluently, it would seem reasonable that comprehension strategies be taught through oral language opportunities (e.g., read-alouds)" (p. 396). Students will also learn to transfer the comprehension skills learned through read-alouds to reading independently.

One common theme found throughout research is that interactive read-alouds lead to deeper understanding of text. Santoro, Chard, Howard and Baker (2008) conducted a study to "evaluate the effectiveness of specific read-aloud practices with first-grade children" (p. 396). They wanted to determine if using specific comprehension strategies and skills during read-alouds would foster a deeper understanding of text and if it would increase vocabulary acquisition. After conducting research on their topic, they found that read-alouds that focus on the text structure, incorporate text-focused discussions and analyze vocabulary are the most effective in deepening student comprehension (Santoro et al., 2008). Santoro et al. (2008) created a read-aloud curriculum that focused on these three main principles. This curriculum was used in first grade general education classrooms with students of varying abilities.   In order to identify if their curriculum was beneficial, they compared the data from the student participants in their read-aloud

curriculum to the students whose classroom teacher used their own read-aloud instructional activities.

In this study (Santoro et al., 2008), comprehension strategies were used before, during and after reading the text. Before reading, the teacher activated background knowledge by previewing the text and vocabulary. During reading, students were invited to be part of the conversation by making text-to-self connections, self-monitoring, making and verifying predictions, etc. After reading, students filled out a graphic organizer retelling what was read in either the narrative or informational text. The narrative graphic organizer focused on text structure and the informational graphic organizer was a K-W-L chart. Vocabulary was reviewed and extended after reading. During this read-aloud experience, students were encouraged to engage in dialogue and talk about the text being read.

After analyzing the results from the study, Santoro et al. (2008) identified that "read-alouds, with explicit comprehension instruction and active, engaged discussions about text, can promote comprehension and text-based discussions"(p.407). They found that the students who participated in their read-aloud curriculum had stronger retellings "that reflected a depth of text comprehension"(p.407). These retellings had "text-based examples and elaborate, rich statements"(p.407). They believed that the retellings were strong due to the text-based focused discussions that the students engaged in through their read-aloud curriculum. In conclusion, Santoro, et al. (2008) found that "read-aloud time is an ideal opportunity to build comprehension through the use of oral language, listening comprehension, and text-based discussion." (p. 407). Meaningful read-alouds

that incorporate student discussion and talk can improve reading comprehension for younger learners who are not yet reading at advanced reading levels.

In addition, Witte (2016) conducted a study with first grade students that focused on using read-aloud experiences to teach students how to use higher order thinking skills and cite textual evidence. This study (Witte, 2016) was conducted using an instructional approach called Complex Text Analysis which focused on identifying the theme of the story read-aloud and supporting this theme with textual evidence. Before starting the study, Witte (2016) "developed a matrix of text complexity features that included lexile level, story structure, illustrations, point of view, vocabulary, theme, and knowledge demands" (p.30). Each first grade read-aloud text was analyzed, given a text complexity score, and put in order from least complex to most complex. This helped determine the order that the text was read-aloud throughout the year. The Complex Text Analysis approach "purposely uses texts of incrementally increasing complexity" (Witte, 2016, p. 33). As the book was being read aloud, students filled out a graphic organizer. They wrote the key events of the text, character's actions of feelings during this event, evidence from the text that support the key event, and the author's message. Students were also asked higher order thinking questions and engaged in dialogue with their peers. After finishing the text, the students were required to analyze the information from the graphic organizer to identify the central message. During the first six weeks, Witte (2016) modeled how to fill in the graphic organizer and find the central theme of the text she was reading aloud. She then started to gradually release responsibility to students and had them fill in the graphic organizer themselves or say their answers verbally as she wrote it

in. When she gradually released responsibility to the students, the discussion was more student driven while Witte acted more as a facilitator.

Witte conducted a pre-assessment before starting the study to identify if students were able to analyze text using text evidence. She also assessed the students' graphic organizers using a district created rubric. After analyzing the rubrics from the beginning of the study to the end, Witte found that almost all of her students scored significantly higher on their post assessment than their baseline pre-assessment. Witte (2016) explained that "the results clearly indicated that all of the students, regardless of reading level, grew in their ability to infer why characters performed certain actions and what the author was teaching the reader" (p.36). By the end of the year, students were also able to support their arguments with evidence from the text. They wrote significantly more in their graphic organizer and many were able to do this independently. Witte (2016) also found that this read-aloud experience exposed students to new vocabulary words. The read-aloud texts also served as a mentor text in writing. The students were now able to write stories with strong details and in sequence.

Furthermore, read-aloud experiences can serve as a motivational tool for struggling readers. Wiseman (2012) conducted a year-long case study that focused on the impact of interactive read-aloud experiences on a struggling and resistant reader who was in kindergarten. Wiseman went into a Kindergarten classroom and observed how the student in the case study, Kevin, responded to the interactive read-aloud experience. Kevin's teacher, Ms. Milner, incorporated interactive multicultural and diverse read-alouds into daily instruction. During the read-alouds, students were encouraged to engage in dialogue with each other about the text that was being read aloud to them. At the

beginning of the year, the student in the case study, Kevin, "struggled with aspects of the literacy curriculum, sometimes becoming disengaged and frustrated during instruction" (Wiseman, 2012, p. 264). However, Wiseman noticed that as the year went on Kevin was an active participant during the read-alouds in the classroom. Kevin engaged in classroom discussions with his peers and his comprehension deepened as the year progressed. After analyzing data, they found that Kevin's responses became more complex and stronger as the year went on. Kevin was also able to make valid text-to-self and text-to-text connections, which deepened his comprehension of the text he was reading. Wiseman (2012) explained that "this approach to reading provided an opportunity for Kevin to incorporate his personal knowledge while his teacher was able to scaffold his meaning making through a skillful pedagogical balance of guidance and release of conversations about picture books" (p. 271). The read-aloud experience created by Ms. Milner made it possible for Kevin to make meaning of what he was reading on a deeper level.

Read-aloud experiences impact beginning readers' comprehension in a positive way. Even though decoding skills are critical for beginning and emergent readers, interactive read-alouds are also important in the development of literacy skills. Wiseman (2012) explains that "interactive read alouds of picture books integrated into the curriculum can build background knowledge and extend language use for emergent readers while encouraging them to contribute their own knowledge to build meaning" (p.271). These experiences enable students to think deeply about the text that is being read to them. They are able to answer higher order thinking questions, even about text that is higher than the level they are reading on. Students learn to use advanced

comprehension strategies, such as inferencing. It also teaches students how to cite textual evidence to support an argument. It can also motivate reluctant readers and positively contribute to their literacy growth. Students are able to take what they learn from read-alouds and apply it when working independently. Read-alouds can also serve as a mentor text and have an impact on other subjects, such as writing.

The Benefits of Incorporating Talk into Classroom Instruction

Research (Fisher et al., 2004, Beck and McKeown, 2001, Heller, 2006, Kelly & Moses, 2018 & Certo et al., 2010) has shown that allowing students to engage in classroom dialogue and discussions has a positive impact on student success and motivation. McElhone (2014) states that "talk is not merely a medium that students can use to show what they know; by talking out their ideas and confusions with peers and teachers, students can actually transform and deepen their thinking" (p.2). A successful classroom is one in which students are given the opportunity to use talk to engage with what they are learning. In elementary school classrooms, student talk is normally centered around text. For example, many teachers use talk before, during and after read-aloud experiences to help students comprehend what they are reading. Students are able to make their own meaning of the text and also listen to their peers thinking and ideas. Fisher and Frey (2014) believe that "the amount of talk that students do is correlated with their achievement" (p. 19). Also, when students are given the opportunity to talk about text it gives them the opportunity to come up with their own ideas and creations instead of taking on the interpretations of their teachers (Hoffman, 2011). Talk allows students to make their own personal connections and comments on what they are reading, which leads to aesthetic responses of the text.

Students should be given the opportunity to engage in text-based discussions in order to make meaning of text. Fisher, Flood, Lapp and Frey (2004) conducted a study to identify if there were certain interactive read-aloud implementation practices that were beneficial to use in the classroom. Expert teachers were observed when conducting read-aloud experiences and were interviewed. The teachers in the study all engaged in strategic text-based discussions as they read the text aloud. There was a before, during and after discussion component to their lessons. The teacher acted as a facilitator rather than the only person doing the talking. These types of discussions "provided students the opportunity to share their thoughts, reactions, expectations, predictions or concerns about the book that the teacher was reading" (Fisher et al., 2004, p.13).

