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**USING STUDENT TALK AND READER RESPONSE JOURNALS WITH
EMERGENT READERS**

by
Samantha A. Gudowski

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 20, 2021

Thesis Chair: Marjorie E. Madden, Ph. D

Dedications

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all of my students who push me to be a better teacher every day.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my daughter, Myla. May you always pursue your dreams and never give up, even when life is difficult.

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First, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Marjorie Madden. Your patience, guidance and continued support pushed me forward. Thank you for believing in me when I was ready to give up. I honestly thought I would never get to this point.

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Abstract

Samantha A. Gudowski
USING STUDENT TALK AND READER RESPONSE JOURNALS WITH
BEGINNING READERS
2020-2021

Marjorie E. Madden, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact on comprehension when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals to comprehend text. Data collected from reading attitude surveys, interviews, student journal entries, audio-recorded student conversations and notes in a teacher researcher journal were analyzed for emerging themes. The findings show that talk about text and the use of reader response journals have a positive impact on both reading comprehension and motivation. Implications for future research are discussed in chapter five.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In my first year as a Language Arts Basic Skills teacher, I knew that I wanted to develop and strengthen our Basic Skills program and become a better reading teacher. Not only was I offering push-in and pull-out support in reading, I was also providing reading support through guided reading groups in first, second and third grade. I worked with the lowest group of readers in each class. This is when my passion for helping my students become better readers, writers and thinkers really developed. In order to help push my students to success, I enrolled in Rowan University's Masters in Reading program to earn my certificate as a Reading Specialist. Although the journey has not been easy, it has pushed me to be the best version of myself for my students and to help them reach or exceed their potential.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research study is to determine what happens when beginning readers use talk and reader response journals to better comprehend text. The goal of this research project is to determine if engaging in discussions about text and using reader response journals, enhances comprehension. The research project will also determine if using these strategies in the classroom increases student motivation and engagement in regards to reading. The students in this study have been identified as emergent readers and would benefit from engaging in strategies to strengthen their comprehension. Defined by the *Reading A-Z* website, readers at the emergent stage have developed an

understanding of the alphabet, have phonological awareness and early phonics skills and have obtained a significant number of high-

frequency words (“Stages of Development,” n.d.). Readers at this stage have also developed a better understanding of comprehension strategies and word-attack skills.

The students chosen for this study were identified as reading below grade level using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). In analyzing the DRA data for each student, their lack of comprehension and ability to recall details impedes their ability to move forward in their reading. Therefore, through this study, I want to focus more on comprehension rather than decoding and word attack strategies to help them grow as readers.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

The motivation of this study is to explore the impact on comprehension when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals to comprehend text. Specific aims of my study include promoting deeper levels of comprehension through conversations about text, promoting deeper levels of comprehension through writing about text and assisting students in demonstrating the proper technique when responding to literature. With sentence starters as a guide and writing in reading response journals, students will learn appropriate ways to respond to texts when talking and writing about them.

Through this study, I hope to gain better insight into these questions:

- Does using talk and reader response journals foster a deeper understanding of text with emergent readers?
- Do reader response journals foster a stronger discussion about text?

- Does talking about texts increase student motivation and engagement?

Story of the Question

Louise Rosenblatt explains how readers have reading experiences that vary from one another through the *Transactional/Reader Response Theory* (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 188). Rosenblatt's work articulates two kinds of responses that all readers have to texts: efferent and aesthetic responses. "*Efferent responses* are those that are factual and objective in nature; *aesthetic responses* are those that are feeling-based, personal, and subjective" (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p.189). Tracey and Morrow (2006) state that "when designing lessons using literature, we should target our instruction on promoting children's aesthetic responses to the texts" (p.55). 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. Asselin (2000) states, "Rosenblatt encourages purely personal responses as starting points that need to progress to include evidence of a stronger transaction with the text" (p. 63). Promoting aesthetic responses leads to a stronger understanding of the text they are reading. Allowing opportunities for students to represent their thoughts and feelings during reading are important in capturing the diversity of students' responses and to facilitate metacognitive development of the response processes.

The authors of *Book Talk and Beyond* (1995), explain how researchers who have studied classroom talk have found that it is often dominated by teachers. Traditionally, teachers ask a question, prompt a student to give a response and then evaluate the

response. This gives students little opportunity to “raise topics of interest, pursue lines of thinking, or collaborate with critical problem solving - a situation even more pronounced for poor readers” (Roser & Martinez, 1995, p. 67). Roser & Martinez (1995) continue to explain that theorists, such as Vygotsky, suggest that language is fundamental to thinking and that through classroom talk; students come to experience the social, collaborative nature of literacy (p. 67). Therefore, we must engage students in meaningful talk in order to promote higher thinking. Therefore, many professional resources encourage the use of reader response journals (Asselin, 2000).

One primary reason for using reader response journals is to increase student comprehension. Fulps and Young (1991) explain that “reading response journals enable students to grow as readers and writers by requiring them to use their own background knowledge to construct personal meaning and by encouraging, in writing, the integration of new experiences with past ones (p. 109).” Encouraging students to put what they read in their own words allows them to take ownership of what was read. Fulps and Young (1991) continue to explain, “Reading response journals provide a teacher with a means of looking inside students’ minds to view their understanding of what was read. In addition, these journals foster students’ ability to connect literature with their own lives and therefore increase comprehension (p. 115).”

Working with emergent readers who are reading below grade level, it is my hope that by combining both reader response journals and student talk about text will help strengthen their reading comprehension.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter two provides a review of the literature on 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. It also includes the research design, procedure, data collection methods and data analysis. Chapter four provides a data analysis of the collected information and a discussion of the findings of the study. Chapter five reveals the conclusions of the research and its limitations and implications for using talk and reader response journals during comprehension instruction.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

An intense response to a work will have its roots in the capacities and experiences already present in the personality and mind of the reader. (Rosenblatt, 1995)

Introduction

Reading is a lifelong skill that students need to master in order to become critical, engaged readers and thinkers in both school and life (Woodruff & Griffin, 2017). The purpose of reading is to comprehend the text, or rather, make meaning from written text. According to the Literacy Glossary from the *International Literacy Association* (2000), comprehension is defined as “making meaning of what is viewed, read, or heard. Comprehension includes understanding what is expressed outright or implied as well as interpreting what is viewed, read, or heard by drawing on one's knowledge and experiences.” To extend student thinking and comprehension skills, we must engage students in meaningful talk in order to promote higher-level thinking and allow time for written responses in a reader response journal. Through conversation, students are able to create both efferent and aesthetic responses to literature. Having students respond to text in a response journal also encourages students to make meaning of what they have read.