In addition, students are able to make inferences about text when engaging in text-based student directed discussions. Kelly and Moses (2018) conducted a study that focused on using small group literature discussions to make inferences and think deeply about text. This study took place in a Title I first grade classroom. Kelly and Moses worked together with the teacher (Meridith) to create an instructional framework. During the weekly literacy block, Meridith would introduce a specific text, ask an inferential question that students would think about during reading, have students read the text independently and document their thinking processes on sticky notes, and then conduct a group discussion based on the inferential question (Kelly & Moses, 2018). The students that participated in the study were put into small heterogeneous groups for discussions. The students groupings were changed often. Students were encouraged to do most of the talking during the discussions. Even though Meridith facilitated discussions, she wanted the students to lead and bounce ideas off of each other (Kelly & Moses, 2018).

Sometimes, Meridith didn't have to be part of the discussion at all because the students were having an effective deep conversation.

Kelly & Moses (2018) found that "first-grade students have profound discussions when provided with high-quality literature that calls for deep thinking" (p.21). Through text-based discussions and strategic text selection, students were able to make inferences about elements such as the characters in the text, authors' purpose and central message and plot. However, Kelly & Moses (2018) found that students need ample time to talk about the text in order to fully develop an inference and deeper level of comprehension. Also, sometimes students will create inferences that are different from the teacher or from what they expected. In order "to foster inferential talk, it is critical that teachers allow students to talk through inferences and not approach the discussion as a means for students to arrive at predetermined inferences" (p. 27). There were many times throughout the study that students came up with inferences that Kelly and Moses had not come up with themselves. The teacher in this study, Meridith, let students create their own interpretations of the text, which led to inferential thinking that was not predetermined. Inferencing is not always being used in classrooms with primary aged students. However, it is a skill that leads to a better understanding of text. Kelly and Moses (2018) found that "text selection, inferential questioning, open-ended discussion, and teacher expertise all play a role in supporting the development of inferencing among primary-age students" (28). When younger students are given time to talk about text with their peers and teacher, they are able to create and develop their inferences, which deepens their comprehension skills.

Furthermore, Beck and McKeown (2001) established a strategy called Text Talk, which focused on using talk during reading aloud experiences to enhance students' comprehension and language skills and build background knowledge. This strategy focuses on the interaction of the reader and the text that is being read to them. Beck and McKeown (2001) state that "Text Talk interactions are based on open questions that the teacher poses during reading that ask children to consider the ideas in the story and talk about and connect them as the story moves along" (p.13). Students are required to discuss the text while they are reading. Their discussions build as the story goes on and the students are introduced to new vocabulary.

Dialogue can also be used when conducting small group instruction through instructional practices such as book clubs. Heller (2006) conducted a study on the effectiveness of dialogue during book clubs with young readers. Students participated in a small group book club using non-fiction picture books. During the book club, the teachers encouraged the students to engage in dialogue about the text. Students also drew pictures and wrote sentences in journals about the text. Even though Heller used informational text, her students were able to create both efferent and aesthetic responses due to their text-based discussions. The students understood the content in the text but could also make connections to their own life. Heller (2006) argued that "oral language is the foundation of literacy. It is therefore essential that teachers encourage talk surrounding the comprehension and composing processes. Such talk provides evidence of children becoming literate" (p.366). When students are given the opportunity to talk about text, it allows them to make meaning and relate to what they are reading.

Students are also able to recognize that talking about text helps them make meaning of what they are reading. Certo, Moxley, Reffitt, and Miller (2010) conducted a research study that focused on using literature circles in elementary school classrooms. The student participants were given the opportunity to talk about the literature they were reading in their groups. Certo et al. (2010) found that students learned how to talk about text from the literature circles. They found that "participation in literature circles improved their ability to talk generally about books in a group" (Certo et al., 2010, p. 251). The students realized that talking with their peers also helped them better understand the story. Students were able to make meaning of the text through their conversations with their peers. Certo et al. (2010) also found that writing about text after reading it helped the students have a stronger discussion about the text. Students are able to build meaning with their peers when they are given the opportunity to talk about text.

Talk in the classroom can also foster a love of literature, engage students and serve as a motivation tool. Heller (2006) found that her students were extremely engaged during the informational book clubs each week. Heller (2006) could tell from her students' facial expressions and comments that they were interested in and curious about the new information they learned. Certo et al. (2010) also found that the participants in the literature circle study enjoyed it because they had the opportunity to talk about text. Certo et al. (2010) explained that "twenty-two of the twenty-four students overwhelmingly reported they enjoyed coming to literature circles, referring to it as "fun" and characterizing it as the best part of language arts" (p. 251). The students also found that talking about text made literature more interesting than the basal reader they used in their classroom (Certo et al., 2010). Using talk in the classroom may also motivate

19

reluctant students to read more often or cause them to be excited about text. Talk may also cause students to realize that they like a certain genre or author of text.

The Role of the Teacher During Productive Text-Based Discussions

Teachers must teach students the skills and strategies that are necessary in order to comprehend what they are reading. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), "instruction in comprehension strategies is carried out by a classroom teacher who demonstrates, models or guides the reader on their acquisition and use" (p. 4-40). Teachers must model how to comprehend and think deeply about text and then gradually release responsibility to their students. This is how students learn to independently make meaning of text. Research (Beck & McKeown, 2001, Peterson & Taylor, 2012, Heller, 2006, Worthy et al., 2012, Wiseman, 2011, & Fisher & Frey, 2004) has shown that teachers play an important role in classroom discussions about text. Teachers should not be the only voice in the classroom. However, teachers should be intentional in how they promote conversation in the classroom. There are certain teacher behaviors that foster a strong classroom discussion about text.

Teachers should be strategic about what questions they ask during a classroom discussion. The questions asked should get students thinking rather than just responding with one or two word answers. When teachers ask higher order thinking questions it leads to deeper conversation and understandings of what the students are reading. Beck and McKeown (2001) established a strategy called Text Talk, which focused on using strategic talk during reading alouds to enhance students' comprehension and vocabulary. Beck and McKeown (2001) found that teachers often ask more literal questions during read-alouds, which result in basic responses of what happened in the text. Literal

questions result in one or two word responses about details or facts that are in the book. Teachers play a role in deepening students' understanding of text. In order for talk during read-alouds to enhance students' comprehension, teachers must recognize the "distinction between constructing meaning of ideas in a text and simply retrieving information from the text" (Beck and McKeown, 2001, p.19). Asking higher order thinking questions can also increase student success in the classroom. It requires students to think about the text on a new level. Peterson and Taylor (2012) examined the impact that higher order thinking questions had on classroom reading achievement for students in kindergarten through third grade in an inner-city school. They found that asking higher order thinking questions increased students' reading success. Students understood how to analyze and make connections to complex text. The higher order thinking questions also taught students how to have a productive classroom discussion where students respectfully listen to others' ideas and opinions.

Asking students open-ended questions often leads to a more meaningful response. It also serves as an assessment tool to identify if students are developing an understanding of what is being read. During her study on informational book clubs, Heller (2006) found that "open-ended questions create an environment where children are free to respond aesthetically or to express their feelings and attitudes about what they have read" (p. 364). After reading informational text and engaging in dialogue about what they read, Heller (2006) would often ask an open-ended question related to story such as "what did you think about the book?" (p. 364). When a student gave a limited response, Heller would follow up with a question such as "why?" This allowed Heller to get an understanding of the participants' thoughts and feelings about the text. Asking

open-ended questions allows students to make a connection between the book and their thoughts. If the student is unable to make this connection, the teacher can then follow up with further questions to scaffold students' thinking. Worthy, Chamberlain, Peterson, Sharp and Shih (2012) also conducted a study that analyzed the importance of read-alouds and dialogue in the classroom. Worthy et al. conducted this study in Mae's second grade general education classroom. After looking at the results, Worthy et al. (2012) noted specific teacher moves that lead to a deeper classroom discussion and understanding of text. One of the teacher moves was asking critical thinking open-ended questions. For example, during one read-aloud experience, Mae asked her students if they thought the character deserved to get trapped (Worthy et al., 2012). Students were required to think about what had already happened in the text and their own personal beliefs to answer the question. Teachers can deepen students' understanding of a story by asking open-ended questions that require students to make meaning of what was read.

Angela Wiseman (2011) also conducted a study that analyzed the teacher-student relationship during an interactive read-aloud experience. Wiseman (2011) conducted her study in Ms. Milner's kindergarten general education classroom four times a week from October to May. The team of researchers observed Ms. Milner's classroom interactive read-aloud and took notes on her instructional moves, students' interactions and how they responded to the text. Ms. Milner engaged in before reading, during reading and after reading discussions with her students. Wiseman (2011) found that engaging in dialogue throughout the entire read-aloud "gave Ms. Milner the opportunity to extend students' literacy understandings within the context of authentic literature" (p.435). After analyzing

the data, they decided that there were four main elements in Ms. Milner's read-aloud experience that fostered a deep understanding of text.

The first element was confirming students' responses. Ms. Milner confirmed students' responses by restating what they said. A confirmation response from the teacher shows the student that their thoughts connect to what they text is saying. This allows the students to feel like their idea is important. The second element that taught students how to make meaning of text was teacher modeling of comprehension skills. Ms. Milner modeled how to think deeply about the read-aloud through a "think aloud" metacognitive approach. She made predictions, asked and answered questions about the main characters or plots, and synthesized the text. Ms. Milner also used the think aloud strategy to model how to identify parts of the story that may be confusing   The third element consisted of extending students' thoughts. This identifies what the student already knows and probes them to think deeper by putting focus on a particular idea that the student may not have come to on their own (Wiseman, 2011). This "extending" element was also seen in the Worthy et al. (2012) study of Mae's second grade classroom read-aloud discussions. When reading a text, Mae would extend students' thinking by making statements such as "say more about that". She was probing students' thinking to try to get them to keep thinking about a specific point. This teaching move shows the students that what they are saying is important and you want to hear more. It also gives students wait time to get their thoughts together. This ultimately leads to a stronger classroom conversation and meaningful connections between the reader and the text. Finally, Ms. Milner created a space that allowed students to build meaning collaboratively. When Ms. Milner noticed that her students were having a thoughtful discussion, she stepped back and listened

rather than facilitating and stepping into the conversation. Incorporating the four elements of confirming, modeling, extending and building into a read-aloud encourages students to think deeply about what is being read and create a more meaningful conversation. Meaningful dialogue among students is only created when teachers are "guiding and instructing within the discussion about the story" (Wiseman, 2011, p.438).

Teachers must also be prepared when conducting text-based discussions in the classroom. Younger students may need direct instruction on how to participate in a discussion. Text should be chosen based on students' age, interests and needs (Fisher et al., 2004). Text complexity and the structure of the text should be taken into account. Teachers should also have before, during and after questions prepared before reading a text aloud with students. These questions should be strategically chosen and should encourage students to think critically or at a deeper level. In order to do this, teachers should preview and read the text before reading it aloud. Even though unexpected questions will arise, preparing questions before will create a stronger conversation and may guide students to make inferences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, research has shown that using talk and reader response journals in classroom instruction helps students make meaning of what they are reading. Each student comes to school with different background knowledge. Therefore, the transaction between the text and the reader is different for each student. Students make meaning of the text-based on their background knowledge, their transaction with the text, and how they respond to it. Using reader response journals frequently in the classroom can aid in the meaning making process.

Students of all ages should be given the opportunity to think deeply about text. The interactive read-aloud approach is a way for younger students, who are still learning to read, to deeper their thinking. These experiences promote active involvement in the reading process (Heller, 2006). Interactive read-alouds that incorporate a text-based discussion component allow students to learn and improve their comprehension skills.

Giving students time to engage in dialogue has a positive impact on student learning, engagement and motivation in the classroom. Talking about text allows students to use higher order thinking skills. Students learn to respond aesthetically to what they are reading. It also allows students to learn new information from their peers. Students may also recognize the joy of reading text through these experiences or find a new genre they are interested in.

The teacher also plays an important role when incorporating student talk into the classroom. In order for students to make meaning of text teachers should be strategic about the types of questions they ask. Asking open-ended questions and higher order thinking questions can lead students to think deeply about what they are reading. Teachers can also probe students to learn new information by asking follow up questions. Teachers must also come prepared to a read-aloud experience in order for it to be successful.

This study looks at what happens when students use both talk and reader response journals in the classroom during classroom read-aloud experiences. It is similar to the research in that the students will be talking about text through an interactive read-aloud experience. Students will also be writing in a reader response journal and sharing their responses. Although there is some research supporting this topic, it is an area that would

benefit from further study. Most of the studies noted in the literature review used talk and reader responses with groups of students in the general education classroom. It would be valuable to gain more insight into what happens when emergent readers in resource classrooms use talk and reader response journals to deepen their understanding of text. Also, the literature studies focus primarily on larger groups of general education students. This study differs in that it focuses on only two special education students who are reading below grade level.

The next chapter addresses the organization of the study. This section provides details about the community, school and classroom in which the study took place. The research design and the procedures of the study are also described in detail.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

This study is qualitative in design and based on teacher research. The research question and design for a teacher research study is based on an area of need or inquiry in the educational setting. Teacher research is created and put into place in a teacher's classroom or school (Shagoury & Power, 2012). Shagoury & Power (2012) state that "teacher research involves collecting and analyzing data as well as presenting it to others in a systematic way" (p.3). Qualitative teacher research analyzes data sources such as student work and student discussions in order to identify themes that emerge from the study. The results from teacher research can be used to "inform and change teachers' own teaching" (Shagoury & Power, 2012, p.4) to enhance student learning.

Context of the Study

Community. This study took place in a school in New Jersey. According to the United States Census Bureau Data (2010), there are approximately 2,274 residents living in this town. The community is comprised of 809 total housing units. The median household income in this town is $84,250. In this community, 92.6% of the members have received a high school graduate degree or higher. Approximately 4.5% of the individuals in the community are below the poverty level. The public school district in this community includes one school that serves students in grades PreK-8.

School.   The research study took place in the public school of this community. According to the NJ School Performance Report (2019), this school serves approximately 265 students from preschool to eighth grade. The school population is 46.8% females and 53.2% males. The racial make-up of the school is 77.7% White, 11.3% Hispanic, 3.0%

Black or African American, 4.2% Asian, and 3.8% are of two or more races. 14% of the student population are students with disabilities. 17.4% of the students are economically disadvantaged and 1.1% of the students are homeless. In the elementary school, the ELA block is 120 minutes and the math block is 75 minutes. There is a social studies and science block during the day, which lasts for 55 minutes. ELA skills are incorporated into all disciplines. The school has a 55 minute R&E block, which focuses on either reteaching or enrichment depending on the students' needs.

Classroom. This research study took place in a K-2 resource center/basic skills classroom. This is one of three resource center classrooms in the school district. Students who attend the resource center have been classified with a disability. Students who attend basic skills benefit from small group or 1:1 interventions in one of the major areas of literacy based on assessment data. This study is a case study that looks at two students, Ryan and Sam (pseudonym) who attend the resource center/basic skills classroom each day for the duration of the ELA block.

Ryan is a kind, hardworking and motivated seven year old student. Ryan is currently on a Fountas and Pinnell reading level A. David Shannon and Mo Willems are two of Ryan's favorite authors. Sam is a caring and positive seven year old student. Sam is currently on a Fountas and Pinnell reading level E. Mo Willems and James Dean are two of Sam's favorite authors. Both Sam and Ryan can comprehend text when it is read to them. However, they struggle with phonemic awareness and phonics skills. This impacts their reading fluency and comprehension on their reading level.

Students who attend the resource center follow the school curriculum but with accommodations and modifications based on the needs of the students. Many of the

students who attend the resource center/basic skills classroom are instructed in the Orton Gillingham approach. All of the special education teachers at this school district were trained to teach this program. This approach to learning is a "direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive way to teach literacy when reading, writing and spelling does not come easily to individuals" (Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators, 2018). Both Sam and Ryan are currently receiving Orton Gillingham support during their time in the classroom.

The K-2 elementary team of teachers recently adopted the Fountas and Pinnell Interactive Read-Aloud program. According to the Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Team (2019), "interactive read-aloud is the foundation for instruction in your classroom. It provides rich opportunities for every student to expand background knowledge, experience age-appropriate and grade-appropriate text, and learn a variety of ways to think deeply and use academic language to talk about an engaging text". The program comes with text sets and lessons associated with the text sets to use with students. The Fountas and Pinnell (2019) interactive read-aloud lessons follow a specific structure:

1. Introduce the text

2. Read the text. Stop frequently to ask questions and engage in conversation.

3. Discuss the text. Invite students to talk about the book, reflect on it and guide their thinking toward understanding.

4. Revisit the text (optional)- revisit certain parts of the story to create a deeper understanding and meaning.

5. Respond to the text (optional)- Students respond in different ways such as writing, art, drama or projects.

This research study focuses on using talk and reader response journals to comprehend text with special education students. The Interactive Read-Aloud program from Fountas and Pinnell also focuses on using talk to make meaning of text. Many of the texts in this study were from this program since it has similar objectives and is part of the school curriculum.

Procedure of the Study

The study took place over the course of six weeks. At the start of the study, I interviewed each student individually to identify their motivation to read, strategies that they felt helped them understand text and to ask about their interests when it comes to reading. I reviewed the results and took these into consideration when picking text to use in the classroom.

The study took place approximately four days per week for six weeks. Students participated in interactive read-aloud experiences. The students participated in the interactive read-aloud experiences as a group for three days of the week. One day of each week, the students worked 1:1 with the teacher to talk and respond to a read-aloud. Text was chosen based on students' ages, needs, interests, and the school curriculum, which focuses on the Fountas and Pinnell Interactive Read-Aloud Program. I read the text before reading it to the students and came up with questions to ask during the text-based discussion. Most of these questions were higher order thinking questions and require students to think deeply about the text. Many of them were open-ended since research showed that open-ended questions lead to a deeper understanding of text.