In the article, *Every Child, Every Day*, Allington (2012) explains how research has demonstrated that conversation with peers improves comprehension and engagement with text. He points to the fact that allowing time for students to read and write is one of the most underused strategies for furthering students' reading ability. Having students share about their reading costs nothing but time and provides measurable benefits in

comprehension, motivation, and even language competence (Allington, 2012). Reader response promotes student interactions with each other and the text. As stated by the authors of *Reader Response in Secondary Settings: Increasing Comprehension through Meaningful Interactions with Literary Texts* (2017), “The reader response approach is heavily reader-oriented. Readers use their prior knowledge and experiences to give meaning to a text, and they are required to justify their unique interpretations of a text with textual evidence” (p.111). “In today's diverse classrooms, incorporating reader response into the curriculum, as opposed to traditional teacher talk, will result in increased reading comprehension and engagement” (Woodruff & Griffin, 2017, p.109).

Graham and Hebert (2010) undertook an in-depth meta-analysis of experimental and quasi-experimental studies that examined the effectiveness of writing practices on improving students’ reading in grades 1 through 12. Their review of the data concluded that extended writing has a strong and consistently positive impact on reading comprehension. They concluded, “Extended writing produced greater comprehension gains than simply reading the text, reading and rereading it, reading and studying it, reading and discussing it, and receiving reading instruction” (Graham & Hebert, 2010, p. 14).

Chapter two provides a review of research in the areas of reader response theory, using reader response journals to improve comprehension, and incorporating talk about text in the classroom. The first section defines reader response theory, discusses how it is used in the classroom and how it contributes to student talk. The second section explains the benefits of using reader response journals to increase student talk about text and

strengthening comprehension. The third section examines the effectiveness of incorporating talk about text in the classroom. The chapter ends with a summary of the literature surrounding Louis Rosenblatt's reader response theory, reader response journals, and dialogue in the classroom.

Reader Response Theory

Reader response theory suggests that literature cannot be considered in isolation from the reader. Rather, the reader brings their knowledge and experience to the text in order to create meaning. Reader response helps students increase their reading comprehension and interaction with texts. Rosenblatt's transactional theory was formed around the notion that all readers have individualized reading experiences because each reader has their own schema, or background experiences (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). As quoted from the work of Rosenblatt, the transactional view of response is based on the belief that the reader is "not seen as a separate entity, acting upon the environment, nor the environment acting on the organism, but both parts acting as a total event" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 98). Since each student has different background schemas, they will have different reading responses to a text. Furthermore, Rosenblatt's work articulates two kinds of responses that all readers have to texts: efferent and aesthetic responses: "*Efferent responses* are those that are factual and objective in nature; *aesthetic responses* are those that are feeling-based, personal, and subjective" (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p.189). Tracey & Morrow (2006) argue that teachers should target their instruction to promote aesthetic responses to literature. Promoting aesthetic responses leads to a stronger understanding of the text students are reading. Allowing opportunities for

students to represent their thoughts and feelings during reading are important in capturing the diversity of students' responses. Furthermore, their thoughts and feelings facilitate metacognitive development of the response process. Through implementing text discussions in the classroom, research shows that literature discussions make a positive impact on reading comprehension and reading interest (Pittman & Honchell, 2014). Woodruff & Griffin (2017) suggest that, "Students benefit most from reading texts when they are provided opportunities to think critically and thoughtfully on their own terms without first being bombarded by the thoughts of others. Furthermore, "Reader response theory supports this process for students to become engaged, thoughtful, and critical readers" (p. 108).

Reader Response Journals and Comprehension

Fulps and Young (1991) argue, "Reading response journals provide students with an opportunity to respond and interpret their reading personally." Students often do not have the opportunity to construct their own meaning as they read and formulate their own thoughts as they write. It is essential to give students the opportunity to ask and answer questions about their own reading and writing. One of the primary reasons reader response journals are utilized in the classroom is to increase comprehension. As stated by Fulps & Young (1991), "Reading response journals enable students to grow as readers and writers by requiring them to use their own background knowledge to construct personal meaning and by encouraging, in writing, the integration of new experiences with past ones" (p. 110). Encouraging students to put what they read in their own words allows them to take ownership of what they read. Additionally, this provides the teacher

with a way to look inside students' minds to view their understanding of what they read. "These journals foster students' ability to connect literature with their own lives and therefore increase comprehension" (Fulps & Young, 1991, p. 115).

Furthermore, the use of reading response journals in the classroom encourages students to create aesthetic responses when reading text. Hancock (1993) suggests, "Articulation of aesthetic response in the classroom through a literature journal enables each reader to transform the printed page into a personal reading experience" (p. 473). She explains, "Written response to literature is a powerful means of preserving those special transactions with books that make reading a rewarding, personal journey" (p. 467). Written responses are much like the reading process in which readers work through their understanding and interpretations of texts in personally significant ways where the uniqueness of their responses is accepted. According to Petrosky (1982), writing about reading "is one of the best ways to get students to unravel their transactions so that we can see how they understand and in the process, help them learn to elaborate, clarify, and illustrate their responses by reference to the associations and prior knowledge that inform them." (p. 24).

Barbara Werchadlo, a first grade classroom teacher, wanted to introduce literature response journals into her classroom. After her own research, she asked Julie E. Wollman-Bonilla, author of the book *Response Journals: Inviting Students to Think and Write about Literature* (Wollman-Bonilla, 1991) to join her in her exploration. Literature response journals were just an extension of writing activities that already took place in her classroom. By introducing the journals, Werchadlo hoped her class would enhance

their understanding of literature and stimulate higher level thinking about books. She also hoped her students would react personally to books and become more excited about reading (Wollman-Bonilla & Werchaldo, 1995). Although student responses varied in length, type and quality, Werchaldo was happy to discover that when her first graders were given the opportunity to respond freely in their literature response journal, almost all of the entries indicated whether the students did or did not understand what they read. Therefore, there was no need for comprehension questions (Wollman-Bonilla & Werchaldo, 1995). Werchaldo also discovered that the response journals were helpful to assess individual students' thinking, especially those students who often did not speak in class. Additionally, it was noted that the weakest readers became more excited about books than struggling students in previous years.