At the start of the study, the students and I went over what it means to engage in a group discussion. We created a list of class text discussion rules to use during the

duration of the study. The students and I also decided to talk freely about the text instead of raising our hands as long as we wait for the person who is speaking to finish their thought. We also came up with sentence starters to use when talking about text. These sentence starters focused on making predictions, asking questions, and making connections, which are the three comprehension strategies we have already practiced in the classroom. These sentence starters were written on an anchor chart that we posted during the duration of the study.

Before reading the text, the students and I looked at the cover of the book. We engaged in a discussion about the author, illustrator and if the book had any awards. The students would then make a written prediction based on the title, picture on the cover and their background knowledge. The students would discuss their predictions and why they chose them.

After making a prediction, I read the text aloud for the students. I stopped frequently to ask questions. Students engaged in text-based conversations based on these questions. The students were also invited to talk about the text even when I didn't ask a question. They were invited to ask their own questions and verbalize their thoughts as they read. After we read the entire book, the students and I discussed their initial predictions. We verified them if they were correct and if they were incorrect, we discussed why.

After reading the text, the students answered questions in their reader response journals. The questions were chosen to promote an aesthetic response from the text. The students were also required to draw a picture to match their writing. After they completed

their reader response journal entry, students shared their responses and discussed them. We also identified the theme of each story.

Data Sources

A variety of qualitative data sources were collected over the course of the study. These data sources consisted of student-teacher interviews, audio recorded conversations, student work in their reader response journals, and a teacher researcher journal.

Students participated in a teacher created interview before and after the study. The interview consisted of questions that focused on student motivation to read, strategies that they felt helped them understand text and student interests. The interview after the research study also had questions that focused on their opinions of the study. For example, one of the questions was "Do you feel like talking about the text helped you better understand it?" I asked the students the interview questions and had them respond verbally while I wrote down their responses.

Conversations were audio recorded in order to analyze the text-based discussions. The audio was analyzed to identify patterns that led to a deeper understanding of text. The audio also helped identify what teacher behaviors led to stronger comprehension or extended student thinking. The students' reader response journals were also used as a data source. The journals were analyzed to identify if students understood the text and were able to make meaning of what they read. Their work was also analyzed to see if they were able to produce aesthetic responses to the text. I also analyzed our class discussions after writing in the journals to identify if the journals helped deepen conversations. The journal entries were also reviewed to see if students' responses lengthened over the course of the study. Lastly, a teacher researcher journal was used to

document observations throughout the study. Observations were of both the students and the teacher. Observations were written down in a notebook during the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected during this study was analyzed to draw conclusions related to using talk and reader response journals to better understand text.

After each week of the study, I analyzed my teacher research journal to identify common themes from my observations. Since I used a written teacher research journal, I was able to code the different themes using different colored highlighters. I also listened to the audio recording of the text-based conversations at the end of each week. I transcribed the parts of the audio that were important to the study objectives by typing them into a word document. After each week of the study, I created a chart and coded the audio findings into different themes. I also compared the themes from my audio recording transcriptions and my teacher research journal to identify any similarities.

After each week I also analyzed student work in the reader response journals. The journals were collected and reviewed. I created a chart and noted if the student was able to answer the question correctly and if they were able to respond aesthetically to the text. I also wrote down any other observations I noticed about the reader response journals. After the study was over I analyzed the entire journals to identify if the responses lengthened over time or if the writing became stronger.

As stated above, students participated in a pre and post interview with the teacher that focused on motivation to read, strategies that they felt helped them understand text and students' interests. When the research study was over, I analyzed the students' responses before and after the study to identify if there were any changes or differences. I

created a chart with the students' responses before and after the text. The next chapter

describes the findings and conclusions derived from the data analysis.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Findings

Chapter four discusses the findings of this research study that answers the question "what happens when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals to better understand text?" The data sources in this study were audio recordings of discussions, interviews, student work, and teacher researcher journal. These sources were analyzed to identify themes that occurred throughout the research study. Five key findings emerged from this research study: (1) Students used metacognitive skills during text-based discussions to deepen their thinking; (2) students understood and analyzed characters on a deeper level when talking about text; (3) students' reader response journal responses lengthened and became stronger as the study progressed; (4) teacher modeling, asking probing questions, and providing wait time deepened students' thinking; (5) students were highly motivated and engaged when given the opportunity to discuss and write about text.

Using Metacognitive Skills to Deepen Thinking

Through dialogue and discussion, students were able to comprehend text on a deeper level. As the study went on the students were frequently using metacognitive skills to make meaning of the text being read aloud. One metacognitive skill that was frequently used was questioning. Students were asking and answering questions to clarify thoughts about the texts. These questions lead to a deeper understanding of the text that was being read. Before reading *Strega Nona*, Sam and Ryan asked many questions about the cover. These questions activated background knowledge about the main character, Strega Nona.

Ryan: Wait is she a witch? I see a pot and all the witches have that.

Sam: Is that a caldron? In Hocus Pocus they have one. I think she's a nice witch just trying to find things to eat.

Ryan: Wait but we don't know if she's a witch yet?

The students were using the questioning strategy to try to figure out key information about the main character at the beginning of the story. When they found out that Strega Nona stood for "Grandma Witch" they were excited that their question seemed to be answered.

Sam also asked clarifying questions when reading *Sheila Rae, The Brave*. In this story, the main character Sheila Rae believes she has no fears. She isn't scared to do or say anything. She eventually realizes that it's ok to be scared sometimes when she takes a new walking route to school and gets lost. In the story, Sheila Rae's friend steals her jump-rope. When she realized this she wraps the friend in the jump rope.

Sam: Wait did she wrap her friend in the jump rope? That was mean. Why did she do that? Did he steal it? Oh yeah. That's why she did it. I guess she thought she was brave enough to get back at him.

Sam was asking and answering her own questions to monitor her thinking.

During the post reading discussion of *Pecan Pie Baby*, Sam even asked a question that showed she was thinking critically about the text. After thinking about the story, she recognized that a father figure was absent in the story.

Sam: Wait why wasn't there a dad in the story? Maybe he was at work? Or maybe she didn't have a dad? I'm not sure."

Ryan: Maybe he just wasn't in the story?

Sam and Ryan were able to think critically about the text and think about who is telling the story and who didn't have a voice in the story.

36

Ryan also asked clarifying questions when she didn't know the definition of a specific word. For example, when reading *Pecan Pie Baby*, she asked for the definition of brussels sprouts. Once I explained that it was a vegetable and showed her a picture of it, she understood the sentence.

Sam: Oh she wanted her to eat healthy because she was having a baby.

It was obvious that Sam understood the meaning of the sentence once I clarified the meaning of the word brussels sprouts.

In addition to questioning, Sam and Ryan made inferences while they were reading and talking about the text. When reading *Blackout* by John Rocco, Sam was able to make an inference without teacher prompting. *Blackout* is about a little boy and his family who are busy with work. It seems like the parents and sister don't have time to hang out with the little boy. One day the electricity goes out and the family is forced to spend time together and with neighbors from their community. It is then that they realize the importance of spending time together. During this story, Sam makes an interesting recognition and Ryan responds.

Sam: I noticed something. They're not busy or working because the stove isn't working and the computers are not working. They can have fun with the kids. The boy is very happy because now they get to be together.

Ryan: Yeah and the boy is not disappointed anymore.

Sam: Yeah. The boy doesn't have to do work. He has nothing to do at first because everyone else works but he wants to spend time with his family and he can now.

Both Sam and Ryan make an inference about the events going on in the story. By talking about what they notice, they were able to think deeply about the meaning of the story.

The students were also able to make inferences about many of the themes in the stories we read and discussed. At the end of each story, I asked the students to think about the author's message or the lesson they wanted us to learn from the story. The students were able to identify the theme from *The Empty Pot* after having an in-depth discussion about the text. In the book, the emperor is looking to pass the throne to one child. In order to determine who will be the next emperor, the children are given seeds and asked to make a flower. Ping, the main character, is excited since he is proficient in tending flowers. However, the seeds are cooked so they don't form into a flower. Most of the children cheat and buy new uncooked seeds when they realize their seed is not blooming into a flower. Ping is the only child who does not and brings his empty pot to the emperor. Ping becomes emperor since he was the only child who showed honesty.

> Me: What was the message that the author wanted us to take away from this story?
>
> Sam: Don't cheat. You should never cheat. Like even when you're playing a game. You should always be honest. Like Ping was the only honest one. You have to be fair.
>
> Ryan: I think the same thing. Like Ping didn't cheat in this book so he got it.

Both of the students were able to make an inference about what the author wanted them to take away from the story. Since they were able to make meaning as they read, they were able to think deeply and take away the central message. This was also seen after reading *Blackout*.