Writing responses to literature in journals has been shown to have many benefits (Cox and Many, 1992a; Crowhurst and Kooy, 1985; Fulps and Young, 1991; Kelly, 1990; Marshall, 1987; Petrosky, 1982; and Wollman-Bonilla, 1989). Through journal writing, Pantaleo (1995) states:

Students are able to engage and participate personally with text, reflect on evoked emotions and ideas, and imagine the perspectives and experiences of others.

Students can take ownership of their reading as they write about their personal interpretations, connect, and associate their prior knowledge and experiences with text. They can express, reflect upon and clarify their thoughts and understandings, gaining self-confidence and motivation as they realize different interpretations of

text are acceptable. Students can improve their comprehension, discussion and writing skills. (p.89)

In summary, when teachers encourage students to create aesthetic responses to literature, they are supporting the growing independence of each reader to interact with a text independently during their own personal encounters with literature. As Hancock argues, “Readers need the encouragement, direction, and guidance of the teacher as they attempt to extend their personal response options” (p. 473).

The Benefits of Incorporating Talk about Text into Classroom Instruction

Researchers who have studied classroom talk have found that teachers often dominate it. Traditionally, teachers ask a question, prompt a student to give a response and then evaluate their response. According to Roser & Martinez (1995), this gives students little opportunity to “raise topics of interest, pursue lines of thinking, or collaborate in critical problem solving - a situation even more pronounced for poor readers.” During student conversations, the teacher should step back and allow the students’ ideas and comments to determine the direction of the conversation. As the students talk, Roser & Martinez (1995) suggest that the teacher ask students to clarify or expand on their comments by asking a question such as *Why do you think that?* Teachers should act as participants in the conversation, responding and commenting naturally while taking turns conversing with the students (Roser & Martinex, 1995).

Fielding & Pearson (1994) have found teacher dominated discussions to be continuously criticized because they emphasize teacher control and students only learn one interpretation. Critics argue that student-centered discussions that encourage multiple

interpretations are more beneficial. In the article *Synthesis of Research/Reading Comprehension: What Works*, Fielding & Pearson (1994) discuss three goals to improve teacher-student discussions. The first goal is to *change teacher-student interaction patterns*. In the traditional format, teachers choose the topic discussion and control which student answers are correct and which are incorrect. In this format, teachers talk more than the students because they are in charge of the discussion. *Responsive teaching* and *instructional conversations* are terms used by Tharp and Gallimore (1989) to contrast effective teacher-student discussion with teacher dominated conversations. In *responsive teaching*, instruction is planned with anticipation of various student responses while the teacher keeps in mind his or her own personal interpretations. Student input is incorporated into discussions as well as student text interpretations, which moves the discussion to higher levels. In this goal, teachers may still choose topics, but student input is what drives the discussion. By changing the pattern of classroom dialogue, it will allow for more student input and less control from the teacher. The second goal, *accepting personal interpretations and reactions*, allows for multiple interpretations and highlights the importance of readers' responses to their reading. This goal is a reflection of Rosenblatt's (1978) distinction between *efferent reading* and *aesthetic reading* as defined earlier in this chapter. According to Fielding & Pearson (1994), "Allowing students to build, express, and defend their own interpretations has become a revalued goal of text discussions" (Time to Talk About Reading section). The goal is for the teacher to become a coequal in the discussion instead of the leader. "In this role," Fielding & Pearson (1994) explain, "the teacher can capitalize on teachable moments, help clarify confusions, keep

track of students' ideas, and suggest ideas for consideration without insisting on a unitary interpretation of the text" (Time to Talk About Reading section). The third goal is *embedding strategy instruction in text reading*. Even though this goal is focused around a shared understanding of important text information, new ideas are arising on how to enhance this shared understanding in a way that will also teach students about comprehension. Learning about comprehension strategies, such as summarizing and determining the main idea, can be intertwined in discussions about texts. Fielding & Pearson (1994) believe that "Students will internalize effective comprehension strategies through repeated situations in which they read and discuss whole texts with a teacher and peers."

Conversations help students build empathy, understanding, respect for others' opinions, and ownership of their learning. Teachers can easily help students deepen their comprehension skills by offering opportunities for conversation in the classroom. This will allow students to expand their ideas through considering the insights of their peers. Ketch (2005) notes that research has shown that good readers use seven cognitive strategies to comprehend text: making connections, questioning, creating mental images, determining importance, inferring, retelling and synthesizing, and employing fix-up strategies as they read. When readers comprehend, they are using these strategies continuously and simultaneously. Ketch (2005) states:

Students must be given opportunities to practice using these strategies in order to internalize them and strengthen their comprehension. Students who engage in conversation in the classroom become reflective thinkers. Conversation brings

meaning to life as students seek to contemplate and understand our complex world. Conversation is the comprehension connection (p. 12).

Teachers should encourage conversation and provide opportunities for students to do so. In doing so, Ketch (2005) explains, “Talk can transform teaching into learning” (p. 12). Through conversation, students will practice the cognitive strategies to strengthen their comprehension, construct meaning, collaborate with their peers, gain empathy for other viewpoints and feel ownership of the learning process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, research shows that utilizing reader response journals and talking about texts in the classroom help students make meaning of what they read. Rosenblatt’s transactional theory explains that all readers have individualized reading experiences because each reader has their own schema or background experiences. Therefore, they will have different responses to text. Utilizing reader response journals in the classroom can aid in the meaning making process and help strengthen comprehension.

Giving students the opportunity to engage in discussions about texts has a positive impact on student learning and motivation in the classroom. Talking about text allows students to practice thinking strategies and show their level of cognitive development (Ketch, 2005). Additionally, over time, students who are actively engaged in classroom discussions will deepen their comprehension skills and can expand their ideas through hearing the insights of their peers.

This study focuses on what happens when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals to better comprehend text. Although there are some studies to support

this topic, further research would be beneficial. Chapter three addresses the organization of the study and provides details about the community, school, and classroom in which the study took place. The research design, procedures of the study, and the course of action for collecting and analyzing the data are also described in detail.

Chapter 3

Context, Research Design, and Methodology

Context of the Study

District and community. This research study took place in a small town in South New Jersey that covers 0.6 square miles. According to the United States Census Bureau Data (2018), there are approximately 3,726 residents who reside in the town and 1,634 housing units. The median household income is \$70,694 with approximately 3.2% of individuals living below the poverty level. In this town, 92.2% residents hold a high school graduate degree or higher and 33.8% residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Being a predominantly Caucasian community, the town also includes Black, Asian and Hispanic races. 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 only public school in the district. According to the 2018-2019 School Performance Report, this school serves approximately 423 students from preschool through eighth grade. The percentage of students who are identified as economically disadvantaged is 32.6%, who receive free or reduced lunch. The racial make-up of the school includes students who are 53.0% White, 25.3% Hispanic, 14.4% Black or African American, 3.1% Asian, and 3.8% who are of two or more races. Furthermore, 32.6% of the population are economically disadvantaged, 18.7% are students with disabilities and 0.7% are English Learners.

Classroom. This research study took place in two different guided reading groups, both in second grade classrooms. The students in each reading group were

identified as reading below grade level and were identified as the lowest reading group in each class. Seen by both the classroom teacher and myself as the reading support teacher, these students received extra support in guided reading.

Teacher researcher. I am the Basic Skills Language Arts teacher who provides reading support for the lowest reading groups in first through third grade. I have nine years of teaching experience, both in the general education classroom (kindergarten and second grade) as well as Basic Skills. I was the teacher researcher for this study in which research was conducted during each classroom's ELA block in the afternoon.

Students and participants. Out of the eight students in the study, two are females and six are males. Of the two females, one is Hispanic and the other student is White. Of the six males, four are White, one is African American and one is Asian.

One of the male students has a 504 Plan and one male is in Basic Skills. The two other males qualified for Basic Skills, but their parents declined services. Both of these students have been referred to the Intervention and Referral Services team. The Hispanic student identifies as an English Language Learner and receives daily support in a pullout setting.

All eight students returned the permission slip and gave consent to participate in this research study.

Research Design

Closely observing students, analyzing their needs, and adjusting the curriculum to fit the needs of all students are just some of the ways that teacher research is a natural extension of good teaching (Shagoury & Power, 2012). This study is qualitative because

it is based on teacher research. “Teacher research involves collecting and analyzing data as well as presenting it to others in a systematic way (Shagoury & Power, 2012, p. 3). The research question was formed based on an area of need within the classroom during the practice of guided reading. Data was collected through interviews, surveys, observations and student work samples. Shagoury & Power (2012) state that “teacher research has a primary purpose of helping the teacher-researcher understand her students and improve her practice in specific, concrete ways (p. 4). The results from this study are meant to inform and change the teacher-researcher’s instruction to enhance student comprehension and increase the length and quality of aesthetic responses to text.

Procedure of the Study

The study took place over the course of four weeks, meeting four times a week for 20 minutes each time. At the beginning of the study, I interviewed each student independently to determine their motivation to read, text interests and strategies they use to help them understand text. In addition to the interview, students also took the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* (McKenna & Kear, 1990) to determine students' confidence and attitude towards reading. To encourage journal writing, students were given copies of sentence starters that were glued into their reading response journals for easy reference when writing about their reading. These sentence starters focused on what students found interesting, what they were wondering, their predictions and their connections. Sentence starters included phrases such as *I wonder*, *This reminds me of*, *I predict*, *I've noticed*, and *I was surprised by*. Students participated in a small group setting during guided reading within their classroom. Texts were chosen based on the

students' instructional reading levels as assessed using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and their text interests determined by the surveys. Texts were read over the course of two to three days depending on the length of each book. Prior to reading the text, students used their reading response journals to write a prediction or jot down what they noticed on the front cover. Each text was broken down into sections due to timing and only chunks of the text were read during each meeting. While students read the text independently, they were encouraged to use their sentence starter charts inside their reading response journals as a guide for writing. Students noted text connections, predictions, feelings and anything else that came to mind as they read the story. While students read independently, I listened in to students and took notes based on reading behaviors that I observed. After reading, text discussions took place. Students shared what they wrote in their journals and often, group conversations began based on written responses.

Sources of Data

A variety of qualitative data sources were collected over the course of the study. These data sources included student-teacher interviews, reading attitude surveys, student written work in reader response journals, and a teacher researcher journal.

Before the study, students participated in a teacher-created survey as well as the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The interview as well as the survey contained questions that focused on student motivation to read, strategies they used to read unknown words, and text interests.

Student and teacher conversations were both audio-recorded and documented in the teacher researcher journal to analyze text-based discussions. Conversations were analyzed for a deeper understanding of text and whether or not students were thinking beyond the text while reading.

Students' reader response journals were also used as a data source to analyze student thinking and to see if they were able to make a deeper connection with the text. Journal entries were also analyzed to see if student responses lengthened and deepened over the course of the study.

Finally, a teacher researcher journal was used to note observations throughout the study. Observations and notes were of both the students and the teacher.

Plan for Data Analysis

Data collected during this study was analyzed to determine what happens when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals to better comprehend text.

During each group session, I observed and took notes based on students' oral and written responses in my teacher journal. Doing so allowed me to look for patterns and to see if the students' comments and thoughts about text deepened over the course of the study.

In addition to daily observations and taking notes in my teacher journal, I analyzed student's reader response journals every week. I looked to see whether or not students were utilizing their reading response journals while reading and if they were able to respond aesthetically to the text.

At the conclusion of the study, I analyzed each students' journal to see if their responses lengthened over time and if their writing became stronger. As stated before, students participated in a pre and post interview with the teacher that focused on motivation to read, strategies that helped them understand text as well as students' interests. In addition to the interview, students participated in the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* (McKenna & Kear, 1990) before and after the study to determine students' confidence and attitude towards reading. When the research study was over, I analyzed the students' responses from both before and after the study to identify if there were any changes. The next chapter describes the findings and conclusions derived from the data analysis.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Findings

Chapter four discusses the findings after investigating the research question, “What happens when emergent readers use talk and reader response journals to comprehend text?” Data was collected over the period of four weeks with eight students. Sources of data include student-teacher interviews, reading attitude surveys, audiotapes of student talk, student written work in reader response journals, and a teacher researcher journal. These sources were analyzed to identify themes that occurred throughout the study.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part includes a brief case study about each student participant; each given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. The second part consists of a discussion of the key findings that emerged from the study. Three major themes became evident from the analysis of the data: (1) Students became more independent in utilizing their reader response journals with the sentence starters anchor charts; (2) Students used metacognitive skills during writing and text based discussions to deepen their thinking; and (3) Students became more motivated and engaged when given the opportunity to talk about text and share their written responses.