> Me: What did the family learn in this story?
>
> Sam: The family learned that you should spend more time together.
>
> Ryan: You should spend time with each other. Like my parents need to work but then they also spend time with me after. But the family learned their

38

lesson to spend time with your family. And also my family shut their phone off when it's time to be together.

Me: What lesson did the author want us to learn from the story?

Ryan: Always spend time with your family. But also other people like we like to spend time with you.

Sam: Yeah the same. Someone spends time with me. My family member is my Grandmom. She babysits me sometimes. One time I had a cardboard box and we made a cardboard car for me. She helped me color it. I love it.

Both Sam and Ryan were able to understand the lesson that the family learned and also the theme from the story. Both students were also able to make a valid connection to the lesson. It was evident that they were making meaning of the text as they read.

Text-to-self connections were also made frequently when discussing the text. When the students were making text-to-self connections they were valid and helped them better understand what they were reading. They were able to use their background knowledge to connect to what is going on in the text. When reading *The Empty Pot*, Sam was able to connect to the main character Ping. In the story, Ping's father is proud of him for trying his best.

Sam: I know how he feels. When I was doing my homework last year I kept messing up and I got upset. I was sad but my mom said you tried your best. She wasn't mad.

Sam was also able to make a connection to the story *Pecan Pie Baby*. In the story, the main character Gia is the oldest sibling. When she finds out her mom is having another baby, she is worried that things will change when the new baby comes and she will be given less attention. Sam was able to make a connection to the story.

Sam: My mom told me that I was getting a baby sibling. I was sitting in my mom's chair at the dinner table and she was sitting on the couch and she told me we were having a baby sibling and I was crying at first. But then I was so happy.

Sam was able to empathize with Ping and Gia because she went through similar experiences.

The students were also using the think aloud strategy to make comments about what they were noticing or thinking about the text. They used this strategy to make clarifications on confusing parts of the text. They also used the think aloud strategy to organize their thoughts. When we were reading the book *The Name Jar*, Sam conducted a think aloud toward the end of the story. In *The Name Jar,* the main character moves to America from Korea. When people start teasing her for her name, she decides to tell her classmates she doesn't have a name yet and tells her family she wants to choose an American name. Her classmates make her a "name jar" with possible new names. However, in the end she realizes she wants to keep her Korean name and tells her classmates the truth. Before I read the page where the main character explains that she wants to keep her name, Sam completes a think aloud without teacher prompting.

> Sam: Wait, I think she might keep her name. Her grandmother likes it and her grandmother is far away and she loves her. And so she might just want to keep that name because it is special.

Ryan also used the think aloud strategy when reading the book *Pecan Pie Baby*. She was using this strategy to think about the problem in the story.

> Ryan: Maybe she's scared the baby is going to sleep in her room and cry and wake her up. And her baby sister will be annoying because when she's sleeping she might say googoo gaga. You know why I think they are putting the baby in her room. It looks like they put in a crib. That's what a crib looks like (pointing to the picture of the crib).

Ryan was using the think aloud strategy to try to understand the text on a deeper level. She was thinking about what changes the main character Gia might be worrying about. Additionally, she was using both background knowledge and textual evidence to

support her thoughts.

Understanding and Analyzing Characters on a Deeper Level

During the study students were encouraged to talk about the text being read aloud. This process allowed the students to understand and analyze the characters in the text at a more complex level. At the beginning of the study, the students would often use one or two word answers to describe characters and their actions in the story. For example, when reading the first book of the study, *A Chair for My Mother*, Sam and Ryan described most of the characters as nice or sad. Even though these words accurately described the characters, they were simple. The students were not yet used to using powerful description words to explain characters' feelings and actions. However, as the study progressed they were able to describe characters using strong character traits and understand the importance of their actions on a deeper level. They were also able to make connections to characters and form opinions about the characters and their actions. In addition, they were able to make inferences about characters. When reading the book *Big Red Lollipop*, Sam was able to think about the characters' actions and feelings on a deeper level. In the book, Rubina is invited to her first birthday party. Her mom says she can only go if she brings her little sister, Sana, which upsets Rubina. She fears her friends will not invite her to another party if she brings her little sister.

> Sam: I think that Rubina is being a little selfish. She is only thinking about herself right now. But I think she should be selfless. I know what selfless means. It means thinking about others more than yourself. That's how she should be since her sister has never gone to a birthday party before. It would be really kind of the sister and they are family. I would do that for my family.

Ryan was also able to think about Rubina and Sana's feelings and actions on a deeper level.

Ryan: Rubina is angry with her sister because she doesn't want her to come to the birthday party. She is also demanding because she said let's go. I don't think people will play with her (Sana) because they are older than her.

At the beginning of the study, Sam and Ryan would often use basic adjectives such as nice and happy to describe characters. However, as the study went on they were using stronger description words, such as selfless and demanding, to explain characters. This was also seen when reading the book *The Empty Pot*. I asked the students to explain how Ping is feeling when his flower has not bloomed.

Ryan: I think he's probably feeling worried because he made flowers on the tree but he can't make it in the pot. So actually he's confused. He is probably thinking just keep doing it and keep doing it and keep waiting and keep waiting.

Ryan recognizes that Ping is confused and worried as to why his flower is not blooming when tending flowers is his specialty. She was also able to use textual evidence to explain her answer. She learned that Ping is good at making flowers in the beginning of the book. She uses this piece of information to support her response.

When Ping was bringing his empty pot to the emperor, another child makes an unkind comment about the fact that Ping's pot is empty and their flower bloomed. After I read this page, Sam makes a comment aloud and Ryan responds as well.

Sam: MEAN!

Me: Why?

Sam: Because she said couldn't you make a big flower like mine? That's mean to say to Ping. It's teasing.

Ryan: I would say "I tried but it won't grow!".

Both Sam and Ryan were putting themselves into Ping's shoes. They were thinking about the characters and the way they would respond. They were each making

meaning of what was happening in the story in that moment. They also made these comments independently. They didn't wait for me to ask a question first, which shows they were making meaning of the text without teacher prompting.

Ryan and Sam were also thinking about what they would do if they were the main character Chrysanthemum in the story *Chrysanthemum*. Once again, the students were thinking from the perspective of the main character without teacher prompting. In the story, the main character Chrysanthemum is made fun of because her name is long and a type of flower. Her classmates tease her because of this. After I read what the classmates said to Chrysanthemum both Sam and Ryan responded with their opinion.

Ryan: I would be sad if I was her. And also disappointed in them. Because I like my name and you can like your name. People should mind their business.

Sam: I would be brave if I was her because if that was my name I would be proud of my name. I would say "I don't care if people laugh at me".

Both Ryan and Sam think about what they might do if they were Chrysanthemum. When students look at the text from the perspective of the characters, they are able to better understand and interpret the text.

Ryan and Sam were also able to think deeply about the characters in *Pecan Pie Baby*. When I first started reading the book, Ryan was immediately able to understand the main character, Gia.

Ryan: She's thinking her life will change. She just wants it to be her mom and her like the real life. She thinks its gonna ruin her life because the baby needs more attention. Like the baby needs to get changed, feed and change the diaper. But probably she will like it because she's gonna be the older sister so she can get her to do things with her.

Ryan understood how Gia felt at the beginning of the story but was also thinking about how she might feel when the baby actually comes.

43

After having a long discussion about the text, Ryan and Sam were both interested in offering advice to Gia and her family.

Sam: I would tell her you should be proud that you're getting a brother. You won't be lonely ever. And when your mom's cooking or doing something you can play together.

Ryan: I would tell her that when I am scared of the dark, my baby sibling sleeps with me.

Both students were able to offer valid advice to Gia as to why she shouldn't feel upset that she is getting a sibling. Since Ryan and Sam were able to discuss the text, they were able to comprehend it on a deeper level. Their responses were aesthetic in nature because they were able to understand and analyze the characters and their actions.

Improvement in Reader Response Journal Responses

During the study, students completed a reader response journal entry after reading each text. Students were asked to respond in writing to questions based on the text that we read. Both students' responses lengthened as the study progressed. The content of the responses also became more thorough. At the beginning of the study, responses were basic and short. After reading the text *A Chair For My Mother*, students were asked to answer the question "What did you think about *A Chair for My Mother*?" Ryan wrote "I like it because I love the rad (red) hetr (chair)". When asked to explain the response, she had trouble connecting her response back to the text or explain how it connected to the plot. However, her responses improved and lengthened as the study went on. After reading *Giraffes Can't Dance*, Ryan was asked to write what she liked about the story. Ryan responded "I like haw (how) he got a fad (friend). I like haw (how) I dis (dance). I like how my fad (friend) dis (dance) also.". When asked to explain her response, Ryan stated

Ryan: They were being mean to him at first but then they were nice and he got a friend. You can dance how you want to. Like I like how I dance and I like how my friend dance but it's not the same. But it's ok!