Student Participants

Steven. Steven is a seven year old, Caucasian male, in a second grade classroom. At the beginning of the study, Steven took the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* (McKenna, M.C., & Kear, J.D. 1990) which took an in-depth look at his feelings toward recreational reading and academic reading. He scored 20/40 in the area of recreational

reading and 16/40 in academic reading. His scores reflected much lower than the average second grader's response. Through the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS)*, I learned that Steven does not enjoy reading for fun during his free time whether in school or at home and would rather do other things with his time. After conducting a teacher questionnaire with all of the students, I learned the reason why Steven does not enjoy reading. He stated in the interview that reading takes him a long time so when he has to read, he chooses books that are easy for him. He also stated that when he does read, he chooses superhero books such as Batman or Nonfiction books about animals. Even though reading is tedious for him, he stated that it is important to learn to read well because reading helps you learn more. When asked what reading strategies he uses to help him better understand the story, he stated that he marks the word with his pencil where he stopped reading so he remembers where he left off..

Steven's independent reading level was assessed using the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)* from Pearson. His independent reading level was found to be at a DRA 18, an end of first grade reading level. The *DRA* identified Steven as being almost a full grade level behind in reading.

Grace. Grace is a seven year old, Caucasian female, in a second grade classroom. According to her *ERAS* results, Grace scored 37/40 for motivation for recreational reading and 33/40 for academic reading. Her results reflected a positive attitude toward reading and are considered higher than the average second grader's results. Grace's positive attitude toward reading is reflected in the classroom because she is often found

reading during free time. Grace identified her favorite book from the *Amelia Bedelia* series, “Let’s Play Ball.”

After conducting the teacher questionnaire, I learned that Grace enjoys reading all kinds of books, both fiction and nonfiction. She enjoys reading because she can learn new things and likes books that are funny, such as books from the *Amelia Bedelia* series. Grace believes it is important to learn to read well because you will need to learn how to read when you are an adult - such as a letter from someone. When asked what reading strategies she uses to help her better understand the story, she stated that she makes connections to the books she is reading.

Grace’s independent reading level was assessed using the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) from Pearson. Her independent reading level was found to be at a DRA 20, a beginning of second grade reading level.

Fred. Fred is a seven year old, Caucasian male, in a second grade classroom. According to his *ERAS* results, Fred scored 23/40 for motivation for recreational reading and 29/40 for academic reading which are about the same as the average second grader’s responses. His results reflected an indifferent attitude toward reading which is visible in the classroom. Fred is always cooperative and participates during guided reading groups, but can always use the extra encouragement when it comes to reading and writing. After conducting the teacher questionnaire, I learned that Fred enjoys reading books that are a part of a series because then he always has a book he likes to read. He is most interested in graphic novels such as the series *Dog Man* and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Fred identified his favorite book as the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul*. Fred believes it is

important to learn to read well because you will need to learn how to read when you are an adult so you can get a job. When asked what reading strategies he uses to help him better understand the story, Fred stated that he does not use any strategies because he always remembers what he reads.

Fred's independent reading level was assessed using the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) from Pearson. His independent reading level was found to be at a DRA 14, a mid to end of first grade reading level which identifies him as reading one grade level behind.

Chloe. Chloe is a seven year old, Hispanic female, in a second grade classroom. Chloe is an ELL student as Spanish is the first language spoken at home. According to her *ERAS* results, Chloe scored 33/40 for motivation for recreational reading and 27/40 for academic reading. Her results reflected a positive attitude towards recreational reading and an indifferent attitude toward reading academically and were typical for the average second grader's response.

After conducting the teacher questionnaire, I learned that Chloe enjoys reading chapter books. She enjoys reading because she can learn new things and believes it is important to learn to read well in case someone asks you a question about a book. When asked what reading strategies she uses to help her better understand the story, she stated that she asks the teacher for help to read unfamiliar words.

Chloe's independent reading level was assessed using the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) from Pearson. Her independent reading level was found to be at a

DRA 14, a mid to end of first grade reading level, placing her a one full year behind in reading.

Patrick. Patrick is a seven year old, Caucasian male, in a second grade classroom. According to his *ERAS* results, Patrick scored 38/40 for motivation for recreational reading and 38/40 for academic reading, which is above average than a typical second grader's response. His results reflected a very positive attitude toward reading which is visible in the classroom and during guided reading groups. Patrick is always eager to participate during reading group and is very thorough and thoughtful in his reading responses.

After conducting the teacher questionnaire, I learned that Patrick enjoys reading scary books and mystery books such as ones from the *Goosebumps* series. He stated that he enjoys reading because you learn new words as you read. He also stated that he enjoys reading in school because there are many books to choose from such as in the classroom library and school library.

Patrick believes it is important to learn to read well because you may be an author one day. When asked what reading strategies he uses to help him better understand the story, Patrick stated that he uses a bookmark to help keep his place. He also stated that he rereads pages to help him understand what is happening in the story.

Patrick's independent reading level was assessed using the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) from Pearson. His independent reading level was found to be at a DRA 16, a mid to end of first grade reading level and one grade level behind.

Jordan. Jordan is a seven year old, African American male, in a second grade classroom. According to his *ERAS* results, Jordan scored 23/40 for motivation for recreational reading and 23/40 for academic reading which is below average than a typical second grader's response. His results reflected an indifferent attitude toward reading. Jordan needs a lot of motivation to complete reading and writing assignments, especially during guided reading group. He often shuts down when he does not know what to write about, even with examples and encouragement from the teacher.

After conducting the teacher questionnaire, I learned that Jordan enjoys reading nonfiction books and books that make him laugh. He stated that he enjoys reading in school because it is fun and you can learn new words. I was surprised to hear that he enjoys reading at school based on his results from the *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* and his lack of confidence when in a guided reading group.

Jordan believes it is important to learn to read well so you can be good at studying. When asked what reading strategies he uses to help him better understand the story, Jordan answered that he rereads pages to help him understand what is happening in the story.

Jordan's independent reading level was assessed using the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) from Pearson. His independent reading level was found to be at a DRA 14, a mid to end of first grade reading level. The *DRA* identified Jordan as being a full grade level behind in reading.

Tyler. Tyler is an eight year old, Asian male, in a second grade classroom. According to his *ERAS* results, Tyler scored 24/40 for motivation for recreational reading

and 30/40 for academic reading. His recreational reading score is below average than a typical second grader's response and his academic reading score is slightly above average than the typical second grader's response. His overall results reflected an indifferent attitude toward reading.

After conducting the teacher questionnaire, I learned that Tyler enjoys reading mystery books such as the *Magic Tree House* series. His favorite book from the series is *Night of the Ninjas*. He stated that he sort of enjoys reading in school and often reads at home with his mom.

Tyler believes it is important to learn to read well in case you ever get lost and need to read signs to get back home. When asked what reading strategies he uses to help him better understand the story, Tyler said that he sounds out words he does not know.

Tyler's independent reading level was assessed using the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) from Pearson. His independent reading level was found to be at a DRA 14, a mid to end of first grade reading level. The *DRA* identified Tyler as being a full grade level behind in reading.

John. John is a seven year old, Caucasian male, in a second grade classroom. According to his *ERAS* results, John scored 30/40 for motivation for recreational reading and 33/40 for academic reading. His recreational reading score is below average than a typical second grader's response and his academic reading score is slightly above average than the typical second grader's response. His overall results reflected an indifferent attitude toward reading.

After conducting the teacher questionnaire, I learned that John enjoys reading both fiction and nonfiction books and particularly enjoys reading *Star Wars* books. He stated that he enjoys reading because it is usually quiet in the classroom during reading time and he likes to learn new things. He also likes that the classroom library offers a variety of books to read.

John believes it is important to learn to read well so you know stuff. When asked what reading strategies he uses to help him better understand the story, John said that he sounds out words that are hard to read.

John's independent reading level was assessed using the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) from Pearson. His independent reading level was found to be at a DRA 16, a mid to end of first grade reading level. The *DRA* identified John as being a full grade level behind in reading.

Major Themes

Observing student conversations and written responses in my teacher journal allowed me to look for patterns and to determine whether student comments and thoughts about text deepened over the course of the study. In addition to notes recorded in my teacher journal, I analyzed each student's reader response journal thoroughly to determine if they were able to respond aesthetically to the texts they read and to see if their journal responses lengthened over time. Findings suggest that over time, oral and written responses became more personal and emotional. Given the opportunity to engage in conversations about the texts read, allowed students to think deeply about what they were reading and to make connections between the text and their own lives. Below are

the three major themes that emerged from the study and became evident from the analysis of the data.

More independence in utilizing reader response journals. Throughout the study, students kept a reading response journal where they noted their thinking while reading various texts. It was my goal that the journals would strengthen students' understanding of literature; stimulate higher level thinking about books and increase excitement and motivation to read. Initially, the students needed a lot of encouragement and support from me to write what they were thinking in their reader response journal. After a few sessions, I realized that the students were going to continue to depend on my prompting and encouragement to note their thinking in their journals. Therefore, I glued anchor charts with sentence starters inside each reading response journal. Students were able to reference these while writing in their journal and as a result, the charts helped promote independence. One chart titled, "How to Talk about Books" was intended to promote thinking. A few examples of the sentences starters included, *I think that, I've noticed, I'm wondering,* and *That reminds me of* just to name a few. Additionally, another chart titled, "During Independent Reading, I Can Jot About..." was included. This chart provided similar sentence starters to "How to Talk About Books," but categorized the sentence starters by what students found **interesting**, by what they were **thinking**, what they were **wondering**, and what they were **feeling** as well as **connections** they were making from the story. These charts made it easy for students to reference while writing in their reader response journals and promoted critical thinking.

While reading the story *The Secret Cave*. Patrick wrote, “I think that Katie will get lose (lost) in the cave.” Patrick showed improvement two weeks later when he wrote a similar prediction while reading the story *Cam Jansen and the Lost Tooth*. Patrick wrote “I think Annie swalloo (swallowed) her tooth becace (because) I swalloo (swallowed) my tooth.” Patrick was making a prediction based on his own experiences of losing a tooth.

Similarly, Grace’s responses also lengthened over time. While reading *The Clever Crow*, Grace wrote, “I predict the crow will brak (break) the pot to drink water.” While this is a reasonable prediction, she only wrote one sentence and did not use text evidence or her background knowledge to support her reasoning. About a month later, Grace was reading *Cam Jansen and the Lost Tooth* and wrote a prediction in her reader response journal. She noted, “This reminds me of when I aet (ate) a apple and my tooth fell out. When I read my predict (prediction) was rung (wrong) because Annies tooth was in the apple.” Grace previously predicted in her journal that the tooth would be in the bead box, but as she continued to read, she learned that her prediction was incorrect and noted that in her journal. She also made a personal connection to the story as she was reading.

Developing independence was most evident with Jordan. Initially, he had a difficult time utilizing his reader response journal to record his thoughts while reading. He would shut down and would say he did not know what to write. Once we placed the sentence starter charts in his journal, he began utilizing those sentence starters to note his thinking while reading in his reader response journal. While reading *Come Back Pip!*, Jordan used text evidence to support his prediction.

Jordan: I think that the cat ate Pip because he loot (looked) tase (tasty).

Jordan continued to reference the sentence starter charts throughout the study and showed more confidence in his ability to record his thinking in his reader response journal independently.

It became evident that the sentence starters we glued into the journals were beneficial to stimulate thinking as students read their texts independently. With the help of these charts, students began to develop more independence in writing in their reader response journals as they read and relied less on teacher guidance. Students began to add more to their writing, using critical thinking skills and adding text evidence without teacher prompting.

Using metacognitive skills to deepen thinking. To effectively comprehend text, students must construct meaning by integrating new information with prior knowledge. Effective readers use metacognitive skills to monitor their understanding of what they are reading and to comprehend text. Metacognition can be defined as thinking about one's own thinking.