Ryan's response was longer and included a valid connection to the story's theme. In the story, the Giraffe dances different than the other animals. Ryan was stating that she dances differently than her friends and that it's ok to do things, such as dance, differently than other people.

Similarly, Sam's response lengthened and became more complex as the study went on. After reading *A Chair for my Mother*, Sam responded by stating "I like it because the girl savd (saved) up to get a char (chair)". Even though Sam's response made sense, it was only one sentence. However, after reading *The Empty Pot*, Sam was asked to write a letter to Ping, the main character in the story telling him her thoughts from the story. Sam wrote "Dear Ping. I love how you did not chet (cheat). I love that you like flawrs (flowers). I like flawrs (flowers) to. What is your fafrit (favorite) flawr (flower)? Mine is a daisy. Thanks for being honest. You will be a grate (great) ledr (leader)". Sam's response was much longer and thought out after reading *The Empty Pot*, which was a book that was read further into the study. Sam made a connection to the main character and asked him a question. She used the character trait of honesty to describe Ping, the main character. She also recognized that honesty is a trait of a good leader. It was obvious from this response that she was able to comprehend this story on a deeper level.

I also noticed that the students were able to produce more writing when they were interested in the story. For example, Sam had stated that one of her favorite books was *Strega Nona*. After reading the text, She wrote "I thick (think) Big Anthony was meen (mean). Because he tuch (touch) the postu (pasta) pot when he was told not to. Big

Anthony knew not to tuch (touch) a magcll (magical) postu (pasta) pot.". After she wrote this, she explained that you should listen to directions and that when you don't, bad things can happen. She said she gets in trouble when she doesn't listen at home and that it's not nice. Sam had explained that she loved *Strega Nona* and even asked if we could read it again. When she was more engaged, she was able to produce stronger, more thoughtful responses.

This same theme was also seen when reviewing Ryan's reader response journal entries. After reading the book *Chrysanthemum*, Ryan created a picture of Chrysanthemum from the story and also of the actual flower. She also drew frown faces on one side of the picture and happy faces on the other side. When asked about her picture, she stated

> Ryan: I drew a picture of Chrysanthemum the flower and her to show she's special. I also put the frown face on the flower on one side because she was sad at first and then happy face on the flower at the other side when she was happy at the end. I also wrote that I like my name.

Ryan was engaged and involved in the entire discussion of Chrysanthemum. It was obvious that she was able to make meaning of the text as she read. She understood the changing emotions that Chrysanthemum faced during the story.

Teacher Modeling and Probing Questions Deepened Comprehension

After completing the study, I realized that asking probing follow up questions can deepen student thinking. It can also help students clarify their thoughts. This was seen during the discussion of *Strega Nona*. Big Anthony tells the townspeople that Strega Nona has a magical pot that makes pasta when you say a certain jingle. When most people don't believe him, he steals the magic pot, says the jingle and shares the magical pasta with the towns people to prove to them that he is right.

Sam: This is kind of weird. He's being nice and mean. It's mean because he took someone else's food and he wasn't supposed to but it's kind of nice because he's sharing with someone.

Me: That's an interesting comment.

Sam: He's sharing food but it's someone else's food.

Me: So is he actually doing it to be nice?

Sam: No. He's only doing it to show he's right.

Ryan: Yeah. He is just trying to be right.

Me: So if he's just trying to show he is right…?

Sam: I guess it wasn't nice.

Ryan: NO!

Through probing questions, both Sam and Ryan were able to understand why Big Anthony was not being nice. I also found that asking open-ended questions led to more aesthetic responses. The probing open-ended question "why" and statement "can you tell me more about that?" also led students to think deeper. In the story *Sheila Rae, The Brave*, Sheila takes a new route to school. Her sister doesn't want to take that route because she fears they will get lost. Sheila Rae goes anyway. Luckily, her sister Louise faces her fear and secretly follows her to make sure she doesn't get lost. During this discussion, probing questions allowed Sam to think deeply about this part of the story.

Me: Why do you think her sister, Louise, is following her?

Sam: Because she wanted to be brave like her sister.

Me: Tell me more about that.

Sam: She wanted to protect her by following her. She followed her to see if she would get lost or not. She would also prove that she was brave.

Probing questions also helped Ryan think deeply about this same part of the story.

Ryan: I think the sister is going to jump out and scare her.

Me: Why?

Ryan: I think she's going to jump out and then Sheila Rae will say why are you spying on me I am so brave and then she's gonna say no you're not. The little sister is actually the bravest. Because the big sister said I'm brave and the sister spied on her and she was scared. The baby sister is the brave one now.

Me: That is an interesting point.

Ryan: So it goes flip-flop. The characters flipped. The little sister was not brave and the big sister was brave. And then it switched. Now the big sister is scared and the little sister is brave.

It was obvious that probing questions and comments allowed both Ryan and Sam to comprehend the story on a deeper level.

It was also seen that probing questions allowed students to figure out the definition to difficult vocabulary words. There were many words that the students had questions about when reading the text. Instead of providing the students the answer, I used context clues and probing questions to define the word.

Providing students wait time to think and form their thoughts also produced stronger conversations. After asking a question I would give students at least 30 seconds to respond. This would help them think about the question and organize their thoughts. It also helped them produce a longer and more thought out response.

Lastly, I found that modeling how to talk about text helped students use the skills independently. At the start of the study, I used the think aloud strategy to model how to accurately think about and connect to text. As the students started to use the skills with less teacher prompting, I started to gradually release responsibility. By the end of the study, both Ryan and Sam were able to use many comprehension skills independently.

They were able to think deeply about the text without teacher prompting. After the study was over, I noticed Ryan using the comprehension skills during the read-to-self center. She was asking and answering questions as she was reading text on her reading level. I also noticed that during guided reading groups, both Ryan and Sam were eager to discuss the text as they read. They were able to actively discuss what they were reading.

Increase in Motivation and Engagement

After completing the study, a post interview was conducted. I asked students questions verbally and recorded their answers. Both Sam and Ryan expressed that talking about text helped them better understand what they read. Ryan was able to identify that asking verbal questions helped to better understand the text. When asked if talking about text helped to better understand the text, Ryan enthusiastically answered yes.

> Ryan: Yes because we talked about it and if we liked it. I could ask questions as I went and you also asked some questions. Like you sometimes said "what do you think is going to happen next?" and we got to talk about it.

The questioning strategy stuck out to Ryan and she recognized that it helped her understand the story. Sam agreed with Ryan.

> Sam: Yeah because it told me more things about the story. I was able to figure out more things from the story when I was talking about it.

Both students recognized that dialogue helped them understand the story on a deeper level.

In addition, both students enjoyed talking about text and using reader response journals in the classroom. When asked if they liked talking about text and using the reader response journals, both students eagerly responded yes.

> Sam: Yes I thought it was exciting to talk about the story. It was fun to think about what we would do if we were the characters. I also liked it because I got to write and I love writing. It helped me get the story. You could think

49

about the connections you made. Like in Chrysanthemum member I made two connections.

It seemed like this study was an exciting new experience for Sam. She learned how to engage with text on a deeper level. She also recognized that reading is a personal experience in which you form your own opinions and connections to the text. Ryan also had an interesting response when asked the same question.

Ryan: Yes it was fun and we got to learn about new things. I liked reading books everyday. I liked being able to talk about it because I love talking about stories. Sometimes we can't talk.

Being able to talk about text was also a new component of literacy for Ryan. The dialogue component of the study allowed Ryan to be an active participant during the read-aloud. She recognized the importance of using dialogue when reading to make meaning of the text. It also seemed like classroom discussion allowed her to become more engaged with the story.

I also found that both students were engaged when using talk to comprehend text. After reading *Giraffes Can't Dance*, Sam asked if we could create a dramatization based on the book.

Sam: After we're done writing can we please each pick a character from the book and do the dance that they did in the story? Please?

Ryan: YEAH! That's so fun!

They wanted to do more with the story. They were also thinking about new ways to make meaning of the story. In addition, when reading *Elephants Can't Dance* by Mo Willems, Sam asked if she could echo read with me. When I allowed her to do this, she was not only echoing my words but also my expression. She had a big smile on her face. She not only enjoyed doing this, but it also helped her think about what she was reading.

50

She often stopped to make comments about what she was echo reading or state her opinion about what was happening in the story. Also, when we were reading *Chrysanthemum*, there was a part where Chrysanthemum's classmates were making unkind comments about her name. After I read this part aloud, Ryan wanted to act it out.

Ryan: Let's pretend that you're Chrysanthemum and were the friends Victoria and Joe.

Sam: Yeah! I'll be Victoria.

Ryan: Ok! I am Joe.

Sam: (pretending to be the character) Let's pick her!!

Ryan: Let's smell her!!