Through dialogue and discussion of text, students were able to comprehend text on a deeper level. Students frequently used metacognitive skills to make meaning of the text being read such as questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting. The most frequently used metacognitive strategy was predicting. Students often used the sentence starters *I think* and *I predict* to show that they were thinking about the text and to monitor their understanding of what they were reading.

Prior to reading chapter two in the book *The Grandma Mix-Up*, I asked students to predict why they thought the chapter was titled “A Bad Start.” In *The Grandma Mix-Up*, the main character, Pip’s parents go away on a trip. She ends up with two grandmas to baby-sit her. Pip is ready for fun with her grandmas, but strict Grandma Nan and easygoing Grandma Sal can't agree on anything.

Steven: I think grandma Nan will be mean in the chapter because her face looks mean on the front cover.

John: I think both grandmas will fight with each other and want to do different things.

Both students used what they had read so far in the story and text clues to construct their predictions for chapter two. After reading chapter two, both students were excited to see that their predictions were correct and saw how using evidence from the text helped them form a prediction.

Fred also made predictions while reading *A Bike for Alex*. Hannah, Alex’s friend and neighbor gives her an old, broken bike she no longer uses. Students had to read the story to find out if Alex's dad can fix the bike so she is able to ride it.

Fred: I think Dad will fix the bike for Alex because on the front cover it looks like a brand new bike. It was blue but now it is red so I think dad painted it for her to look brand new.

Through reading the story, Fred learned that his original prediction was correct and that Alex’s dad did indeed fix the old bike. The bike was gifted to Alex and her dad made it look brand new by repainting it for her.

In addition to predicting, students asked and answered questions to clarify their thoughts and to demonstrate they were thinking about the text. These questions lead to a

deeper understanding of the text that was being read. After reading and writing in their journals, students independently led the discussion without teacher prompting to discuss chapter two of the story, *The Grandma Mix-Up*:

Grace: I wonder why Grandma Nan is so strict?

Steven followed up Grace's question with his thoughts and prediction.

Steven: Maybe Grandma Nan was raised by a strict mom so that is why she is so strict.

The students were using the questioning strategy to try to figure out key information about the story and to determine why the grandmas had such different personalities. Later in the story, students continued to facilitate discussions on their own. Grace asked clarifying questions when she did not know the meaning of a specific phrase. For example, she asked for the meaning of "loosen up." Other students took the opportunity to give her some examples from the text to help clarify what it meant in relation to the story.

Grace: What does loosen up mean?

John: It means Pip could go to bed at like 8:50 or 9:00, not right at 8:00 like Grandma Nan said.

Steven: It means to give her choices like at lunch when she had choices of what to eat.

Once the other students gave her some examples, she then understood what it meant.

While reading *Lincoln Loved to Learn*, Tyler wrote in his journal "I wonder what Abe's bed is made out of?" As he continued to read, he learned that Abe's bed was out of cornhusks. Tyler was unsure what cornhusks were so he noted in his journal asking, "I wonder what cornhusks are?" After reading, we discussed and explained the meaning of

cornhusks by explaining that is the part of the corn you peel off before eating corn on the cob. After discussing and looking at the illustration in the book again, Tyler had a better understanding of what cornhusks were and why they made a great bed.

Journal responses also showed that text-to-self connections were made frequently when reading text. By making text-to-self connections, students were able to apply their background knowledge to what was happening in the text to have a better understand what they were reading. While reading *Young Cam Jansen and the Lost Tooth*, Grace was able to connect to one of the characters in the story, Annie, who could not find her tooth that she had lost. Annie had eaten an apple earlier in the story.

Grace: That reminds me of when I aet (ate) a apple and my tooth fell out.
 When I read that part my predict (prediction) was rung (wrong)
 because Annie's tooth was in the apple.

Grace had originally predicted that the tooth had fallen into the bead box in the art room during art class. She had noticed from the illustrations that many of the white beads looked like teeth and thought the tooth may be inside the box. After reading some more, Grace revised her prediction based on her own personal experiences with losing a tooth when eating an apple.

Chloe also made a text-to-self connection in her journal while reading, *A Bike for Alex*. In the story, Alex receives an old bike from her friend Hannah because she no longer needs it and is so excited.

Chloe: That reminds me of when I got a bike from my friend. Alana gave
 me the bike and I was happy I got it.

Not only were students thinking while they were reading, their reading responses helped to promote discussion among each other to promote a deeper understanding of the story.

Increase in motivation and engagement. I was concerned that initially discussing the text before students read the text and jotted in their journals would result in students writing based on the ideas from their peers rather than their own thoughts and opinions. Therefore, students wrote in their journals while they were reading and most text discussions happened after reading. After reviewing student journals and recorded responses, findings suggest that students became more independent in writing in their journals and were excited to share what they wrote. For example, during a text discussion, Grace asked, “Can I stop and jot?” On another day, Grace came to class with another *Cam Jansen* book from the series and gave it to Patrick who really enjoyed reading *Cam Jansen and the Lost Tooth*. Grace recommended he read the book and told him “It’s a good book.” Furthermore, while reading *A Bike for Alex*, both Tyler and Jordan stopped reading to discuss the text quietly with each other and make predictions about what might happen next. They also decided which sentence starter they should use to write their predictions in their journal after their discussion. In addition to the improved length of journal entries and an increase in motivation, research findings also show that engagement through both talking and writing about text also helped improve comprehension.

Additionally, after completing the study, a post interview was conducted which provided more evidence that motivation and engagement increased. I verbally asked the students questions and recorded their answers. All of the students agreed that talking about books helped them understand what they read. Discussing the text with their peers allowed them to help each other better understand what was happening in the story.

When I asked Fred if he felt talking about books helps you understand what you read, Fred replied yes.

Fred: Yes. When I read a book I understand most parts, but talking about it helps me understand even more or parts that I didn't understand.

Grace also agreed with Fred and added to his response.

Grace: Yes because talking about books helps you understand better. When you say it, it helps me remember the story or when I am confused it helps me understand.

The next question asked the students whether or not they think the reader response journal helped them better understand the stories they read. Surprisingly, all students had the same exact answer.

Steven: Yes because if I forgot what happened in the book I can go back and read my journal to remember.

Chloe: Yes because I can go back and read my journal to help me remember my story.

Fred: Yes, if we have to go back to talk about a story, I could go back into the journal to see what I wrote to help me remember.