Me: That's not very nice (frowning).

Both Ryan and Sam read their parts with expression. After acting out this section, they went into a long conversation about how Victoria and Joe were being unkind by teasing Chrysanthemum. After this conversation, Ryan asked if they could act out what Victoria and Joe should have said to Chrysanthemum. Acting out different parts of the story allowed students to make meaning of the text.

This study fostered a love in reading to both of the students in the study. Sam and Ryan were excited about reading. After reviewing the teacher researcher log, I noticed that there were multiple times that the students came into the classroom asking what book we were going to be reading and talking about today. I also recognized that the students became aware of some of the authors and their writing style. For example, in my teacher researcher log, I noted that Sam asked "Can we please read another book by Kevin Henkes?" In addition, when reading *The Art Lesson*, Sam shouted with excitement.

Sam: Look its Tomie DePaolo! That's the same author as *Strega Nona*! I loved *Strega Nona*!

Further, Sam and Ryan would often ask if they could put the books used in the study into her personal book bin that she reads out of during the read-to-self and read-to-someone daily literacy centers. When picking out new texts, the students would become excited when they found a book written by an author from the study. In my teacher researcher journal, I mentioned a time that Ryan asked if I could help her find a book written by the same author as Chrysanthemum. It was evident that talking about text and responding in writing increased student engagement when reading text.

In conclusion, the data analysis revealed that using talk and reader response journals deepens emergent readers' comprehension and increases motivation and engagement in the classroom. Chapter five will provide a summary of the findings as well as conclusions that were drawn from the study. It will also provide the implications for classroom practice.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the findings as well as the overall conclusions that were drawn from the study. It also addresses implications for today's classrooms as well as suggestions for further research.

Summary of the Findings

This study examined the effects of using talk and reader response journals to comprehend read-aloud literary text. The study data that was collected from the student work, interviews, audio recorded conversations and my teacher researcher journal suggests that using talk and reader response journals in the classroom has a positive impact on comprehension instruction with emergent readers. The findings show that using dialogue and writing in reader response journals can lead to a deeper understanding of text and increase student motivation and engagement during the literacy block. In addition, providing wait time, modeling skills and asking open-ended and probing questions helps students make meaning of text. As the study progressed, it was evident that the students were thinking about the text in a more complex manner. Students were using metacognitive skills such as questioning, inferencing, and making connections to think about the story. They were also describing characters and their actions on a deeper level. In addition, the students' reader response entries became more thorough and lengthened. Dialogue allowed students to create both efferent and aesthetic response to text, which was a new experience for them.

Conclusions of the Study

My goal for this study was to determine if using talk and reader response journals in the classroom helped emergent readers better comprehend read-aloud literary text. I specifically wanted to see if using dialogue strengthened students' ability to read for meaning and if it impacted their motivation in the classroom. Prior to the study, I reviewed others' research in the areas of the use of using dialogue and reader response journals during literary experiences. This study supports the findings of that research.

Research (Santoro et al., 2008, Witte, 2016, Wiseman, 2012) found that read-aloud experiences that incorporate student talk lead to a deeper understanding of text. Through these experiences, students can use higher order thinking skills, such as making inferences or citing textual evidence. This was seen throughout the research study. It was concluded that the students in this study were able to actively use metacognitive skills, such as questioning, inferencing and making connections, when given the opportunity to talk about text. These skills helped them read for meaning, which deepened their comprehension. It also allowed them to create both efferent and aesthetic responses to literature. Students were able to understand the text and connect with it on a personal level. Students' responses were more thorough and stronger than ever before.

Additionally, research (Witte, 2016, Kelly & Moses, 2018) has shown that primary aged students are able to use higher order thinking skills to make inferences about characters' actions, the plot and the theme of the story. This was also seen in this study. It was concluded that students were able to analyze and understand characters and their actions when talking about text and using reader response journals. Students were able to make inferences about the characters and their actions. They were using strong

traits to describe the main characters. Students were also able to form opinions about the character and their actions. They were even able to put themselves in the character's shoes and think about what they would do if they were the character. Additionally, the text-based discussions allowed students to understand the theme or the story or the lesson the author wanted us to take away from it. Kelly & Moses (2018) found that students often made inferences that were different from the teacher or what they expected. This was also seen in this study. The inferences that the students came up with often surprised me, as I had not made that prediction prior to the study but they were accurate and strong. Text-based discussions encourage students to think past literal comprehension of the text.

Furthermore, students' reader response journal entries became more thorough, personal and lengthened as the study progressed. Towards the middle and end of the study, students started to write responses that fall under Hancock's (1993) reader response options of personal meaning making and character and plot involvement. Students were writing about the characters in the text but also their opinions and thoughts about that characters' actions. They also wrote about the plot of the story and often included their opinions or asked the characters a question. When Kelly (1990) conducted a study using reader response journals, she had found that the students writing lengthened over time. This theme was also noticed in this study. As the students became more comfortable using the reader response journals, their response became longer. The students were also able to produce more writing when it was based on a book they enjoyed. It was also noted that the reader response journals deepened students' understanding of the text that was read.

Continuing, the results of the study showed that teachers play an important role during interactive read-aloud experiences. Research (Beck & McKeown, 2001, & Heller, 2006) has shown that asking students open-ended questions leads to a more meaningful response from students. This was seen in this study. Students were able to produce stronger responses to text when asked open-ended questions that started with the words "why" or "how". The text was always read prior to the lesson in order to create open-ended questions to use with the students. However, additional unexpected open-ended questions were created during the text-based discussions with the students. These types of questions encouraged students to create aesthetic responses. Research (Worthy et al., 2012) also showed that follow up questions can scaffold students' thinking. During this study, students were able to deepen their thinking when asked probing questions. After a student responded to a teacher created question, I would often ask "why" or "can you tell me more about that". This would scaffold student thinking and force them to think deeper about the text. These questions would often help students understand the definition of an unknown vocabulary word. Lastly, wait time was something that aided student comprehension. Providing students wait time allowed them to organize their thoughts before they said them aloud.

The final conclusion that I drew from the study is that using talk and reader response journals can increase motivation and engagement in the classroom. It can also foster a love of reading for students. Research (Heller, 2006, Certo et al, 2010, Wiseman, 2012) has also proven that using talk in the classroom when engaging with text can engage students and serve as a motivational tool. After the study was conducted, students participated in a post assessment interview. The post assessment questions showed that

using dialogue when reading text aloud was a new experience for both of the students. Both of the students in the study enjoyed being able to speak about the text. They also recognized that dialogue helped them understand the story on a deeper level. The students enjoyed writing about text in the reader response journals. Both of the students recognized that reading is a personal experience. During the study students came into the classroom inquiring about the book that was going to be read that day. They were excited to read and talk about a new book. The students also used many of the strategies during the read-to-self and small group guided reading centers. The students also wanted to put many of the books we read into their personal classroom book bin. It was evident that the students enjoyed using dialogue and reader response journals to engage with text.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the amount of time available to conduct the research. This study took place within a thirty-minute session, four days a week. In addition, the overall time frame of the study was only six weeks. Although the students made progress, it would be interesting to see how their comprehension and reader response journal entries improved over a longer span of time. In addition, it would also be interesting to analyze which newly learned strategies the students begin to apply to the texts that they are reading.

Another limitation of this research was the amount of students. Only two students participated in this study. Additionally, only narrative texts were used throughout the study. Therefore, data was not collected about the impact of talk and reader response journals when using informational or expository text.

Implications for Today's Classrooms

After analyzing the data throughout this study, there are several implications for both general and special education teachers and future teacher researchers. This study can offer valuable information to teachers and help them understand the outcome of incorporating talk and reader response journals into comprehension instruction. Those outcomes include creating a deeper understanding of text, being able to connect with and think about text on a personal level, and an increase of motivation and engagement during comprehension instruction.

There are implications for this study in regard to my own classroom instruction. Interactive literacy read-alouds that incorporate student talk and reader response journals should continue to be used in my classroom. The positive results and students' responses to the texts suggest that using dialogue can deepen student thinking and allow them to create both efferent and aesthetic responses. Students are able to accurately ask and answer clarifying questions, make inferences about characters and the plot and make connections to the text. It also encourages students to state their opinion about characters' choices and actions. They are also able to view the text from the different perspectives of the characters. Reading becomes a personal meaning making experience when students are given the opportunity to talk about text. Therefore, I should continue to use talk and reader response journals as the year progresses.

In addition, it is also important that I continue to provide teacher modeling and gradually release responsibility when I recognize that students are ready to try the skill independently. During the study, I provided teacher modeling and gradually released responsibility onto the students as the study progressed. This taught the students how to

properly talk and think about text. By the end of the study, the students were able to talk about text in a complex way without teacher prompting. Teacher modeling with a gradual release of responsibility allows students to use skills independently. As new comprehension skills are learned and used during read-aloud experiences, I will continue to use this approach.