In addition, all students enjoyed talking about the books we read, but overall did not like the writing part as much.

Fred: I liked talking about the book we read because I got to hear other people's thoughts on it. I didn't like the writing part as much. I liked talking about what I wrote and what I thought about the book more.

Grace: Writing was okay. Some books were harder to write about and connect to.

Despite not liking writing in their reader response journals as much as talking about the books, students still agreed that they would recommend to their peers that they

should use a reader response journal when reading to help them better understand the story.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the data analysis and findings revealed that using talk and reader response journals deepens beginning reader's comprehension with metacognitive skills and increases motivation and engagement in the classroom. Students' journal responses lengthened over time and demonstrated the use of the sentence starters independently. Students demonstrated the ability to comprehend text on a deeper level and monitor their own comprehension by using metacognitive skills such as questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting. Students also demonstrated an eagerness to share and discuss their responses written in their reader response journals after reading which improved students' overall motivation and engagement towards reading. Chapter five will provide a summary of the findings as well as conclusions that were drawn from the study. It will also describe limitations, implications for today's classrooms and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

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

Summary of the Study

This study examined the effects when emergent readers used talk and reader response journals to comprehend text. Data collected from student journal entries, interviews, reading attitude surveys, audio-recorded student conversations and my teacher researcher journal suggests that using talk and reader response journals in the classroom fosters a deeper understanding of text and increases student motivation and engagement in reading groups. The findings show that students' comprehension through the use of dialogue and reader response journals did improve over time as well as their overall motivation and engagement towards reading. Over the course of the study, it was evident that the students were thinking deeper about the text and forming both efferent and aesthetic responses. Their journal responses became longer and demonstrated that students were reflecting on what they were reading. In addition, students used metacognitive skills such as questioning, predicting and making connections to show they were thinking about the story.

Conclusions of the Study

My goal for this study was to determine if dialogue and the use of reader response journals would improve comprehension and increase student motivation and engagement in reading. Prior to the start of the study, I reviewed each student's *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) assessment to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in regards to reading. All of the students were identified as reading below grade level with a sufficient weakness in comprehension. In addition, I reviewed others' previous research findings in the area of talking about text and the use of reader response journals to improve comprehension.

Louise Rosenblatt provides theoretical support in regards to using reader response journals for literacy in the elementary classroom. Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory suggests that reader response journals encourage personal connections with literature. The transactional view of response is based on the belief that the reader is "not seen as a separate entity, acting upon the environment, nor the environment acting on the organism, but both parts acting as a total event" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 98). Research found that "Reading response journals enable students to grow as readers and writers by requiring them to use their own background knowledge to construct personal meaning and by encouraging, in writing, the integration of new experiences with past ones" (Fulps & Young, 1991). Allowing students to put their own thoughts into writing not only enabled them to take ownership of what they read, but also gave me insight into viewing their understanding of the text. Furthermore, research (Hancock, 1993; Tracey & Morrow, 2006) found the use of reading response journals in the classroom encourages

students to create aesthetic responses when reading text and transforms the printed page into a personal reading experience. Initially, students struggled with what to write in their reader response journal and often looked to me for inspiration. I glued sentence starters inside each student journal to help promote text discussion and independence in responding to text in their reader response journals. As the study continued, it became evident that the sentence starters were beneficial in stimulating thinking as students read their texts independently. With the help of these charts, students began to develop more independence in writing in their reader response journals as they read and relied less on teacher guidance. Students began to add more to their writing, using critical thinking skills and adding text evidence without teacher prompting. Students' journal responses reflected both aesthetic and efferent responses.

Additionally, research (Roser & Martinez, 1995, Allington, 2012, Fielding & Pearson, 1994, Tharp & Gallimore, 1989) found that teachers often dominate conversations only allowing students to give a response followed by a teacher prompt or question. Research stated that teachers should step back and allow the students' ideas and comments to determine the direction of the conversation. Teachers should ask students to clarify or expand their comments by asking questions. Reflecting on the start of the study, I found myself still dominating the conversation and realized I needed to allow the students to lead the conversations. Once I did, students initiated conversations among each other and answered each other's questions independently. I only intervened during student conversations when I wanted students to elaborate or expand on their thoughts.

By changing the pattern of dialogue, it allowed for more student input and less control from me.

Lastly, I concluded that using talk and reader response journals can increase motivation and engagement in the classroom. At the end of the study, I conducted a post interview with each of the participants, which proved that motivation and engagement increased since the beginning of the study. The post interview results reveal that students believe talking about books helped them better understand what they read. They also felt that discussing the text with their peers allowed them to help each other better understand what was happening in the story. Despite not liking writing in their reader response journals as much as talking about the books, students still agreed that they would like to continue to use reader response journals when reading.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the amount of time available to conduct the research study. This study took place during twenty-minute reading group sessions 4 days a week.

Additionally, the whole study lasted only three weeks. It was projected to take place for four to six weeks, but due to COVID19, schools shut down as safety precautions across the country. Therefore, we were unable to continue the study for the full length of time. Due to school closed and going full remote, the post interview survey was conducted with only half of the participants.

Although the students made some progress, it would be interesting to see how their comprehension and reader response journal entries improved over a longer span of time, such as an entire school year.

Implications for Today's Classrooms

After analyzing the data throughout this study, there are several implications for general education teachers and future teacher researchers. This study can offer information that can be of value in the classroom when it comes to dialogue about text and the use of reader response journals. Both talk and reader response journals can create increased comprehension as well as engagement and motivation in the literacy block. Students will develop a deeper understanding of text and connect to text on a more personal level with an increased motivation to read, write and also talk about text. With positive outcomes, it was shown that student responses to texts deepened with dialogue and encouraged them to use both aesthetic and efferent responses. Students were able to make and revise predictions, ask questions and make connections to texts. Utilizing reader response journals in the classroom aids in the meaning making process and helps strengthen comprehension. Giving students the opportunity to engage in discussion about texts has a positive impact on student learning and motivation in the classroom.

Therefore, I should continue to use talk and reader response journals with my students.

For further research, a longer length of time would be more suitable for the study. With the limitations of only three weeks for this study, four to eight weeks or even longer would be more suitable to achieve the necessary data. Furthermore, only fiction texts

were read during this study. It would be important to investigate if the same findings and outcome would be true with the use of different genres, such as nonfiction texts.

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