Within my school environment, an implication could also be that more primary general and special education teachers incorporate student talk into classroom read-aloud experiences. Teachers may benefit from a professional development on how to incorporate more student talk into classroom instruction. During this professional development, I can share the results of research studies so that teachers understand the importance of using talk and reader response journals in the classroom. The professional development should also include how to incorporate talk into read-aloud experiences so that it does deepen students' comprehension skills. In addition, it should explain the importance of teacher modeling and gradually releasing responsibility and how to ask probing and scaffolding questions. Primary aged students are able to answer higher order thinking questions when they are given the opportunity to express their thoughts verbally. The teachers may find that their students can answer inferential and critical thinking questions. Additionally, they may find that the students will transfer the comprehension skills learned from the read-aloud into small group guided reading instruction.

Another implication is to provide this information to teachers who have primary aged students who are struggling to stay engaged or motivated during comprehension instruction. During this study, the students were excited to talk about text. They came into the classroom talking about the read-aloud material. The students were eager to

discuss the text each day. Teachers may find that allowing students to engage in dialogue increases student motivation to read.

In closing, this study highlighted the importance of using talk and reader response journals during comprehension instruction. This study supports previous research, which suggest that using talk and reader response journals in the classroom allow students to make meaning of read-aloud text and increase motivation and engagement. Teachers also play an important role when using talk and reader response journals in the classroom. It is my hope that this study will contribute to the field and inspire general and special educators of primary grades to think about how they can incorporate more student talk into their literacy curriculum, especially when engaging with read-aloud text. It is important that we teach students how to comprehend text at a young age so they can transfer these skills when they are reading text on their reading level. Even though primary aged students are young, they are capable of using higher order thinking skills when given the proper resources. As educators, we can set our students up for success by providing them with the tools that they need to comprehend text. We must also show our students that reading is different for each student engaging with a given text. Using talk and reader response journals is a way to teach students this. This study has shown that talk can not only deepen students' comprehension skills but also foster a love for literacy.

References

Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators. (2018). What is the Orton-Gillingham approach?. Retrieved from https://www.ortonacademy.org/resources/what-is-the-orton-gillingham-approach/

Andreae, G. (2016). *Giraffes can't dance*. New York, NY: Orchard Books Scholastic Inc.

Beck, I.L., & McKeown, M.G. (2001). Text talk: Capturing the benefits of read-aloud experiences for young children. *The Reading Teacher*, *55*(1), 10–20.

Bunting, E. (1989). *The wednesday surprise*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Boelts, M. (2009). *Those shoes*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

Certo, J., Moxley, K., Reffitt, K., & Miller, J. A. (2010). "I learned how to talk about a book": Children's perceptions of literature circles across grade and ability levels. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 49*(3), 243-263. Retrieved from http://ezproxy.rowan.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.rowan.edu/docview/742847913?accountid=13605

Choi, Y. (2001) *The name jar.* New York, NY: Dragonfly Books.

de la Peña, M. (2015). *Last stop on market street*. New York, NY: Penguin Group

dePaolo, T. (1975). Strega nona. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers.

dePaolo, T. (1989). *The art lesson*. New York, NY: Paperstar: The Putnam and Grosset Group.

Demi. (2012). *The empty pot*. New York, NY: Square Fish.

Durkin, D. (1993*). Teaching them to read.* (6th ed.) Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Fisher, D., Flood, J., Lapp, D., & Frey, N. (2004). Interactive read-alouds: Is there a common set of implementation practices?. *Reading Teacher, 58*(1), 8–17. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.58.1.1

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2014). Speaking volumes.(student-led discourse). *Educational Leadership*, *72*(3), 18–23.

Fountas & Pinnell Literacy™ Team (2019, January 25) What is interactive read-aloud? [blog]. Retrieved from http://fpblog.fountasandpinnell.com/what-is-interactive-read-aloud

Hancock, M. R. (1993). Exploring and extending personal response through literature journals. *The Reading Teacher, 46*(6), 466-474.

Heller, M. (2006). Telling stories and talking facts: First graders' engagements in a nonfiction book club. *The Reading Teacher, 60*(4), 358–369. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.60.4.5

Henkes, K. (1987). *Sheila rae, the brave.* New York, NY: HarperCollins Publisher.

Henkes, K. (1991) *Chrysanthemum.* New York, NY: HarperCollins Publisher.

Hoffman, J. L. (2011). Coconstructing meaning: Interactive literary discussions in kindergarten read-alouds. *The Reading Teacher, 65*(3), 183–194. https://doi.org/10.1002/TRTR.01025

Kelly, P. R. (1990). Guiding young students' response to literature. *Reading Teacher, 43*(7), 464-470. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/20200441

Kelly, L. B., & Moses, L. (2018). Children's literature that sparks inferential discussions. *Reading Teacher, 72*(1), 21–29. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1675

Khan, R. (2010). *Big red lollipop.* New York, NY: Penguin Young Readers.

Lester, H. (1994). *Three cheers for tacky.* New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Lester, H. (2012). All for me and none for all. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

McElhone, D. (2014). Text talk: Engaging readers in purposeful discussions [IRA E-ssentials series]. Newark: DE: International Reading Association. DOI:10.1598/e-ssentials.8045

Miller, D. (2012). *Reading with meaning: Teaching comprehension in the primary grades.* Portsmouth, NH: Stenhouse Publishers

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common Core State Standards.* Washington, DC: Authors.

National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.* Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

New Jersey Department of Education. (2016). *New jersey student learning standards: English language arts.* Retrieved from: https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/

New Jersey Department of Education. (2019). School performance reports. https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/

Peterson, D. S., & Taylor, B. M. (2012). Using higher order questioning to accelerate students' growth in reading. *The Reading Teacher, 65*(5), 295–304. https://doi.org/10.1002/TRTR.01045

Rocco, J. (2011). *Blackout*. New York, NY: Disney Press.

Rosenblatt, L. (1982). The literary transaction: Evocation and response. *Theory Into Practice, 21*(4), 268–277. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405848209543018

Rosenblatt, L. (1994). *The Reader, the text, the poem : The transactional theory of the literary work.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Santoro, L., Chard, D., Howard, L., & Baker, S. (2008). Making the very most of classroom read-alouds to promote comprehension and vocabulary: Strategically enhancing read-alouds has been shown to improve student's comprehension. *The Reading Teacher, 61*(5), 396–408. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.61.5.4

Scieszka, J. (1989). *The true story of the three little pigs*. New York, NY: Viking Penguin.

Shagoury, R., & Power, B. M. (2012). *Living the questions: a guide for teacher-researchers*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers.

Tracey, D.H., & Morrow, L.M. (2006). *Lenses on reading: An introduction to theories and models*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

United States Census Bureau. (2010). Community facts. www.factfinder.census.gov

Viorst, J. (2004). *Super-completely and totally the messiest!*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Willems, M. (2004*). Knuffle bunny: A cautionary tale*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.

Willems, M. (2007). *Knuffle bunny too: A case of mistaken identity*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.

Willems, M. (2009). *Elephants cannot dance!*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.

Williams, V. B. (1982). *A chair for my mother*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publisher.

Williams, V. B. (1984). *Music, music for everyone*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publisher.

Witte, P. G. (2016). Teaching first graders to comprehend complex texts through read-alouds. *Reading Teacher*, *70*(1), 29–38. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1467

Wiseman, A. (2011). Interactive read alouds: Teacher and students constructing knowledge and literacy together. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 38*(6), 431-438.

Wiseman, A. M. (2012). Resistance, engagement, and understanding: A profile of a struggling emergent reader responding to read-alouds in a kindergarten classroom. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 28(3), 255-278.

Woodson, J. *(2013). Pecan pie baby.* New York, NY: Puffin Books.

Worthy, J., Chamberlain, K., Peterson, K., Sharp, C., & Shih, P. (2012). The importance of read-aloud and dialogue in an era of narrowed curriculum: An examination of literature discussions in a second-grade classroom. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 51*(4), 308–322. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2012.685387

Appendix

Texts Used Throughout Study

A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams

Music, Music for Everyone by Vera B. Williams

Strega Nona by Tomie dePaola

Pecan Pie Baby by Jacqueline Woodson

Three Cheers for Tacky by Helen Lester

Super-Completely and Totally the Messiest by Judith Viorst

The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi

Sheila Rae, The Brave by Kevin Henkes

The Empty Pot by Demi

Blackout by John Rocco

The Wednesday Surprise by Eve Bunting

The Art Lesson by Tomie dePaola

Last Stop on Market Street by Matt de la Peña

Knuffle Bunny: *A Cautionary Tale* by Mo Willems

Knuffle Bunny Too: *A Case of Mistaken Identity* by Mo Willems

Elephants Cannot Dance! by Mo Willems

Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts

Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andreae

Big Red Lollipop by Rukhsana Khan